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Rethinking the Postwar from Outside:

Japanese Literature of Decolonization

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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Jiajun Liang

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Michael Emmerich, Chair

This dissertation examines the discursive transformations in the postwar Japanese literary terrain through a transnational lens of decolonization. The transition from wartime to postwar Japan was often considered as a rupture which was figured, at the discursive level, as a centripetal turn away from the imperial legacies and toward the brighter future of recovery and development. Beginning in the 1980s, however, scholars questioned the popular conception of postwar Japan as a self-contained, homogenous space, which failed to account for the massive transnational flows such as repatriation, demobilization, and deportation in the aftermath of the collapse of the empire.

This dissertation aims to recuperate the multivalence in the postwar cultural landscape through a careful and critical analysis of literary works. In particular, it proposes to attune our interpretative frame to include not only what is explicitly depicted in fictions but also the ostensibly insignificant details that may seem impertinent to the narratives' development. Through a contrapuntal reading, this dissertation hopes to show new ways to approach literary works not

simply as a national literature of postwar Japan, but rather as belonging to a transnational literature of decolonization.

In chapter 1, I analyze the tropes of madness and metamorphosis in Abe Kōbō's *Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu*, which not only constitute a powerful critique of the autobiographical narratives of return (*hikiage-mono*) but also present the opportunity to reflect on the possibility of decolonization. In chapter 2, I compare two contemporaneous fictions: Kyū Eikan's *Honkon* and Ishihara Shintarō's *Taiyō no kisetsu* and show that literary awards, while supposedly based on objective and purely "aesthetic" qualities, are complicit in creating discursive boundaries within the literary establishment. In chapter 3, I examine the contradiction between cannibalism and modernity in Ōoka Shōhei's *Nobi* and *Musashino fujin* and suggest that Japan's coloniality, far from dissipating with the demise of the empire, was reincarnated within the postwar society itself. Finally, in the epilogue, I compare the anime film *Hotaru no haka* by Takahata Isao and argue that the contrasting color schemes compel the viewers to reflect on the lingering traces of the war in the postwar society.

The dissertation of Jiajun Liang is approved.

Michael Berry

Katsuya Hirano

Seiji M. Lippit

Michael Emmerich, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

To the memory of my father,

My beacon of hope and inspiration

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Vita

Education

2009-2013	B. A.	Macalester College
		Majors: Japanese, Economics, Mathematics (Applied and Statistics)
2013-2015	M. A.	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
		Japanese Studies
2018-2019	Research	Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan
	Fellow	Yanai Initiative Research Fellowship

Publication

"Impossible to Return: Abe Kōbō, Repatriation, and Postwar Japan." *The Journal for Japanese Studies*, vol. 48, no. 2 (forthcoming in summer 2022).

Translation

Ching, Leo. "Ouran tiji de Wushe shijian: Lun Jindao Youzi de *Taiguo yeman dè*" [Musha Incident, Incidentally: Tsushima Yūko's *Exceedingly Barbaric*]. In *Wushe shijian: Taiwan lishi yu wenhua duben* [Musha Incident: A Reader in Taiwan History and Culture]. Taipei: Rye Field, 2020.

Conference Presentations

"Between Praising and Prizing: Politics of Recognition in Japanese Literary Awards." Association for Asian Studies Conference in Asia, July 2019. Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand.

"'Perhaps Japan Doesn't Exist Anywhere': The Impossible Return in Abe Kōbō's *Beasts Head for Home*." Asian Studies Conference Japan, June 2019. Saitama University, Saitama, Japan.

"Literature of the Vanishing Home: Memories, Violence, and Displacement in Repatriation Literature." Trans-Pacific Workshop, June 2017. University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

"Space and Repetition: Identity Crisis and Formation of National Consciousness in Decolonized Taiwan." Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast, June 2016. California State University, Northridge, CA.

Workshop discussant, Trans-Pacific Workshop, June 2016. University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

"In the Shadow of Democracy: Okamoto Kidō's *Marē haiyū no shi*." New York Conference on Asian Studies, October 2015. Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY.

"Indicators of Gender Identity in Contemporary Japanese Fictions." Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, October 2013. Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.

Introduction

"What Time is it?" The Postwar as a Layered Temporality

> But the question 'What time is it?' in its symbolic sense was not merely raised to reveal the actual situation that the modern world is upside-down. The important suggestion at that particular scene in the plane is that man in an upside-down world *does not realize that it is upside-down*. For man whose intellect and senses are shut up in an inverted world and for whom the upside-down image has become normal, the normal appears, by contrast, to be inverted. Within such a world absurdity replaces common sense, and sanity is treated as insanity […]
>
> —Maruyama Masao, "Politics and Man in the Contemporary World"

Museumized Memories of the Past

Navigating my way inside the bustling Shinjuku Station on an August afternoon, my attention was captured by the colorful light-box advertisements for the Heiwa Kinen Tenji Shiryōkan (Memorial Museum for Soldiers, Detainees in Siberia, and Postwar Repatriates, hereafter Memorial Museum). In one such advertisement (see Figure 1), a high-school girl stares into the viewer's eyes, accompanied by a line of text that reads: "Knowing about the war turns ordinary, everyday life [*heibon na mainichi*] into the most precious treasure." On the adjacent advertisement, a woman, presumably a mother, looks down, as if weeping: "Just the thought of sending my child to the battlefield brings tears to my eyes." On the lower left corner of each poster, we see the silhouette of a typical postwar core family, with the father and mother on either side and two children, a boy and a girl, holding their parents' hands in the middle. Four lines of text above the silhouette inform the viewers that "The truth of the war [*sensō no shinjitsu*] is only an eight-minute walk from here. Summer

vacation special events in session." Finally, on the bottom of the advertisement is the slogan "Telling the next generation about the last great war to the next generation [*saki no taisen o tsugi no sedai ni kataritsugu*]," followed by the information that the museum, which offers free admission for the public, is officially commissioned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Sōmusho itaku*).

Figure 1: Light-box advertisements for the Memorial Museum

Leaving Shinjuku Station, it is indeed an eight-minute stroll to the Memorial Museum, which is located on the thirty-third floor of Shinjuku Sumitomo Building, across the street from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building. While Sumitomo Building may no longer stand out as it used to among the high-rise buildings of Nishi-Shinjuku, it in fact heralded the age of skyscrapers in Tokyo and even across Japan. Known for its distinctive triangular design and astonishing height of 210 meters,[1] the Sumitomo Building was the tallest skyscraper in Japan when it was built in March 1974—until it was surpassed half a year later by the Shinjuku Mitsui Building, located just to the east of the Sumitomo Building.

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[1] The Shinjuku Sumitomo building is commonly referred to as the "Triangle Building" (*sankaku biru*).

Sumitomo Realty, one of the largest and richest real estate companies in the world, quickly relocated its headquarter to this new landmark in the recently developed Shinjuku subcenter (*fukutoshin*), which, within a span of ten years, boasted an impressive skyline that was on par with any other metropolis in the world. Starting with the Keio Plaza Hotel in 1971, Nishi-Shinjuku witnessed the construction of six more skyscrapers by the end of the decade.[2] Not surprisingly, most of these high-rise buildings were developed and owned by the major *zaibatsu* (financial groups) such as Sumitomo, Mitsui, and Yasuda, which were dissolved, at least nominally, in the early postwar period under the U.S. Occupation.[3] By the early 1970s, however, these zaibatsu had completely regained their footing and once again dominated the Japanese economy, as they used to during the wartime years. Contrary to their once infamous image as greedy exploiters that thrived on the nation's misfortunes (as well as the tragedies of its Asian neighbors, which were rarely evoked), they were viewed in a decidedly more positive light in the 1970s as symbols of Japan's rapid growth, which was most conspicuously visible in the radical transformation of urban spaces. From the Olympic spectacle,[4] which included not only the Olympic facilities and stadiums but also the Shinkansen railway system, to the less pronounced yet more pervasive urban development (*toshi kaihatsu*) such as shopping arcades (*shōtengai*), shopping malls, and residential neighborhoods (*danchi*), the cityscapes across Japan left little trace of the wounds of war and defeat.

Gazing at the magnificent skyline in Nishi-Shinjuku, few people today would conjure up images of the burned-out ruins of Tokyo in 1945. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that shadows of the past are banished from memory and just leave it at that. If the postwar foundational

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[2] These include the Shinjuku Sumitomo Building (1974), Shinjuku Mitsui Building (1974), International Telecommunication Building (now KDDI Building, 1974), Yasuda Kasai Kaijō Building (now Shinjuku Sompo Japan Building, 1976), Shinjuku Nomura Building (1978), and Shinjuku Center Building (1979).

[3] The zaibatsu dissolution was at best partially successful, as the American occupation forces quickly shifted its focus to transforming Japan into its economic and military ally in order to contain the spread of communism in East Asia.

[4] I adopted this term from Franz Prichard, *The Urban Revolution in Japanese Fiction, Documentary, and Photography of the 1960s and 1970s*, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2011).

narrative of recovery and prosperity has managed to repress alternative narratives of violence and victimization, the repressed voices must nonetheless return. To add yet another twist to the famous Freudian formulation, however, the "return of the repressed" is itself repressed, in the sense that the past is allowed to return only insofar as it maintains an unbridgeable distance from the everyday life in the present. It is precisely this distance that the Memorial Museum aims to preserve. In urging the visitors to take a glimpse into the horrific "truth of war" (*sensō no shinjitsu*), while simultaneously reassuring them that this tragic past is, after all, insulated from their treasured everyday present, the museum allows what is repressed to return only insofar as that very return is pushed away, quarantined within an irretrievable past. In other words, any potential threat posed by the "return of the past" is preemptively neutralized and immediately reincorporated into the circuit of unchanging everydayness. Exposing themselves to a mild dose of what Uno Tsunehiro calls "pain within the margin of safety" (*anzen ni itai*),[5] the visitors to the Memorial Museum are, rather than being compelled to confront the historical legacies of the war, excused or even encouraged to indulge in the fantasy of the utopian present through a perfunctory performance of self-reflection at a safe distance.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Memorial Museum is designed to "ensure that the memory of the suffering of Japan's World War II soldiers, detainees in Siberia, and postwar repatriates is passed down to future generations who have never experienced war."[6] In addition to the permanent exhibition which displays various artifacts, maps, and documents, the museum also hosts monthly events such as documentary screenings, one-person plays (*hitori shibai*), interviews and roundtable discussions with people who personally experienced demobilization, detention, or repatriation. In particular, the museum organizes special events during school breaks

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[5] See Uno Tsunehiro, *Zero nendai no sōzōryoku* (Tokyo: Hayakawa Shobō, 2008).
[6] From the English website of the Memorial Museum: http://www.heiwakinen.jp/english/index.html.

when it receives great numbers of elementary, middle, and high school students from all over Japan,[7] who are often required to compose an essay reflecting on their visit as a post field trip assignment.

At one such event that I attended on August 19, 2018, Tsuchiya Hiroko, who is now in her mid-eighties, recounted her childhood experiences of repatriating from Gongzhuling (Japanese: Koshūrei) in the former Manchuria in July 1946. Her story began with the Soviet invasion (*shinkō*) of Manchuria on August 9, 1945, when the "Soviet red devils" (*aka-oni no yōna Soren-gun*)[8] tore up the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact and invaded their "hometown." After recounting how she, along with 5,000 other Japanese settlers in Gongzhuling, 530 of whom had lost their lives by the time of repatriation, had suffered numerous hardships not only from the civil war between the Nationalists (KMT) and the Communists (CCP), but also from the plundering (*ryakudatsu*) and riots (*bōdō*) by the local Chinese villagers, she concluded her story by emphasizing the preciousness of peace and reminding the audience—who, matched perfectly the image of the museum's target demographic portrayed in the light-box advertisements, were comprised mostly of elders, students, and mothers—that Japan must not only avoid starting another war at all costs, but also take care "not to get embroiled in [*makikomarenai*] wars fought by other countries [*yoso no kuni*]."

The host concluded the event by making a witty comparison—perhaps due to the heavy presence of students—between school field trips and overseas repatriation: "Just like your field trip doesn't end till you get home and greet your parents by saying: 'I'm home' [*tadaima*], the war doesn't end until you have safely returned to your home country." The war ended, in other words, as an indisputable fact when the repatriates set their foot once again on Japanese soil, suggesting that they

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[7] The number of schools that organize field trips to the Memorial Museum varies by the month. The peak usually comes in April, May, and June, numbering about a hundred schools each year. The website contains a detailed list of visiting schools: http://www.heiwakinen.jp/school/list.html.

[8] Based on my transcription at the event.

could finally, despite the prolonged delay, join their compatriots in enjoying the peace and prosperity promised by the postwar.

The host's final remark contains an unintended yet profound paradox. By foregrounding the delayed return of the repatriates, he relativized the official narrative which sets August 15, 1945, as the decisive divide between war and postwar, thus problematizing the putative homogeneity of the postwar temporality. Despite acknowledgement of the multiplicity of temporalities, however, he nonetheless endorsed a binary division between wartime and postwar, thus insisting on the separation from the present and closure of the imperial past, which he located not in the national narrative but rather on the level of the individual subject. As such, the experience of defeat is quarantined as belonging to the past and the outside, something that can be narrated at a safe distance from the vantage point of home and the present.

In fact, this paradox is at the very heart of the Memorial Museum. The arresting design, the touching messages, and even the "Free Admission" in the light-box advertisements all invite and perhaps even compel commuters to pay a visit to the museum and learn about the "truth of war." Yet at the same time it also strives to keep memories of war at bay by relegating them to the recesses of the past, as is clearly shown in phrases like "the last great war" (*saki no taisen*), so as not to disturb the precious everyday life at present.

The Layered Discourse of the Postwar

According to historian Mori Takemaro, the division between "modern Japan" (*kindai Nihon*) and "contemporary Japan" (*gendai Nihon*) is typically set on August 15, 1945—the day marking the demise of imperial Japan and the rebirth of postwar, pacifist Japan.[9] The sense of a rupture, in terms

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[9] Mori Takemaro, "Senzen to sengo no danzetsu to renzoku: Nihon kingendaishi kenkyū no kadai," *Hitotsubashi ronsō*, vol. 127, no. 6 (2006), 639.

of both historical facts and common perceptions, following Japan's defeat is beyond doubt. Japan's political and social structures were overhauled under the Allied campaigns of disarmament and democratization, notwithstanding the fact that some measures were revoked a few years later, when the need to curb the spread of communism outweighed the imperatives of demilitarization and decolonization. At the very least, in the years leading up to the outbreak of the Korean War and the signing of the US-Japan Security Treaty, the general consensus was that August 1945 marked a clean and total break from the wartime imperialism and fascism.

If the promulgation of a pacifist constitution and the conviction of war criminals were examples of the domestic changes effected by the American occupiers in the early postwar period, there were transformations beyond the national borders as well. Under the supervision of the Allies, millions of Japanese civilians and soldiers were repatriated from the "outer territories" (*gaichi*) while, in the opposite direction, tens of thousands of former imperial subjects were deported and rendered stateless almost overnight.[10] The presumption of a temporal break is thus inseparable from a spatial reconceptualization that drastically reconfigures the definition and, perhaps more accurately, the imagination of Japanese territory from an expansive empire to a self-sustained "island country" (*shimaguni*).[11] The transformation of space is, in other words, mapped onto and mirrored through the transformation of time, which retroactively constructs the foundational narrative of the postwar by sealing off imperial history as something that belongs to "outside countries" (*yoso no kuni*).

Beyond the historical significance of these changes, the reconfiguration of national space and the unprecedented population flows also had profound ideological and epistemological implications,

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[10] According to Lori Watt, five million Japanese civilians and soldiers returned to postwar Japan from its vast overseas domains by the end of 1946. In the opposite direction, nearly a million Koreans, 40,000 Chinese, and 18,000 Taiwanese were deported and sent back to their respective "countries of origin." See Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2009), 2-3.
[11] Oguma Eiji offers a compelling account of the reimagination of space and identity in *A Genealogy of 'Japanese' Self-images*, translated by David Askew (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002).

as they not only facilitated and precipitated the construction of what Oguma Eiji calls the "myth of ethnic homogeneity" (*tan'itsu minzoku shiwa*),[12] but also absolved Japan from the responsibilities—both moral and actual—of decolonization. As a result of the "unmixing of peoples," discourses of decolonization were marginalized by the rising currency of the national paradigm, characterized by the popular belief of ethnic uniqueness that would eventually culminate in the "theories of Japaneseness" (*Nihonjin-ron*) in the 1980s. The discursive transition from diversity to homogeneity thus reflects and encapsulates postwar Japan's centripetal turn from a multiethnic empire to an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically uniform nation-state.

The incorporation of postwar Japan into a new geopolitical order under American authority further complicated the "third-party decolonization," which conveniently gave way to the apparently more urgent needs to contain communism under the Cold War regime. As a result, the Occupation Forces under Douglas MacArthur and the postwar Japanese government under Yoshida Shigeru were complicit in producing and perpetuating what historian Yoshikuni Igarashi calls the "foundational narrative of the postwar,"[13] transforming postwar Japan, through selective memory and collective forgetting, from an abominable enemy to an intimate ally. Significantly, what the "foundational narrative" implies is not simply an official account of Japan's "overnight metamorphosis" from militarism to pacifism, but quite literally a narrative upon which the postwar was conceptually and discursively founded. In other words, the "postwar," as the appellation suggests, begins with an end—a rupture from and a closure of the war that precedes it.

As dominant as it was, however, the foundational narrative never monopolized the discursive space of the postwar. From early on, some Japanese thinkers raised doubts about the

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[12] Oguma explains that whether the concept of "Japanese" is monoethnic (*tan'itsu minzoku*) or multiethnic (*kongō minzoku*) depends significantly on the rhetorical needs of the time. Theories of multiethnicity were widely celebrated during the colonial period to make the incorporation of overseas territories and the assimilation of colonial subjects more palatable.
[13] For a detailed explanation of what he means by the "foundational narrative," see Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton University Press, 2012), 20.

sense of complacency in assuming that the defeat meant a total and absolute break from the past.

Takeuchi Yoshimi, for example, insisted that the "independence" enjoyed by postwar Japan, insofar

as it was not acquired through struggle as in India and China but was merely bestowed by the

American occupiers, was simply a continuation of the logic of imperialism.[14] Maruyama Masao, a

contemporary of Takeuchi, was similarly suspicious of the common conception that 1945 marked an

epistemic rupture from the past. According to Maruyama, Japan's defeat was an inevitable result of

the lack of subjective awareness and responsibility, which he traced all the way back to the

Tokugawa period. Contrary to many of his contemporaries who regarded the wartime years under

fascism as an exception or aberrance, Maruyama actually considered the war and the defeat as the

natural course of history.[15]

Nakano Shigeharu, who was about ten years old than Takeuchi and Maruyama, also astutely

sensed the inherent contradictions between the sweeping changes on the surface and the persisting

political system. In an essay published in *Kaizō* in March 1946—only half a year after Japan's

surrender, Nakano observes:

> No matter where I look, I feel the structure [*shikumi*] dominating the national life in Japan
>
> [*Nihon no kokumin seikatsu*] is precisely as it was before [*moto no mama, sokkuri sonomama*].
>
> Admittedly, the ministers and generals have been locked up; the financial capitalists have
>
> been locked up; and the subservient intellectuals [*tedai shisōka*] [who were complicit in

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[14] This is a point Takeuchi makes throughout his postwar writings. See, for example, "Kindai no chōkoku" (Overcoming Modernity, 1959), "Hōhō to shite no Ajia" (Asia as Method, 1961), and "Kuni no dokuritsu to risō" (Independence and Ideal of the Nation, 1952). The first two essays are translated into English and included in *What is Modernity: Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi* (edited and translated by Richard Calichman, Columbia University Press, 2005). The last essay is discussed in Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Duke University Press, 2010), 194-6. In fact, according to Calichman, Takeuchi's "Kindai no chōkoku," titled after the famous symposium of the Kyoto School held in 1942, was "to a great extent written against those writers who would seek to deny their own complicity with wartime ideology, an ideology that for Takeuchi extended well into the postwar period as well." See *What is Modernity*, 24.
[15] Maruyama notes the political continuity, particularly that of nationalism, coursing through Japanese history in a few prominent essays collected in *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics* (edited by Ivan Morris, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), including "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism," "Nationalism in Japan: Its Theoretical Background and Prospects," "From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics," and "Politics and Man in the Contemporary World."

promoting the war] have been locked up. While these are all undeniable facts, the structure

itself [*shikumi sono mono*] remained exactly as it was before.[16]

Here, Nakano distinguishes the warmongers who thrived in and benefitted from the political system

from the *political system itself*. While the removal of war criminals created the impression that Japan

had swept away its wartime legacies, the preservation of what Nakano calls the "structure" (*shikumi*),

particularly the retention of the imperial institution, raised serious doubt about whether the rupture

was as thorough or absolute as it was often credited with being. In his essay, Nakano specifically

questions what it means for Emperor Hirohito to issue the "imperial decree on the New Year's

Day" (*gantan shōsho*) as the head of the state without offering a "single word of apology to the

countless war victims, nor to the countless widows, orphans, and those who were burnt out of their

homes."[17] Indeed, insofar as Hirohito, the representation of the national polity (*kokutai*) under

whose name the "sacred war" was waged, survived not only the war but also, in retrospect, the war

crime trials, one has to agree with Nakano's observation that despite the radical changes

accomplished by the Occupation Forces on the surface, the political system remained fundamentally

and institutionally the same.

Despite the existence of such differing voices that noted the "continuing problems" (*renzoku

suru mondai*), as Nakano later calls it in another essay, such as the preservation of the emperor system

and the perpetuation of systematic discrimination against the minority groups,[18] the (im)balance

between the foundational narrative and the competing ones remained in place until the 1980s.[19] The

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[16] Nakano Shigeharu, "Sokkuri sonomama," in *Nakano Shigeharu zenshū, vol. 12: Hihyō no ningensei* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1997), 43.

[17] Ibid., 44.

[18] See Nakano Shigeharu, "Renzoku suru mondai," in *Nakano Shigeharu zenshū, vol. 15: Renzoku suru mondai* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1997). Originally published in *Tsushin hōi* (April 20, 1975), this essay launches another protest against the sense of rupture permeating the postwar society by focusing on the continuity (*renzoku*) of the unequal treatment of the *zainichi* Koreans and the discriminated communities (*hisabetsu buraku*) in postwar Japan. This brief essay is taken up by critic Yamashiro Mutsumi in a recent book of the same title (*Renzoku suru mondai*, 2013).

[19] Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, 17, 21; Mori, 644-6.

transformation in the discursive landscape might have been effected by a few changes in the historical and social milieus, including the illness and death of Hirohito, the shifting power dynamics of the Cold War paradigm, and the rising prominence of the Annales School which emphasized the *longue durée* (long duration) over rigid periodizations. However, the renewed interest in revisiting the past in the 1980s was paradoxically intercepted by the rising discourse of the *Nihonjin-ron*, which appropriated the critical discourse of political continuity to serve its own purpose—as evidence of an unbroken cultural tradition that is uniquely Japanese.

In any case, the momentum to reflect on the polyvalent and contradictory meanings of the postwar continued into the 1990s, which was perhaps felt more palpably in Japan as the advent of the Heisei era. In both Japanese and English scholarship, the deep structural continuities were examined from a number of refreshing and sometimes internally conflicting perspectives which nonetheless agreed on the pervasive linkages between the wartime fascist and the postwar democratic political orders. The essays included in the volume *Total War and "Modernization,"* edited by Yamanouchi Yasushi, Victor Koschmann, and Narita Ryūichi, are based on the premise that the "total-war system" (*sōryokusen taisei*) neither sprang into being nor ceased to exist overnight. Rather, following what Koschmann calls the "etiological approach to continuity, in which postwar effects are produced by wartime causes,"[20] the contributors consider the "total-war system" as characteristic of and inseparable from modernity itself.

Following this lead, Amemiya Shōichi takes up the political and social continuities between the "wartime and postwar systems" (*senji sengo taisei*) in terms of a shared propensity for "enforced homogenization" (*kyōsei-teki kinshitsuka*).[21] In particular, he regards the postwar economic miracle not as an antithesis but rather as a resurgence of the "total-war system" that was often believed to

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[20] Koschmann, "Introduction," xv. Originally published as *Sōryokusen to kindaika* in 1995, the English translation came out in 1998. Yamanouchi lays the theoretical ground of this volume in his methodological introduction chapter.
[21] Amemiya, *Senji sengo taisei ron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1997).

have ended with Japan's defeat. Focusing on the persistence of gendered violence, Ueno Chizuko

similarly argues that despite the surface changes of liberation and democratization, female bodies

were subjected to the same logic of total mobilization in wartime and postwar Japan, albeit for

apparently opposite ends.[22] In the case of comfort women who were forcibly recruited to the

military brothels, Ueno suggests that they continued to suffer from socially institutionalized forms of

prejudice and violence, as their voices were silenced and their struggles subsumed into national

discourses of victimization which tended to be masculine and patriarchal in nature.

Around the same time, on the other side of the Pacific, scholars were compelled by a similar

sense of urgency to mark, remark, and unmark the boundaries of the postwar, which crystalized in

an edited volume titled *Postwar Japan as History* (1993). In the introduction, Andrew Gordon

acknowledges a shared belief among the contributors that "the postwar era in some sense had

ended," while simultaneously conceding the difficulty, if not impossibility, of defining the conditions

and limits of the postwar.[23] Focusing on the construction of memory in the postwar society, Carol

Gluck's contribution, titled "The Past in the Present," makes clear that the "great divide of 1945"

was in fact not a sharp break "when the past ended and the present began" that it was often

imagined to be.[24] Rather, as the title of her essay suggests, the wartime past and the postwar present

blend into each other, making it difficult to pinpoint the chronological boundaries.

Whereas most countries had moved from the "postwar" to the "contemporary" by the late

1950s, Gluck observes, Japan firmly clung to the former even half a century after the war, precisely

because it served as a "founding myth of the new Japan."[25] Anticipating what Igarashi later calls the

"foundational narrative" of the postwar, Gluck uses the concept of the "heroic narrative" in another

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[22] Ueno Chizuko, *Nationalism and Gender* (translated by Beverley Yamamoto, Melbourne, Trans Pacific Press, 2004), particularly essays in the second half of Part III.
[23] Andrew Gordon, "Introduction," ix.
[24] Gluck, "The Past in the Present," 64.
[25] Ibid., 93.

article to elucidate the discursive transition following Japan's defeat, which assigns war responsibility to the fascist government and victimhood to the Japanese people, who found consolation in believing that they were simply deceived by the cunning, corrupt militarists.[26] While this "heroic narrative" would become, under the synergy of the Japanese government and the American occupation, the "template of postwar reform," Gluck actually lists as many as five conceptions of the postwar, each with its own set of premises. The multiple and sometimes contested meanings show that the boundaries of the postwar, which is perhaps best conceived in the plural as the "postwars," were not only porous but also contingent upon the discursive needs of the times.

More recently, scholars have begun to pay attention to the transition from the wartime to the postwar through the lens of decolonization. Kuan-Hsing Chen's *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* is one of the first and most original attempts to understand Japan's imperial legacies from a transnational perspective.[27] Taking the title from Takeuchi Yoshimi's 1960 lecturer,[28] Chen proposes to consider the "linkages between three intersecting historical processes: decolonization, deimperialization, and de–cold war."[29] What he means by the first two processes is relatively clear and straightforward. If decolonization refers primarily to the "active work carried out on the terrain of the colonized," deimperialization, by the same token, denotes the "work that must be performed by the colonizer first, and then on the colonizer's relation with its former colonies."[30] The difficulty, however, is that in East Asia, as in many other parts of the world, the processes of decolonization and deimperialization were cut short by the formation of the Cold War paradigm, which led to the outbreak of civil wars in Japan's former colonies and the infamous "reverse course" in postwar

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[26] See Gluck, "The 'End' of the Postwar: Japan at the Turn of the Millennium," *Public Culture*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1997), 1-23.

[27] Originally published in Taiwan in 2006, it was translated into English in 2010 and into Japanese in 2011.

[28] Chen wrote specifically about Takeuchi's lecture in another essay: "Takeuchi Yoshimi's 1960 'Asia as Method' Lecture," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2012), 317-24.

[29] *Asia as Method*, xii.

[30] Ibid., 4.

Japan itself under American occupation. It is impossible, Chen contends, to claim postcolonial independence without first dismantling the structural oppression under the Cold War regime.

Chen's pioneering work on the lasting legacies of the Japanese Empire is followed by several other studies that similarly focused on the process of transnational decolonization. Mariko Tamanoi's *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan* (2009) investigates the memories and imaginaries of Manchuria shaped by the vexed history of Japanese imperialism and decolonization. Focusing on Manchuria where imperial forces have crisscrossed for centuries, Tamanoi argues that the sentiments of victimization among Japanese settlers were replaced over time by a sense of nostalgia, which enabled postwar Japan to compensate the sense of loss and rupture after the empire's collapse. In other words, memories of trauma were naturalized, if not normalized, into a benign and innocuous form of nostalgia before they were processed as meaningful experiences of the past, for the sake of a better future.

Published in the same year, Lori Watt's *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* focuses on the experience of repatriation, demobilization, and retention of Japanese soldiers and civilians. In her book, Watt argues that the incomplete and uneven efforts of decolonization endorsed a sense of break, which in turn contributed to discourses of national victimhood in postwar Japan. By marginalizing and stigmatizing returnees from the former colonies, metropolitan Japanese were able to forge a new national identity through which they could detach themselves psychologically from the troubled past. Reinvented as the "domestic other," the colonial returnees were regarded as a buffer zone against which metropolitan Japanese were able to reimagine themselves as the innocent citizens of a postwar nation.

Yoshikuni Igarashi's *Homecomings: The Belated Return of Japan's Lost Soldiers* (2016) is, in many ways, in direct conversation with Watt's study, insofar as both works are mainly concerned with the

politics of repatriation and demobilization in the postwar cultural narratives.[31] In contrast to Watt,

who examines the experiences of civilian colonial settlers including widows and orphans, Igarashi

confines his focus to media representations of former servicemen's experiences. Through the

manipulation of images of war veterans, Igarashi contends, postwar mass media were able to create a

rhetoric of sacrifice for the sake of a brighter future, which enabled postwar society to construct a

narrative of continuity overcoming the sense of loss and rupture. Importantly, Igarashi proposes to

consider the "postwar" not simply as a time period but instead as a "condition" through which

Japanese society was able to transition from the haunting memories of the past to a sense of

tranquility, democracy, and prosperity in the present.

Finally, with an emphasis on the culture of redress, reparation, and reconciliation, Lisa

Yoneyama's *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justices and Japanese War Crimes* (2016)

marks another important step toward the understanding of what she calls "transborder"

decolonization. Yoneyama frames Okinawa, for example, as a site of liminality where the reality of

liberation strangely coexists with the state of occupation. As a result of the continuity and

transferability of violence under the two imperial regimes,[32] Okinawa is caught in a permanent state

of suspension and indeterminacy, despite the shifting balance among the hegemonic powers

themselves. Rather than treating decolonization as a finished event, she situates it within a "*longue*

durée of violence" that allows the epistemic breaks, whether of Japan's defeat or the "Cold War

hiatus," to be viewed as conditions of the structural continuity of imperial violence and dominance.

Taken together, Yoneyama's decolonizing approach endorses neither national paradigms based on

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[31] Meant as a companion to his previous book, *Bodies of Memory*, which explores the collective narratives of war on a macro level, *Homecomings* zeroes in on the individual experiences of war veterans through the mediation of mass media. In contrast to *Bodies of Memory*, which assigns a central role to the United States in Japan's postwar self-invention, *Homecomings* provides a more nuanced picture by taking into account the different sites of decolonization from the labor camps in the Soviet Union to the wild jungles in the South Pacific. Despite the shifting focus and changing scope, both works critique the discursive strategy in postwar Japan to naturalize and sanitize the memories of loss and defeat.
[32] Yoneyama, ix.

the typical center-margin dichotomy, nor schemes of periodization based on historical or conceptual ruptures.

In any case, the discourse of the postwar is perhaps best described as a layered structure in which the official, foundational narrative coexisted, however uneasily, with multiple competing narratives, which were themselves transforming over time. For intellectuals in the early postwar period, their suspicion about the sense of rupture was concerned primarily with the preservation of the emperor system and the absolution of Hirohito from any charges of war crimes. As the Shōwa period drew to a close in the 1980s, both in terms of the burst of the bubble economy and the death of the emperor, scholars came to realize that the boundaries of the postwar were in fact much hazier than they were often acknowledged to be. Interestingly, such reflections coincided with a consensus, however vague, that "the postwar era in some sense had ended," as Andrew Gordon notes in the introduction to the volume *Postwar Japan as History*. In other words, efforts to locate the origin of the postwar were, in a way, prompted by a sense of the "vanishing," which, according to Marilyn Ivy, refers to something on the verge of disappearing, but not quite.[33]

Whereas the early efforts to rethink the postwar have challenged the popular notion that August, 1945 marked a historical and conceptual break by pointing out the concept's polyvalence, it was not until more recently that scholars have extended their attention beyond the domestic space of postwar Japan to the transnational experiences of repatriation, demobilization, and decolonization. It goes without saying that this dissertation would have been impossible without the transformations in the discursive terrain in the past few decades. While acknowledging the intellectual debts this project owes to the preceding scholarly endeavors, I believe this dissertation makes original and meaningful contributions toward a better understanding of the lingering traces of Japan's imperial legacies, both within Japan and in its former colonies.

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[33] Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

The first contribution this project aims to make is disciplinary. While most of the preceding scholarship has been conducted by historians and anthropologists,[34] this dissertation is devoted primarily to the analysis of the production, publication, interpretation, and consumption of literary texts. My intention, to be sure, is neither to endorse disciplinary boundaries nor to privilege literary texts above historical and anthropological ones, whether oral or written. Rather, for methodological reasons that I shall explain shortly, I believe an attentive examination of literary works not only complements findings by historians and anthropologists but also offers unique opportunities to engage with the conditions of decolonization in Japan and its former colonies.

Secondly, as is perhaps clear from the literature review, this dissertation aims to transcend the conventional paradigm that presupposes a temporal break between wartime and postwar Japan. Despite the remarkable efforts that have challenged the popular belief in the "great divide of 1945," it remains customary, for understandable reasons, that literary histories be organized by clearly demarcated temporal boundaries. In comparison to the amount of scholarship devoted to colonial literature, it seems that the critical attention paid to the literature of decolonization remains somewhat insufficient.[35]

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[34] This is not to say, to be sure, that literature was not included in previous studies. In fact, almost all the studies mentioned above contain excellent discussions of literary works. I have benefitted much from, for example, Yoneyama's discussion of Ōshiro Tatsuhiro's *Kakuteru Pātī* (The Cocktail Party, 1967) and Igarashi's discussion of Gomikawa Junpei's *Ningen no jōken* (The Human Condition, 1956-58), as well as the films directed by Kobayashi Masaki of the same title (1959-61).

[35] Some excellent scholarship on colonial literature include, on colonial Taiwan, Leo Ching's *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (University of California Press, 2001), Faye Yuan Kleeman's *Under an Imperial Sun: Japanese Colonial Literature of Taiwan and the South* (University of Hawaii Press, 2003), and Robert Tierney's *Tropics of Savagery: The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (University of California Press, 2010); and on colonial Korea, Takashi Fujitani's *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (University of California Press, 2011), Serk-Bae Suh's *Treacherous Translation: Culture, Nationalism, and Colonialism* (University of California Press, 2013), Aimee Kwon's *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea and Japan* (Duke University Press, 2015), and Christina Yi's *Colonizing Language: Cultural Production and Language Politics in Modern Japan and Korea* (Columbia University Press, 2018). In these examples, it is usually practical concerns such as the limit of space that forces one to focus on particular time periods and geographic locations. It needs to be acknowledged that the current project makes similar compromise by focusing on literary works produced in postwar Japan, even though the works themselves deal with the colonies.

The third objective, which is closely related to the second, is to propose a transnational perspective to postwar Japanese literature within a broader geographic context.[36] As I have explained, the lingering traces of Japanese imperialism have been marginalized in the conventional discursive paradigm, largely due to the rhetorical needs of the Cold War regime. As a result, images of the "Other" in postwar literature tend to be either erased in a fantasized, homogenous space or else associated, almost unproblematically, with the American occupiers. Former colonial subjects, on the other hand, were regarded as belonging to a bygone past and thus having little to do with present, postwar Japan. This dissertation aims to recuperate the presence of the colonial and, in some cases, the "postcolonial" Other, as well as their relevance to the formation of national identity in postwar Japan.

Last, but not least, this study aims to make methodological interventions by adopting a contrapuntal approach to decolonization, which is inspired by Edward Said's proposal that we juxtapose public narratives of the colonizers with the hidden narratives of the colonized.[37] In his influential *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said explains his method of "contrapuntal reading" as follows: "Contrapuntal reading means reading a text with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England."[38] He gives an excellent example in his analysis of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, in which he observes that the elegance and extravagance in Mansfield Park derives from exploitation and dispossession in the colonial plantations in Antigua,

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[36] For an excellent discussion on the spatial continuity of occupation, see Seiji Lippit, "Spaces of Occupation in the Postwar Fiction of Hotta Yoshie," *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2010), 289-312.

[37] See Said, "Consolidated Vision," *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage Books, 1994). The juxtaposition and opposition between the narratives of the colonizers and those of the colonized that Said writes about are reminiscent of what James Scott calls the public transcripts and the hidden transcripts in the social interactions between the dominators and the subordinates who nonetheless seek to resist the structural oppression they face. See Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (Yale University Press, 1990). Both works are, of course, influenced by the intellectual trends of poststructuralism and postmodernism that emphasize the marginal and the absent over what is ostensibly present and dominant.

[38] *Culture and Imperialism*, 66.

despite the latter's ostensible invisibility in the story: "[T]o hold and rule Mansfield Park is to hold and rule an imperial estate in close, not to say inevitable association with it. What assures the domestic tranquility and attractive harmony of one is the productivity and regulated discipline of the other."[39] In the same light, the texts examined in this study would allow me to explore the complexity of decolonization precisely because of their ambivalent positions: These novels, while written and published in postwar Japan, were not set in postwar Japan and indeed weren't even about it. At the same time, we cannot read them without an awareness of it.

Literature of Decolonization: Postwar as a Layered Structure

If the national discourse of the postwar can be characterized as a layered structure, a similar pattern is observed in the literary realm as well, which is comprised, on the one hand, of a central, dominant narrative that turned increasingly inward to focus on the relation between the carnal body and individual subjectivity and, on the other, of multiple competing narratives that continued to interrogate the significance of the historical juncture of defeat and decolonization. In other words, while much of the mainstream literature, as if to mirror the contracting national borders, focused on the space of interiority, there also existed alternative voices that presented the possibility to implode the inward gaze through a transnational and decolonial lens.

It would be rare, however, to find literary works that function directly and explicitly as receptacles for political and ideological messages. Indeed, the subtlety of literature not only makes its interpretation dynamic and contingent, but also renders the divide between the foundational narrative and its counter-narratives blurred and contested. In lieu of a comprehensive survey of the postwar literary terrain, which would be both impractical and unnecessary, I will give two examples that demonstrate the discursive ambiguity in fictions that revolve around the moment of transition

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[39] Ibid., 87.

from the war to the postwar. Unlike many other works that focus on the "current conditions" in the postwar society such as the American occupation and the black markets, in both cases the authors returned, almost compulsively, to the horrifying and harrowing experiences of the war and the defeat. Despite their attempts to recuperate traces of the past, however, both works were written with a sense of rupture and closure that leaves the past behind and looks forward to a slow, painful, yet inevitable process of recovery.

Umezaki Haruo's "Sakurajima" (1946) is an autobiographical story about a Japanese soldier who experiences the moment of defeat on the titular Sakurajima Island in Kyūshū. The protagonist Murakami, a cryptologist who is transferred to Sakurajima in the final days of the war, is convinced that his life will end on this barren, volcanic island. Despite his certainty in the premonition of death, however, the news of Japan's surrender arrives first, and he survives the war unscathed.[40] Written immediately after the war, the story tellingly closes with the following sentence: "Covering my face with my hands, I staggered down the hill, step by step [*yoromeki nagara, sakamichi o ippoippo kudatte itta*]."[41] Embodying both a closure of a painful past and an anticipation of an uncertain future, this sentence captures the ambivalent feelings that characterize many of the foundational works of postwar Japanese literature.

Published ten years later, Mishima Yukio's *Kinkakuji* (The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, 1956) explores his nihilist aesthetics that beauty can be realized only through death and destruction. Mizoguchi, a stammering Buddhist acolyte at the eponymous Kinkakuji Temple, becomes fascinated with the idea that the temple, the object of a fixation that verges on a pathological obsession, would

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[40] In this regard, Shimao Toshio's *Shi no toge* (The Sting of Death), which was serialized sporadically in a number of journals from 1960 to 1976, tells a similar story of a Japanese navy who unexpectedly survives the war before the order of suicide mission arrives. For an analysis of *Shi no toge*, see Philip Gabriel, *Mad Wives and Island Dreams: Shimao Toshio and the Margins of Japanese Literature* (University of Hawaii Press, 1999), particularly chapter 1.

[41] "Sakurajima," *Chikuma Nihon bungaku zenshū: Umezaki Haruo* (1992), 447. An English translation of the story, by D. E. Mills, is available in *The Catch and Other War Stories* (edited by Saeki Shoichi, Tokyo: Kōdansha International, 1981).

be burnt to the ground in the firebombing campaigns. By a strange twist of fate, however, the American bombers deliberately avoid the city of Kyoto for the sake of preserving the ancient temples, leaving both the protagonist and the temple unharmed. In many ways, Mishima's *Kinkakuji* seems quite different from, if not opposed to, Umezaki's story: *Kinkakuji* is set in the very heart of the Japanese empire that seems, at least on the surface, far removed from the ongoing war. Moreover, compared with "Sakurajima," which was published only a year after Japan's defeat, *Kinkakuji* appeared at a time when Japan had restored, at least nominally, its sovereignty and independence from the American occupation.

What connects the two stories, however, is a sense of suspension—a feeling that Japan's unexpected surrender had somehow forestalled almost certain deaths. While regretting that he and the temple have both survived the war, Mizuguchi is confronted with the realization that "[he] is now condemned to live eternity in the form of quotidian life."[42] Indeed, as Igarashi points out, Mizoguchi's trauma is "not the loss that he suffers during the war but the *missed encounter* with the loss at war's end."[43] In other words, despite his perverse obsession with what could or, from his perspective, should have happened, Mizoguchi is forced to accept an uneventful and unheroic future. Much like Umezaki's "Sakurajima," the sense of a closure is represented most forcefully in the final sentence of the novel, in which Mizoguchi, after setting fire to the temple, experiences a bizarre mixture of relief and fulfillment: "Then I noticed the pack of cigarettes in my other pocket. I took one out and took a puff. I felt like a man who settles down for a smoke [*ippuku*] after finishing a job of work, and I thought I wanted to live [*ikiyō to watashi wa omotta*]."[44] Somewhat reminiscent of

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[42] Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, 187.
[43] Ibid., my emphasis.
[44] Mishima Yukio, "Kinkakuji," *Mishima Yukio zenshū*, vol. 10 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1973), 274. For an English translation, see Ivan Morris (Knopf, 1994).

Martin Heidegger's idea of "being-toward-death," Mizoguchi's nihilist aesthetics seems to achieve reconciliation "between his vision of beauty and the reality of the temple."[45]

In both examples, then, Japan's surrender marks a moment of rupture that disrupts the continuous flow of the everyday and, for better or worse, separates a bygone past from an inevitable future. Whether Murakami's unsteady steps down the hill or Mizoguchi's puff of smoke after the arson, their actions are driven by the "angel of history" who, as Walter Benjamin famously describes, is turned toward the past yet propelled irresistibly by a storm known as progress "into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward."[46] In order to restore the multivalence in the discursive formation of the postwar literary terrain, the following chapters propose to attune our interpretive frame to include not only what is explicitly depicted in literary works, but also the ostensibly insignificant details that may seem unrelated to the plot of the story. Through contrapuntal reading, this dissertation demonstrates that it is possible to approach literary works not simply as a national literature of postwar Japan, but as belonging to a transnational literature of decolonization.[47]

Chapter 1 examines Abe Kōbō's 1957 novel *Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu* (Beasts Head for Home) and argues that, despite its formal resemblance to a genre known as the *hikiage-mono* (autobiographical narratives of return), it implodes the generic structure by problematizing the fundamental premise of homecoming. Indeed, if "postwar literature of Japan begins with the experience of 'return' [kaeru],"[48] as Kawamura Minato importantly notes, Abe's novel offers a

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[45] Dennis Washburn, *Translating Mount Fuji: Modern Japanese Fiction and the Ethics of Identity* (Columbia University Press, 2007), 227.

[46] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940), in *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn and edited by Hannah Arendt (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 255-66.

[47] This is not to say, to be sure, that a work must necessarily include transnational settings and elements to be read as literature of decolonization. Indeed, the three chapters in this dissertation serve more as case studies to demonstrate the interpretative possibilities afforded by a contrapuntal approach that juxtaposes multiple competing and decentering perspectives.

[48] Kawamura, *Sengo bungaku o tou: Sono taiken to rinen* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 1.

counter-narrative in its apparently meaningless ending, which stops short just before the protagonists reach the borders of postwar Japan. Focusing on the tropes of madness and metamorphosis, this chapter argues that the indecipherable speeches and animalistic transformations in the story can be interpreted as a critique of Japan's imperial structure, which is predicated on a paradoxical logic of racialization and differentiation on the one hand, and assimilation and homogenization on the other.

Chapter 2 compares two novels, Kyū Eikan's *Honkon* (Hong Kong, 1955) and Ishihara Shintarō's *Taiyō no kisetsu* (Season of the Sun, 1955), which won two prestigious literary awards in the same year. Outwardly, the two works have little in common: *Honkon* is considered an adventure novel set in an exotic land that has little to do with postwar Japan, whereas *Taiyō no kisetsu* tends to be seen as depicting the sense of crisis and confusion in the postwar Japanese society. The simultaneous awarding of the two novels based on the divide between "popular" and "pure" literature, however, reflects two opposed paradigms of "politics of desire." Whereas Kyū's *Honkon*, which insists on bringing Japan's imperial past into the present, is relegated to the realm of popular entertainment, Ishihara's *Taiyō no kisetsu*, comfortably ensconced in the center of the literary field (*bundan*), is regarded as encapsulating the zeitgeist of postwar Japan.

Chapter 3 examines two novels by Ōoka Shōhei that were written around the same time: *Nobi* (Fires on the Plain, 1948-49; 1951) and *Musashino fujin* (A Wife in Musashino, 1950), and argues that the oppressive structure of the Japanese Empire was not dismantled with the collapse of the empire but was in fact reincarnated within postwar society. The shadow of death, instead of dissipating at Japan's defeat in the war, continues to hover above a postwar society that appears to have overcome traumatic memories of the past. Despite the formal differences between the two works, they are nonetheless connected by a similar logic of incorporation and cannibalism at the metaphorical level. While *Nobi* focuses on battlefield experiences in the Philippines and *Musashino*

fujin depicts adulterous relations in a suburban household in postwar Japan, the two novels show that the Japanese empire's encroachment into the colonial territories and that of postwar Tokyo—as the national capital—into the rural spaces share a homologous structure of expansion, incorporation, and assimilation.

Finally, the conclusion jumps out of the time span covered in the main chapters and dwells instead on the anime film *Hotaru no haka* (Grave of the Fireflies, 1988) directed by Takahata Isao. While the film, adapted from Nosaka Akiyuki's autobiographical story written in 1967, follows the original fiction quite faithfully for the most part, Takahata's creative rendering of the opening and closing scenes transposes the viewers from the historical juncture of the defeat to the present moment when the film was made. The overlapping temporalities, represented by contrasting lighting and color schemes, challenge the foundational narrative, which subsumes the traumatic past as steppingstones toward a peaceful and prosperous future, and show instead that the painful memories of the war remain inadequately redressed, even decades after the war.

In short, each of the dissertation chapters, rather than focusing on the plot or the characters, pays close attention to seemingly insignificant details which, however, afford the possibility to greatly expand the interpretative horizon and to critically rethink the formation of the postwar literary landscape through a transnational, contrapuntal, and decolonial lens. By reversing the inward gaze that characterizes the foundational perspective, it is possible to uncover the lingering traces of Japan's imperial legacies and to continue to work toward decolonization and deimperialization.

Chapter One

Impossible to Return: Madness, Metamorphosis, and Postwar Japan

> When we inquire into the nature of our society, status quo and present, we begin to
> see that a sense of security of everydayness (in which today appears like yesterday
> and tomorrow appears like today), as for example the sense of security one feels in a
> community, pervades us. We then gradually extend the continuum of everydayness
> until we finally enter the framework of the state.
>
> —Abe Kōbō, "The Frontier Within, Part II," 1969

In July 1956, Japan's Economic Planning Agency (*Keizai kikaku-chō*) released its annual economic white paper, which famously proclaimed: "The postwar period has ended [*mohaya sengo de wa nai*]. We are now facing a different situation. The growth from recovery is over. Looking forward, economic growth will be achieved by modernization [*kindaika*]."[1] Although the original intention of the white paper was to alert the Japanese nationals to the "painful process of self-transformation [*mizukara o kaizō suru katei*]," this warning was gradually replaced in the public memory by an optimistic outlook that foreshadowed Japan's high growth, starting with the so-called Jinmu Boom (*Jinmu keiki*).[2] A decade after Japan's devastating defeat in World War II, the focus of popular discourse shifted slowly yet decisively from ruins to recovery, and eventually to the promise of economic prosperity.

In tandem with the production and popularization of the official or "foundational narrative" of the postwar, war memoirs (*senki-mono*) were published in great numbers by repatriated civilians

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[1] Keizai Kikaku-chō, *Nenji keizai hōkoku: Nihon keizai no seichō to kindaika* (Tokyo: Keizai Kikaku-chō, 1956).

[2] Shimizu Kazuhiko examines the transformation of the discourse on "the end of the postwar" in the public memory. See Shimizu, "Mohaya 'sengo' de wa nai to iu shakai-teki kioku no kōsei katei," *Edogawa Daigaku kiyō*, no. 25 (2015), 195-206.

and demobilized soldiers.[3] In fact, 1956 witnessed a peak in the publication of war memoirs: in total, sixty appeared that year,[4] including the first two volumes of *Ningen no jōken* (The Human Condition), Gomikawa Junpei's *magnum opus*. Written from the perspective of the postwar present, such literary works often managed simultaneously to evoke the precarious conditions of the war and to repress them, preventing them from disturbing a precious sense of the everyday. In a 1969 lecture "Zoku Uchinaru henkyō" (The Frontier Within, Part II), cited in the epigraph to this chapter, Abe Kōbō likens a numbing illusion in the unchanging everydayness to a similar sense of security found in collective community, which serves as the gateway through which "we finally enter the framework of the state." The unity of the temporal and the spatial "sense of security" thus contributes to the foundational narrative that posits the postwar state as the ultimate guarantor of an unbroken "continuum of everydayness." Narrated as relics of the past, memories of loss and defeat were thus essentialized or even fetishized as traces of experience necessary for the "building of a new Japan" (*Nihon no atarashii kunizukuri*), as the 1956 economic white paper eloquently promised in its conclusion.

This chapter argues that within the context of a broad shift from an emphasis on loss to an emphasis on recovery that took place in postwar literary discourse, Abe's 1957 novel *Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu* (Beasts Head for Home, hereafter *Kemono-tachi*)[5] rejects the implicit presumption of a temporal break between the wartime past and the postwar present by writing *against* the genre of autobiographical narratives of repatriation (*hikiage-mono*), as well as the teleology of the return to postwar Japan that such narratives tended uncritically to imply. By closely examining notions of the

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[3] As I briefly mentioned in the introduction, the phrase "foundational narrative" is borrowed from Igarashi's *Bodies of Memory*, in which he suggests that the "foundational narrative" was co-produced by Japan and the United States in the context of the Cold War regime in East Asia. On the roots of the foundational narrative, see *Bodies of Memory*, 19-46.

[4] "Sengo no sensō bungaku no tenbō," *Yomiuri Shinbun* (May 19, 1957). Cited in Oh Mijung, *Abe Kōbō no sengo: Shokuminchi keiken to shoki tekusuto o megutte* (Tokyo: Kurein, 2009), 161.

[5] Unless otherwise noted, citations of the novel are based on the English translation by Richard Calichman (2017), with occasional modifications for a more literal rendition of the original text.

impossibility of "return" and the elusiveness of "home" (*kokyō*) in Abe's work, I aim in this chapter to envision an alternative narrative of decolonization by relativizing the boundary that separates the past from the present, and the "outside" from the "inside."

Between "Formal Realism" and "Structural Flaw" in Literary Criticism

Born in Tokyo in March 1924, Abe Kōbō spent most of his childhood in Mukden (Fengtian or Hōten, today Shenyang), Manchuria, where his father Asakichi worked as a professor at the Manchuria Medical College (today China Medical University) until 1942 when he resigned his post and started his own clinic. After returning to Japan at the end of 1946, Kōbō soon started writing and publishing poems and short stories. Heavily influenced by existentialism and surrealism, he quickly established himself as one of the leading avant-garde writers in Japan and won the prestigious Akutagawa Prize in 1951 for his *Kabe-S Karuma shi no hanzai* (The Wall-The Crime of S Karma). In the early 1960s, he started collaborating with director Teshigahara Hiroshi, who adapted a number of his novels into films, among which *Woman in the Dunes* (1964) received the Special Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, winning both men international fame. Since then, Abe Kōbō has been recognized as one of Japan's most "international" writers and is often compared with writers such as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, and particularly Franz Kafka.[6]

For readers familiar with Abe's other works, *Kemono-tachi* may come across as somewhat atypical owing to its highly intelligible plot, lucid style, and realistic descriptions. It is perhaps for this reason that the novel has tended to be disparaged or ignored by critics and scholars. Indeed, compared with his earlier works written under the influence of existentialism, surrealism, and finally

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[6] Mark Gibeau opposes calling Abe Kōbō an "international writer," which he believes overlooks the socio-historical specificity of his writings. He instead suggests considering him as a "nomadic writer" who rejects such ideas as belonging or community altogether. See Gibeau, *Nomadic Community: The Literature and Philosophy of Abe Kōbō* (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 2006), in particular the introduction.

communism, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, his later novels such as the "missing trilogy"[7] (*shissō sanbusaku*) or his more experimental, plotless fictions, *Kemono-tachi* seems almost to have fallen through the cracks. The reactions of the few contemporary critics who reviewed it were lukewarm at best, as commentators generally dismissed the work as a disorienting, long-winded adventure novel with an overtly autobiographical foundation, notwithstanding some obvious fictional twists, based on Abe's own experiences in his adolescent years in Manchuria.

To give a synopsis of the plot, the novel tells the story of Kuki Kyūzō, a second-generation Japanese youth who traversed the vast, frozen Manchurian wasteland after the collapse of the Japanese empire. The novel begins with Kyūzō, living under the protection of a Soviet Red Army officer named Alexandrov, plotting to escape from the town of Baharin, where he has spent the first nineteen years of his life, in order to get on a repatriation ship back to Japan. Boarding a train bound for Baicheng, where he is supposed to transfer to another train to Shenyang, he makes the acquaintance of a man who professes to be a newspaper reporter by the name of Wang Muzhen. Although Wang initially claims to be Chinese, it later turns out that he is actually half-Korean and half-Japanese and is fluent in a handful of languages, from Japanese, Korean, and Mandarin to less widely spoken ones such as Fujianese, Mongolian, and Russian. By virtue of his multiethnic identity and multilingual capacity, this mysterious man seems to epitomize, at least ostensibly, the slogan of "harmony of the five races" (*gozoku ky*ōwa, namely Japanese, Manchus, Mongols, Koreans, and Han

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[7] Critics and scholars started using the "missing trilogy" to refer to *Suna no onna* (1962; trans. 1964, *Woman in the Dunes*), *Tanin no kao* (1964; trans. 1966, *The Face of Another*), and *Moetsukita chizu* (1967; trans. 1969, *The Ruined Map*) since an interview that Abe had with Akiyama Shun in 1968. It is possible, however, that the idea of grouping the three works as trilogy gained currency because of the popularity of the adapted films, which were all collaborated between Abe Kōbō (scriptwriter), Teshigahara Hiroshi (director), and Takemitsu Tōru (composer). This "trilogy," however, never achieved consensus among scholars. Some scholars added *Hako otoko* (1973; trans. 1974, *The Box Man*) to this list, making it a tetralogy. Others grouped *Moetsukita chizu*, *Hako otoko*, and *Mikkai* (1977; trans. 1979, *Secret Rendezvous*) together as the "urban trilogy." Despite the different ways of taxonomy, the various efforts to organize Abe's later works into a system show the critics' uneasiness with Abe's deconstructionist, non-linear, and plotless approach, as well as the desire of bring the ostensibly nonsensical and fragmented structures into an intelligible, coherent genealogy.

Chinese, with the Japanese at the top of the racial hierarchy), which is revealed later in the novel to be cruelly deceptive.

Shortly after, in a train wreck that results from the civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists, Kyūzō is left with no choice but to travel with the man, who now changes his name to Kō Sekitō. Despite enduring numerous near-death experiences due to starvation, exhaustion, and the freezing weather, the two men finally manage to reach the outskirts of Shenyang, when Kō suddenly confesses that he is in fact smuggling a large quantity of heroin which he entrusts to Kyūzō while he ventures into the city center to negotiate. One night, however, Kyūzō is ambushed and knocked out by Kō, who steals the vest that Kyūzō has been using to conceal the heroin, along with his travel certificate, which Kyūzō had hidden in his right shoe. Lacking the certificate, Kyūzō is denied entrance to the Residence of Japanese Detainees (*Nikkyō ryūyōsha jūtaku*) in Shenyang and barred from boarding the repatriation ship.

At a loss, Kyūzō catches sight of a Japanese man who turns out to be a smuggler by the name of Ōkane. Intrigued by Kyūzō's story, Ōkane agrees to take him along on his next trip. When Kyūzō boards the smuggling ship, he discovers to his astonishment that Kō, who has used Kyūzō's certificate to assume his identity, is also abroad the ship, bound for Japan. In the novel's final scene, both Kyūzō and Kō are captured and locked up in the ship's hold, where Kō, clearly losing his mind, insists that he is in fact Kyūzō and that he has been tasked with the crucial mission of establishing the "central government in exile of the Republic of Manchuria" (*Manshū kyōwakoku bōmei chūō seiken*) as the Chief President (*shuseki-daitōryō*); Kyūzō, pounding frantically at the iron wall, is transformed into a beast.

Published in the monthly literary magazine *Gunzō* in four installments from January to April 1957, *Kemono-tachi* occupies, as Richard Calichman writes in the introduction to his English translation, a rare place among Abe's oeuvre. On the formal level, two distinctive features set it apart

from Abe's other fictions. These features, as I show later, give the impression that one should approach it more or less autobiographically, as one of the repatriation narratives that were published in such large numbers around the same time.[8] This essay argues, however, that instead of contributing to the spate of war memoirs, chronicles, and autobiographies in the late 1950s, Abe was in fact writing *against* the genre by deliberately rendering Kyūzō's homecoming journey a pointless endeavor, denaturalizing the very notion of the "return" to postwar Japan.

Unlike most of Abe's other fictions, which are characterized by an emphasis on anonymity, *Kemono-tachi* is remarkably detailed in terms of its presentation of historical and geographical settings, and of its characters' backgrounds. Specifically, whereas most of Abe's stories deal with the mishaps that befall an anonymous male protagonist in an unknown location at an indefinite time, *Kemono-tachi* is set unambiguously in Northeast China (former Manchuria) in the early years of its decolonization. In addition, unlike the characters in his other fictions who are either unnamed or have lost their names for various absurd reasons, most of the characters in *Kemono-tachi* are given specific and realistic names, though their names can be abandoned, invented, and even stolen with ease, as in the case of Kyūzō's mysterious travel companion, who first changes his name from Wang Muzhen to Kō Sekitō and then literally steals Kyūzō's name in order to assume his identity.

The flexibility of names and identities notwithstanding, the specificity of the settings, the lucid style, and the realistic plot have all invited critics to emphasize what they perceive to be the

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[8] I deliberately use "repatriation narratives" instead of "repatriation literature" for two reasons. First, these works tend to follow a "narrative structure" in the sense that they usually assume a teleological mode which automatically and unproblematically sets postwar Japan as their end goal or "telos." The experiences of repatriation are thus reduced to an unfortunate yet ultimately temporary interruption before they successfully "make it back home." Second, I would like to emphasize the importance of non-fictional accounts, which include not only memoirs and autobiographies, but also interviews, oral histories, documentaries, and so forth. Given the dominance of the so-called "I-novels" in the modern Japanese literary discourse, I would like to avoid the propensity of equating literature with autobiographical fictions. In addition, Mariko Tamanoi makes a distinction between *hikiage-mono* and *hikiage-bungaku*, based on the two genres' readership and the "hierarchy of cultural production." Specifically, she explains that *mono*, a term commonly used for popular cultural productions, indicates a lower status that is neither literature proper (*bungaku*) nor history. Although my use of "repatriation narrative" is not necessarily derived from the same concerns, I agree with her problematization of "literature" in the discourse of repatriation. See Tamanoi, 59-60.

novel's autobiographical elements. As such, scholars have tended to treat *Kemono-tachi* differently from Abe's more fantastic or allegorical fictions by adopting a realist or even naturalist mode of interpretation, in which they map the episodes and landscapes in the novel onto Abe's childhood experiences in Manchuria. While these overlaps are not without historical grounds, such a reading not only reduces the literary interpretation to a mere confirmation of the author's personal history, but more importantly divorces the novel from and opposes it to the rest of Abe's oeuvre.

The second distinguishing feature of *Kemono-tachi*'s critical reception is that despite the clarity of its plot, critics have often expressed frustration with its narrative structure (*kōsei*). In one of the few lukewarm reviews that appeared following its publication, Yamamuro Shizuka writes: "This work has a disproportionately long torso, but the head, the tail, and the facial features are all hazy. It is simply beyond my grasp." While finding "a vague appeal [*bōbaku taru miryoku*] in the fact that he deals with matters beyond modern citizens' everyday reality," Yamamuro complains that he "couldn't help feeling that the writer proceeds without knowing what he is really trying to write."[9] Another critic, Yamashita Hajime, was similarly disappointed by the lack of clarity in the novel's structure, which he explains as follows:

> This is a kind of action novel, but I would be hard-pressed to call it a success. It is an innovative attempt, and I find it commendable that the author gets rid of his usual pedantic abstractness. But the muddle [*konran*] of the final chapter exposes the problems with the structure, where the force [*hakuryoku*] of the protagonist's impulse [*shōdō*] underlying his adventure simply fails to rise to the surface.[10]

Yamamuro and Yamashita's opinions of the novel are notably consistent. While commending Abe's attempt to tackle materials that transcend the banality of everyday life, both critics express confusion

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[9] Yamamuro Shizuka, "Kongetsu no bundan tenbō," *Tosho Shinbun* (March 30, 1957).
[10] Yamashita Hajime, "Jieitai hihyō no sakuhin futatsu," *Tōkyō Taimuzu* (April 8, 1957).

regarding the novel's structure. Specifically, Yamamuro's frustration with the "disproportionately long torso" is likely directed at the exceptionally detailed depiction of the journey across the Manchurian wilderness which, instead of building towards the long-expected showdown between Kyūzō and Kō that would culminate in the victory of one over the other, ends haphazardly as both men are thrust into an indeterminate state of suspension. Similarly, Yamashita's dissatisfaction is centered on the "the muddle of the final chapter," which ends anticlimactically and thus fails to convey the intensity of the protagonists' perilous adventure (*bōken*).

While it is certainly not unusual for critics to find Abe's fictions baffling, their confusion usually stems from the elements of fantastic unreality (*hi-genjitsu*),[11] such as the absolute absurdity of a character's metamorphosis into a wall, a plant, or a cocoon, or else the inexplicable horror of a character's loss of his name or disappearance from the world without a trace. Given the realism and clarity of *Kemono-tachi*'s plot, it is therefore curious that the novel bewilders Yamamuro to the extent that he finds it utterly beyond his grasp. If not for plot, that is to say, what could possibly account for the incomprehensibility of this putatively straightforward novel? The answer, it would seem, lies not so much in its content as in what Yamashita calls the "structure" (*kōsei*) of the novel, which, rather than culminate in a demonstration of the "force" that springs from the arduous journey, leaves the impression that the story is put to an abrupt halt without a proper closure.

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[11] It is worth noting that what Abe means by the real or reality (*genjitsu*) is not as self-evident as it may at first appear. With extensive involvement in the avant-garde movement known as the "record movement" (*kiroku undō*) in the 1950s, spearheaded by people like Hanada Kiyoteru, Sugiura Minpei, and Okamoto Tarō, Abe emphasizes the importance of seeking out reality in what may appear as unreal. Although some critics dismiss Abe's use of supernatural elements like the spirits or the dead as "unreal" (*hi-genjitsu teki*), Abe forcefully rejects such views as confounding realism with naturalism, which he considers to be a vulgar degradation of the former. In an essay titled "Shi'nin tōjō," Abe argues that while such fantastic elements as the dead (or more precisely, the undead, because it is not their death, but rather their coming back to life as spirits, that make them "unreal" in the first place) may seem "unrealistic" (*hi-jitsuzai*) in the sense that they do not actually exist, they are by no means "unreal" (*hi-genjitsu*) because they constitute the very ways in which we perceive reality. In other words, once the fantastic takes hold in imagination, it gains the same degree of material reality as something that actually exists in reality. See "Shi'nin tōjō: jitsuzai shinai mono ni tsuite" (1973), in *Abe Kōbō zenshū, vol. 5* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1997), 199-202.

Writing some fifteen years after *Kemono-tachi*'s initial publication, Tsuruda Kin'ya similarly identifies what he perceives to be the novel's fatal flaw in the misalignment between its putative genre as a *Bildungsroman* (coming-of-age story), on the one hand, and the protagonist's failure to achieve any "notable development" (*medatta seichō*) on the other.[12] Specifically, Tsuruda points out that in comparison to his firm resolution to abandon his life under Soviet protection and to escape from Baharin, Kyūzō's indefinite imprisonment in the hold of the smuggling ship in the final chapter is a degradation rather than progression in terms of his character. In other words, the narrative elicits the readers' anticipation of Kyūzō's development and maturation over the course of his journey, only to betray it in the very last scene, in which Kyūzō tumbles into an abyss of despair and madness. Tsuruda thus attempts to locate the novel's primary failure in the contradiction between two formal characteristics, suggesting that the sense of realism spawned by the specificity of the details is ultimately undercut by the indeterminacy of the final scene, rendering it completely meaningless and absurd.

Whereas Tsuruda laments Kyūzō's failure to live up to readers' expectations, Nakano Kazunori instead reads the final scene in a more positive light by arguing that it is precisely the "oscillation" (*yuragi*) in Kyūzō's existential condition that demonstrates the development in his identity.[13] In other words, Nakano does not interpret Kyūzō's imprisonment simply as a mark of failure or defeat, but instead, in a manner of dialectical sublation, as presenting an opportunity for sublimation or even transcendence.

Despite their seemingly opposed understandings of the extent to which Kyūzō undergoes growth or development, Tsuruda and Nakano nonetheless partake in the same mode of teleological reading. Typical of autobiographical repatriation narratives, this interpretation assumes the basic

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[12] Tsuruda Kin'ya, "'Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu' ni okeru anbibarensu," *Nihon kindai bungaku*, no. 20 (1974).
[13] Nakano Kazunori, "Mikikan no hikiagesha: Abe Kōbō 'Kemono wa kokyō o mezasu' ron," *Kindai bungaku ronshū*, no. 32 (2006).

premise that miseries and sacrifices are ultimately supposed to lead to some kind of redemptive "meaning," often represented by the protagonist's growth and transcendence of previously insurmountable ordeals. In other words, Tsuruda's and Nakano's disagreement lies not in their views of the meaning or role of literature or even their understanding of Abe's goal in *Kemono-tachi*; instead, they simply have differing opinions about the degree to which Abe succeeded. Nakano sees progression in a situation that Tsuruda considers indicative of mere stagnation and degradation.

Their teleological reading of this novel stems from a general propensity among critics to treat it as yet another war memoir that was published in large numbers around the same time. In fact, according to a newspaper article in May 1957—shortly after the last installment of *Kemono-tachi*—the number of war memoirs reached a peak in the preceding year, numbering a total of sixty.[14] In terms of repatriation narratives specifically, Fujiwara Tei's *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru* (The Shooting Stars Are Alive, 1949)[15] and Gomikawa Junpei's *Ningen no jōken* (The Human Condition, 1955) were arguably the two most famous examples, as both became immediate bestsellers and were quickly adapted into films. Yet, even apart from these notable examples, less well-known accounts continued to be published by local publishers and private organizations throughout the Shōwa period.[16] Tracing the publishing history of memoirs and autobiographies based on experiences of

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[14] "Sengo no sensō bungaku no tenbō," in *Nihon Dokusho Shinbun*, May 19, 1957.

[15] The title of the English translation by Nanako Mizushima, *Tei: A Memoir of the End of War and Beginning of Peace* (Tonnbo Books, 2014), tellingly reveals the epistemic break between the war and the postwar. For a discussion of *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru*, see Andrew Barshay, *The Gods Left First: The Captivity and Repatriation of Japanese POWs in Northeast Asia, 1945-56* (University of California Press, 2013), 170-84. What is of particular interest in Barshay's discussion is the coincidence between the publication of Fujiwara's novel and the first American-style Mother's Day in Japan, which was introduced as part and parcel of the efforts by the Occupation Forces to democratize Japan. The celebration of Fujiwara as the archetypical mother figure of unconditional love and sacrifice, Barshay points out, obscured Fujiwara's critique of Japan's oppressive patriarchal structure, which persisted despite the demise of Empire. As a result, Fujiwara's memoir, which was initially written with the thought of "leaving a will to her children" and was thus not intended for public consumption, was conveniently coalesced into the foundational narrative of the postwar as one of recovery and rehabilitation.

[16] Tamanoi, 59.

repatriation and demobilization, Narita Ryūichi also points out that the number of such publications peaked about every two decades, from around 1950 to 1990.[17]

Formal Resemblances to Autobiographical Narratives of Repatriation

Apart from the timing of publication, *Kemono-tachi* also highly resembles its contemporary autobiographical works in terms of its style and plot, except for one crucial difference, namely the anticlimactic ending, which I will come back to later in this chapter. For example, in his survey on the repatriation narratives from Manchuria, Yamada Shōji notes several salient themes that prevail in these autobiographical accounts.[18] First, most works start on August 15, 1945, the date when the Soviet Union entered the war. Secondly, these narratives tend to emphasize the miseries and tragedies suffered by the Japanese repatriates in their strenuous homecoming journey. Lastly, describing themselves as the "abandoned people" (*kimin*), the repatriates are often highly critical of the fleeing (*tōbō*) Kwantung Army for leaving the civilians to die, as well as of the Japanese state, not only for its deceptive promise for better lives in the colonies, but also for its cold attitudes and irresponsible arrangements after their repatriation.

Ostensibly, it indeed seems reasonable to characterize *Kemono-tachi* as one of the typical repatriation tales, as the novel fits almost perfectly into the descriptions above. To begin with, although the narrative itself starts somewhere in the winter of 1947, the Soviet invasion in August 1945 is nonetheless endowed with tremendous significance in the novel, as shown in the flashback immediately before Kyūzō boarding the train in Baharin. Having managed to slip out of the dormitory occupied by the Soviet officers, Kyūzō waits anxiously for the train departure as he

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[17] Narita Ryūichi, "Hikiage to yokuryū," *Iwanami kōza: Ajia Taiheiyō sensō, vol. 4* (edited by Kurasawa Aiko, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2006), 179-208.

[18] Yamada Shōji, *Kindai minshū no kiroku, vol 6: Manshū imin* (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsu Ōraisha, 1978), 49. Mariko Tamanoi makes similar observations in her book, but with a more extensive list with seven major themes. See Tamanoi, 64-83.

conceals himself in one of the freight cars. Lying down in his hiding place, Kyūzō suddenly falls into

a deep sleep, at which point the narrative is interrupted by a brief flashback where he looks

nostalgically back on the peaceful, everyday life during the wartime years as some kind of forgone,

irretrievable treasure: "This was a time brimmed with hope [*kibō ni michita*], however modest. It

seemed that there would still be time before the disturbance of the war [*sensō no kyūhaku*] came to

affect this remote area [*hekichi*]."[19] However, Kyūzō's time of modest hope, described here as some

kind of perpetual, unchanging everyday life, is ruined irrevocably when the Soviet Union goes to war

against Japan: "It was in the afternoon of August 9, 1945, in the summer of Kyūzō's sixteenth year,

when news suddenly came that the Soviet Union had entered the war."[20] Here, the very precision in

time indicates that Kyūzō considers the Soviet involvement as marking a temporal and

epistemological rupture that completely shatters his sense of timeless continuity or even

homogeneity.

Secondly, *Kemono-tachi*, like most other repatriation narratives, makes repeated references to

the misfortunes and sufferings endured by the Japanese colonizers, including the typical examples

such as the "rebellions" (*hanran*) by the local "bandits" (*hizoku*), the outrages (*bōkō*) committed by the

Soviet soldiers, and the outbreak of epidemics.[21] Although none of them is elaborated directly in the

novel, I argue that the historical specificity enables us to probe into the vortex of colonial violence

through seemingly oblique and passing references.

As an example, shortly after the town of Baharin is occupied by the Soviet Red Army,

Kyūzō comes across a group of Japanese who, like snakes shedding their old skin, try to showcase

their acceptance of and even loyalty to communism by holding a red flag and placing red ribbons on

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[19] *Kemono-tachi*, 20. I made a minor change in order to emphasize "*kibō ni michita toshitsuki*" in the original.
[20] Ibid., 19.
[21] Here, I used the examples raised by Yamada Shōji. Narita and Tamanoi made similar observations respectively, but with slightly different focuses.

their chests. Watching them pass, however, Kyūzō "suddenly noticed that they were being followed by ten or so powerfully built [*kukkyō na*] Chinese men,"[22] giving the inauspicious impression that they are about to suffer at the hands of these Chinese men.

In repatriation narratives, if the Chinese often come across as a horde of lawless mobs (*bōto*) and bandits (*hizoku*), then the Russians tend to be depicted as merciless rapists. In the same chapter in *Kemono-tachi*, Kita, the manager at the pulp factory in Baharin, is quick to come to his senses after the Soviet occupation and commands that "all you women must go cut your hair,"[23] indicating the imminent danger that Japanese women will be violated by the Soviet soldiers unless they somehow "violate" themselves first. As Tamanoi points out, sexual violence by the Russian soldiers, although rarely talked about by the victims themselves, is a prevalent theme in memoirs by their fellow repatriates.[24] According to such accounts, women would not only cut their hairs and change into their scruffiest clothes, but some would go so far as to cover their faces in mud and even dung in order to avoid attracting unwelcome attention from the Russian soldiers.

Compared with the menaces posed by the Chinese bandits or the Russian rapists, however, epidemics including typhoid, dysentery, cholera, and tuberculosis have in fact claimed the largest number of Japanese lives in Manchuria.[25] It is thus hardly surprising that the threat of epidemics is felt decidedly more palpably in the novel than the possibility of being robbed or raped, which are after all portrayed in passing as ominous speculation or premonition. While Kō leaves to bribe a Nationalist General named Bai into escorting them to Shenyang, Kyūzō is forced to come into close contact with five mummies (*miira*) who supposedly died in a typhus outbreak. At first, Kyūzō mistakes the mummies for "something like rotting wood." It is only upon closer inspection that he

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[22] *Kemono-tachi*, 28.
[23] Ibid., 21.
[24] See Tamanoi, 72-76.
[25] Ibid., 77.

realizes with horror that these "strange [*wake no wakaranu*] and inexplicable [*kimyō na*]" objects are in fact human corpses that have been gnawed beyond recognition by mice. Based on the writing carved into the wall above their heads, which reads: "How regrettable [*munen*]![26] Halfway through the journey [*michi nakaba shite*], all of us, fallen here by a feverish disease, summer, year 21, Mizuura Takeshi, and four others,"[27] Kyūzō surmises that the mummies must be "a family or perhaps colleagues from a company or something" who were infected during the major typhus outbreak in 1946 (Shōwa 21) and subsequently died from exhaustion and thirst.[28]

If Kyūzō has merely been observing indifferently as an outsider in the case of the Chinese bandits and the Soviet soldiers, here he could no longer afford to assume such a detached position, as he is thrust into close contact, both physically and psychologically, with the imminent danger of infection and death itself. This is clearly demonstrated by the rapid succession in his change of attitude. When Kyūzō realizes that the mummies are actually Japanese repatriates who "had walked through the wasteland like us," he first "felt a bit sorry [*kinodoku*]," then "suddenly […] somehow felt afraid" and "drew back in horror," until he finally "quietly tiptoed away so as not to awaken them."[29]

Finally, like many others who were left behind by the colonial government and the Kwantung army, Kyūzō considers himself as being betrayed and abandoned by those who he thinks should have taken care of him. Immediately after the Soviet occupation, for example, the Japanese community in Baharin literally vanishes overnight without a trace. Before Kyūzō realizes, he and his dying mother, who is struck by a stray bullet on the night before the Soviet takeover, turn out to be

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[26] I made a slight change to Calichman's rendition of "*munen*" to highlight the sense of regret.
[27] *Kemono-tachi*, 131.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 131-2.

the only Japanese who remain in the town. After burying his mother after her painful death on the

next day,

> [Kyūzō] searched throughout the town for any Japanese people. For half a day he
>
> ran about looking for them. But where were the 865 Japanese who had lived there?
>
> They were now completely gone. Kyūzō alone was left, like a pool of water that
>
> remains on the tideland.[30]

Here, the irony lies in the fact that Kyūzō is doubly abandoned in the sense that he is abandoned by

the "865 Japanese" in Baharin, who would in turn consider themselves as being abandoned by the

Japanese state.

Furthermore, in the two years that he lives under the Soviet occupation, Kyūzō is constantly

haunted by the "restlessness of being left behind" in his dreams, where he "turned into an insect

roaming across a map or that he boarded a train with neither ticket nor destination."[31] In retrospect,

his foreboding turns out to be right on the mark. Even after he embarks on the journey across

Manchuria, he continues to be abandoned over and over again, first by Kō, who knocks him out and

steals his travel certificate, then by the Japanese community in Shenyang. Contrary to his naïve

imagination where he would be welcomed warmly as a compatriot who has heroically endured

tremendous difficulties, in reality Kyūzō is chased off coldly like a stray dog because he fails to

produce a certificate to prove his identity to the youth at the entrance of the Japanese community,

who impatiently sends Kyūzō off by insisting that "we've got absolutely no power to do anything."[32]

Finally, just as Kyūzō thinks that he has seen the last ray of hope when Ōkane agrees to bring him

along on his next smuggling trip, he is betrayed yet again when he realizes that Ōkane, who secretly

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[30] Ibid., 28.
[31] Ibid., 31.
[32] Ibid., 161.

plans to force Kyūzō into slave labor, has never intended to let him off the ship from the very beginning.

The Continuity and Rupture of Decolonization

Despite the formal similitude, I argue that *Kemono-tachi* differs at the most fundamental level from autobiographical works such as Fujiwara Tei's bestselling memoir *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru*. Whereas most other repatriation narratives are based on the visceral instinct that, as Fujiwara writes, "if we were going to die anyway, we would rather die even one step closer to our home [*kokyō*],"[33] *Kemono-tachi* challenges the very notion of return, and, more radically still, that one must necessarily have a home to which one might return in the first place. In other words, by questioning the very possibility of a nostalgic return "home," Abe compels his readers to ponder the elusive and indeed illusive nature of national belonging itself.

Focusing primarily on the genres of memoir and autobiography, Narita Ryūichi points out that most repatriation narratives start with the Soviet invasion in August 1945, as in the case of Tsuchiya Hiroko's interview at the Memorial Museum in Shinjuku. The paradox of such narratives, he observes, lies in the fact that "to experience repatriation, one first needs to leave one's home [*dekakeru*]; but when people talk about postwar repatriation, they usually mention only the return."[34] Detailing the hardships and miseries (*kurō*) of the journey, such "tales of suffering" (*jūnan monogatari*), which carefully circumvent discussion of the history that brought the colonizers to the colonies in the first place, tend to reduce circumstances that ought to have been critically examined within the transnational framework of decolonization to national, if not nationalist, discourses of "homecoming" (*kikyō*).

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[33] Fujiwara, *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru*, 193.
[34] Narita, "'Hikiage' ni kansuru joshō," *Shisō*, no. 955 (2003), 149-174.

Narita's suggestion that we must take into account the "prehistory" of repatriation—namely, the history of colonial settlement—indicates that what these autobiographical narratives reflect are not necessarily empirical or objective facts but merely the particular "ideological apparatuses" through which memories are reproduced and perpetuated. Specifically, by emphasizing the extreme hardships of their homecoming journeys, autobiographical narratives such as Fujiwara's tend to sentimentalize and even essentialize their sufferings into objects of fetishistic possession, which were then utilized either as discursive capital to highlight their tremendous sacrifices and to ward off the discrimination against them as returnees striving to reintegrate into postwar society.

At the same time, however, the discursive strategy to essentialize their memories into a "state of exception" necessarily entails the presumption of and a yearning for an alternative, idealized mode of "normalcy" characterized by an unchanging, everyday life. In other words, by reducing their experiences to a kind of "exception"—a regrettable yet ultimately transitory interruption that can be safely detached and even excluded, both spatially and temporally, from the hypothetical "normal" situation—the repatriates are able to reassure themselves that they have at long last reached their "home." By foregrounding the "exceptional" experiences of suffering and sacrifice in their journeys, the autobiographical narratives of repatriation inadvertently push the larger historical realities such as war, imperialism, and decolonization into the background. As a result, memories of war are surrogated by those of defeat, and the conditions of decolonization are confounded with those of occupation. As such, the transnational and transtemporal legacy of Japan's imperial history, as Narita forcefully argues, are reduced to personal "tales of sufferings" based on their intimate memories.

In *Kemono-tachi*, this logic can be clearly observed when Kyūzō expresses his perplexity at the consequences of the war, which ultimately leads to the total disintegration of his conception of time. Shortly after his escape from Alexandrov's room, as Kyūzō waits impatiently for the train in whose

freight car he is concealed to depart, he suddenly feels a tinge of nostalgia for Baharin, where "all his memories lived"—this despite the fact that he is still in Baharin. Kyūzō is overcome with the presentiment that time itself will be severed irrevocably: "In two hours, this place here would become another's land, one that could no longer be called 'yesterday.' And as for tomorrow, nothing yet could truly be known about it."[35] Caught between nostalgia for yesterday and anxiety about tomorrow, Kyūzō wonders:

> Just as today exists within yesterday, so, too, does tomorrow exist within today; and just as today exists within tomorrow, so, too, does yesterday live within today. He had been taught that this was how man lived, and he had come to believe it. As a result of the war [*sensō no kekka*], however, this convention had disintegrated [*bunkai*], becoming something scattered and unrelated. For Kyūzō, yesterday and tomorrow were no longer linked together.[36]

Here, Kyūzō ascribes the disintegration of his sense of temporal continuity to the "result of the war." Given the novel's setting in Manchuria, one would naturally be inclined to assume that Kyūzō is referring specifically to the Second Sino-Japanese War. However, as I mentioned earlier, Kyūzō fell into a deep sleep immediately following his reflection on the temporal rupture, at which point the narrative is interrupted by a flashback to "the afternoon of August 9, 1945, in the summer of Kyūzō's sixteenth year, when news came that the Soviet Union had entered the war."[37] As this transition makes clear, the "result of the war" that Kyūzō has in mind is neither Japan's colonial domination over the Chinese people, nor China's resistance against Japanese imperialism, but rather the conditions of defeat and occupation imposed by the Soviet Union. To put it bluntly, his understanding of the war is not based on the general conditions of history, but is instead limited to

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[35] *Kemono-tachi*, 19.
[36] Ibid. I made a slight change to Calichman's translation to highlight the phrase "*sensō no kekka*" (the result of the war).
[37] Ibid., 20.

his immediate, personal experiences of the Soviet invasion. In other words, his version of "war" ironically refers to what is technically the "end" of the war, and his personal memories of occupation are foregrounded in a way that renders invisible the actual historical contexts of empire and war.

In fact, the implications and consequences of Japan's imperialism in Manchuria, along with its oppressive racial policies, seem to be completely outside Kyūzō's purview, and he appears astonishingly unaware of the intense animosity that Chinese people feel towards the Japanese colonizers. After Kyūzō is ambushed and knocked out by Kō, he is rescued by a Chinese youth who makes a living slaughtering and skinning stray dogs. When Kyūzō regains consciousness, he is utterly perplexed by the youth's hostile attitude:

> "So you're a Jap demon [*Nihon no oniyarō*]!" uttered the dog-catching youth, extending
> his foot and kicking Kyūzō in the head. Kyūzō was shocked, as he had been
> wondering how to thank the youth for his kindness. Yet he felt no animosity. The
> sense of something like friendship that began when he peered at the urchin from the
> tower continued unabated. He wanted to believe that this was rather a quarrel
> between friends [*nakama-genka*] over some minor misunderstanding [c*hotto shita*
> *gokai*].[38]

Here, Kyūzō's misinterpretation of the youth's hostility as "a quarrel between friends over some minor misunderstanding" would clearly be inconceivable had he not been completely ignorant of the brutal reality of Japan's imperial aggression in Manchuria. Later when the Chinese youth shows Kyūzō the way to the Japanese residential district, Kyūzō again takes the liberty of interpreting his help as a sign of friendliness and kindness, without ever entertaining the possibility that the youth is simply trying to get rid of what he perceives to be a nuisance. In fact, the youth explicitly warns Kyūzō not to come near the park again:

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[38] Ibid., 155.

Stopping, the youth spoke for the first time. "It's close by now. You go on alone. Once you go, don't come back to the park. If I find you wandering around there again, you'll pay for it! You'll be treated the same way as those dogs!" With an exaggerated gesture, he signaled with his hands that he would slit Kyūzō's throat.[39]

Again, Kyūzō is unwilling to believe that the youth actually means what he says with his "exaggerated gesture." After he is turned away at the Japanese neighborhood, he thinks optimistically to himself: "I wonder if he still wouldn't forgive me if I told him that I was driven away by Japanese people. […] Right, I should go and thank him. I could then take the chance to ask for help."[40] Although he later feels the vague presentiment that "what separated him and the youth […] wasn't simply misunderstandings [*gokai*]" and that "there were rather larger things at stake,"[41] he never seriously attempts to pursue the nature of those "larger things" that "wasn't simply misunderstandings," which is immediately washed away as soon as he catches sight of the Japanese man Ōkane.

Compared with the naive Kyūzō, Kō and Ōkane are clearly more aware of and sensitive to the animosity between the Chinese and the Japanese, as well as to the danger of exposing their identities, which is represented specifically in terms of their ability to speak Japanese. When Kyūzō first meets Kō on the train, for example, Kō advises Kyūzō not to use Japanese in public: "But it's best to avoid speaking Japanese too loudly. There's a lot of anti-Japanese, anti-imperialist sentiment now."[42] Similarly, after being turned away from the Japanese residential quarter, Kyūzō recognizes Ōkane's "distinctly" (*tokubetsu na*) Japanese features and begs him for help in Japanese, at which

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[39] Ibid., 160.
[40] Ibid., 165.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 37.

point Ōkane immediately scolds him in hushed voice: "Idiot! I told you to stop! We'll be killed if people find out we're Japanese. You're chattering too loud."[43]

Kyūzō's lack of historical awareness was, in fact, not uncommon among the Japanese colonizers in Manchuria. Commenting on the roundtable discussion following the publication of *Repatriation Records of Overseas Japanese* (*Zaigai hōjin hikiage no kiroku*) in 1970, Marukawa Tetsushi points out that the roundtable participants repeatedly expressed their confusion at the sudden change of attitude among the local Chinese and Korean residents who transformed overnight from friendly neighbors into vicious bandits (*hizoku*), as if they were recounting some incomprehensible natural disaster (*tensai*) that had befallen them.[44] In fact, many repatriates even described these riots as "rebellions" (*hanran*), which ironically presupposed the existence of a firmly established racial hierarchy undergirded by Japan's colonial domination in Manchuria. In short, their perplexity at these "rebellions" embodied not only their conviction that they were innocent scapegoats for the Japanese military who had shamelessly abandoned them, but more importantly their belief in the hierarchical structure, which exalted the Japanese above all the other races, regardless of the collapse of the Japanese empire.

Kyūzō's ignorance, however, should not be taken as reflecting Abe's own lack of historical consciousness. As I explained earlier, the startling contrast between the degree of specificity in terms of the historical and geographical settings, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the almost jarring absence of reference to the consequences and legacies of imperialism and decolonization in the main narrative seems to suggest that what Yamashita and Yamamuro have described as a "structural failure" was in fact a deliberate choice made by Abe, who makes his critical intervention precisely through an eloquent silence. In particular, given that Abe criticizes, quite explicitly, the

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[43] Ibid., 166.
[44] This roundtable was hosted by none other than Fujiwara Tei, the author of *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru*. For a discussion of the roundtable, see Marukawa Tetsushi, *Teikoku no bōrei: Nihon bungaku no seishin chizu* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2004), 122.

deceptive nature of Japanese colonialism in many of his postwar writings, it seems reasonable to read Abe's reticence on the hypocrisy of Japan's colonial rule in *Kemono-tachi* contrapuntally as a sign not of his ignorance or indifference, but rather of a deliberate calculation.[45]

Japan in Reality, Japan in Textbook: The Teleology and Tautology of Return

It is for this reason that I believe we should be mindful not only of how *Kemono-tachi* conforms to, but more importantly how it deviates from mainstream autobiographical narratives of repatriation. Following Narita's observation, whereas *Kemono-tachi* similarly accords great importance to the Soviet invasion in August 1945, it does not simply circumvent Japanese imperialism in Manchuria, but rather obliges readers to confront its historicity by reflecting on the very rationale, or the lack thereof, for Kyūzō's arduous journey. As many critics have noted, Kyūzō seems to be driven less by any rational motive than by what can only be described as a visceral "instinct." Kobayashi Osamu, for instance, writes:

> What really stands out in Kyūzō's hunger march is, on the one hand, his obsessive
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> and tenacious desire for others [*tasha*]. Yet, on the other hand, as if in inverse
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> proportion to his firm determination, no specific reason is given as to why he
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> embarks on such a journey in the first place.[46]

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[45] In his autobiographical chronology, Abe writes that the "state of anarchy" (*museifu jōtai*) after Japan's surrender brought not just anxiety and horror, but also a dreamlike freedom of infinite possibilities (*arayuru kanōsei*): "Liberation from father and the properties and the duties he represented. The collapse of hierarchy and racial prejudice… I believed wholeheartedly in the false slogan of the harmony of the five races [*gozoku kyōwa*], and I felt intense hatred and contempt towards those Japanese who trampled on [*fuminijitte*] that ideal." See Abe Kōbō, "Jihitsu nenpu," in *Shin'ei bungaku sōsho 2: Abe Kōbō* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1960), 278. Decades later, Abe explains in an interview that he grew up believing in the equality among all races: "In Manchuria, we were taught 'the harmony of the five races' since childhood. […] That was the façade [*tatemae*], at least. Since we were kids, we really believed it." His childhood belief was shattered, however, when he witnessed the brutal reality of racial hierarchy under Japanese imperialism: "Once I was riding on a train, and I saw the Japanese adults kick at the Chinese passengers and force them to give up their seats. […] As children, we genuinely believed in the slogan of the 'harmony of the five races,' but in the end we had a lot of doubts." "Abe Kōbō," *NHK Eizō fairu: Ano hito ni aitai* (Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai, April 30, 2006). Although the program was broadcasted in 2006, the interview itself was conducted in 1985 when Abe was sixty.

[46] Kobayashi Osamu, "Abe Kōbō 'Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu' ni tsuite: Manshu taiken no taishōka o megutte," *Komazawa Tandai kokubun* No. 25 (1995), 65.

Kobayashi's observation is echoed by First Lieutenant Bear, one of the Soviet officers who appears early on in the novel, who exclaims: "Everyone who has a place to return to has no choice but to return there. That's called 'instinct' [*honnō*]" (6). Bear's nostalgic comment on his own situation turns out to be nothing less than a prophecy of Kyūzō's own fate, since Kyūzō's "impulse [*shōdō*] for action," as Kobayashi puts it, "would always precede any clear reason or motive."[47]

Critics' confusion over Kyūzō's lack of clear motives is clearly related to the fact that Kyūzō was born not in Japan (*naichi*) but rather in an overseas colony (*gaichi*). As a result, Kyūzō's understanding of Japan is derived almost exclusively from his imagination or even fantasy:

> What he knew about Japan was only what he had imagined from the textbooks at
> school. (Mount Fuji, the Three Views of Japan, a smiling island of green surrounded
> by the sea, where the wind was gentle, birds sang, and fish swam. In the autumn,
> leaves fell in the forest and then the sun would shine, ripening the red seeds. A land
> of diligence, with diligent people.) A lost lover has a face, but this lover was still
> faceless.[48]

Here, Kyūzō's fantasy of Japan as a peaceful, idyllic utopia characterized by beautiful landscapes and diligent people is nothing but an illusion which is, however, so powerful that it sustains his lengthy, laborious journey across the frozen Manchurian wilderness. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that this fantasy is the deliberate product of Japan's imperial education in the colonies. Specifically, the textbook that Kyūzō mentions here is likely the *Shōgaku kokugo tokuhon* (elementary school national language reader)—commonly referred to as the *Sakura tokuhon* because the first volume (for first graders) begins with a color print of cherry blossom—which was adopted throughout the

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[47] Ibid., 69.
[48] *Kemono-tachi*, 19.

Japanese Empire.[49] The stereotypical Japanese aesthetics of the image of cherry blossom comes full circle, as the final volume (volume twelve, for sixth graders) of the textbook closes with a collection of ten poems on the theme of mountain cherry (*yamazakurabana*) by celebrated late-Edo scholars.[50] Indoctrinated with such ideas about quintessential Japanese aesthetics, even children who grew up in the colonies would naturally come to identify the "Japanese spirit" with cherry blossoms, even without knowing what a cherry tree looked like.

It is therefore unsurprising when Ōkane tells Kyūzō that postwar Japan is not the kind of utopia he imagines from the textbook, but rather a "wasteland of burnt ruins [*ippen no yakenohara*]," the first thing that Kyūzō blurts out is the cherry trees: "I suppose the cherry trees have all burned down too," to which Ōkane callously dismisses: "Cherry trees? Who cares about cherry trees?" Unwilling to give up his fantasy, Kyūzō insists: "I've never seen one yet!" which Ōkane again mockingly brushes aside: "Who cares about such things? You're a strange one."[51] Ōkane's dismissal of the cherry trees, regarded by Kyūzō as the quintessential emblem of the "Japanese spirit," is somewhat reminiscent of Sakaguchi Ango's iconoclastic attitude towards the "traditional Japanese culture" in his influential essay "*Nihon bunka shikan*" (A Personal View of Japanese Culture, 1941), where he defiantly suggests that replacing ancient temples with more utilitarian structures such as parking lots and dry-ice factories would not diminish the "glorious culture and traditions of our race" in the slightest.[52] Therefore, for someone like Ōkane who harbors absolutely no fantasy for Japan, it is perhaps no coincidence that he makes a fortune by smuggling scarce goods such as saccharin, cooking oil, and even penicillin back to Japan, which was facing tremendous food

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[49] On the *Sakura tokuhon*, see chapter 7 in Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Nejimagerareta Sakura: Biishiki to Gunkokushugi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003).

[50] Nakano Kazunori, "Mikikan no hikiagesha," 95.

[51] *Kemono-tachi*, 171.

[52] Sakaguchi Ango, "A Personal View of Japanese Culture," translated by James Dorsey, in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature Abridged*, edited by J. Thomas Rimer and Van C. Gessel (Columbia University Press, 2012), 436.

shortage under the American occupation. Even as a defeated nation, postwar Japan was in uncanny ways still deeply connected to and even dependent on the former colonies for its own survival.

In light of Kyūzō fantasy for the idealized and essentialized Japan, the sentence about the "lost lover" that follows his fetishistic fantasy, which might appear haphazard or even misplaced at first glance, starts to make more sense. Whereas the "lost lover" who "has a face" clearly implies something that is once possessed but now lost, in Kyūzō's cace, the yet "faceless" lover seems to suggest that he is even unaware of his own loss, because he has never actually "possessed" the now lost object to begin with. The difference between the "lost lover [who] has a face" and the "faceless lover" can perhaps be explained in terms of the distinction that Freud makes between melancholia and mourning, where the former refers to the experience of loss "withdrawn from consciousness," whereas in the case of the latter, "there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious."[53] The melancholic, in other words, merely knows something is irretrievably lost without fully realizing the nature of such loss, which is regressed reflexively or "narcissistically" back to the ego. Unable to recognize the nature of his loss, Kyūzō is therefore not entitled to even properly "lose" his faceless lover, which clearly refers to the imperial metropole that is yet unknown to him. As a result, Kyūzō's illusive identification could only lead to the ultimate melancholic experience, where even his loss is irretrievably alienated from himself.

Thus, what Kyūzō had perceived as his "homeland" (*kokyō*) was to him, from the very beginning, a "foreign land" (*ikyō*). His journey away from Baharin, the town where he had actually lived until the beginning of the Soviet occupation, is therefore not a journey home to begin with, but precisely its opposite—that is to say, a journey into exile.[54] Given the tendency in existing scholarship to compare *Kemono-tachi* with Abe's own childhood experiences, it is somewhat curious

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[53] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 14* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1957), 245.
[54] See Ōkubo Norio, *Gendai bungaku to kokyō sōshitsu* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1992), 56.

that scholars have largely ignored one of the most critical differences between the protagonist Kyūzō and the writer Abe Kōbō, namely, their births. Specifically, whereas Kyūzō is explicitly stated in the novel to have been born in the colonial town of Baharin, Abe was born in Tokyo and moved to Manchuria in 1925 with his parents when he was eight months old.

The extreme brevity of the period Abe spent in Japan before emigrating to Manchuria has, perhaps, caused critics to overlook the fact that, unlike Kyūzō, Abe was born in the colonial metropole. Such a conflation is not wholly unjustifiable—after all, Abe was a mere toddler who was unlikely to remember much, if anything, of Japan when he moved to Manchuria. As inconsequential as the eight months may seem, however, the difference between Kyūzō's birth in the fictional colonial town of Baharin and Abe's birth in Tokyo is, I believe, significant. In particular, the fact that Kyūzō was born in Manchuria and had never set foot in Japan diminishes the legitimacy of his claim to "belong" to postwar Japan or to be engaged in a journey of return. Had Kyūzō actually been born in Japan, in other words, the tremendous sufferings he endured during the journey could have been explained as practical necessities, rather than as a sign of his "homing instinct." To put it bluntly, what makes Kyūzō's journey so perplexing, as Kobayashi rightly notes, is precisely the fact that it is based not on any clear reason (*riyū*) or motive (*dōki*) but on what can only be described as a vague impulse (*shōdō*) or instinct (*honnō*).[55] Moreover, since his birth would not affect the "how" of his journey but only the "why," it seems reasonable to speculate that Abe deliberately sets Kyūzō's

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[55] Interestingly, the title of the novel, *Beasts Head for Home*, already gives away, from the very beginning, the secret of Kyūzō's and Kō's hunger march—that is, they are but beasts (*kemono*) blindly following their instincts. In fact, the boundary between the human and the beast becomes increasingly tenuous as the protagonists press on with their journey. For example, Kyūzō is woken up by some "rough panting by his ear" one night and finds himself prey to a wild dog. At the same time, he is himself assaulted with an animalistic desire—a "raging appetite" (*mōretsu na shokuyoku*) for the dog. Ultimately, it becomes impossible to distinguish Kyūzō and Kō from the wild dog, as they are referred to as a group: "Untiringly, the three hungry rascals [*sanbiki no gakki*, literally "hungry ghosts"] continued their game of tag [*onigokko*], their shadows dancing faintly about the vast wasteland" (115). Interestingly, the process of animalization continues even as Kyūzō escapes the wasteland and enters the city of Shenyang. When the dog-catching youth gives Kyūzō a piece of dog meat, it awakens his appetite and ironically turns himself into a beast, whose saliva drips uncontrollably down his chin. To make it even more ironic, Kyūzō is well aware of his own transformation, as he thinks to himself: "It's like I've become a dog" (157). However, whereas these examples are to be read figuratively, Kyūzō's metamorphosis in the final chapter is decisively more metaphysical. I will return, in more detail, to this point later.

birthplace in the colony, precisely to make the readers reflect on the meaning or, more radically, the meaninglessness of his journey.

Instead of simply rejecting the logic of national belonging from a rational perspective, in other words, *Kemono-tachi* at a fundamental level challenges the so-called "homing instinct," which enables the repatriates in the typical autobiographical narratives to envision a certain sublimity in *kokyō* that goes beyond life and death. The urge to "die even one step closer to home," as Fujiwara Tei powerfully writes in *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru*, demonstrates that the meaning of "home" is captured not in the opposition between life and death, but solely in the binary between inclusion and exclusion. To put it bluntly, even death can be redeemed in the last instance as something meaningful, as long as one is incorporated, both physically and symbolically, into the postwar national community.

Such a redemptive meaning that transcends life and death is shown more explicitly in *Yobe do kotaezu*, another piece by Fujiwara Tei, which is strictly speaking not a memoir because it was based not on Fujiwara's own experience but on the documents provided by the Reclamation Section (*kaitakuka*) at the Aomori Prefectural Government.[56] In this account, a member of the colonial reclamation group (*kaitakudan*) from Aomori tries to persuade the others to remain in the colonial town until the food shortage in the mainland (*naichi*) is alleviated. Although the group leader dismisses the talk among the local villagers (*Manjin*, literally Manchurians) that twenty million have died of starvation in the Japanese mainland as absurd false rumor, he nonetheless concludes: "At any rate, life in the mainland doesn't seem so easy. It would be a problem if we go back now. It might be a better idea to stay here and work a bit longer until things get better in Japan." His suggestion, however, is immediately challenged when another member of the reclamation group blurts out: "I

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56 On *Yobe do kotaezu*, see Saka Kenta, *Abe Kōbō to "Nihon": Shokuminchi, senryō keiken to nashonarizumu* (Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 2016), 97-8.

want to go back even just a day earlier. I would rather join those twenty million and starve to death!"[57]

Here, it is possible to identify a certain "short-circuit" of meaning in the absurd resolve to "join those twenty million and starve to death," which disrupts the smooth functioning of national belonging by exposing its fundamental deceptiveness and emptiness.[58] Similarly, the sentiment to "die even one step closer to home" lies less in the anticipation of a dignified livelihood or even basic survival than in an ineffable "transcendental lure" that can only be located in the empty tautology of return itself. That is to say, the meaning of going back lies not in any kind of practical concerns or calculations, but ironically in its own reflexivity. As such, the settler's urge to "go back even just a day earlier" can only be apprehended as an ineffable instinct that not only transcends but at the fundamental level rejects the logic of reason. In other words, the short-circuit allows him to not only circumvent such concrete concerns as overpopulation and food shortage in the *naichi*, but it endows even the worst-case scenario, which is, in this case, death from starvation, with a transcendental and redemptive meaning based on its own tautological end.

Such short-circuit, needless to say, would not function without the reclamation group member's firm belief in the national community, which, as Benedict Anderson importantly shows, is predicated on none other than imagination. Specifically, what redeems his wish to "join those twenty million and starve to death" is clearly not the desire to "starve to death" but rather the overpowering urge to "join those twenty million" compatriots, whom he imagines would welcome him warmly for making the ultimate sacrifice, namely, death.

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[57] Fujiwara Tei, "*Yobe do kotaezu*," in *Hiroku Daitōa senshi: Manshū hen* (Tokyo: Fuji shōen, 1954).
[58] The theoretical underpinning of the phrase "short-circuit" comes from a book series entitled *Short Circuits* (edited by Mladen Dolar, Alenka Zupančič, and Slavoj Žižek, MIT Press). In the series foreword, Žižek explains: "A short circuit occurs when there is a faulty connection in the network—faulty, of course, from the standpoint of the network's smooth functioning." This deconstructionist approach to "cross wires that do not usually touch" has the potential, I believe, to critically challenge the dominant forms and hegemonic practices that are often taken-for-granted in our everyday life.

In *Kemono-tachi*, Kyūzō experiences a similar kind of short-circuit, which ascribes the meaning of return not so much to any concrete situations as to the empty tautology of return itself. This is shown most explicitly in the scene where Kyūzō is forced to encounter the five mummies who have supposedly died in the typhus outbreak. As noted earlier, in sharp contrast to the situations of the Manchurian bandits or the Soviet soldiers, which he merely observes from the outside, in the case of the mummies Kyūzō is thrust into close contact, both physically and psychologically, with the imminent danger of infection and even death. As a result, Kyūzō experiences a rapid succession of emotions ranging from sympathy to instinctive and visceral horror, and finally an overwhelming fear of awakening the dead. Given the grotesque description of "their faces and internal organs [as having] all been completely gnawed away in identical fashion,"[59] it might be tempting to assume that Kyūzō's horror is inspired simply by the ghastly sight or his immediate fear of infection or possibly death. But in fact, Kyūzō is overcome by this inexplicable terror not when he first identifies these appalling "objects," but only after he notices the message on the wall and realizes that the mummies are actually Japanese repatriates, just like he imagines himself to be. Later, he even feels that "these mummies hated him" and "clearly wanted to entangle [*makizoe*] him in their fate."[60] Thus, the reason Kyūzō "drew back in horror" lies not so much in the threat of death as such, but instead in what he perceives to be a special or even intimate connection between himself and the mummies, without which his imagining of the corpses' hatred for him would have made little sense. In this sense, the message on the wall may provide some clues to help understand the roots of Kyūzō's fear. More than a direct fear of death itself, the message conveys, above all, the profound sense of regret (*munen*) the dying felt at the thought that they, falling halfway through the journey (*michi nakaba shite*), would never be able to reach their desired destination. Immobilized by the deadly fever as they fall

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[59] *Kemono-tachi*, 131.
[60] Ibid., 132.

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halfway through, they could only regret over their forever unfinished journey as they helplessly await their eventual demise.

Seen in this light, Kyūzō's deepest fear is conjured up less by the dire possibility of being infected with or even dying from typhus than by the overwhelming sense of regret that he could have experienced. It is precisely this fate of collapsing "halfway through the journey" that compels Kyūzō to "quietly tiptoe away so as not to awaken them." The ineffable horror that possesses him thus stems from the "short-circuit" of meaning, which circumvents or perhaps even surpasses the imminent threat of death itself. As such, the teleology of Kyūzō's journey is replaced by an empty tautology, in which the very purpose or "telos" of his return is redeemed precisely through its own self-reflexivity. In contrast to other repatriation narratives in which the protagonists return for the sake of a better life, Kyūzō's journey is predicated on an ironic inversion in the sense that he clings so tenaciously to life precisely in order to return to his imagined home (*kokyō*). It is therefore this absolute void of meaning that compels Kyūzō to ascribe a kind of unconditional transcendence of life and death to the tremendous sacrifices that he endures throughout his perilous journey.

Fetish of Hope, Fetish of Home

Viewed in this light, the train of tragedies in the novel makes one wonder if the episodes are arranged in a such a way that Kyūzō's every hope and effort is doomed to be frustrated. Once the reader begins to suspect that the plot is designed in such a way that things will always go wrong, the events actually start to seem like a series of theatrical contrivances, in the sense that the reader would expect or even predict that Kyūzō's condition will worsen whenever there seems to be any prospect of improvement. Interestingly, even Kyūzō himself is aware of the paradoxical situation, in which every hope will always turn into despair in the end. Recalling the decisive moment when he opens the door of Alexandrov's room, which sets in motion his entire journey, Kyūzō suddenly realizes:

"Hope was written on the front of that door, but perhaps despair had been written on the back. This was perhaps the nature of doors. A door always appears as hope when one is standing before it, but then turns to despair when one turns around."[61]

The message here, I believe, is more profound than it may at first appear—namely, the cynical cliché that hope may at any moment turn into despair. Kyūzō's metaphor of the door is based not simply on the dialectic unity of opposites in which two antagonistic conditions achieve a synthetic unity, but rather on the realization that hope and despair, just like the front and back of the same door, are merely two seemingly opposite *representations* of the same reality. Like the famous thought experiment known as the Schrödinger's Cat in which the hypothetical cat is simultaneously alive and dead, hope and despair are immanently constitutive of and embedded within each other.

Faced with this impossible paradox, Kyūzō resorts to a strategy of self-deception: "Kyūzō thus resolves to look only at the front of doors without turning around."[62] In other words, despite his knowledge of the nature of his predicament, in which hope "turns to despair when one turns around"—or more plainly, hope *is* despair in masquerade from the beginning—Kyūzō nonetheless pretends to be oblivious to it by resolving to "look only at the front of doors without turning around." The series of abandonments and betrayals in the novel should not be understood, then, as mere literary devices to move the plot forward, but instead as an eloquent demonstration of the "return of the repressed," in the sense that despair always returns in Kyūzō's very resolution to repress it by averting his eyes.

If so, Kyūzō's attitude can be regarded as a kind of fetishism, whose mechanism Octave Mannoni cogently sums up in the phrase "I know very well, but nonetheless" (*je sais bien, mais quand*

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[61] Ibid., 63.
[62] Ibid.

même).[63] Here, the contradiction between Kyūzō's belief and action is not simply a matter of "false consciousness," but rather of the material foundation of ideology. As Louis Althusser explains in his seminal essay on what he calls the "ideological apparatuses," ideology has not an ideal or spiritual existence, but a purely material one that resides solely in one's actions and practices.[64] In other words, the key lies not so much in Kyūzō's acknowledging stance "I know very well ([that hope] 'turns to despair when one turns around')," but rather in the posture of resignation that follows: "but nonetheless ([I must] 'look only at the front of doors without turning around.')"

Where, then, does Kyūzō's fetishism stem from? One clue can perhaps be found in the scene immediately following the one in which Kyūzō is denied entry into the Japanese residential district in Shenyang. Unwilling to give up his "hope," which has already turned into despair, Kyūzō is peering in at a Japanese family when a boy notices him and yells: "Hey, there's a beggar spying on us!" Kyūzō immediately retorts back: "I'm Japanese, you idiot. I'm Japanese!"[65] at which point he is chased away by the Nationalist soldier guarding the entrance. Having nowhere to turn, Kyūzō thinks pathetically to himself:

> Dusk is near. Where should I go? I've been completely abandoned. […] Yet there
> were houses everywhere. If there were houses, then there had to be doors; and if
> there were doors, then they had to be tightly locked. There was a door right over
> there, but its inside was infinitely far away. In the end, this is no different from a
> wasteland completely empty of people. Or maybe it's worse. The wasteland refused
> to allow me to escape, whereas the town prevents me from approaching.[66]

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[63] Octave Mannoni, "*Je sais bien, mais quand même*," in *Clefs pour l'Imaginaire ou l'Autre Scène* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 9-33. Quoted in Emily Apter, *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the Century France* (Cornell University Press, 1993), 14.

[64] On the material existence of ideology, see Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster (Monthly Review Press, 1971), 165-70.

[65] *Kemono-tachi*, 163.

[66] Ibid.

In this Kafkaesque monolog, Kyūzō's fetishistic hope derives from his intense desire to "approach" (*chikazuku*) or to belong to the "imagined community" known as Japan. Kyūzō wishes not only to be allowed into the "inside [that] was infinitely far away" through the locked doors, but more importantly to be properly recognized as a member of that community, rather than as a beggar who spies enviously on the Japanese from the other side of the wall. Interestingly, the image of the tightly locked doors represents a paradoxical reality in which hope and despair are juxtaposed with or, more accurately, superimposed onto each other. Only this time, Kyūzō is compelled to confront the fundamental impossibility of "look[ing] only at the front of doors without turning around," which is now foregrounded explicitly in its radical inaccessibility despite the perceived physical proximity. In other words, Kyūzō's implicit realization that the "hope" on the front of the door is made visible precisely *through* the refusal to turn around and look at the back of the door. His recognition that "if there were doors, then they *had to be* tightly locked" therefore suggests that the impossibility of approaching is not incidental but rather essential or structural.

Kyūzō's aimless thought here can be compared with the final scene in Abe Kōbō's 1950 short story "Akai mayu" (The Red Cocoon), which similarly describes the predicament of a young man who, unable to find his home, literally unwinds his own body and turns into a "big, empty cocoon." Like Kyūzō, the homeless protagonist in "The Red Cocoon" finds himself wondering helplessly: "But, why… why does everything belong to someone else and not to me? Even if it isn't mine, can't there be just one thing that doesn't belong to anyone?"[67] Pulling the thread that eventually unwinds his very body into a cocoon, which is dyed red by the evening sun, the man is forced to confront the fundamental paradox that "now that I have a house, there's no 'I' to return to it."[68]

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[67] "The Red Cocoon," translated by Lane Dunlop, in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature: Abridged*, 450.
[68] Ibid., 451.

Just as Kyūzō's desperate soliloquy is evoked by the thought that "dusk was near," it is perhaps no coincidence that in "The Red Cocoon," the protagonist's profound anxiety is similarly triggered by the image of the setting sun: "Illumined from within, it glowed red with the colors of sunset."[69] Contrary to the nostalgic, homely ambience typically conjured up by the image of the sunset, however, here it functions to signify an absolute void, not only in terms of the man's total lack of social relations but more importantly of his own subjectivity, which is represented quite literally as a "big, empty cocoon." Interestingly, cocoon is usually used as a metaphor to represent the preparatory phase which would ultimately lead to the decisive moment of transformation or even transcendence. In the short story, however, the protagonist's metamorphosis leads not to any sublimity or transcendence beyond his mundane everyday existence but rather to its own failure, a total void, where the subject itself disintegrates into absolute nothingness.

Written seven years before *Kemono-tachi*, "Akai mayu" probes into the relation between individual existence and social belonging, and the bleak ending where the lack of social anchoring leads to the total dissolution of subjectivity seems to suggest Abe's pessimism in envisioning the possibility of existence outside of the rigid social structure. Such pessimism is prevalent in Abe's early fictions like "Dendorokakaria" (Dendrocacalia, 1949), "Mahō no chōku" (The Magic Chalk, 1951), and even his Akutagawa Prize winning work "Kabe, S Karuma-shi no hanzai" (The Wall: The Crime of S Karma, 1951), in all of which the protagonists submit in one way or another to the external, social reality. In "Dendorokakaria," for example, the protagonist Mr. Common (*Komon-kun*) is forced to transform into a plant to be housed and displayed at a botanical garden. Similarly, in "Mahō no chōku," Argon literally vanishes into his apartment wall because he has consumed too much "food" that he has scribbled on the wall with his chalk, which has the magic power of transforming any drawing into tangible or even edible things. In "The Wall," once again, the

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[69] Ibid., 451.

protagonist S. Karma is absorbed into his own chest by its negative pressure and is transformed into an infinitely growing wall in his internal, mental landscape. All these stories depict, in one way or another, a tragic dissolution or incorporation of individuals into the relentless, external social realities.

From Disintegration to Disappearance: Sustained Flight from Community

As a number of critics have noted, such pessimistic attitude in Abe's early fictions[70] can be distinguished from the more positive outlook in his later novels such as his celebrated "missing trilogy." In *Woman in the Dunes* (*Suna no onna*, 1962), which describes the story of a man[71] who is trapped into living with a young woman in the bottom of a sandpit, his decision to remain in the village despite his long-awaited opportunity of escape at the end of the novel is often interpreted as embodying the prospect of an alternative mode of living outside the everyday social order. Specifically, if the man's discovery of osmosis and his invention of the water trap makes it possible to remain self-sufficient in terms of physical survival in the desert, the woman's pregnancy suggests the prospect of continuation and even proliferation in terms of an alternative, independent social existence.[72] As Richard Calichman suggests, the titular "woman in the dunes," who is contrasted with the "woman from the city," symbolizes not just the imagination of the organic, authentic life in the countryside versus the artificial, stagnating life in the city, but more significantly the possibility of

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[70] Not all scholars, to be sure, read the early works as entirely pessimistic. Takano Toshimi, for example, suggests that the wall (*kabe*), as an ambiguous symbol, can be interpreted as representing growth and stagnation, as well as freedom and imprisonment at the same time. See Takano, *Zōho: Abe Kōbō ron*, 255.

[71] The name of the protagonist Niki Junpei appears only once in his death certificate at the very end of the novel, which is used to show that he is considered legally dead because he has disappeared for too long.

[72] Kimura Yōko is critical of such a male-centered reading, arguing instead that the situation is quite hopeless from the perspective of the woman, as her condition of ectopic pregnancy is likely to lead to extremely perilous situations such as miscarriage or even death. See Kimura, *Abe Kōbō to wa dare ka* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 2013).

imagining a radical alternative that is "characterized by the immediacy of feeling, pure flow, communality, spontaneousness, and temporal originarity."[73]

Similarly, in *The Ruined Map* (*Moetsukita chizu*, 1967), which depicts the story of a private detective, hired by a woman to look for her missing husband, ends up disappearing himself, the identification of the detective with the missing husband is often interpreted as conveying the message that "escape is a way—the only way—to transcend the limitations of the 'daily life' or community."[74] William Currie, for example, reads the ending as an essential "conflict between the inauthenticity of daily life and the authenticity of escape,"[75] which strongly resonates with the aforementioned interpretation of *Woman in the Dunes* as depicting the opposition between the inauthenticity of mediated, urban life on the one hand, and the authenticity of unmediated, independent life of self-sufficiency outside of the everyday world on the other. Mark Gibeau offers a more nuanced reading by considering the man's disappearance not as a "loss" of any inherent, essential identity but instead as the "reemergence into a new, as yet undefined subjectivity" which is external to and independent of the rigid network of established social relations.[76]

Such alternative, independent mode of existence in Abe's later fictions is consistent with an attitude of what he calls the "sustained flight" (*nigedashippanashi*), which is developed in an essay in two parts titled "The Frontier Within" (*Uchinaru henkyō*, 1968-69). Published shortly after *The Ruined Map*, Abe discerns in this essay the liberating power of the urban space as the "internal frontier" of the modern nation-states. In Part II of the essay, he makes an intriguing point by suggesting that there is no essential difference between "working in a company somewhere and leaving the countryside to become a gangster,"[77] in the sense that both conditions entail subjecting oneself

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[73] Richard Calichman, *Beyond Nation: Time, Writing, and Community in the Work of Abe Kōbō*, 40.
[74] Mark Gibeau, 168.
[75] Ibid., 166.
[76] Ibid., 184.
[77] Abe Kōbō, "The Frontier Within," translated by Richard Calichman, 158.

voluntarily to an established social order. Specifically, Abe notes the profound irony in gangster films where the protagonists who have fled their villages in the beginning of the film would "invariably begin to feel anxious and find it impossible to remain as drifters,"[78] whereupon they enter the gangster organization, which is usually the easiest community to become a member of. In contrast to the provisional flight that "one flees someplace [only] in order to gain entry elsewhere,"[79] Abe proposes instead a mode of "sustained flight," which refers to the incessant dialectical movement that is not predicated on the "prejudice" of ever settling down somewhere else.

In retrospect, Abe's notion of sustained flight foreshadows what Asada Akira would theorize as *tōsō* (flight)[80] some fifteen years later in his influential book *Tōsōron: Sikizo kizzu no bōken* (*On Flight: The Adventure of Schizo Kids*, 1984). Inspired by the concept of "line of flight" (*ligne de fuite*) in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,[81] Asada advocates a kind of infinite, perpetual flight from the "paranoid" regime of fixed structures to a "schizophrenic" mode of existence characterized by the constant flux or flow of "becoming."[82] Specifically, Asada explains that the conventional notion of escape, which is predicated on the boundary between the "inside" (*uchi*) and the "outside" (*soto*), only ends up reproducing and reinforcing such boundaries by transforming the "outside" into the renewed "inside."[83] Instead, he proposes a gesture that "prescribe[es] escape (*tōsō*) rather than maturation as a means to elude the embrace of the maternal frame."[84]

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[78] "The Frontier Within, Part II," 158.

[79] Ibid., 158

[80] While Asada's term of *tōsō* has typically been translated as "escape," I translate it as "flight" here for the sake of consistency, because the Deleuzian concept of *ligne de fuite*, from which *tōsō* is derived, is usually rendered as "lines of flight" in the English translation.

[81] See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (translated by Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

[82] In line with their theorization of paranoia and schizophrenia, Deleuze and Guattari distinguish the dynamic mode of "becoming," which characterizes a process of change and movement, from the usual, static modes of "being."

[83] See Marilyn Ivy, "Critical Texts, Mass Artifacts: The Consumption of Knowledge in Postmodern Japan," in *Postmodernism and Japan* (edited by Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian, Duke University Press, 1989).

[84] Tomiko Yoda, "The Rise and Fall of Maternal Society: Gender, Labor, and Capital in Contemporary Japan," in *Japan after Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present* (edited by Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootunian, Duke University Press, 2006), 270.

Karatani Kōjin, who is implicitly skeptical of the Deleuzian "game of rhizomatic flight,"[85] which he perceives as a conceptual adventure of infinite difference or, one might be tempted to say, *différance*,[86] criticizes Abe's solution of alternative existence in *Moetsukita chizu* as a mere escapist fantasy. In his essay "Chizu wa moetsukita ka" (1970), Karatani criticizes Abe for proposing to liberate the individuals not by resolving the actual social contradictions, but rather by reducing the complex social reality into rigid, simplified abstractions. Specifically, he accuses Abe of resorting to a kind of "lightness" (*migarusa*) which releases the urbanites from the oppressive, feudal ideology in the rural communities without necessarily deconstructing the "roots" (*ne*) of such relations.[87] As the title of his essay suggests, which inverts the original title of Abe's 1967 novel into a question, Karatani interprets the "ruined map" as referring not just to the disappearance of the private detective into the urban space, but more importantly to the total disintegration of the network of social relations.

In short, whereas Abe's own notion of the sustained flight explicitly rejects the very basic premise of "settling down somewhere," Karatani perceives it as an empty gesture where the ideal of anonymity and homelessness is essentialized into yet another kind of home through the abstraction of the infinitely complex social structure.[88] Karatani's critique of Abe's "escapist fantasy" can perhaps be understood in relation to what many critics have regarded as a transition in Abe's fictional writing, where the characters in Abe's early works, who are prohibited to exist as individual

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[85] In an interview with Itō Seikō in 2013, Karatani explains that his suspicion about the Deleuzian nomadology stems from his belief that mobility (*yūdōsei*) is essentially independent from actual movement itself. He says: "Even in the state of settlement, mobility remains as long as there are conditions of communal property. As such, it is problematic to differentiate mobility from fixity based on the form alone." See Karatani Kōjin and Itō Seikō, "Senzo, yūdōsei, rajio no hanashi," *Bungakukai*, January 2014.

[86] *Différance* is one of the most central concepts in deconstructionism. First used by Jacques Derrida in 1963, this term, which is a playful misspelling of *différence*, means both difference and deferral at the same time. See Derrida, "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy* (translated by Alan Bass, The University of Chicago Press, 1982, 1-28) for a more thorough discussion.

[87] Nakano Kazunori, "Chizu to keiyaku: Abe Kōbō Moetsukita chizu ron," *Nihon kindai bungaku*, vol. 81 (2009).

[88] Gibeau, 163.

subjects, have somehow miraculously found a route of escape in his later novels as they render themselves as unrecognized or, more accurately, recognized only in absence or negativity as "missing" or even "legally dead," by the society. Watanabe Hiroshi, for example, notes that Abe at this point was more engrossed with "the image of the shifting sands erasing the traces of all who have passed, the concept of the labyrinthine city, into which one might vanish at will" than with the "ideals of revolution and transformation" that characterized most of his earlier works.[89] If so, it indeed seems tempting to conclude that Abe resolves the dilemma in his early fictions by devising out of thin air a short-cut or even a "short-circuit," where an autonomous, independent, yet ultimately insubstantial mode of existence is created out of thin air in order to rescue his characters from disintegrating into absolute nothingness—that is, into "big, empty cocoons."

The problem with such a nihilistic reading is that, despite its accusation of Abe's evasive gesture towards social contradictions in reality, it paradoxically prescribes to the presumption of a linear structure which culminates in a totalizing "telos" within the narrative itself. Accordingly, the disappearance of the schoolteacher in *Suna no onna* or that of the detective in *Moetsukita chizu* is disparaged as an empty narrative solution because it fundamentally invalidates the meaning of all the preceding events in the novel. Ironically, such a mode of reading essentially treats the community or society from which the fictional protagonist disappears as an autonomous, isolated, and ultimately static entity that is incapable of change. In other words, this line of thought fails to take into account the formative possibility presented by disappearance or escape (*tōsō*) itself, which can be embodied in the dynamic potentiality of radically transforming the very boundaries and terrains of urban society into the "frontier within" (*uchinaru henkyō*).

Deconstruction of Telos, or the Meaninglessness of Meaning

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[89] Ibid., 165.

If the literary critics are able to rationalize the conclusions in *Suna no onna* and *Moetsukita chizu* by coming up with more positive and morally satisfying interpretations that conform to the linear narrative structure such as "the birth of hope" or "the overcoming of community," in the case of *Kemono-tachi*, they do so by formally dissociating the novel from its purported genre, in despite of its numerous surface resemblances. In order to overcome this seemingly irresolvable contradiction, Abe's attitude of "sustained flight" provides important insights into the significance of Kyūzō's lack of substantial development. Wary of the hegemonic paradigm of "authentic citizens" (*honmono no kokumin*) who are firmly grounded in the agrarianist ideology of the land (*tochi*), Abe celebrates instead the "inauthentic" nomads such as the Huns, the Gypsies, and the Jews, who embody the liberating potential to transcend established boundaries and dominant structures. As such, the notion of "sustained flight" opens up an alternative possibility of interpretation by replacing typical plot development in terms of growth and maturation with the movement of incessant escape, which in Kyūzō's case is paradoxically represented as an endless chain of rejection and exclusion. In other words, in contrast to critics like Tsuruda and Nakano who attempt to explain the meaning of the novel exclusively in terms of the protagonist's growth within the narrative, the notion of "sustained flight" allows us to envision an alternative value system based on the precise opposite of linear growth, namely, the defiant position of escape or flight without teleological ends.

The meaning of *Kemono-tachi* can thus be located "dialogically," in the sense that rather than conform to the basic presumption of a definitive "message" within the text, the suspension of meaning at the end of the novel implodes the typical narrative structure based on the "telos" of plot development. In other words, the ostensible senselessness of the ending scene should not be taken at face value as a cynical nihilism. On the contrary, I argue that it needs to be considered as a "space-clearing gesture" that compels readers to dispense with the common propensity to look for a "moral

lesson" in fiction and instead to participate in the dynamic process of meaning-making themselves.[90] In other words, it is possible to approach *Kemono-tachi* as what Roland Barthes calls a "writerly" text, which takes into account the role of the readers, who no longer passively consume but instead actively produce the meaning of the text.[91] As such, the meaning of *Kemono-tachi* stems not so much from the teleological end within the plot or narrative, but instead from the very deconstruction of its putative meaning. What Yamamuro and Yamashita have regarded as the "muddle" (*konran*) of the last chapter actually constitutes, rather than undermines, the very "meaning" of the novel. Therefore, in stark contrast with the two most influential repatriation novels mentioned earlier, namely Fujiwara Tei's *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru* and Gomikawa Junpei's *Ningen no jōken*, Abe's *Kemono-tachi* is distinctive precisely for its radical rejection of the basic premise of a structure that culminates in the teleological and even tautological end of "the return" to postwar Japan.

Conventionally, scholars have interpreted the two bestsellers by Fujiwara and Gomikawa as representing opposite ends in the spectrum of repatriation literature, because whereas Fujiwara's autobiographical work culminates with the narrator's successful return to Japan along with her children, Gomikawa's six-volume novel closes with the protagonist Kaji's tragic death in the vast, frozen Manchurian wilderness while longing for his wife Michiko.[92] On a surface level, the diametrically opposed endings indeed seem to justify the typical categorization of repatriation narratives based on the success or failure of the attempted return. A more critical examination, however, shows that this focus on the comic versus the tragic ending ultimately ties the meaning of the works exclusively to the supposed telos of the return. The difference between the two works, manifested most explicitly in the fates of their protagonists, is thus not as drastic as it may at first

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[90] I borrow the term "space-clearing gesture" from Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" *Critical Inquiry* vol. 17, no. 2 (1991), 336-57.

[91] Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, translated by Richard Howard (University of California Press, 1986).

[92] For a closer analysis of *Ningen no jōken*, see chapter 2 in Igarashi's *Homecomings*, in which he analyzes both the novel and its adapted film. Lori Watt also briefly examines *Ningen no jōken* in *When Empire Comes Home*, 148-151.

appear, because Kaji's demise in *Ningen no jōken*, far from challenging the telos of homecoming, serves to reify and reinforce it.

It thus becomes clear that *Kemono-tachi* needs to be categorically distinguished from both works, which, despite having superficially opposed plots and, in particular, endings, nonetheless uphold the same teleological ideal of "return" to postwar Japan. In other words, the seemingly ambiguous suspension of meaning at the ending of *Kemono-tachi* fundamentally rejects the basic premises of the genre itself. Despite or perhaps precisely because of *Kemono-tachi*'s numerous formal resemblances to typical autobiographical narratives, it seems more appropriate to consider the work an "anti-repatriation novel" than a repatriation novel proper.[93] In what follows, I focus specifically on the novel's final chapter to argue that the two protagonists' metamorphoses, prompted by their desperate state of suspension and indeterminacy, serve not so much to generate explicit meanings that conform to the plot as to destabilize and even deconstruct the ostensible givenness and naturalness of "home" (*kokyō*) as the ultimate anchor of meaning or teleological end in repatriation narratives.

Madness and Metamorphosis

In the final chapter, despite the grudge Kyūzō harbors for Kō on account of his betrayal, Kyūzō is nonetheless driven by an ineffable compassion for Kō, perhaps due to the memories they share of

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[93] In his study on *The Ruined Map*, Gibeau performs a similar reading where he rejects the common interpretation of the novel as a "plot-centered linear narrative." Focusing almost exclusively on the theme of escape or disappearance, critics typically reconfigure the ending so that it better conforms to the linear narrative structure of the detective novel. Instead, Gibeau contends that the novel should be approached as an "anti-detective story," which according to William Spanos, "evoke[s] the impulse to 'detect'... in order to violently frustrate it by refusing to solve the crime." See Gibeau, 161-173. In a similar light, Baryon Posadas considers *The Box Man* a "metaphysical detective novel," which according to Patricia Merivale and Susan Sweeney, from whom Posadas borrows the term, is defined as "a text that parodies or subverts traditional detective-story conventions—such as narrative closure and the detective's role as a surrogate reader—with the intention, or at least the effect, of asking questions about mysteries of being and knowing which transcend the mere machinations of the mystery plot" (200). See Posadas, *Double Fictions and Double Visions of Japanese Modernity* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011), 190-220.

the arduous journey across the Manchurian wilderness. Realizing that Kō is imprisoned somewhere on the ship, Kyūzō is desperate to discover his whereabouts. When Kyūzō finally discovers Kō, locked up in the ship's hold, however, he realizes that Kō has already lost his mind, as Kō not only claims to have been tasked with the mission of "establishing the central government in exile of the Republic of Manchuria," but even believes himself to be the real Kyūzō: "This is top secret, and I can tell only Japanese people, but the fact is that I'm really Japanese. My name is Kuki Kyūzō. But Manchuria and Japan must become allies [*meihō*]. My name is Kuki Kyūzō and I'm really Japanese."[94]

Realizing his own precarious situation, Kyūzō tries to negotiate with the smugglers for his share of heroin, but only ends up in the ship's hold himself, handcuffed to Kō. Listening to Kō's delirious ravings as Kō mistakes the sound of a winch in the quay for the booming of a cannon and believes that the United States and the Soviet Union have gone to war against each other, Kyūzō thinks to himself:

> Damn it, it seems that I've just been circling around the same place. No matter how
> far I go, I can't take a single step out of the wasteland. Perhaps Japan doesn't exist
> anywhere. With every step I take, the wasteland walks together with me. Japan just
> flees further away…[95]

Just then, Kyūzō experiences a "sparklike dream" of Baharin, in which his boyhood self is crouching beside his mother. What makes his dream even more eerie, however, is that from over the wall, "another Kyūzō, this one exhausted, peeped timidly in at the sight of them, […] utterly unable to cross over."[96] Finally, just as Kyūzō recognizes the profound irony that he has been "walking in the opposite direction" from the moment when he first sets out, he is transformed into a beast (*kemono*),

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[94] *Kemono-tachi*, 186.
[95] Ibid., 190.
[96] Ibid.

"roaring as the skin of his hand peeled and blood oozed out, and yet pounding with all his strength."[97]

This brief concluding chapter, in which Kyūzō's and Kō's lengthy journey wraps up at a dazzling speed, offers a number of important insights. For example, whereas Kyūzō may easily dismiss Kō's hallucinatory remarks about the war between the United States and the Soviet Union as a madman's drivel, the readers are retrospectively compelled to take into account the overlaps on the metafictional level between the novel's publication and the historical context of the Cold War. Moreover, as Michel Foucault shows, madness as the paramount "mental illness" should not be considered a timeless phenomenon but instead a historical construct through which power is exercised, normalized, and ultimately naturalized in modern societies.[98] Kō's insanity thus needs to be examined through the prism of power, which not only "disciplines and punishes," but more importantly defines the very structures and apparatuses through which power is perceived and perpetuated.

In fact, Kō's ravings in the last chapter are not the first occurrence of his madness in the novel. Earlier in their journey, Kō once loses consciousness due to a severe fever and begins spurting gibberish: "Kō suddenly began laughing and, pointing to the marsh, shouted meaningless words [*imi no nai koto*]: 'Andara, tsoan, chii, rururu.'"[99] A day later, rather than show signs of recovery, Kō's behavior became only more lunatic, as he kept singing a single lyric—"young lady"—in a spooky nasal tone: "Rather than hum the full song, however, he would like a broken record soon return to the 'young lady' at the beginning."[100]

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[97] Ibid., 191.
[98] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, translated by Richard Howard (Vintage Books, 1988).
[99] *Kemono-tachi*, 71.
[100] Ibid., 73.

Here, Kō's insanity is represented most explicitly through the fragmentation of language, as he not only mutters "meaningless words" but also keeps singing a single lyric "like a broken record." In the analysis on Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's "Haguruma" (Cogwheels, 1927), Seiji Lippit points out that at the core of the narrator's madness lies his existential anxiety (*fuan*) about the ineluctable disintegration of consciousness and even subjectivity, which is reflected specifically through the "breakdown of his linguistic capacity."[101] Although the direct cause of Kō's madness differs substantially from that of the narrator in "Haguruma," which stems from the "vague anxiety" of his age due to the onslaught of modernization, they are nonetheless both represented through the total collapse of signification. What distinguishes *Kemono-tachi* from "Haguruma," however, is that whereas Akutagawa's short story is narrated in the first person, Kō's madness is portrayed from and therefore mediated through Kyūzō's perspective. it is entirely possible that Kō's "meaningless words" are in fact meaningful but only *sounded* meaningless to Kyūzō, who lacks the linguistic capacity to decipher Kō's message. In particular, given Kō's multilingual and multiethnic background, it seems far more likely that Kō is unconsciously speaking in his native Korean, which is, however, dismissed by Kyūzō as incomprehensible "gibberish" (*wake no wakaranai koto*).

In this light, the specific content of Kō's speech is of secondary importance, as Kyūzō's very gesture of relegating Kō's unintelligible message to the realm to madness has already precluded any possibility of understanding in the first place. Kyūzō's seemingly impartial description of Kō's "meaningless words" is predicated upon a basic prejudice that endows him with the power to determine whether an utterance contains any "meaning" at all. Yet, the process of signification can only be imbued with "meaning" if it is rendered as intelligible within the language of the colonizer, who claims the exclusive authority to adjudicate between what is meaningful and what is meaningless, and by extension between reason and madness. In other words, Kyūzō's assessment of

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[101] Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (Columbia University Press, 2002), 57.

Kō's mental dysfunction reveals the lopsided power structure in which the colonizer assumes the prerogative to dismiss the language of the colonized as meaningless gibberish, which is not only outside of, but essentially incompatible with, the metropolitan, "standard" language of the colonizers.

In the same light, in their analyses of Shimao Toshio's autobiographical novel "The Sting of Death" (*Shi no toge*, 1960), Philip Gabriel and Marukawa Tetsushi respectively point out the "short-circuit" in the story where reason and madness is determined exclusively by one's position within the network of arbitrary colonial relations. Specifically, the protagonist Toshio dismisses his wife Miho's "unintelligible" words in her native Amami dialect, one of the many Ryūkyūan languages, as symptomatic of her "madness" (*kyōki*), which not only denies Miho of her rationality or even subjectivity, but more importantly conceals the historical implications of Japan's violent expansion into and annexation of the Ryūkyū Kingdom.[102] Similarly, in the case of *Kemono-tachi*, Kyūzō's assessment of Kō's mental dysfunction, much like Toshio's "diagnosis" of Miho's "madness," reveals the lopsided power structure in which the colonizer assumes the prerogative to dismiss the language of the colonized as meaningless gibberish, which is not only outside of, but essentially incompatible with, the metropolitan, "standard" language of the colonizers.

If Kō's madness in this scene stems from his "unintelligible" Korean identity, it is portrayed rather differently in the final chapter, in which his insanity is characterized by his compulsive insistence on Japanese identity. Specifically, in the concluding scene, Kō not only speaks exclusively in Japanese, but even goes so far as to insist that he is, in fact, a Japanese by the name of Kuki Kyūzō. His "madness" here is reminiscent of the ending scene in Kim Saryang's "Tenma" (Pegasus, 1940), where the protagonist Genryū insists that "I'm not a *yobo* anymore! I'm Ryūnosuke, Gennoue

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[102] See Philip Gabriel, *Mad Wives and Island Dreams* (1999), and Marukawa Tetsushi, *Teikoku no bōrei* (2004).

Ryūnosuke!" while pounding on gates at every building.[103] Here, Genryū's delusional remark that

"I'm Ryūnosuke" is clearly a bitter yet somewhat humorous expression of the author's

disappointment at missing the Akutagawa Prize, which is, of course, named after the prominent

novelist Akutagawa Ryūnosuke himself. However, as Christina Yi points out, the climactic final

scene should by no means be understood simply in terms of Kim's cynical complaint over his

literary defeat, but instead be regarded as a powerful critique of the racial politics in the context of

Japanese colonialism in Korea, which is sarcastically reflected in Genryū's pathetic pleading to "save

this Japanese man (*naichijin*, literally person from the colonial metropole)."

In both *Kemono-tachi* and "Tenma," the colonized subject is perceived to be mad when he

somehow *misrecognizes* himself—that is to say, when he "erroneously" regards himself as being one of

the colonizers rather than one of the colonized. Whereas Kyūzō considers Kō insane in the first

instance because Kyūzō perceives him as the unintelligible Other, in the second case Kō's madness

is apparent for precisely the opposite reason: Kō tries to abolish the very difference between self and

other altogether by claiming to become one of "us." Taken together, then, while the two

occurrences of Kō's madness in the novel may superficially seem opposed to each other, they are in

fact derived from the same structure based on the politics of racialization. Confined within an

ambiguous domain of proximity, the colonized find themselves in a strange predicament in which

they either become utterly unintelligible or else misrecognize themselves. In other words, lest they

lapse into madness, the colonized must assimilate with colonizers as much as possible, but not so

much as to collapse the critical distance altogether. The colonizers, meanwhile, position themselves

at the absolute center of reason by relegating "madness" exclusively to the colonial Others who,

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[103] English translation by Christina Yi, who discusses "Tenma" in detail in her book *Colonizing Language* (2018), 34-46. Yobo is a derogatory term for Koreans during the colonial period.

however much they might attempt to approach it, may never cross the racial boundary between "us" and "them."

In short, in order to be recognized as a rational subject, Kō can only *pass as* Japanese, which entails his *behaving* sufficiently like a Japanese without actually *becoming* one. In fact, Kō is very much aware of his own ambivalence towards passing, which he explains to Kyūzō when Kō first confides his racial identity shortly after the train wreck: "In any case—ha-ha—this question of where I come from is quite something. I think about various things, such as not blowing my nose with my fingers when I become Japanese or that I must use tweezers to trim my whiskers when I become Korean."[104] In fact, Kō even presses Kyūzō to say whether it seems possible that he could pass as a Japanese: "If I wanted, do you think I could look Japanese? What do you think?"[105]

With the benefit of hindsight, it seems possible that already at this early stage Kō is plotting to steal Kyūzō's identity. The difference between Kō's attitude here and his claim in the final chapter lies, however, precisely in the critical distance between *behaving* and *becoming*, and thus, by extension, between reason (recognition) and madness (misrecognition). In other words, whereas Kō's *behaving* like Kyūzō makes him an imposter, it is his unconscious *becoming* of Kyūzō that decisively makes him a madman. My point here is neither to confirm nor to deny Kō's madness, which is, after all, contingent upon the development of the plot; instead, I mean to suggest that madness is structurally embedded within the violent yet arbitrary network of colonial dominance. As Foucault shows, the determination of madness, which is imposed externally onto the subject, demonstrates the mechanism through which power operates by reflecting and reinforcing the structure upon which racism and colonialism are predicated.

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[104] *Kemono-tachi*, 62.
[105] Ibid.

Taking into account the underlying colonial implications, Kō's claim about his Japanese identity in the final chapter should thus be regarded as a transformation (*henkei*) proper rather than a madman's wild hallucination. At the same time, Kō's radical change cannot be separated from his counterpart Kyūzō's transformation, even though it is touched upon only briefly in the novel's final sentence: "He became a beast, roaring as the skin of his hand peeled and blood oozed out, and yet pounding with all his strength."[106] Kyūzō's metamorphosis has typically been interpreted as a mere figure of speech depicting his existential predicament, perhaps on account of the fleeting and somewhat casual nature of the description or the generally realistic style of the rest of the novel. Compared with Abe's more surrealist fictions in which characters metamorphose into fish ("Suichū toshi") or a plant ("Dendorokakariya"), Kyūzō's transformation into a beast indeed seems rather unremarkable.

Rather than dismiss Kyūzō's transformation based on its lack of novelty, however, it seems more constructive to consider *Kemono-tachi* as part of a genealogy of what Tanaka Hiroyuki calls Abe's "tales of transformation" (*henkeidan*).[107] The very significance of metamorphosis as a central trope in Abe's fictions lies precisely in the fact that the crisis of the disintegrating subject can be represented only reflexively through itself. As Lianying Shan notes, Abe makes a slight yet important change between the original serialized version published in *Gunzō* and the book form, which appeared immediately after the last installment of the serialization.[108] In particular, whereas in the original version on *Gunzō* Kyūzō merely "began striking the oxide-red iron plate *like* a beast," in the book version he actually "*became* a beast." Abe's rewriting of this sentence makes it clear that he sees Kyūzō's change as a decisive transformation, rather than a mere figure of speech. The protagonists'

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[106] Ibid., 191.
[107] Tanaka Hiroyuki, "Abe Kōbō *Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu* kō," *Kindai bungaku shiron*, no. 32 (1994), 43-52.
[108] Lianying Shan, *Narrating the Colonial Past in Manchuria and Shanghai in Postwar Japanese Literature* (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2007), 130.

73

transformations should thus be understood not as metaphorical but as metaphysical, in the sense

that Kyūzō and Kō are compelled to confront a fundamental existential crisis in which their

insistence on national belonging leads not to the restoration of subjectivity but rather to its failure.

In contrast to the prevailing interpretation that treats the transformations of Kyūzō and Kō

as independent metaphors, I argue that they should be apprehended in conjunction with each other:

Kyūzō's metamorphosis into a beast can be interpreted as an uncanny prognosis of the fate of Kō,

who is slowly yet irreversibly *becoming* Kyūzō. Whereas Kyūzō begins to question the basic premise

of national belonging when he wonders whether "perhaps Japan doesn't exist anywhere," Kō

nonetheless still firmly clings to his blind belief in national identity by claiming that "my name is

Kuki Kyūzō and I'm really Japanese,"[109] thus foretelling an instance of ineluctable repetition. As

such, contrary to the ostensible synchronicity, Kyūzō's transformation can in fact be interpreted as

embodying in advance Kō's eventual fate, of which he is yet oblivious.

In this light, the simultaneous transformations of Kyūzō and Kō seem to operate under two

conflicting yet ultimately connected logics. From Kyūzō's perspective, Kō's madness, which is

manifested in his *becoming* Kyūzō, represents both an absolute difference and, at the same time, an

inevitable repetition. In fact, this dialectic of difference and repetition recurs throughout Abe's

career and remains a central theme in his later fictions.[110] For instance, in *Daiyon kanpyōki* (Inter Ice

Age 4, 1958), acclaimed as one of the earliest science fictions in Japan, the protagonist Katsumi

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[109] *Kemono-tachi*, 186.

[110] The intricate relationship between difference and repetition is interestingly reminiscent of the pair of concepts of "being" and "becoming" in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. According to Deleuze, whereas the state of "being" is based on static, immutable identities (repetition), that of "becoming" is characterized by a dynamic flux of incessant changes and movements (difference). Moreover, Deleuze suggests that difference and repetition are not necessarily opposed to each other but are rather dialectically unified in a state of what he calls "the being of becoming." Specifically, in his explanation of Nietzsche's notion of "eternal return," Deleuze writes: "Returning is being, but only the being of becoming. […] Returning is thus the only identity, but identity as a secondary power; the identity of difference, the identical which belongs to the different, or turns around the different. Such an identity, produced by difference, is determined as 'repetition.' Repetition in the eternal return, therefore, consists in conceiving the same on the basis of the different." See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, translated by Paul Patton (Columbia University Press, 1994), 41.

witnesses, through a "forecasting machine" (*yogen kikai*), a future in which the land is completely submerged under the rising sea.[111] In preparation for the impending apocalypse, scientists created a new race of "aquans" (*suisei ningen*) from aborted human fetuses. Genetically altered to have gills instead of lungs, the aquans are surmised to be incapable of emotions and are thus regarded as both the absolutely unintelligible Other and, paradoxically, the inevitable successor of the human race, which is bound for near total extinction. The relationship between the aquans and the humans, much like that between Kyūzō and Kō in *Kemono-tachi*, is thus characterized paradoxically by an irreducible rupture on the one hand and an anticipated continuity on the other.

The ambivalent structure of "repetition with difference" can be similarly observed in Abe's later metaphysical detective fictions. In the case of *The Ruined Map*, for example, Mark Gibeau suggests that the eventual fate of the private detective can be interpreted not simply as yet another case of "disappearance" (*shissō*) but rather as the recurrence or repetition of an "endless loop," where the detective *becomes*, albeit unconsciously, the missing husband after whom he has been chasing all along.[112] Similarly, in his analysis of the fractured narrative in *The Box Man*, Baryon Posadas interprets the multiplication of urban homeless who walk around in cardboard boxes not simply as a doubling or mirroring of identity, but rather as embodying the possibility of change and difference, which is "necessarily produced in every new iteration […] even if only by virtue of the act of repetition itself."[113] As is shown in these examples, the paradoxical relationship between Kyūzō and Kō is not merely a singular incident but rather foreshadows a pattern that would recur throughout Abe's literary career.

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[111] For an analysis of *Inter Ice Age 4*, see chapter 3 in Christopher Bolton's *Sublime Voices: The Fictional Science and Scientific Fiction of Abe Kōbō* (Harvard University Press, 2009).
[112] Gibeau, 171.
[113] Posadas, 220.

Seen in this light, Kyūzō's metamorphosis into a beast should not be casually reduced to a prosaic metaphor for the sake of a dramatic ending. On the contrary, the fact that Kyūzō is transformed into a beast while "Japan is just a few centimeters on the other side" not only gives form to the profound irony that Kyūzō's homecoming is doomed to fail from the beginning, but also reflects Abe's implicit critique of the fantasy of nostalgic return to the idealized national community. Kyūzō's disillusioned realization that "perhaps Japan doesn't exist anywhere" thus clearly sets him apart from Kaji, the protagonist in Gomikawa Junpei's *Ningen no jōken*, who dies while dreaming of an idealized domestic life with his beloved wife. In sharp contrast to Kaji, whose demise ends up reaffirming and reinforcing his belief in the postwar utopia, Kyūzō's liminal experience at the very boundary of postwar Japan compels him to cast doubt on the very existence and legitimacy of national communities.

From Kyūzō to Shūzō: Recalling the National Past

In this light, the abrupt if not absurd ending where Kyūzō magically "became a beast, roaring as the skin of his hand peeled and blood oozed out, and yet pounding with all his strength" seems to suggest that something is structurally repressed like the "bone in the throat." In fact, given Kyūzō's skepticism about the legitimacy of national belonging, it seems possible to interpret his metamorphosis as a convenient escape from the ultimate melancholic experience, which is the realization that what he has considered home (*kokyō*) turns out to be none other than "a retroactive fantasy, a projection filling in the void."[114] Therefore, the ultimate horror is not necessarily the loss of home as such, as in the case of Kaji in *Ningen no jōken*, but rather the loss of *nostalgia for* home or what Žižek calls "the loss of the loss itself," which he describes as akin to the experience that "when

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[114] Slovaj Žižek, "The Politics of Alienation and Separation: From Hegel to Marx… and Back," *Crisis & Critique*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2017), 455.

a black African is enslaved and torn out of his roots, he in a way not only loses these roots—retroactively he has to realize that he never really fully had these roots."[115] In this light, whereas Kyūzō's transformation into a beast may seem on the surface to prevent him from accomplishing his homecoming journey, on a deeper level it ironically enables him to delay, if not elude, the radical disillusionment that his idealized home "doesn't exist anywhere" from the very beginning. "Rather than being in love with the hometown," as Gibeau points out, "Kyūzō is in love with the idea of the hometown or, perhaps more accurately, he is in love with the idea of being in love with the hometown."[116]

In fact, even Kyūzō's name, which according to Lori Watt is likely to be derived from the philosopher Kuki Shūzō (1988-1941),[117] seems to inhere exactly such implications. As Leslie Pincus points out, Kuki Shūzō's most prominent work *Iki no kōzō* (*The Structure of* Iki), originally published in 1930, gained a "second life" amid the height of the *Nihonjin-ron* (theories of Japanese essentialism and, by extension, exceptionalism) in the 1960s, just around the same time when *Kemono-tachi* was serialized.[118] In particular, Shūzō's theorization of the elusive concept *iki*, which broadly refers to the attitude of resignation and detachment alleged represented by courtesans in the Edo period, is "more an imagined recalling of something that never quite existed, an originary experience that came from the future rather than the past that stood-in for the genius of the race."[119] While Abe never explains his intention in naming the main protagonist after Kuki Shūzō, it indeed seems possible to be related to Shūzō's philosophical articulation on the "authentic" versus "inauthentic" existence, which are derived respectively from the "recollection" (*kioku*) and "forgetfulness" (*bōkyaku*) of

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[115] Ibid.
[116] Gibeau, 88.
[117] Watt, 154.
[118] Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture in Imperial Japan: Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (University of California Press, 1996), 5.
[119] Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton University Press, 2000), 31.

cultural memories. Heavily influenced by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, Shūzō believes that "it was imperative to return [the lost 'true self'] to the habitus of *Dasein*, the world of primordial identification" through the contingent (*gūzen*) possibilities of returning to remembrance.[120]

In other words, according to Kuki Shūzō's theory, past is always inherently yet essentially present to the self, which can thus be "recalled" (*sōki*) at any moment based on the principle of contingence or uncertainty. In fact, as Harootunian summarizes, "Kuki [Shūzō] wished to recall, through the experience of *iki*, the existence of a collective we—the Japanese race in a moment of cultural mastery and maturation," which for him is supposed to "outlast the immediate conditions of historical production."[121] As such, Kuki Shūzō's philosophical belief in the authentic, immediate existence, which embodies the ineffable power to "recall" the past in the flash of an instant, seems to echo precisely with Abe's fictional character Kyūzō's naïve, optimistic conviction in belonging to the "collective, mutual existence," which promises the prospect of retrieving the cultural memories of the past based on his imagined bonds with the spiritual "home" (*kokyō*).

If so, the significance of Kyūzō's metamorphosis is essentially twofold, as it not only symbolizes the empirical impossibility of return in terms of his physical access to postwar Japan, but more importantly suggests the epistemological impossibility of "recall" (*sōki*) in terms of his fantastic nostalgia for the collective memory of the "national past." It is precisely this superimposed structure that perplexes critics like Yamamuro or Yamashita in making sense of the ending of the novel, because it not only denies the "meaning" in terms of the growth or maturation (*seichō*) of the protagonists on the level of the narrative or plot, but it more importantly abolishes the teleological end at the very heart of the postwar repatriation enterprise, which is predicated as much on the empirical return as on the epistemological "recall" of the collective, national subjectivity.

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[120] Ibid., 224.
[121] Ibid., 243.

While some critics are frustrated by the anticlimactic denouement, which seems to defy the fundamental structure and underlying premise of repatriation narratives, others interpret the ending more positively by retrospectively juxtaposing the fictional elements along with Abe's biographical experiences of repatriation. Specifically, according to Abe's autobiographical chronology, he boarded the repatriation ship bound for Sasebo in Nagasaki Prefecture near the end of 1946. Unfortunately, due to the cholera outbreak on board just as the ship was about to enter the port, the passengers were stranded off the shore of Japan for nearly ten days, which eventually resulted in some repatriates displaying signs of madness (*hakkyō*). Given Abe's explicit acknowledgement that his "extraordinary experiences" (*ijō na taiken*) of the epidemic at the time later serves as the source of inspiration for *Kemono-tachi*,[122] it is justifiable that scholars were tempted to interpret the themes of madness, imprisonment, and above all metamorphosis in the novel as rhetorical devices to be passively superimposed onto Abe's personal experiences of return to postwar Japan.

While such a reading may have resulted in a more positive appraisal of the novel, it at the same time overlooks the transformative potentiality of the protagonists, which is either dismissed as meaningless, "structural" flaws that violate the principle of narrative development, or else reduced to thinly disguised metaphors that are in the end traced back to Abe's personal experiences. As such, both lines of interpretation are fundamentally based on a "realist" mode of reading, which, as I have explained, refuses to consider the meaning of the text beyond its narrative or authorial framework.

If so, the reason *Kemono-tachi* has been conventionally considered to occupy an odd place among Abe's oeuvre, it seems, lies perhaps not so much in the "realist" development of the fiction per se than in its "realist" mode of interpretation, which instead of encouraging the critics to overcome what may ostensibly appear absurd or even meaningless, in fact permits them to reconfigure the ending so that it fits into the conventional narrative structure with an explicit

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[122] Abe, "*Nenpu*" in *Abe Kōbō zenshū, vol. 12* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha), 465.

teleological end in moral terms. To put it bluntly, the seemingly anticlimactic conclusion, instead of making everything that precedes it into a waste or "muddle" (*konran*), in fact allows the novel to transcend its own limitation by compelling the readers to confront the surface meaninglessness.

The Political and Historical Contexts Behind *Kemono-tachi*

My position that "meaning" is constituted through its own "deconstruction" should not, however, be mistaken with a cynical attitude that lapses irredeemably into the mire of nihilism—namely, the total abolition of meaning as such. On the contrary, if the narrative structure fails to provide the anchor of meaning in its own right, then the meaning of the text has to be derived from elsewhere. More specifically, the imperative to "always historicize,"[123] as Fredric Jameson famously writes at the very beginning of *The Political Unconscious* (1981), seems to shed important light on the significance of this oft overlooked novel. To this end, it is perhaps constructive to consider Abe's creative career alongside with his political trajectory.

As many scholars have noted, Abe's expulsion from the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) at the Eighth Party Congress in July 1961, the year before he published *Suna no onna*, marks an important point of transition in both his political and creative life. Specifically, it has been considered to signal his retreat from avid political involvement, which culminates in a full withdrawal from politics due to a statement that he issued along with Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, and Ishikawa Jun in February 1967—half a year before *Moetsukita chizu* was published. As the result of the statement, which protests forcefully against the Cultural Revolution in China, Abe was fiercely attacked by his former associates like Hanada Kiyoteru and Noma Hiroshi. Since then, Abe rarely makes explicitly political comments and focuses instead on exploring the limits of literary

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[123] Fredric Jameson, "Preface," *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Cornell University Press, 1981), 9.

representation through the "plotless novels" and experimental theater.[124] In this light, Karatani Kōjin's accusation of Abe's evasive gesture in his celebrated "missing trilogy," which is criticized for circumventing the real contradictions and complications in society, can perhaps be interpreted as reflecting his frustration with Abe's intellectual hiatus, allegedly overtaken by a fascination with literary experimentation devoid of substantial interventions into the everyday reality.

The problem with such a line of reasoning, which dismisses Abe's proposal for disappearance or "sustained flight" as a mere conceptual or even rhetorical move, is that it overlooks the concrete historicity and materiality entailed in his writing career. In other words, Abe's waning political involvements result not so much from his preoccupation with literary representation per se as from his disillusionment with the promise of revolutionary politics itself. Delegated by the New Japan Literary Society (*Shin Nihon bungakukai*) and the Congress of National Culture (*Kokumin bunka kaigi*), Abe participated in the Czechoslovakian Writers' Conference in Prague in April 1956 and traveled through Eastern Europe for about two months. Witnessing the reality of the everyday life in a communist state for the first time, Abe was greatly disappointed by what he considers the "heaven disease" (*tengokubyō*) in the Soviet states,[125] which attempted to create the illusion of a universal communist utopia by "pretend[ing] *as if* contradictions do not exist in Socialist societies."[126]

At the same time, Abe was also deeply upset with the ways in which the Chinese writer Xiao Jun was treated by the Chinese Communist government.[127] One of the most prominent leftist intellectuals who resisted against Japan's imperial aggression during the war, Xiao was ironically charged as a "counter-revolutionary" (*fan geming*) in 1948 and was subsequently sent to a coal mine in

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[124] It should be noted that such characterization is much too reductive in terms of Abe's tremendously complex writing career. Even his later novels, despite his emphasis on the exploration of representation, have never quire abandoned the realistic concerns. For example, *The Ark Sakura* (*Hakobune Sakura-maru*, 1984), one of his last novels, clearly reflects his concerns and anxieties about the imminent threats imposed by the nuclear age.

[125] The essay titled "Tengokubyō," included in the essay collection *Tōō o iku*, appears on October 1, 1956. See *Abe Kōbō zenshū, vol. 7* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1998), 43-5.

[126] Toba Kōji, *Undōtai: Abe Kōbō* (Tokyo: Ichiyōsha, 2007): 216, emphasis mine.

[127] Karube Tadashi, *Abe Kōbō no toshi*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2012): 167.

Fushun, Liaoning to "experience life" (*tiyan shenghuo*). When Xiao's novel *Wuyue de kuangshan* (The Coal Mine in May) was published in 1954, it immediately received harsh criticism from the other party intellectuals for its "individual heroism" (*geren yingxiong zhuyi*), which allegedly disregards the leadership and guidance from the party. At the Writers' Conference in Prague, Abe was greatly dismayed by Xiao's fellow Chinese writers, who unanimously accused him as a "counter-revolutionary."[128] After his return from Eastern Europe, Abe quickly published two essays, "Akiraka ni shitai rekishi no kizu" (The Historical Wound that Needs to be Exposed) and "Hyakka seihō" (Let A Hundred Flowers Bloom),[129] in which he explicitly criticized the Chinese Communist regime for implicating and suppressing intellectuals like Xiao Jun.[130]

Therefore, when his essay collection *Tōō o iku: Hangaria mondai no haikei* (Traveling Eastern Europe: The Context of the Hungary Problem), which was based on Abe's observations and reflections from his travels in Eastern Europe, appeared in February 1957, it is hardly surprising that the leaders of the JCP were greatly offended and infuriated by his criticism on the Soviet, Japanese, and Chinese Communist Parties, which they deemed as blatant betrayal to and vicious slander on the communist cause.

Fiercely denounced by the orthodox party intellectuals,[131] Abe was forced to clarify his stance in subsequent essays that the positive or "plus" contradictions in the socialist states, which play a constructive role in fostering individuality and heterogeneity, should be categorically

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[128] "Akiraka ni shitai rekishi no kizu" in *Abe Kōbō zenshu, vol. 6*, 137-8. Also "Hyakka seihō" in the same volume, 158-9.

[129] The title of the second essay comes ironically from the famous expression "letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend" (Chinese: *baihua qifang, baijia zhengming*, Japanese: *hyakka seihō, hyakka sōmei*) by Mao Zedong, which is considered to mark the beginning of the so-called Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1956. Conceived originally as a way to "promote the flourishing of the arts and the progress of science," it quickly degraded into the infamous Anti-Rightist Campaign just a year later, resulting in the suppression and persecution of numerous potentially dissident intellectuals.

[130] In particular, Abe mocks at the hypocrisy of the slogan "letting a hundred flowers bloom," where literary criticism is based more on the writer's political or ideological stance than on the specific content of the work. Despite its seemingly liberal attitude, in other words, the "a hundred flowers" campaign does not seem to welcome or even tolerate voices of dissent, let alone discontent.

[131] Abe Neri, *Abe Kōbō den* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2011), 109.

distinguished from the negative or "minus" contradictions in the capitalist societies. Despite his explanation, however, the party members continued to condemn and distance Abe until he was eventually purged from the party in 1961. In this light, contrary to the conventional interpretation which locates the turning point in Abe's political and literary career in his expulsion from the JCP in 1961, it seems more reasonable to trace it further back to his initial political disillusionment with communism when he traveled through Eastern Europe in 1956, which heralded an unhappy decade of bitter disagreement with and misunderstanding from his former friends, comrades, and mentors such as Hanada and Noma.

It was in the midst of Abe's political disenchantment with the revolutionary ideals promised by communism that the novel *Kemono-tachi* was conceived of. For example, Abe participated in a roundtable discussion with Haniya Yutaka and Ōnishi Kyojin on the theme of "The Hungary Problem and Writers" (*Hangarī mondai to bungakusha*) on January 1, 1957, the very same day when the first installment of *Kemono-tachi* appeared on the literary magazine *Gunzō*. Moreover, the essay collection *Tōō o iku* was published about a month later, when the novel had just reached the midpoint of its serialization.

At the same time, however, the timing for *Kemono-tachi* also ironically coincides with the 1956 Economic White Paper (*keizai hakusho*) published by the Economic Planning Agency, which famously proclaims the end of the postwar period (*mohaya sengo de wa nai*) and, by extension, inadvertently portends the advent of the high-growth period. In particular, the White Paper predicts that the economic growth will gradually shift from the needs of recovery (*kaifuku* or *fukkō*) to the "[modernized] transformation" (*kindaika*),[132] which is defined specifically as the "painful operation" of "self-reform" (*mizukara o kaizō suru*) that warrants the "swift and stable economic

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[132] The characters used here are *kindaika*, which is usually rendered as modernization in English. Here, however, *kindaika* is explicitly annotated as transformation, in particular self-transformation, through the use of parenthesis: "Kindaika— namely transformation, is the process of self-reform [*Kindaika—toransufōmēshon—to wa, mizukara o kaizō suru katei de aru*]."

development."[133] Contrary to the cautious yet optimistic verdict in the White Paper, the radical suspension of meaning at the end of *Kemono-tachi* fundamentally rejects the logic that undergirds the "foundational narrative," which is predicated on the sequential, if not entirely teleological, temporalization of history into clearly demarcated time periods in the order of the war, postwar recovery, and high growth. In a sense, just when Abe was disillusioned with the promise of the communist utopia which he had long fantasized about since his exposure to the surrealist communist art in the early 1950s, the protagonist Kyūzō is, in his own way, about to confront the melancholic loss of his nostalgic yet imagined "home," which was in reality desperately attempting to move forward by relegating the traumatic memories of war and defeat to the past. Whether communist or nationalist, in other words, a utopia is precisely what it is—a paradise in fantasy.

In this light, the conventional interpretation which treats the degree of details in the novel as mere background settings is far too reductive in terms of the novel's specific historical and political implications. As I explained earlier, most literary critics have either dismissed the elements of realism in the novel as inconsequential triviality that deviates from Abe's typical principle of anonymity, or else treated them as clues to probe into Abe's relatively unknown trajectory in Manchuria before his more celebrated writing career in postwar Japan. In fact, even those who did take the details in the novel more seriously did so more out of curiosity in the writer's biographical experiences than out of interest in the reality or historicity of these details per se. As such, critics have tended to interpret the realism in *Kemono-tachi* not as reflecting Abe's critical engagement with the external reality, but rather as signs of his "introversion" from overt political interventions to personal memories. As a result, despite the numerous clearly fictional twists in the plot, the proper nouns that litter the text are often reduced to sporadic episodes in Abe's childhood experiences in Manchuria and therefore ironically

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[133] *Nenji keizai hōkoku: Nihon keizai no seichō to kindaika*, published by Keizai Kikaku-chō, is publicly accessible through the website of the Cabinet Office (*Naikaku-fu*): https://www5.cao.go.jp/keizai3/keizaiwp/wp-je56/wp-je56-0000i1.html.

forced into the conventional framework of autobiographical narratives or even the literary tradition of the I-novel (*shishōsetsu*).

In light of the specific political conditions in which *Kemono-tachi* was written, it thus becomes clear that the numerous references to specific dates, locations, and names in the novel are intended to be read in relation to the broad historical context rather than to Abe's personal history of growing up in the colonial Manchuria. For example, about halfway through the first chapter, the third-person narrator abruptly inserts a chronology into the narrative. Beginning with the Allied Council for Japan on April 4, 1946[134] and ending with the formation of the Ashida cabinet on March 10, 1948, this chronology does not focus exclusively on the "domestic politics" of postwar Japan but also includes significant events in the Allied nations such as the nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll, the stock crashes in New York and Chicago, and the devaluation of the Soviet currency.[135] More significantly, however, are the series of incidents that happened in the former colonies of imperial Japan. In particular, the narrator closely traces the development of the civil war in China, fought between the Nationalists (KMT) and the Communists (CPC), immediately following Japan's defeat. For example, the chronology contains the following entry: "The Chinese Nationalist government transfers the capital from Chongqing to Nanjing" on May 1, 1946. Then in less than a week, "[the] Chinese Communist Party establishes a people's government in Changchun," the very same city of what used to be the capital of Manchuko under the name of Xinjing (Japanese: Shinkyō). About three months later, "[the] Chinese Communist Party issues a mass mobilization order, initiating a full-fledged attack on the mainland" on August 19. Finally, the narrator records the February 28 uprising, one of the

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[134] The United States, the British Commonwealth, the Soviet Union, and the Republic of China convened in Tokyo for discussions regarding the fate of Japan
[135] *Kemono-tachi*, 30.

bloodiest incidents in postcolonial Taiwan, in which thousands of civilians were brutally massacred by the Nationalist army.[136]

Oblivious to the drastic changes in the world around him, Kyūzō is able to "maintain a blissful state of ignorance" under the protection of the Soviet officers.[137] Unlike Kyūzō, who considers himself to be "in the calm eye of the typhoon" (29), however, the third-person narrator maintains a detached yet critical stance by situating the fictional narrative within the broad historical context. The chronology thus functions not only to provide a historical context or a meta-fictional layer to the novel, but more importantly to show the profound, persisting connectedness between Japan and its former colonies.[138] Specifically, the transference of capital from Chongqing to Nanjing by the Nationalist government, the establishment of a people's government in Changchun by the Communist Party, and finally the "mass riots in Taipei [that] resulted in over 1,000 casualties" were all directly related to the political vacuum left by the collapse of the Japanese Empire, as cities like Nanjing, Changchun, and Taipei were among the indispensable centers of power for Japan's colonial domination during the war.

Historicity of Fiction: From Baharin to Ha'erbaling

As this chronology shows, contrary to Abe's typical penchant for anonymity, in the case of *Kemono-tachi*, specificity and authenticity becomes the guiding principle. As I mentioned earlier, although the remarkable degree of details does not necessarily serve the purpose of reconstructing Abe's childhood years growing up in Manchuria, it does allow the readers to retrace the steps taken by the

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[136] Ibid. The February 28 Incident will be examined in further detail when I discuss Kyū Eikan's *Honkon* in Chapter 2.

[137] Gibeau, 95.

[138] The chronology, Lianying Shan points out, "shows that Kyūzō's journey is not just an isolated experience, but that it takes place in a time when new nations and national boundaries are being formed" (122). At the same time, however, Abe also problematizes and destabilizes the very notion of "new nations and national boundaries" through the deliberate failure of Kyūzō's journey.

protagonists on a map. Specifically, nearly all the place names that appear in *Kemono-tachi* are real, which include not only large cities such as Shenyang, Changchun, and Harbin, but also remote rural villages rarely traveled and little known to anyone but perhaps the locals. As they trudge across the frozen wilderness after the train derailment, for example, Kō explains to Kyūzō: "The next town is Shuanggang. That's also on the border. The towns after that, Kaitong, Bianzhao, Tanyu, Taipingchuan, as well as the towns thereafter, are all on the border."[139]

Despite or perhaps precisely because of the profusion of details in the novel, it stands out all the more when certain elements are at odds with the overarching principle of realism based on the veracity of geographic and historical details. Specifically, whereas almost all the place names in the novel are real, there is but one notable exception: the town of Baharin is fictional and cannot be found anywhere on a map of Manchuria.

As Kyūzō's actual hometown where he is born and raised, Baharin is without question one of the most significant places in the novel. Given Abe's impressive meticulousness in terms of the specificity of referents in *Kemono-tachi*, his decision in setting Baharin alone, of all the numerous places in the novel, as fictional cannot be taken lightly as a whimsical coincidence. Nakane Tōju, for example, points out: "Although the novel is littered with specific proper nouns like place names and personal names, Baharin alone is made-up [*kakū*]."[140] Oh Mijung similarly suggests that Baharin, which is set (*settei*) somewhere near the city of Qiqihar, is a fictional place that does not match strictly with reality.[141] However, even among the few scholars who attempt to situate Kyūzō's fictional journey within the actual geography of Manchuria, none seems too concerned with the

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[139] *Kemono-tachi*, 60.
[140] Nakane Tōju, "Abe Kōbō: 'Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu' ron," *Showa bungakushi ni okeru Manshu no mondai* (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Kyōiku Gakubu Sugino Yōkichi Kenkyūshitsu, 1996), 160.
[141] Oh Mijung, 164.

specific reasons behind Baharin's deviation from the propensity of reality and authenticity in the novel.

One possible explanation is the violently synthetic nature of colonial towns like Baharin. In the novel, Baharin is described as being comprised of two parts, the "old town" (*kyū shigai*) which is mainly inhabited by the local Chinese villagers, and the "new town" (*shin shigai*) which is dominated by the Japanese colonizers working at the pulp factory—the backbone of the town's industry. Cutting through the new town, which he describes fondly as a "fantasy land that could be transformed into anything—a jungle, waterway, or tunnel,"[142] Kyūzō arrives at the bridge that connects the two parts of the town after he slips out of the Soviet dormitory. Once across, he wanders into the "oldest part of town," which "at the same time […] was now the most desolate part."[143] Moreover, in stark contrast to the new town where he "knew the alley so well that he could immediately recall each scribbling on the wall," the "streets in the old part of town were a maze."[144] Therefore, instead of achieving the ideal of "Five Races Under One Union," as the national motto of Manchuko goes, the spatial adjacency between the two parts of Baharin ironically highlights the absolutely insurmountable chasm between the colonizers and the colonized.[145] The newly built pulp factory in the new part of town, whose very existence depends exclusively on the tireless extraction and exploitation of resources in the "oldest part of town," eventually transforms what used to be the "main artery" of the town (*kansen dōro*) into a dilapidated maze. In other words, the demarcation of space not only reflects or represents the racial division of society, but it more significantly reifies and justifies the very hierarchical structure commonly observed in colonial spaces.

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[142] *Kemono-tachi*, 13.
[143] Ibid., 14.
[144] Ibid., 13-4.
[145] See Saka Kenta, 174.

While the deformed symbiosis in colonial towns like Baharin, which is imposed arbitrarily by the domineering colonizers, seems to provide a compelling explanation for the made-up name by demonstrating the intrusive nature of colonial intervention and exploitation, the very specificity of the name "Baharin" involves, I believe, an additional layer of concrete historicity. Given the impressive degree of references to geographical and historical details, it seems unlikely that Baharin is entirely "made-up" without any archetypes in reality. Specifically, I speculate that a small rural town known as Ha'erbaling (*Harubarei* or *Harubarin*), which is located in the outskirts of Dunhua (Japanese: Tonka) County in southwestern Jilin Province, serves as the archetype for Baharin, not only because of the striking resemblance in their names,[146] but more importantly because of the occurrence of two infamous historical incidents which may be vaguely referenced in the novel.

As a colonial town that depends heavily on the pulp industry, one possible point of entry for determining Baharin's archetype is the list of pulp factories in colonial Manchuria. According to Sunaga Noritake, a total of twenty-seven factories in Manchuria were involved in the pulp industry as of October 1942, among which nine are categorized specifically as pulp factories whereas the rest eighteen as paper-manufacturing (*seishi*) factories.[147] Starting with the establishment of the Manchuria Pulp Company (*Manshū Parupu*) in May 1936, some of the oldest and largest pulp factories include Eastern Manchuria Rayon Pulp Company (*Higashi Manshū Jinken Parupu*, or *Tōman Parupu*), Oriental

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[146] The characters for Baharin are 巴哈林, whereas the characters for Ha'erbaling are 哈爾巴嶺. Although the orders of the first and third characters ("ha" and "ba") are switched, they are nonetheless the same characters. Moreover, while the conventional *on'yomi* reading for Ha'erbaling would be Harubarei, it is also frequently read as Harubarin, following its Chinese reading. In this case, it is entirely possible that Abe's choice is based on the Chinese reading, which is not unseen in his other writings on Manchuria. For example, in the essay "Tomo o motsu to iu koto ga" (The Meaning of Having Friends), published in November 1948, Abe uses シェンヤン (Shenyan) instead of the more common reading 瀋陽 (Shin'yō) for denoting the city of Shenyang. Compared with the conventional reading Shin'yō, the former reading Shenyan clearly approximates the Chinese pronunciation Shenyang better. Jie Fang interprets Abe's choice as a strategy to avoid censorship, as the former reading, while much closer to the Chinese reading, is decidedly more unfamiliar to the average Japanese readers. While the specific rationale behind his choice remains unclear, it seems certain that Abe is at least aware of the practice of privileging the Chinese reading over the conventional *on'yomi* of the word. See Jie Fang, "Abe Kōbō shoki sakuhin kenkyū: 'yokuatsu no monogatari' o megutte" in *Gengo, chiiki bunka kenkyū*, vol. 24 (2018), 17-34.
[147] Sunaga Noritake, "Manshū no kagaku kōgyō (jō)," *Rikkyō keizaigaku kenkyū*, vol. 59, no. 4 (2006), 136.

Pulp Company (*Tōyō Parupu*), and Japan-Manchuria Pulp Company (*Nichiman Parupu*).[148] Moreover,

since the pulp industry is one of the "national policy" industries, it is hardly surprising that all of

these companies belonged to top conglomerates (*zaibatsu*) during the war such as Mitsubishi,

Kanebō, Kawanishi, and Ōji.[149]

Among the four major pulp companies in Manchuria, of particular interest is the main

factory of the Japan-Manchuria Pulp Company located in Dunhua County, where the Dunhua

Incident, alternatively known as the Nichiman Pulp Incident, happened in August 1945. Shortly after

Japan's surrender to the Allies, the Soviet armies quickly occupied the town of Dunhua and took

over the pulp factory. Relocating all Japanese men to a nearby airfield, the Soviet occupation force

decided to imprison the women in the single dormitory, many of whom were sexually abused by the

Soviet soldiers. Futilely attempting to evade the unbridled sexual violence, many women decided to

shave their heads and cover their faces with dirt.[150] Unperturbed by the Japanese women's desperate

struggles, however, the Soviet soldiers continued their sexual aggression until August 27, when about

thirty women, unable to live on under such extreme violence, decided to commit collective suicide

(*shūdan jiketsu*) by taking cyanide.

The fear of rampant sexual violation by the Soviet soldiers in Dunhua is echoed by Kita, the

factory manager in *Kemono-tachi*, who anxiously urges "all you women must go cut your hair."

Although the Dunhua Incident is by no means the only case of sexual violence allegedly perpetrated

by the Russians,[151] which are widely recorded in memoirs of repatriation from Manchuria,[152] such

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[148] Ibid., 133-4.
[149] Ibid., 134. Strictly speaking, both Kanebō and Ōji can be considered as affiliated with the Mitsui Group, even though they operated largely independently in their own right.
[150] Yoshioka Ikuzō, "Sukui naki Tonka: Moto Nichiman Parupu Tonka kōjō," in *Hiroku Daitōa senshi, Manshū hen ge* (Tokyo: Fuji Shoin, 1953), 83.
[151] Some other major incidents of rape and massacre of Japanese repatriating civilians include the Tonghua Incident and the Gegenmiao Incident.
[152] Takeda Shigetarō estimates that as many as 30,000 to 40,000 Japanese women were subject to rape as a result of the Soviet occupation. See Watt, 47. The victims of rape, however, rarely wrote about their traumatic experiences themselves. See Tamanoi, 73.

association would seem more than a mere coincidence in light of another war crime that took place

in the nearby town of Ha'erbaling, just about forty kilometers to the southeast of Dunhua.

Connected by the Jingtu (Japanese: Kyōto) Railway[153] stretching between Xinjing (*Shinkyō*,

today Changchun) and Tumen (Japanese: Tomon), which is known for rich forests of oak, birch,

maple, and pine,[154] Ha'erbaling was, for the most part, a rural village in deep mountains inhabited

mostly by impoverished Chinese and Korean peasants.[155] Little is known, however, about the fact

that Ha'erbaling is by far the largest dump site of biological and chemical weapons developed by the

Division of Epidemic Prevention and Water Supply (*Bōeki kyūsuibu*) of the Kwantung Army under

the direction of the notorious Surgeon General Ishii Shirō,[156] which consisted of Unit 100 based in

Changchun, Unit 516 in Qiqihar, and above all the infamous Unit 731 in Harbin.[157] Although the

exact amount of weapons is yet to be determined, as the estimates vary widely between 300,000

(Japanese estimation) and 1,800,000 (Chinese estimation),[158] it goes beyond doubt that a staggering

amount of lethal biochemical weapons were buried in this otherwise insignificant remote village

shortly before Japan's surrender to the Allies. In fact, according to the research by Tsuneishi Keiichi,

the Kwantung Army went so far as to invent a new type of blister agent with extremely low freezing

point by mixing up Lewisite and mustard gas, which could be effectively deployed even in the rigid

winter in Manchuria. In anticipation of the impending war with the Soviet Union, the Kwantung

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[153] Known as the Changtu Railway since the collapse of Manchuko, upon which Xinjing was reverted to its old name of Changchun.

[154] Tagami Manabu, "Manshū no parupu kōgyō o miru," *Manshū Nichinichi Shinbun*, May 16, 1938.

[155] Mantestukai, "Manshū tetsudō meguri: Kyōto-sen no maki," *Manshū Gurafu fukkokuban, vol. 6* (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2009), 126-7.

[156] See Ohara Hiroto, et al., *Nihongun no dokugasu sen: Semarareru ikidan shōri* (Tokyo: Nicchū shuppan, 1991), 151, and Tsuneishi Keiichi, *Kagaku heiki hanzai*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2003), 246.

[157] Nnanyan Guo, "Discovering Traces of Humanity: Taking Individual Responsibility for Medical Atrocities," *Japan's Wartime Medical Atrocities: Comparative Inquiries in Science, History, and Ethics*, edited by Jing-Bao Nie, et al. (Routledge, 2010), 108.

[158] For Japanese estimation, see Nobukuni Takahiro, "Chūgoku iki kagaku heiki shori jigyō no keii to kongo no mitōshi," *Rippō to chōsa*, no. 292 (2009), 72. For Chinese estimate, see Lu Yi, "Riben yiqi huaxue wuqi xiaohui gongzuo de jinzhan yu xianzhuang" *Guoji guanxi xueyuan xuebao*, no. 1 (2005), 33-7. The Abandoned Chemical Weapons Office (*Iki kagaku heiki shori tantōshitsu*) of the Cabinet Office (*Naikakufu*) of Japan publishes regular official reports regarding the progress on the disposal of abandoned chemical weapons in China.

Army decided to set the headquarters of its prided First Area Army (*Dai-ichi hōmengun*) in Dunhua. As a result, countless weapons and ammunitions, including the biological and chemical weapons, were brought into Dunhua from all over Manchuria in preparation for a protracted war of attrition with the Soviet Union.[159]

In reality, however, these weapons were never deployed against the Soviet armies, because most members of the biochemical units fled on the eve of the Soviet invasion of Manchuria. Perhaps afraid of the potential consequences of using massive biological weapons against the Allied powers, Unit 731 attempted to destroy all evidence in the cover of darkness by massacring test subjects, dumping embalmed specimens into the nearby Songhua River, burning off anatomical and medical records, and even demolishing the research facilities with explosives.[160] Despite their systematic destruction of evidence, however, some experimental animals escaped from the facilities and as a result caused a number of major epidemic outbreaks, including the typhus epidemic in "year twenty-one" (1946) that supposedly takes the lives of the five mummies in *Kemono-tachi*, whom Kyūzō unsuspectingly believes are killed because of an inevitable and indiscriminate natural disaster: "Speaking of typhus, there was lice. Kyūzō recalled the louse that had crawled out from Kō's collar by the marsh, and his entire body suddenly throbbed with itchiness."[161] It thus never occurs to Kyūzō, or perhaps even to the mummies themselves, that they are in fact victims of the medical atrocities committed by their compatriots of the Kwantung Army. It thus becomes all the more ironic that the implied "telos" of their unfinished journey (*michi nakaba shite*), namely the Japanese state, turns out to be solely responsible for their profound regret (*munen*) and, ultimately, their anguished deaths.

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[159] Ohara et al., *Nihongun no doku gasu sen*, 154.
[160] Tsuneishi Keiichi, *Nana-san-ichi butai: Seibutsu heiki hanzai no shinjitsu* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), 166.
[161] *Kemono-tachi*, 132.

The reference to the typhus outbreak in the novel is unlikely to be a mere coincidence, as Abe's father Asakichi actually fell victim to typhus in the winter of 1945 while treating an infected patient from the very same outbreak.[162] According to the biography by Kōbō's daughter Neri, "in the midst [of the Soviet invasion], a typhus epidemic broke out, which was allegedly spread by the rats released [*nigashite*] by the Japanese germ units [*saikin butai*]. Asakichi was infected, so were the rest of the family. He died from high fever at over 40 degrees [Celsius] that lasted for a week."[163] As such, the family of mummies in the novel should not be regarded simply as dramatic devices to move the plot forward but instead as the concrete embodiment of what Abe's family *could have* ended up in reality. When put into the historical context, it seems to make sense that Kyūzō "felt that these mummies hated him" and "wanted to entangle him in their fate" precisely because his naïve fantasy of the idyllic utopia ironically conceals the brutal reality where the Japanese state indiscriminately and mercilessly murdered even its own imperial subjects.

Therefore, although a number of literary critics and scholars have associated the conception of *Kemono-tachi* with Abe's lived experiences with epidemics, they have focused primarily on the cholera outbreak on the repatriation ship right before its arrival in the Sasebo port. In other words, they resort to Abe's extraordinary experiences onboard mostly out of the practical needs to come up with a reasonable explanation for the seemingly abrupt, if not entirely absurd, conclusion with madness and metamorphosis. However, if considered in relation to the medical atrocities committed by the imperial Japanese armies, the significance of epidemics goes beyond the level of narrative tropes and even authorial experiences. Instead, these episodes should be placed squarely within the

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[162] Kimura Yōko, "Shinyō no Abe Kōbō: Sakka to naru izen no shippitsu katsudō o chūshin ni," *Mejiro Daigaku jinbungaku kenkyu*, vol. 11 (2015), 229.

[163] Abe Neri, 51. Although Neri implies that the rats were released by the Kwantung Army, it is unclear whether the animals were actually released or if they escaped on their own. The reality is perhaps a combination of both, as incidents of destruction of evidence happened concomitantly at several different locations where the biochemical units were stationed.

broad historical context which encompasses not only the countless individual misfortunes on the journey of repatriation, but more importantly the ineffaceable wounds left by the "exceptional" past on the supposedly postwar everyday present.

In other words, whereas the conventional line of interpretation has either emphasized the profusion of realistic details or the putatively meaningless ending which contradicts the typical linear structure culminating in the protagonist's maturation and triumph over hardships, these seemingly incompatible elements may actually allow the attentive readers to uncover for themselves what is ostensibly absent or, more radically, repressed from the plot of the novel itself. Therefore, unlike most autobiographical narratives that focus exclusively on the personal sufferings, *Kemono-tachi* shows that the experiences of repatriation are not isolated from, but rather integrally connected to, the extended history that transcends the simple temporal division between the war and the postwar.

As an example, even though the novel never directly depicts Kyūzō's desired destination of postwar Japan, the readers are nonetheless alerted to its grim reality through the offhanded comments by the crews of the smuggling ship. The captain, for example, admonishes Kyūzō: "Things won't be so good once you leave the ship. You'll wind up an urchin [*furōji*], wandering about scrounging in garbage. Best to spend a bit more time enjoying yourself here."[164] Later, the doctor on board similarly reminds Kyūzō: "Really, you might be better off here than going ashore and becoming an urchin."[165] In reality, for orphans born in the colonies like Kyūzō who have no money, no identification papers, and no relatives or friends to turn to, one likely outcome for them is indeed to wind up urchins. In this light, Kyūzō seems to have little control over his own fate, which is uncannily predicted, if not entirely predetermined, by the ship crews. Kyūzō's potential life as an

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[164] *Kemono-tachi*, 183.
[165] Ibid., 188.

urchin in the alternative reality in postwar Japan, in other words, constitutes an isomorphic relation to the dog-catching youth whom he has briefly met in the outskirts of Shenyang.

Deeply mired in the profound crises of overpopulation and food shortage, the very same reasons that had once driven Japan to the path of colonial expansion, the bleak reality in postwar Japan turns out to be the precise opposite of Kyūzō's rosy imaginations. It is thus hardly surprising that the untimely return of the overseas repatriates actually compounds, rather than alleviates, these predicaments. As a result, many repatriates who attempted to reintegrate into the postwar social order experienced tremendous difficulties and, at the end of their wits, wound up unemployed, or worse, criminals. In particular, "women from Manchuria and men from Siberia," as Lori Watt succinctly phrases, were typically subject to the most systematic and persistent discrimination by their fellow citizens, who considered the former to be physically violated by the Russian soldiers, whereas the latter ideologically contaminated by the Soviet Communism.[166]

Dismayed by the dire situation after their return, many repatriates in fact responded to the call of "postwar reclamation" (*sengo kaitaku*) and devoted themselves once again to the national cause. Almost immediately after Japan's official surrender to the Allies, the government established the Bureau of Reclamation (*Kaitakukyoku*) under the direction of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (*Nōrinshō*) on October 26, 1945 and subsequently raised the proposal for "emergency reclamation" (*kinkyū kaitaku*) at a cabinet meeting on November 9. Uncannily paralleling its wartime counterpart of colonial reclamation, the national policy (*kokusaku*) of "postwar reclamation" was similarly designed to increase food production and eliminate unemployment.[167] As a result, the repatriates were immediately reincorporated into the postwar economy through the ironic transformation from the superfluous population into the surplus population or what Marx famously

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[166] For a detailed discussion on the treatment received by repatriates from Manchuria and Siberia, see Watt, 98-138.
[167] Nōchi kaikaku shiryō hensan iinkai, "Kinkyū kaitaku jigyō jisshi yōryō," *Nōchi kaikaku shiryō shūsei, vol. 3* (Tokyo: Nōsei chōsakai, 1975), 294-301.

calls the "reserve army of labor." In this light, Abe's notion of the "frontier within" (*uchinaru henkyō*)

needs to be apprehended not simply as a theoretical concept but instead as the concrete historical

reality where the overseas colonies or "external frontiers" were literally folded back onto the rural

hinterlands of postwar Japan.

In conclusion, in response to the conventional approach that treats this novel either as

another autobiographical account, albeit with major fictional twists, or else as a structurally flawed

coming-of-age novel, my own reading of *Kemono-tachi* rejects both lines of interpretation and

contends instead that the novel challenges the very traditions and premises of the so-called

repatriation narrative. In other words, the seemingly awkward juxtaposition of realistic details with a

frustratingly meaningless conclusion should not be understood strictly within the framework of the

narrative structure of the novel itself. Instead, it opens up space for readers to actively make sense of

what may ostensibly appear as nonsensical by taking into account the broader historicity. Moreover,

this historicity is concerned not so much with isolated incidents or individual experiences of

repatriation, which tend to be relegated to the recesses of the exceptional past, as with the *longue durée*

or the implicit temporal continuity from Japan's modernization to imperialization, decolonization,

and eventually occupation by the Allied powers.[168] In this sense, the colonial past and the

postcolonial present constitute a synchronic, rather than diachronic, relationship, enabling us to

intervene critically into the very construction of the "repatriation narrative" as a genre, which

endows tales of suffering in the process of repatriation with a redemptive meaning for the sake of

postwar Japan's "foundational narrative" of recovery and prosperity.

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[168] For a discussion of the "*longue duree* of decolonization" in the Japanese context, see, for example, Lisa Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

Chapter Two

Politics and Aesthetics of the Postwar: Structure of Desire and Literary Awards

He took a deep breath of air. Once again he caught a strangeness on the wind, neither pleasant nor unpleasant, neither odor nor perfume—just strange, and curiously exciting. "Superintendent, what's that smell? Casey noticed it too, the moment Sven opened the door."

Armstrong hesitated. Then he smiled. "That's Hong Kong's very own, Mr. Bartlett. It's money."

—James Clavell, *Noble House*, 1981

If the 1956 economic white paper announced the "end of the postwar" (*mohaya sengo de ha nai*) on the economic level, Ishihara Shintarō's impressive debut into the literary scene earlier that year, when his novel *Taiyō no kisetsu* (Season of the Sun) won the prestigious Akutagawa Prize, was seen as drawing a curtain on the so-called "postwar literature." Literary critic Togaeri Hajime described this event as foreboding nothing less than the "demise of the literary establishment" (*bundan no hōkai*).[1] To some, however, the sensation over Ishihara's novel was perhaps no more than the last nail in the coffin, a belated confirmation of something they had faintly sensed since the Korean War. Participants in the roundtable discussion "The Final Settlements of Postwar Literature" (*Sengo bungaku no sōkessan*) held in January 1953, which listed prominent writers and critics such as Hirano Ken, Ara Masahito,

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[1] See Ann Sherif, "The Aesthetics of Speed and the Illogicality of Politics: Ishihara Shintarō's Literary Debut" *Japan Forum*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2005), 186.

Honda Shūgo, among others, concluded that "postwar literature, as a literary movement (*bungaku undō*), has ended."[2]

While some critics chided Ishihara for bringing an end to literary traditions, others celebrated his novel for bearing the seeds of a fresh, new literature. Regardless of their different appraisals of the quality of his writing, the Akutagawa Prize judges praised Ishihara, then a student at Hitotsubashi University, for his "youthfulness" (*wakasa*), "newness" (*atarashisa*), and "freshness" (*shinsensa*).[3] Commenting on the scene in which the protagonist Tatsuya ripped through the shōji paper screen with his erect penis—one of the most controversial moments in postwar Japanese literature, Etō Jun commended Ishihara for his defiance of literary conventions, which he regarded as equivalent to thrusting through the shōji of the morality of the "adult world" (*otona no sekai*).[4]

Whether or not they approved of Ishihara's celebration of "amorality," the Akutagawa committee seemed to agree that his novel forebodes the advent of "a previously unknown youthful freshness, as well as a feeling of speed towards a bright future."[5] Indeed, Ishihara's "feeling of speed" is not limited to the text but is also shown in his sensitivity to the various trends in the mass culture, which he promptly took advantage of. Not only did he appear frequently in weekly magazines (*shūkanshi*),[6] which became extremely popular in the mid 1950s, he also quickly turned his debut novel into a film, in which his younger brother Yūjirō debuted in a supporting role.[7] Released

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[2] See Shim Su-kyŏng, "Sengo o meguru shinshō fūkei: Ishihara Shintarō 'Taiyō no kisetsu,' Kaikō Takeshi 'Panikku,' Ōe Kenzaburō 'Warera no jidai' o chūshin ni," *Nihon gengo bunka* vol. 18 (2011), 518.

[3] From the selection critique (*senpyō*) by Inoue Yasushi and Niwa Fumio. See Gomi Yasusuke, et al., *Akutagawa-shō zenshū, vol. 5* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjūsha, 1982), 447-8; 449-50.

[4] Etō Jun, "Akutagawa-shō to sabu karucha" in *Sandē Mainichi*, July 25, 1976, quoted in Nagai Tatsuo, et al., *Akutagawa-shō no kenkyū: Akutagawa-shō no ura omote*, (Tokyo: Nihon Jānarisuto Senmon Gakuin Shuppanbu, 1979), 268.

[5] Sherif, 186.

[6] In an essay titled "Chūkan bunkaron" (On Middlebrow Culture, 1957), Katō Hidetoshi suggests that the proliferation of shūkanshi gave rise to a new, encompassing "middlebrow culture" that threw into question the very boundaries between a privileged, highbrow culture (*kōkyū bunka*) on the one hand and a mass, lowbrow culture (*taishū bunka*) on the other. See Katō, "Chukan bunkaron," *Chūō kōron*, March 1, 1957. Cited in Sherif, 190.

[7] *Crazed Fruit* (*Kurutta kajitsu*, 1956), similarly based on Shintarō's fiction (1956) and released by Nikkatsu, was the first film in which Yūjirō played a leading role, heralding a career of almost unparalleled popularity in postwar Japan. In a way, Ishihara's taiyōzoku fictions may be seen as a prototypical example of the "media mix" phenomenon, not only because Shintarō was directly involved in the production process by casting his own younger brother, but also because

by Nikkatsu the following year, the film caused a tremendous sensation (or scandal, depending on

the perspective), leading to a social phenomenon that journalist Ōya Sōichi named the *Taiyōzoku*

(sun tribe), as young people imitated the extravagant, carefree lifestyle portrayed in the film.[8] Born

into modern, wealthy families, the main characters in *Taiyō no kisetsu*, like the Ishihara brothers, could

afford to go to elite private universities, own luxury cars and yachts, and indulge in recreational sex

and sports such as boxing and sailing.[9]

The "newness" that the Akutagawa Prize committee identified in *Taiyō no kisetsu* stems

perhaps as much from the "ecology of the sun tribe on the beaches along the Shōnan coast"[10] as

from the yearning for the "post-postwar"[11] consumer culture that would come to dominate Japan's

social and cultural discourse in the late 1950s. Indeed, before Ishihara's sudden burst into the literary

scene, the Akutagawa Prize had been largely monopolized by writers who were later known as the

"Third Generation of New Writers" (*daisan no shinjin*),[12] whose works often dealt, whether directly or

implicitly, with the bleak reality of postwar Japan under the American occupation.[13] In this light,

Ishihara's awarding needs to be considered dialectically. On the one hand, the judges recognized

Ishihara's youthful energy that was free of the dismal ambience in the previous literature of *daisan no*

shinjin; on the other hand, Ishihara's bold depiction of sex and violence, along with the public

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he wrote fictions with the prospect of film adaptations in mind, so that the novel and the film would appear more or less concurrently and thus amplify each other.

[8] In fact, the taiyōzoku films were so controversial that they sparked widespread protests among citizens demanding more stringent regulations, which eventually led to the reorganization of Eirin (short for *Eiga rinri kanri iinkai*, or Motion Picture Code of Ethics Committee) to include external, independent members.

[9] Sherif, 194.

[10] Etō Jun; quoted in *Akutagawa-shō no kenkyū*, 268.

[11] I borrowed this term from Michael Raine, "Ishihara Yūjirō: Youth, Celebrity, and the Male Body in late-1950s Japan," *Word and Image in Japanese Cinema*, edited by Dennis Washburn and Carole Cavanaugh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 222.

[12] The first two generations refer to the First and Second Wave Postwar Writers (*daiichi-ji/daini-ji sengo-ha*) who dominated the literary scene between 1945 and 1950. Writers belonging to the *daisan no shinjin*, in comparison, debuted near the end of the American occupation.

[13] In a recent study, Kendall Heitzman rejects the conventional impression that writers associated with the so-called "*daisan no shinjin*" group were mostly apolitical, and instead argues that their political stance lies precisely in their "individual, unallied resistance." See Heitzman, *Enduring Postwar: Yasuoka Shotarō and the Literary Memory in Japan* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2019), 21.

excitement it aroused, served as an opportunity for the Akutagawa Prize to redefine its own course. Umeda Yasuo, who saw Ishihara's awarding as a "turning point" (*tenki*) in the award's history, points out that "Akutagawa Prize became a kind of show that provides a popular topic to the mass media. It became more like a social event (*shakai-teki gyōji*) than a literary one."[14]

This cycle of popularization, in which the publicity of *Taiyō no kisetsu* effectively "popularized" the Akutagawa Prize, which in return legitimized the novel's own popularity, inadvertently created a paradox. Established in 1935 by Kikuchi Kan, the Akutagawa Prize, named after the Taishō literary giant Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, was conceived in parity with the Naoki Prize, which commemorated novelist Naoki Sanjūgo, both close friends of Kikuchi. Despite the nearly identical regulations of the two awards, the two awards were designed in their inception to celebrate qualitatively different literatures. While the Akutagawa Prize recognizes the best original work (*sōsaku*) of "pure literature" (*jun-bungaku*), the Naoki Prize is an award for the "popular literary art" (*taishū bungei*).[15] In addition, despite the fact that both awards are announced on the same day and later publicized in the same issue of the literary magazine *Bungei shunjū*,[16] only the winners of the Akutagawa Prize have the privilege to be published in the magazine, whereas the winners of the Naoki Prize are published in the less prestigious *Ōru yomimono* (All Fiction).[17]

The enormous success of *Taiyō no kisetsu*, coupled with the concomitant popularization of the Akutagawa Prize itself, thus posed a difficult question: Why was a work of "pure literature" so popular, or to turn it around, why such a popular novel received an award that was supposed to be reserved for "pure literature," and by extension, to what extent is it possible to even draw the line between literary purity and popularity. At the same time, the two awardees of the Naoki Prize for

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[14] Umeda Yasuo, "Akutagawa-shō urabanashi," *Tsukuru* (March 1977); quoted in *Akutagawa-shō no kenkyū*, 142.
[15] Edward Mack, *Manufacturing Modern Japanese Literature: Publishing, Prizes, and the Ascription of Literary Value* (Duke University Press, 2010), 189.
[16] It should be noted, however, that the decision for Akutagawa Prize is always announced before the Naoki Prize.
[17] Mack, 189.

the same term, overshadowed by Ishihara's dazzling popularity, hardly garnered any critical or

popular attention beyond the lukewarm reception at the awarding ceremony, let alone commercial

success. In this case, the valorization of the "pure," which necessarily entails the marginalization of

the "popular," justifies and reifies the division of literature into the "pure" and the "popular," as well

as the dominance of the former over the latter.

Interestingly, if *Taiyō no kisetsu* was celebrated for its unconventional or even "un-Japanese"

(*Nihon-banare*) topics such as boxing and sailing, which seemed to break completely free of the

shadow of war and ruins that loomed over the previous literature, the winners of the Naoki Prize

were deeply implicated with Japan's imperial past. Unlike Ishihara, who was only thirteen at the time

of Japan's defeat, the two recipients of the Naoki Prize experienced exile, albeit for different reasons

and under different circumstances, after the collapse of the Japanese Empire. Specifically, Nitta Jirō

(born Fujiwara Hiroto),[18] who was awarded for three short stories "Tōshō" (Frostbite), "Gōrikiden"

(The Life of Gōriki), and "Yamainu monogatari" (The Tale of Mountain Dog), had served as a

meteorologist at the Manchuko Observatory until he was captured by the Soviet Army in 1945 and

was subsequently detained in China for about a year. Coincidentally, Nitta Jirō's wife was none other

than Fujiwara Tei, the author of the bestselling repatriation memoir *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru*.

Kyū Eikan, the other awardee for that term, was born in colonial Taiwan under Japanese

rule. Better known today as a "god of stocks" (*kabu no kamisama*) or "god of moneymaking"

(*kanemōke no kamisama*), Kyū was in his third year in Economics at Tokyo Imperial University when

Japan surrendered to the Allied Powers in August 1945. He returned to Taiwan, which was handed

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[18] While not considered a commercially successful writer, Nitta is known as one of the favorite authors of the reigning Emperor Naruhito (crown prince from 1989 to 2019). For instance, Naruhito not only visited the photography exhibit "Mountains that Nitta Jirō Loved" (*Nitta jirō no aishita yamayama*, Fijifilm Square) on July 12, 2012, but also attended a charity preview (*shishakai*) of the film "Tsurugidake" (Mt. Tsurugidake), based on Nitta's novel of the same name (1977), at Yūrakuchō Asahi Hall on June 17, 2009. See Imperial Household Agency (*Kunaichō*), "Kōtaishi dō hi ryō-denka no go-nittei, Heisei 24 nen (7 gatsu ~ 9 gatsu)," https://www.kunaicho.go.jp/activity/gonittei/02/h24/gonittei-2-2012-3.html; "Kōtaishi dō hi ryō-denka no go-nittei, Heisei 21 nen (4 gatsu ~ 6 gatsu)," https://www.kunaicho.go.jp/page/gonittei/show/2?quarter=200902.

over to the Chinese Nationalist Government (or Kuomintang, KMT), shortly after the war, but was soon forced to flee once again to Hong Kong, then under British rule, in fear of persecution due to his political dissent and involvement with the Taiwanese independence movements. His novel *Hong Kong* (*Honkon*, 1955), which won the 34th Naoki Prize, depicts the predicaments that confronted Taiwanese intellectuals in exile, who renounced their political ambitions and commitments out of disillusionment or, more simply, the practical need for bare survival in diaspora. Living hand-to-mouth, they no longer had the leisure (*yoyū*) to be concerned with lofty political ideals and principles.

In this chapter, I explore the politics of literature by focusing on two interrelated topics: on the one hand, Kyū Eikan's thematic transition from politics to entertainment, and on the other, the seemingly coincidental simultaneity of the awarding of Ishihara's *Taiyō no kisetsu* and Kyū's *Honkon*. In particular, I consider the significance of the ironic categorization of *Honkon* as "popular fiction" in light of fact that *Taiyō no kisetsu* was clearly more "popular" in terms of readership, critical attention, media coverage, and even commercial success. I argue that while both works are typically considered "apolitical," *Taiyō no kisetsu* depicts a hedonistic pursuit of material gratification under the Cold War regime, whereas *Honkon* is driven by the obstinate rejection of politics or "the politics of depoliticization."

The Continuous History, the Cyclical History

Born in March 1924 in Taiwan, Kyū Eikan (Chinese: Qiu Yonghan, born Qiu Bingnan) experienced complex identity crises growing up in a polygamous and interracial family. His father, Qiu Qinghai, a wealthy merchant in the city of Tainan, had two wives, an official Taiwanese wife and a Japanese concubine originally from Kurume, Fukuoka. As the eldest son, Kyū Eikan was registered under his father as an "indigenous islander" (*hontōjin*), rather than as an "illegitimate child" (*shiseiji*) under his Japanese concubine-mother, even though that would give him the more privileged status of a

"metropolitan Japanese" (*naichijin*). Despite the odds against colonial subjects in terms of educational opportunities, Kyū became one of the few Taiwanese students to be admitted to Taipei High School, which mostly accepted students of Japanese descent, at least according to their statuses on the family registers. Graduating at the top of his class, Kyū entered Tokyo Imperial University in 1943. He abandoned his studies after Japan's defeat and returned to Taiwan as soon as the sea route between Japan and Taiwan was restored in February 1946.

Like many of his fellow Taiwanese intellectuals, however, Kyū was quickly disillusioned by the rampant inflation and corruption of the Nationalist regime under Governor-General Chen Yi, who was in charge of the takeover after Japan's defeat. When the February 28 Incident, a violent clash between the Taiwanese islanders (no longer *hontōjin* but *benshengren*, literally people of the native province) and the Chinese mainlanders (*waishengren*, or people from the outside provinces) in the newly decolonized Taiwan, broke out in 1947, the Nationalist Government was quick to crack down on political dissidents and subversive intellectuals in the name of containing the spread of communism.[19] Kyū, working at the time as a researcher at Huanan Bank, got involved with the Taiwanese independence movement by drafting a petition statement addressed to the United Nations demanding Taiwan to be governed by the United Nations as a trust territory. When Huang Chaoqin, the Chairman Speaker of the Provincial Consultative Council (*shengyihui yizhang*), openly repudiated news about Taiwanese independence, which was widely reported by international news agencies such as Associated Press and United Press, as groundless rumors, Kyū intuitively sensed

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[19] The spark of February 28 Incident was that an agent of the Taipei City Monopoly Bureau fired his pistol while trying to confiscate contraband cigarettes from a widow, accidentally hitting an onlooker who died the next day. The angry crowd protested at the square in front of the Office of the Governor-General but was met with bloody suppression, as Chen Yi ordered the soldiers to fire upon the protesters. The indiscriminate shooting immediately instigated island-wide revolts against the Nationalist regime, as the Taiwanese protesters took over government offices, radio stations, and airports. In response to the riots, Chiang Kai-shek sent troops from the Fujian Province, resulting in massacre of thousands of Taiwanese intellectuals and civilians, marking the beginning of a period that would come to be known as "White Terror." For an overview of the history of the February 28 Incident, see Michael Berry, *A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film* (Columbia University Press, 2008), 182-4.

that his life was in imminent danger and escaped to Hong Kong in October 1948 to join Liao

Wenyi, the leader of the Taiwanese independence movement.[20]

Barely escaped with his life, Kyū had no money or means of survival in Hong Kong, but he

quickly managed to build a fortune by sending parcels of antibiotics to Japan, which was facing

tremendous shortage of medicine under the American occupation. Kyū moved back to Japan in

1954 to seek medical treatments for his daughter, around the same time when he made literary debut

with "Mitsunyūkokusha no shuki" (Notes of an Illegal Immigrant), a short story depicting the

predicaments of his friend Wang Yude, who was similarly forced into exile as a result of the

February 28 Incident. Notably, this story was one of the first literary works to directly portray the

consequences of the incident, which would be extremely dangerous, if not outright impossible, in

Taiwan under the shadow of the White Terror.[21] Within two years, Kyū published over a dozen

fictions that dealt with the colonial violence under Japanese imperialism and the "neo-colonial"

violence under the Nationalist regime, including *Dakusuikei* (The Muddy Stream, 1954), which was

nominated for the 32nd Naoki Prize, "Haisentsuma" (Wives of a Defeated Nation, 1955),

"Kyakushi" (Death in a Foreign Land, 1955), and "Kensatsukan" (The Prosecutor, 1955).

In particular, *Dakusuikei*—the title of which comes from Zhuoshui River, the longest river in

Taiwan—depicts the lives of two Taiwanese youths, Lin and Liu, who were basically doppelgangers

of each other not only because they occupy similar structural positions in tropes such as love

triangles, but also because they both suffered similar fates, first under Japanese imperialism and later

under the Nationalist dictatorship.[22] Throughout the novel, Lin and Liu are entangled in love

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[20] A full account of Kyū's journey of exile is beyond the scope of this chapter. Kyū does discuss his escape from Taiwan in considerable detail in several autobiographical accounts. See, for example, *1997: Honkon no yūutsu* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1997), 15-9; *Wa ga seishun no Honkon, Wa ga seishun no Taiwan* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1994) 100-7.

[21] The first work of fiction to deal with the February 28 Incident is a story titled *Taiwan daoshang xue yu hen* (Blood and Hatred on the Island of Taiwan) by an unknown writer who goes by the pen name Bo Zi. See Berry, 188-93.

[22] A number of scholars describe the two characters as "alter egos" of each other (*bunshin*). See Okazaki Ikuko, *Taiwan bungaku: Itan no keifu* (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1996), 86, and Chang Ji-lin, "Naoki-sho jūsho made no Kyū Eikan:

triangles not once, but twice, as both characters first fall in love with a Japanese woman Mihoko during their study in Tokyo and, after their return to Taiwan, with a Taiwanese woman named Zhang Cuiyu. Interestingly, even in these love triangles, the two men seem far more interested in each other than in the woman who they supposedly vie for. For example, when Lin finally defeats Liu and wins over Cuiyu, daughter of a wealthy coal mine owner, he is immediately overcome with a sense of loss and emptiness: "As soon as [Liu] Deming left, my interest in Cuiyu promptly waned. Marrying the daughter of a rich merchant, and eventually becoming his secretary, if not his adopted son—that just doesn't seem to suit my personality."[23] Despite their traditional heterosexual values in the novel, in other words, the emphasis on the homosocial relationship between Lin and Liu over their respective romantic relationships seems to gesture towards a structural unity.[24]

Despite their shared tragic experiences, however, Lin and Liu are eventually forced to walk different paths, or in fact, quite possibly the path that separates life and death. Towards the end of the novel, while Lin scurries to avoid the likely persecution after the February 28 Incident, Liu adamantly refuses to leave Taiwan, even if his decision to remain would likely cost his life. With the bitter realization that "I have no state [*kokka*] nor nation [*minzoku*]. I'm a Jew who wanders aimlessly about the world until eternity,"[25] Lin decides to leave the past behind and escapes to Hong Kong in a smuggling boat. In their final confrontation, Lin invites Liu to join him and imagine a radically different world that transcends the existing political order: "We're going to live [*ikirunda*]. We're going to live. In a world where there is no nation or state. Let's go. Let's live in a world where we can live properly as humans [*ningen rashiku*]."

'Dakusuikei' to *Honkon* o chūshin ni," *Ekkyō suru Chūgoku bungaku: Arata na bōken o motomete* (Tokyo: Tōhō Shoten, 2018), 422.

[23] Kyū Eikan, "Dakusuikei," *Kyū Eikan tanpan shōsetsu kessaku-sen: Mienai kokkyōsen* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1994), 201.

[24] See Marukawa Tetsushi, *Taiwan, Posutokoroniaru no shintai* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2000),138.

[25] "Dakusuikei," 213.

If Lin is able to discern some kind of liberating potential from the irretrievable loss of

traditional political structures such as nation or state, Liu on the other hand refuses to forsake his

belief in such concepts. Coldly rejecting Lin's proposal, Liu claims that he will simply follow his

principle of *sanmin-shugi* (principle of three sleeps), an ironic pun on the homonymic term "*sanmin-*

shugi" (Chinese: *sanmin-zhuyi*, Three Principles of the People) proposed by Sun Yat-sen, the founder

of the Chinese Nationalist Party. By following his own principle to "sleep three times a day," Liu

attempts turn the official ideology of the Nationalist government on its head. Unconvinced by Liu's

passive or cynical resistance, however, Lin challenges his doppelganger figure:

> "You think we're walking on entirely different roads? You're wrong. We are one and the
>
> same person [*onaji hitori no ningen*]. We are nothing more than the two appearances [*futari no*
>
> *sugata*] of that same person. Recently, I've started to feel that you're really close by. But the
>
> more I feel you're close by, the more I feel you're getting farther away from me. Why do we
>
> have to follow different ways of life? Why can't we live together with each other?"[26]

Unable to persuade Liu, Lin finally comes to realize that "I'm all alone. And I will have to live the

rest of my life enduring such loneliness."[27] Following Deleuze's distinction between "becoming" and

"being," what decidedly separates the two characters lies precisely in the fact that whereas Lin

believes in the infinite possibilities in the incessant flux of "becoming," Liu seems to be trapped in

the limiting concepts and categories of "being."

It is thus fitting that the book version (*tankōbon*) of the novel ends with Lin,[28] determined

that he would never set foot in this land again, gazing at the Zhuoshui River, "flowing thunderously

for thousands, tens of thousands of years with the same dusky and muddy color":

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[26] Ibid., 214-5.
[27] Ibid., 215.
[28] The novel was originally serialized in three installments on *Taishū bungei* between August and October of 1954. When it was submitted to the Naoki Prize for consideration, however, the last installment was left out, allegedly according to the suggestion by Kyū's friend Dan Kazuo. The Naoki Prize version, which includes only the first two installments, were

> Originating in the faraway Qilai Mountain of the Taiwan Mountain Range, cutting through the aboriginal lands [*bankai* near Wushe, which is known for the Wushe Incident, and merging with the Qingshui River, Zhuoshui River enters the plain and yet again separates into two streams before flowing into the Taiwan Strait.[29]

Rather than simply provide a geographic description of the titular Zhuoshui River, this rather poetic ending conveys a sense of solemn boundlessness, both spatially and temporally. What is of particular interest here, however, is the brief and seemingly inadvertent mention of the Wushe Incident (Japanese: *Musha jiken*; Chinese: *Wushe shijian*), referring to the last and arguably bloodiest aboriginal uprising against the Japanese rule during the colonial period,[30] in which the aborigine tribe massacred over 130 Japanese in the village of Wushe, leading to the brutal retaliation by the Japanese military that ultimately resulted in the death of over 600 tribesmen, more than half of their original number.

While the simple mention of Wushe might be easily glossed over as just another place name, the modifying phrase "which is known for the Wushe Incident [*musha jiken de yūmei na*]" seems to invalidate such casual reading by bringing attention to its historical particularity. In particular, it is hardly surprising if Lin, who is forced to escape the island after the failed indigenous revolution to chase out the occupying Nationalist troops, feels empathy with Mona Rudao, the aboriginal leader of the Wushe Incident who fled to the mountains and committed suicide when the uprising was quelled by the Japanese colonial government. In this light, this muddy river that flows across the island of Taiwan can be read metonymically as the "river of time" that perpetually carries forth the

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used for all future editions, including those in his *zenshū* (complete works). In this chapter, I treat the Naoki version of *Dakusuikei* as the definitive version, because Kyū had himself acquiesced in the decision to make the first two parts a stand-alone novel when he began serializing *Honkon* in 1955. I will return to the excised third installment shortly.

[29] "Dakusuikei," 217.

[30] In this chapter, I distinguish between the aboriginal and the indigenous. Whereas the former refers to the aborigine tribes (*yuanzhumin*), the latter is more about the self-identity that emerged from conflicting politics and ideologies. In other words, whereas "aboriginal" is fixed and static as it stems directly from concepts like blood and lineage, "indigenous" is structural and relational as it always forms or "becomes" in struggle, whether against Japanese colonialism or against Nationalist dictatorship.

repeated failed revolutions to gain independence and self-governance from oppressive, external

powers.

In fact, the continuity and cyclicality of violence is a familiar trope in Taiwanese literature.

Leo Ching points out, for example, that in Wu Zhuoliu's *Ajia no koji* (The Orphan of Asia, 1946), a

hallmark in modern Taiwanese literature, the name of the protagonist Tai-ming is "an allusion to the

Ming Dynasty, the last Han Chinese empire before the Manchu rule" and thus a fantastic return to

the traditional or "authentic" Chinese identity.[31] Similarly, in Li Qiao's *Taimushan-ji* (The Record of

Taimu Mountain, 1984), the protagonist experiences "a duplicity of violence" by identifying with

three rebel leaders in modern Taiwan history, all at the same topographical site of the titular Taimu

Mountain. In particular, Michael Berry notes the "tragically cyclical nature of history" in the story by

pointing out the structural repetition in all three cases, in which the leaders were "driven to rebel by

a patriotic rejection of outside rule, but each case ended with a brutal crackdown, a massacre, and

the death of the leader."[32] If so, Kyū's Zhuoshui River functions precisely like Li's Taimu Mountain

as a bearer of Taiwan's painful history of domination under outside rule.

To be sure, the river is not the only topographical site to be endowed with a duplicity of

violence and resistance in *Dakusuikei,* as the city of Tainan, hometown of both the writer Kyū and

the fictional character Liu, similarly embodies a cyclical time. In an early scene in which Lin visits

Liu in Tainan, Lin describes the city not by providing extensive geographic descriptions but instead

by sketching out its long history of resistance and rebellion:

> This old capital, which for centuries had been the capital of Taiwan, is home to many
>
> historic temples and monasteries. This is not only the land where Liu Yongfu, who fought
>
> against Prince Kitashirakawa immediately after the Sino-Japanese War, took his last breath,

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[31] Ching, 179.
[32] Berry, 203.

but also the city where Yu Qingfang, the leader of the famous Tapani Incident, formed

alliance at the Xilai Temple, just like in the *Record of the Three Kingdoms*. (139)

In this way, the city of Tainan, like Zhuoshui River and Taimu Mountain, seems to belong to a

unique chronotopic category in which time is layered over space. The "spatialization" of time means

that this cyclical pattern is both infinitely extended to the past, yet also simultaneously compressed

into a recurring structure as an implosive moment.

Unlike Li Qiao, however, Kyū traces Taiwan's rebellious history even further back to the

dynastic transition from the Han empire of Ming to the Manchu empire of Qing by alluding to the

Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong (commonly known as Coxinga, which literally means the Lord of

the Imperial Name), who captured Taiwan from the Dutch and transformed the island into a

military base for resisting against the Manchu rule even after the fall of the Ming court. Interestingly,

Kyū's fascination with Coxinga perhaps stem as much from their shared political cause of resistance

as from their shared mixed identity: Coxinga was, like Kyū himself, born to a Chinese father and a

Japanese mother from Kyūshū. The incidental connection does not end here, as Coxinga set the

capital of his Kingdom of Tungning in the city of Anping (present day Tainan), the very place where

Kyū would be born two and half centuries later.

In his debut work "Mitsunyūkokusha no shuki," the protagonist You Tiande, modeled on

Kyū's friend Wang Yude, falls in love with "a woman from the Zheng family," which in the story is

"rumored to the last descendants (*matsue*) of Zheng Chenggong."[33] This seemingly abrupt, if not

impertinent, mention of Coxinga serves no real purpose in terms of the narrative other than to call

attention to the recurring structure of historical triangulation—whether in Coxinga's case between

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[33] Kyū, "Mitsunyūkokusha no shuki," *Kyū Eikan tanpan shōsetsu kessaku-sen*, 23.

Ming, Qing, and Taiwan, or in Kyū's case between Japan, China, and Taiwan—that underlies the surface layer of the narrative itself.[34]

Coxinga is figured more prominently in *Dakusuikei* in an intense debate about blood and national identity between Lin and Liu. Perplexed by the conflict between Liu's fervent nationalism one the one hand and his mixed identity on the other, Lin wonders: "Raised in this fated land [*innen no chi*], it is no wonder that he inherits the ancestors' legacies. Yet I was hesitant at the thought that he doesn't feel the slightest contradiction to rebel against Japan while being half-Japanese himself."[35] Offended by Lin's question, Liu explains that his Taiwanese nationalism has nothing to do with his ancestry whatsoever: "Zheng Chenggong, too, had a Japanese mother, but so what? When all the minsters and generals of the Ming court surrendered one after another, it was him who used Taiwan as his base and fought till the end." Unconvinced by his reasoning to disentangle land from blood, Lin asks: "That might be true, but in Coxinga's case, his enemy were the Manchus." Clearly irritated, either by Lin's persistence or by his own oversight, Liu impatiently retorts: "Whoever the enemy was, that's not the point. Today, who would question that Zheng Chenggong is the symbol of the Han nation [*Kan minzoku*]?"[36] Whether or not this altercation actually reflects Kyū's ambivalence about his own identity, it suffices to say at least that the frequent evocation of Coxinga shows his reflection on and engagement with the continuous or cyclical nature of violence and resistance in the history of modern Taiwan.

From Taiwan to Hong Kong, or from Politics to Entertainment

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[34] The concept of triangulation is borrowed from Leo Ching.

[35] "Dakusuikei," 139. It should be noted that Lin, too, has a complex relationship with Japanese identity. If Liu's ambiguity derives from his mixed blood, Lin's ambiguity comes from his name, which can be pronounced either as Lin in Chinese or as Hayashi in Japanese. As Mihoko and Lin become more intimate, for example, Mihoko gradually comes to address him in the Japanese-style as Mr. Hayashi (*Hayashi-san*) rather than in the Chinese-style as "Mr. Lin" (*Lin-san*). See *Dakusuikei,* 169.

[36] Ibid., 139-40.

If *Dakusuikei* ends right before Lin leaves Taiwan for Hong Kong, *Honkon* begins immediately after its protagonist Lai Chunmu lands at Kai Tak Airport in Kowloon, Hong Kong. Having no friends or family, Chunmu seeks refuge in a man named Li Mingzheng (referred to in the novel as Lao Li, or Old Li), who is rumored to have made a fortune in Hong Kong after fleeing Taiwan a few years ago for political reasons. When Chunmu knocks on Lao Li's door, however, he is dismayed to find out that Lao Li lives not in a luxurious mansion as rumored, but rather in a squalid shack in a slum that is ironically called the Diamond Hill (*Zuanshi Shan*).[37] Having little means of subsistence or prospect of securing long-term jobs, Chunmu and Lao Li scrape by various dubious businesses, such as unlicensed peddling of dried squid, carrying water from the nearest hydrant back to the shantytown (which has no running water), diving into the ocean to catch lobsters and selling them to seafood restaurants, and smuggling scarce medical supplies and fake gold watches to Japan. In the last chapter, Lao Li comes up with an audacious plan, a "once-in-a-lifetime adventure" (*isshō ichidai no bōken*) by duping a trading company in Casablanca into making bulk orders of premium tea leaves but sending them inferior merchandise mixed with old newspapers and rocks. The novel ends with the two characters parting ways, as Lao Li makes his way to Japan to "lie low" for a while, while Chunmu decides to stay behind in Hong Kong.

Published in four installments from August to November 1955, precisely one year after *Dakusuikei,* on the same literary magazine *Taishū bungei*, it is hardly surprising that some regarded *Honkon* as a sequel (*gojitsudan*) to *Dakusuikei*. However, despite the ostensible continuity in the plot of the two fictions, scholars are hesitant to categorize them in the same genealogy, given the many notable differences in their genres, styles, and themes. For example, Chang Ji-lin points out that while *Dakusuikei* feels documentary (*jitsuroku*), autobiographical (*jiden-teki*), and even somewhat

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[37] Located near the Kai Tak Airport, Diamond Hill is now a relatively wealthy neighborhood in Kowloon, but it used to be one of the largest shantytowns in Hong Kong before the government launched large-scale public housing programs in the 1970s.

pedantic, *Honkon* is loaded with entertainment (*gorakusei*), fictionality (*kyokōsei*), and even certain exotic feelings (*ikoku jōcho*).[38] Regarding such change favorably, Chang considers Kyū's attempt at creating an "adventure novel" as a sign of his literary maturity, in the sense that he was able to break free from the autobiographical traditions of the I-novel and overcome the identity crisis that haunts his earlier works.[39] Okazaki Ikuko, on the other hand, is less enthusiastic about Kyū's transition, which she described rather harshly as a kind of *tenkō* (conversion),[40] a word frequently associated with writers who were pressured by the Japanese military government to renounce literary and political resistance during the war. In contrast to Chang's optimistic interpretation, in other words, Okazaki sees Kyū's changing style as a calculated move to cater to the taste of the reading public: "[Kyū's] conversion to stories about money [*okane no hanashi*] is due to the fact that Japanese readers would have little interest in novels about Japan's colonies, February 28, suppression from the Nationalist Party, and Taiwan independence."[41]

Despite the moral implications in their respective evaluations, Chang and Okazaki seem to concur that the changing style between the two works is the result of Kyū's deliberate decision, one which Izumi Tsukasa describes as a kind of "award-winning strategy" (*jūsho senryaku*).[42] Specifically, Izumi compares *Honkon* with the third installment of *Dakusuikei,* which was taken out when the novel was sent to the Naoki Prize committee for review. Interestingly, the excised third installment of *Dakusuikei* depicts Lin's life after his arrival in Hong Kong. Despite its geographical setting in Hong Kong, however, the removed third chapter focuses primarily on the political movements for Taiwan independence than on the protagonist's daily struggles in Hong Kong. In other words, the

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[38] See Chang, 435.

[39] Chang's observation is largely accurate, as a cursory examination of Kyū's memoir *Wa ga seishun no Taiwan, wa ga seishun no Honkon* (My Youth in Taiwan, My Youth in Hong Kong, 1994) shows that the plot in *Dakusuikei* indeed aligns more closely with Kyū's life than that in *Hong Kong*.

[40] Okazaki, 94.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Izumi Tsukasa, "Kyū Eikan *Dakusuikei* kara *Honkon* e: Naoki-shō ga hiraita mono to tozashita mono," *Nihon kindai bungaku*, vol. 90 (2014), 77-92.

city of Hong Kong functions merely as a backdrop in which the predicaments of exiled Taiwanese intellectuals are played out. As a result, Izumi regards *Honkon* as accomplishing what *Dakusuikei* fails at by effectively using the topography of Hong Kong to flesh out the more mundane struggles in everyday life, rather than focusing solely on the lofty political ambitions. In short, the foreground and background of the two novels seem completely inverted in the sense that the political and national struggles, which take the foreground in *Dakusuikei,* recede quietly into the background in *Honkon*, whereas the monetary concerns, which are mentioned only offhandedly in *Dakusuikei,* are now pushed to the foreground in *Honkon*.[43]

The relationship between *Dakusuikei* and *Honkon* is thus both complex and ambiguous: while there is a certain degree of continuity in terms of their plot, character, and even the time and venue of publication between the two fictions, there is also considerable rupture in terms of each work's style, genre, readership, and perhaps most importantly, stance and motivation. Marukawa Tetsushi suggests that, on the metatextual level, this change parallels a structural transition on two simultaneous fronts: personally, it forecasts the writer Kyū Eikan's own transformation (Marukawa uses the neutral word *tenshin*, rather than the more morally charged term *tenkō* used by Okazaki) to become a successful investor and entrepreneur;[44] socially, it foreshadows postwar Japan's shifting course from the pursuit of political freedom to that of economic prosperity.[45]

From a practical perspective, it indeed seems possible that Kyū's shifting focus was the result of his strategy to win the prestigious Naoki Prize by catering to the taste of the reading public and, in particular, the Naoki committee members. However, I am less interested in Kyū's authorial intent than in the broader "political unconscious" behind his calculated move. For this reason, I argue that Marukawa's historically grounded approach is more fruitful than the author-centered interpretations

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[43] Ibid., 85-88.
[44] Marukawa, *Taiwan*, 174.
[45] Ibid., 167.

by Chang and Okazaki. Regardless of their differing methodologies, however, both approaches seem to take for granted the relation between, on the one hand, the surface apoliticality in *Honkon* and, on the other, its entertainment values. In other words, compared with the explicitly political themes of colonialism and nationalism in *Dakusuikei,* the more plebian issues of moneymaking (through illegitimate and even criminal routes, such as unlicensed peddling, smuggling, and fraudulence) make *Honkon* decidedly more apolitical. Moreover, it is this very apoliticality that makes the novel more entertaining and thus more suitable for the Naoki Prize, the alleged pinnacle of popular fiction.[46] In fact, Ibuse Masuji, one of the Naoki judges for that term, makes the following comment in his *senpyō* (selection critique): "It feels a little showy [*dogitsui*], but the material is entertaining [*zairyō ga omoshiroku*]. It shows a remarkable progress [*chōsoku no shinpo*] compared with *Dakusuikei*."[47]

Given how rarely the word "politics" is evoked, much less discussed, in the text, it indeed seems reasonable to consider *Honkon* as an apolitical novel. In this chapter, however, I would like to propose a more nuanced reading and argue that *Honkon* is in fact deeply political precisely in its consistent rejection and repression of the conventional political concepts based on the national paradigm. In fact, the disavowal of politics at the surface level opens up, rather than closes off, new

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[46] The relationship between politics and literature is extremely complex and is beyond the scope of this chapter. It should be noted, however, that traditionally the genre of so-called "political fictions" (*seiji shōsetsu*) in the Meiji period, which deal with the "masses" (*taishū*), are often excluded from "literature of the establishment" (*bundan bungaku*) and relegated to the less prestigious category of "popular literature" (*taishū bungaku*). However, interestingly, the interwar and wartime proletarian literature is typically considered as one of the central pillars of "pure literature," along with I-novels and modernist fictions. In the postwar period, the so-called "Politics and Literature Debate" (*Seiji to bungaku ronsō*) broke out between writers associated with the journals *Shin Nihon bungaku* (New Japanese Literature) and those associated with *Kindai bungaku* (Modern Literature). I will return to the division between pure and popular literature, as well as its relation and relevance to politics later in this chapter. For a detailed study of the political fictions during the Meiji period, see Atsuko Ueda, *Concealment of Politics, Politics of Concealment: The Production of "Literature" in Meiji Japan* (Stanford University Press, 2007); for the postwar "Politics and Literature Debate," see *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52* (edited by Atsuko Ueda, et al., Lexington Books, 2017).

[47] In addition to Ibuse, other judges also recognized Kyū's name, because his *Dakusuikei* was considered by the very same eight judges (Ibuse Masuji, Osaragi Jirō, Kawaguchi Matsutarō, Kigi Takatarō, Kojima Masajirō, Nagai Tatsuo, Murakami Genzō, and Yoshikawa Eiji) for the 32nd prize precisely one year ago. In fact, even though *Dakusuikei* was only a runner-up for that term, most judges praised Kyū's literary talents and expressed confidence in his writerly career. Kigi Takatarō, for example, writes in his senpyō: "I wanted to choose Kyū Eikan as my first pick… For now, let's just say we should pay attention to this writer." See "Senpyō," *Ōru yomimono*, April 1955.

possibilities of political interpretation and intervention. In contrast to the common understanding of apoliticality as a total disinterest in and disengagement from politics, in the case of *Honkon*, the word "politics" is always immediately and explicitly renounced as something not only potentially dangerous and even disastrous but also fundamentally pointless. At the same time, I argue that it is precisely this stance of compulsive rejection that haunts the ostensible apoliticality of the novel and paradoxically asserts its political relevance and significance.

The Repression and Return of Politics

Already from the opening lines, *Honkon* conveys a sense of urgency that seems to reject not only politics but even the very principle of reason itself: "He is being chased. For now, running away is his one and only purpose. He has no clue as to why he is being chased, nor why he must be on the run. In fact, he doesn't even have the leisure [*yoyū*] to think about these questions."[48] Without providing much explanation other than saying "If the reality in postwar Taiwan is that people who have neither killed nor plundered must be constantly on the run just to stay alive, the first condition of survival is to use one's foot rather than his brains," the narrative keeps flowing with the same dazzling speed: "While in Taiwan, he hopped on any train or truck that he managed to catch. Spending great efforts to sneak into a motorized boat, he barely made it to Amoy with his life. By the time he left Amoy, he was finally able to afford a seat on an airplane."[49]

This opening paragraph, strung together by a series of fast and intense actions, creates a sense of suffocating immediacy that leaves little room for a moment of pause. Such urgency in return creates a sense of rupture in time by deferring reason and disengaging meaning from actions. It was not until a few paragraphs later when Chunmu suddenly "returned to his senses" (*ware ni*

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[48] "Honkon," *Kyū Eikan tanpan shōsetsu kessaku-sen*, 293.
[49] Ibid.

kaetta) that the readers finally realize that the opening passage is a flashback to his past few months, hectically trying to make it out of Taiwan alive. Even hours after arriving in Hong Kong, he is still in a dreamlike daze: "… How many hours had it been? Lai Chunmu still hadn't fully awakened from his dream. The drone of the propeller was still ringing in his ear. He felt he was slowly losing his sense even while just sitting here."[50] Here, Chunmu's exile is attributed more to his visceral instincts for survival than to any lofty ideals or elaborate plans for political resistance. Indeed, the imperative to "act before you think" gestures toward the realm of instinct and intuition, which seems to circumvent or "short-circuit" the logic of reason. However, unlike the "homing instinct" in many autobiographical repatriation narratives mentioned in Chapter 1, the "short-circuit" in *Honkon* functions in a completely opposite direction. Whereas the homing instinct to "die even a step closer to our home," as Fujiwara Tei powerfully writes in *Nagareru hoshi wa ikiteiru*, refers to the centripetal desire to approach one's home (*kokyō*) at all costs, in *Honkon* the characters are driven by a centrifugal force to resolutely abandon home, which is no longer the comforting space to indulge in idyllic fantasies but rather a menacing threat to his very survival and existence.

Immediately after they make acquaintance, Lao Li reassures Chunmu that he no longer needs to fret over "political crimes or thought crimes" because Hong Kong is absolutely insulated from the world of political struggle: "Once you're here, there's nothing to worry about. As you can see, Hong Kong has no Nationalist Party nor Communist Party. Actually, some defeated generals of the National Army live right here in this Diamond Hill, but they are just refugees like the rest of us."[51] Once reduced to the status of mere stragglers, their political affiliations, military ranks, and official titles naturally lose all symbolic meanings. Lao Li then goes on to explain:

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 298.

"This is an entirely different world. Just live here for a while, your way of thinking will start to change. It becomes silly [*bakabakashiku*] even just to think about things like politics [*seiji nante*]. After all, there's nothing more naïve [*amai*] than to think that politics can save us. Nothing can save us. Nothing! Absolutely nothing, I'm telling you!"[52]

Interestingly, contrary to the typical impression that apolitical fictions simply stay away from politics, Lao Li actively and even impatiently brings up politics, only to renounce it immediately. Lao Li's apoliticality is thus clearly different from its standard definition which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, refers to the state that one is "not interested or involved in politics."

Given Lao Li's compulsive repetition and absolute conviction in the pointlessness of politics, his apoliticality stems not so much from his *disinterest* in politics than from his *disbelief*. The difference between the two, I argue, is subtle yet critical in understanding the shifting emphasis from *Dakusuikei* to *Honkon*. Specifically, whereas to be disinterested in politics does not necessarily invalidate the efficacy or legitimacy of politics, to disbelieve in politics, on the other hand, questions the very meaning and purpose of any political endeavors. If so, the conventional interpretation of *Honkon* that focuses on its "entertaining materials," as Ibuse notes in his senpyō, relegates the work's apparent apoliticality to a neutral indifference to politics. On the contrary, Lao Li's zealous disavowal of politics seems to suggest the possibility of an alternative reading by revealing precisely what is ostensibly rejected. In fact, Lao Li becomes so excited that he "gets tongue-tied like a drunkard even without a single drop of alcohol."[53] In other words, whereas the content of Lao Li's message seems to explicitly reject politics, his frenzied attitude paradoxically undercuts that very message by reaffirming its latent yet pressing relevance.

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

Later into the story, Chunmu is introduced to a wealthy Taiwanese merchant by the name of Hong Tiancai who makes a fortune by smuggling scarce materials into postwar Japan. When Tiancai treats Chunmu and his friend to dinner at a luxury restaurant, Chunmu impatiently asks him: "So you too are forced to leave Taiwan for political reasons?" At his question, "a look of tremendous grief [*hitsū*] crept over his face."[54] However, "just like the sun blocked by the floating clouds," that sorrowful look quickly dissipates as Tiancai answers: "Let's not talk about that. I'm a businessman now. What good does it do for a businessman to talk about politics?"[55] Disappointed at Tiancai's casual dismissal of the reason behind his exile, Chunmu feels that his "pride" (*jisonshin*) is shattered into pieces because he has secretly expected some kind of comradeship for "shouldering the same fate of a ruined nation [*onaji bōkoku no unmei*]."

Chunmu's frustration is understandable, but it would be a mistake to take Tiancai's renouncement of politics at face value as reflecting a neutral apoliticality stemming from total detachment. Like Lao Li, Tiancai seems to be troubled by a similar conflict between the content of his speech and its context, in the sense that Tiancai's "sorrowful look" (*hitsū na hyōjō*), which clearly arises from his disillusionment rather than disinterest, contradicts his outwardly calm rejection of politics at the content level. Once again, the difference between the two causes of apoliticality is crucial here, because it would be inconceivable for someone who is disinterested in politics to be disillusioned. In other words, even though they may be *represented* similarly, the apoliticality from disillusionment is fundamentally incompatible with the apoliticality from disinterest, as the former always already precludes the latter at a structural level. Therefore, despite the general lack of direct engagement with political issues as in *Dakusuikei,* it seems imprudent to categorize *Honkon* simply as an "entertainment fiction" (*goraku shōsetsu*) that is devoid of any political significance. To be truly

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[54] Ibid., 332.
[55] Ibid.

"apolitical," at least according to the standard dictionary definition, characters in *Honkon* would simply *not* talk about politics at all or, even if they do, in a way that is less emotionally invested. The awkwardly compulsive references to politics, which are always immediately followed by explicit rejection and disavowal, seem to reveal rather than conceal the complex political nature underneath the surface turn away from politics towards entertainment.

To be sure, my argument that politics is constituted through its own negativity is not simply a rhetoric move, nor is it the typical postmodernist stance that asserts "presence of the absent," at least not in its usual sense of a neutral state of non-existence.[56] In fact, its apoliticality is more akin to what Atsuko Ueda terms the "politics of concealment" in a different context, which refers to a kind of politics that conceals its own politicality by denigrating and excluding alternative and potentially subversive political discourses.[57] In other words, what appears to be the absent presence of politics in *Honkon* is, in fact, the result of compulsive repression which is inevitably fated to return. It returns, however, not in the form of direct or even pedantic discussions of collective resistance as in Kyū's prior fictions such as *Dakusuikei,* but rather as deeply personal existential crises which one needs to confront at the individual level. The formal transition from direct engagement with politics in *Dakusuikei* to the entertaining adventure of deception and action in *Honkon* is thus reminiscent of what Jean-François Lyotard describes as the process in which grand narratives give way to the more localized "little narratives" (*petits récits*) that refuse to be subsumed into a totalizing, universal whole.[58]

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[56] See, for example, Ihab Hassan, *The Dismemberment of the Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

[57] In fact, in her study of Tsubouchi Shōyō's *Shōsetsu shinzui* (The Essence of the Novel, 1885-86), Ueda shows that modern literature as a discipline was constructed in such a way that it systematically precluded direct political involvements since its inception. "The modern *shōsetsu*," Ueda writes, "is then discovered as 'art' that is associated with a certain apoliticality, whose defining characteristic was psychological realism of the socially isolated self" (65). In this sense, the postwar "Politics and Literature Debate" may be seen as an inadvertent repetition of the establishment of the literary institution in the early Meiji years. See Ueda, *Concealment of Politics, Politics of Concealment*, 165.

[58] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

In fact, if the postmodern is defined, according to Lyotard, as an "incredulity towards metanarratives," *Honkon* seems to be characterized by the *impossibility* of metanarratives.

The aversion to metanarratives such as national resistance and independence in *Honkon* can be seen in the casual treatment of the backstories of the main protagonists and, by extension, Kyū's own refusal to ascribe their predicaments simply to their past identities. Both Lao Li and Chunmu have complex relations with the Japanese Empire and, quite possibly, with the Nationalist regime as well, but neither dwell too much on their personal histories, much less discuss their political relevance or significance. Trying to convince Chunmu of his business talent, for example, Lao Li proudly boasts: "I may not look like it, but I used to be a respectable official [*rekki to shita Yakunin*] back in the days when I was in Manchuria."[59] The reason Lao Li attempts to impress Chunmu with his past in Manchuria is, of course, due to the extreme difficulty for colonial subjects to secure government posts within the Empire. Given Lao Li's resourcefulness to come up with audacious plans of fraudulence, it is not inconceivable if Lao Li comes from a privileged background or has perhaps even received some education in the imperial metropole. If so, his career trajectory would have matched what Benedict Anderson describes as the "colonial pilgrimage," in which colonial officials move across different parts of the empire as they receive colonial education and later perform colonial duties.[60]

Moreover, his experience of working in Manchuria means that Lao Li is proficient not only in his native tongue Hakka and the metropolitan language Japanese, but likely also in Mandarin

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[59] "Honkon," 307.
[60] Marukawa uses the concept of "colonial pilgrimage" to analyze one of Kyū's short stories "Kensatsukan," in which the protagonist Wang Yuxin, who is closely modeled on Wang Yude's (the model for You Tiande in "Mitsunyūkokusha no shuki") elder brother Wang Yulin. During the colonial period, Yuxin studied law at the Tokyo Imperial University and later became the first Taiwanese ever to serve as a public prosecutor in Japan. Like many of his compatriots, he returned to Taiwan after Japan's defeat and worked as a prospector in the city of Hsinchu (Xinzhu), only to discover that the Hsinchu mayor Guo Shaozong had been misappropriating supplies left by the Japanese Imperial Army and selling them in the black market for his personal gains. Unable to take Guo into custody, Yuxin soon faced relentless retaliation and was abducted and executed by the secret police in March 1947. Wu Zhuoliu also discusses Yulin's misfortune in his *Taiwan Lianqiao* (The Taiwanese Forsythia, 1975).

Chinese. If so, Lao Li would have been considered a "*banshanzai*" (half-mainlander) in postwar

Taiwan, a derogatory term used to refer to people of Taiwanese origins who had, however, spent

considerable time in mainland China under Japanese colonial rule. After the retrocession (*guangfu*),

the Nationalist authorities found it convenient to exploit their multilingual capacity and thus relied

heavily on these so-called "half-mainlanders" as the go-between for the Mandarin-speaking

government and the Hakka-speaking public. As a result, these intellectuals can be considered as the

very emblem of the structural continuity of domination and oppression in Taiwan by external

powers. Whether or not Lao Li actually collaborates with the Nationalist regime is beside the point

here. Given the important role played by *banshan* politicians in postwar Taiwan, including their

involvement in the February 28 Incident, it seems unlikely that Kyū creates a character with such

complex colonial background whimsically without considering the historical specificity he embodies.

What is yet more intriguing is that Kyū purposefully stays away from directly engaging with national

politics by leaving Lao Li's past unexplored, despite the fact that his backstory can be readily

developed into powerful critique of Taiwan's colonial and postcolonial conditions.

In contrast to Lao Li's extremely brief background, Chunmu's personal history is introduced

with more details. Born a colonial subject in rural Tainan, Chunmu has "walked a path that had

nothing to do with his own will."[61] Graduating from Chiayi Agricultural College at the height of the

Pacific War, Chunmu is conscripted and sent to Negros Island in the Philippines as an employee of

the Colonial Development Company (*Takushoku Kaisha*).[62] Stuck in the mountains when the Battle

of Leyte Gulf started, Chunmu "subsisted on barks and lizards along with other Japanese soldiers

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[61] "Honkon," 301.

[62] Established in 1936, the Taiwan Colonial Development Company (*Taiwan Takushoku Kabushiki Kaisha*) was one of the semi-official, semi-civil (*hankan hanmin*) "national-policy companies" (*kokusaku kaisha*) in Taiwan, along with the Bank of Taiwan (*Taiwan Ginkō*) and the Taiwan Power Company (*Taiwan Denryoku Kabushiki Kaisha*). In order to advance Japan's colonial interests, the Colonial Development Company made extensive investments not only in different parts of Taiwan, but also in other colonial cities under Japanese rule such as Shanghai, Jakarta, Hanoi, and Manila. After Japan's surrender, the company was dismantled by the order of the General Headquarters (GHQ) in 1947 and its assets requisitioned by the Chinese Nationalist Government.

and settlers."[63] After spending six months in captivity by the U.S. Army, he finally returns to Taiwan after the war and goes back to work at the original company, only to be dismissed shortly in order to make room for the "associates" (*ichizoku rōtō*) of the mainlander Nationalist official who is assigned to requisition the company.

In Chunmu's case, the transition from the Japanese colonial rule to the Nationalist regime is more ambiguous, as he seems to experience both continuity and rupture at the same time. On the one hand, the fact that he is able to go back to the "original Colonial Development Company" (*moto no Takushoku Kaisha*) seems to suggest a structural continuity as if nothing has really changed as a result of the war. Yet on the other hand, he immediately loses his job to mainlanders who are associated with the Nationalist government. What is ambiguous is not only Chunmu's relation to the transfer of power but also his own political stance as well. After his dismissal, Chunmu joins an anti-government organization, which turns out to be a "suspicious group [*etai no shirenai dantai*] that was neither left-wing nor right-wing—put simply, it was simply a handful of malcontents."[64] Compared with the protagonists in *Dakusuikei,* this group seems to be organized not so much by any clear political agenda than a visceral yet somewhat vague sense of resentment. Chunmu's inability to fully express his frustration should be considered pre-political rather than apolitical in the sense that his "feelings," while intense and immediate, have not yet given rise to any concrete articulations. In other words, Kyū seems to seize the very moment, to borrow the language of Raymond Williams, before the "emergent" individual politics, which is yet elusive and amorphous, has fully developed into the "dominant" forms of collective politics bound by concepts such as nation and state.[65] This moment of "becoming" shows the possibility of an alternative politics that breaks free from the

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[63] In fact, many Taiwanese, who were forcibly conscripted into the Japanese military, not only fought but also starved alongside the Japanese in the Philippine mountains. See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the extreme hunger suffered by Japanese soldiers in the Philippines in the final days of the war.
[64] "Honkon," 301.
[65] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

typical postcolonial paradigm of national resistance and gestures instead toward a more universal existential dimension.

From National Freedom to Nomadic Freedom

Kyū's withdrawal from national politics in *Honkon*, especially in light of *Dakusuikei* written just a year ago, seems remarkably reminiscent of Abe Kōbō's attitude of "sustained flight" (*nigedashippanashi*) in "Uchinaru henkyō," in which Abe writes provocatively: "We carry within ourselves a prejudice that this process invariably involves settling down somewhere. My point here consists in shedding doubt on this prejudice."[66] Perhaps more striking is how Kyū and Abe both associate the "flight" from the nation with the image of the Jews as a "stateless people." In light of their diasporic history, Abe suggests: "Jews are those who could not attach themselves to the land. And those who were not bound to the land were Jews."[67] Comparing the Jews to other nomadic communities such as the Gypsies, the Huns (the Xiongnu), or even the "*fūten-zoku* hippies in Shinjuku," Abe focuses more on the obstinacy of anti-Semitism in Western civilization, which he attributes to the ingrained obsession with notions such as legitimacy and authenticity that stem from a "faith in the land."[68]

Compared with Abe's historical analysis, Kyū's reference taps more into the stereotypical and stigmatized image of the Jewish people as misers who care for nothing but money. After spending three days in detention for unlicensed peddling, Chunmu, who feels humiliated for having his head shaved, blames Lao Li for not paying twenty dollars to bail him out. When Chunmu claims that he has the right (*kenri*) to demand someone whom he considers a "comrade" (*dōshi*) to "live and

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[66] Abe Kōbō, "Uchinaru henkyō, Part II," 159. In his speech, Abe favors the cultural or artistic resistance against the state over the political or conceptual resistance (160). However, what he dismisses as "political" seems to refer specifically to the dogmatic, partisan politics between different political parties and factions than to the Foucauldian conception of politics, which is related to the operation of knowledge and power.

[67] Ibid., 136.

[68] Ibid., 147.

die together," Lao Li mocks Chunmu's naivete in believing in something so illusory and idealistic. To Lao Li, what truly matters is neither decency nor dignity but bare survival:

> "You see, we don't have anyone to count on but ourselves. We abandoned home [*kokyō*] out of love for freedom. We came to this land in pursuit of that freedom. But the only freedom that was granted to us was the freedom to destroy ourselves, the freedom to starve to death, the freedom to commit suicide—in short, the kind of freedom that makes us no longer human [*ningen shikkaku*].[69] You must be quite an idiot if this kind of life still doesn't rid you of your good-citizen mentality [*zenryō naru shimin no konjo*]. We don't have home or morals— even dogs don't feed on that kind of things. Money is all that matters! Money is the only thing you can count on."[70]

Here, Lao Li explicitly rejects any political or ethical principles that rest on lofty, abstract and, from his point of view, deceptive concepts such as "home [*kokyō*] and morals [*dōtoku*]." The irony lies, however, in the fact that he comes to realize the deceptiveness of these ideals precisely because he has lost them due to his experience of betrayal and disappointment. In other words, such painful realization always happens *after* the irreparable loss of and disillusionment with a sense of national belonging and moral righteousness. Deprived of home and morals, the exiled intellectuals are thus reduced to what Giorgio Agamben calls a state of "bare life"—that is, they are already "no longer human" to begin with. Lao Li's transition from the pursuit of freedom to that of money therefore suggests a subtle slippage in the meaning of "freedom" itself, as he moves away from a collective, transcendental conception based on national resistance and instead towards a more concrete, individual freedom grounded in the everyday existence.

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[69] Regardless of whether Kyū uses the phrase "no longer human" intentionally as an allusion to Dazai Osamu's 1948 novel *Ningen shikkaku* (translated as *No Longer Human* by Donald Keene in 1958 and more recently by Mark Gibeau as *A Shameful Life* in 2018), both works express a sense of distrust of the conventional meanings and values that have been unproblematically ascribed to being human.

[70] "Honkon," 317.

Chunmu, on the other hand, refuses to accept Lao Li's cynical reasoning and condemns him by invoking the stereotype of the Jews as greedy misers: "Jews! You people [*kisama no yōna yatsu*] are the Jews!" "Yes, the Jews. My goal for the time being is indeed to become a Jew," Lao Li responds, calmly brushing off Chunmu's accusations:

> "Despise them all you want, but the Jews managed to live on even when their nation was destroyed. Look at the influence [*seiryoku*] of those Jews who have taken root in Hong Kong. Look at that gorgeous synagogue on that hillside. You should despise yourself before you despise the Jews. Laugh at yourself who have lost your state, abandoned your nation, and yet still failed to become a Jew!"[71]

Unlike Abe who tries to demystify the Jewish stereotypes by offering a historical account of anti-Semitism, Kyū exploits the semiotic image of the Jewish people as a way to draw an analogy with the exiled Taiwanese for sharing the same fate of statelessness. Here, I am less interested in the specific cause of their differences than in the seemingly accidental simultaneity in alluding to the Jewish people as a symbol of diaspora and displacement. In fact, given their shared interest in exploring possibilities beyond national politics, it seems almost inevitable that Kyū and Abe both evoke the Jews as a rootless, nomadic people who are "essentially opposed to land."[72]

According to Lao Li's logic, the exiled intellectuals from Taiwan can be divided into two categories, namely, the "Taiwanese" who cling firmly to their national identities despite, or perhaps precisely because of, their physical diaspora, and the stateless "Jews" whose existence is fundamentally detached from the limiting concepts such as home (*kokyō*), state (*kuni*), and nation (*minzoku*). Despite the many problems with the racial stereotype, the figure of the Jew symbolizes a universal state of "bare life" as the two sides of the stereotype come full circle: as a stateless people,

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Calichman, *Beyond Nation*, 82.

the Jews are forced to believe in the power of money as the sole, infallible guarantee of freedom, which in return affords them the possibility or, quite literally, the "freedom" to move beyond the conventional political framework.

Chunmu gradually comes to realize the paradoxical nature of "Jewishness" as he spends more time in the city of Hong Kong. Halfway through the novel, Chunmu is surprised to discover that he is slowly yet irreversibly turning into a "Jew" himself:

> Naturally, Chunmu's way of thinking started to change. Even though he didn't want to become a Jew through and through [*tettei*] like Lao Li, it became painfully clear that the only way he could be saved was to chase after opportunities, make efforts to rise to the surface. […] The words Lao Li once spurted out in his crazed anger had all of a sudden come alive and pressed on him with an increasing sense of reality.[73]

Chunmu is, in fact, repeatedly struck by the realization that he is gradually *becoming* a "Jewish" figure like Lao Li. Slightly later, Chunmu makes acquittance with a burly man named Yang Jinlong, who works on a semi-smuggling ship owned by a Nationalist general who ships rice out of Taiwan in the name of "rescuing refugees in the mainland." Upon arrival in Hong Kong, however, the general, unsatisfied with the profits he makes from the rice, ends up selling the ship altogether and absconding while the crew are lost in sightseeing in Hong Kong. Jinlong, quite unaware of the dire situation that awaits him, banters optimistically: "Hong Kong is full of pretty ladies! It's a shame to go back to Taiwan just yet." Chunmu mocks Jinlong's naivete, in a way much reminiscent of Lao Li's cynical mockery of Chunmu himself: "But you see, there's nowhere as difficult to live as Hong Kong. Without money, you can do nothing but throw yourself into the sea."[74] As he blurts out his pessimistic thought, Chunmu is "shocked to discover [*hakken*] an unknown self who sounded just

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[73] "Honkon," 344.
[74] Ibid., 347.

126

like Lao Li." Here, the shock Chunmu experiences comes perhaps not so much from his acknowledgement of Lao Li's influence upon him, which he has known all along, but rather from the discovery of his own "Jewishness" that precedes and transcends the political concepts such as nation and state in which he used to believe unquestioningly.

After going out drinking with Jinlong one night, Chunmu looks up at the moon and suddenly experiences a "frantic nostalgia [*monoguruoshii nosutarujia*] that swept over him like an overwhelming tide."[75] In the next moment, however, he renounces not only his sentimental longing for an actual "hometown" as geographic space, but also the fantasy for a conceptual "home" in which a false sense of comfort and security is crystalized. "No matter how much he longed for it, he knew he would never see his hometown [*kokyō*] again," at which point the narrative switches abruptly from third to first-person, "No, I don't have anything like a home [*kokyō*] from the start. Not just me—in the end, how can any human being [*ningen*] have a home?!"[76]

Compared with the protagonists in *Dakusuikei,* the relationship between the doppelganger figures in *Honkon* are more akin to that between Kyūzō and Kō in Abe's *Kemono-tachi*. In particular, whereas Lin and Liu in *Dakusuikei* are portrayed almost as perfect mirror images of each other, in the case of *Honkon*, the figure of Lao Li seems to suggest what Chunmu would eventually *become*. In other words, if the doppelganger relationship in *Dakusuikei* is characterized by temporal simultaneity on the one hand and symmetrical opposition on the other, the relationship between Chunmu and Lao Li is structured by a deferred repetition in the sense that Chunmu, who always seems to realize his transformation "too late," is never able to fully catch up with his own "becoming."

Ultimately, however, Kyū seems to reject the seemingly ineluctable identity between Chunmu and Lao Li, as the two characters part ways towards the end of the novel. Consistent with

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[75] Ibid., 350.
[76] Ibid.

his refusal to ascribe "meaning" to some abstract, collective political causes, Kyū seems to believe in the latent singularity of human existence which is not predetermined but rather "over-determined." As such, Chunmu's "repetition" of Lao Li can never be complete or absolute, as that would entail both characters subjecting themselves to an invariable structure. In fact, if repetition is, according to Deleuze, not simply the "recurrence of identical elements" but rather a transgression or the "repetition of difference," it is hardly surprising that Chunmu and Lao Li choose to follow divergent "lines of flight" in the end. In contrast to Lao Li who leaves for Japan in order to lie low from the potential fallout of their fraud scheme, Chunmu decides to stay behind in Hong Kong as Lao Li's liaison for the smuggling business. The novel ends with Chunmu's painful realization as he walks back in the drizzle after seeing Lao Li off at the docks:

> Strangely, he didn't feel like blaming Lao Li. In the end, everyone has their own way of living. Today it's Lao Li, maybe tomorrow Lily will leave him as well. When it comes to that, he couldn't bring himself to blame her either. In fact, nobody is in the position to blame anyone else from the beginning. Even so, what cruelty [*zankoku na michi*] it is to walk the path toward freedom [*jiyū e no michi*]![77]

If Lao Li is as close as what Chunmu may count as a "friend," his lover Lily, a prostitute who flees Shanghai shortly after the Communist takeover of mainland China, is the only person in Hong Kong with whom Chunmu feels anything akin to rapport or intimacy. As he comes to terms with the fact that Lily may eventually leave him due to her own precarious conditions, Chunmu is overwhelmed by a sense of emptiness and loneliness. His realization that "nobody is in the position to blame anyone else from the beginning" suggests, however, that the loneliness he experiences is not circumstantial but rather existential in the sense that it entails a fundamental detachment from any concrete social relations such as friendship, marriage, and family.

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[77] Ibid., 396.

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret the novel's ending at face value as sociopathic or even nihilistic. In fact, Kyū's message here seems more akin to Abe Kōbō's warning against a false sense of "security of everydayness," which is then easily extended to the "framework of the state."[78] Interestingly, Kyū describes the experience of existential loneliness as "a path toward freedom" (*jiyū e no michi*) which is, however, quite different from its usual liberal meaning as a power or privilege to be enjoyed, whether collectively or individually. On the contrary, it needs to be conceived far more radically as referring to a contingent, nomadic freedom of "becoming" which is literally "free" from any of its common associations with teleological ends, moral judgments, and liberal values. If so, the nomadic or "rhizomatic" conception of freedom, which refuses to be subsumed into any pregiven principles or structures, is fundamentally at odds with either the ideals of national community or the illusions of bourgeois enjoyment. "If one believes in freedom," as Terry Eagleton once writes provocatively on the longing for certainty, "then this must surely include a certain freedom from one's belief in it."[79]

Kyū's use of "freedom" in *Honkon* is therefore deeply paradoxical. On the one hand, every character in the novel seems to pursue it tirelessly—in fact, the word freedom seems to symbolize the very topos of Hong Kong. On the other hand, however, such freedom is described as something profoundly cruel and painful. In Kyū's own writings, this paradoxical nature of freedom is embodied by none other than the figure of the Jew. When the protagonist Lin in *Dakusuikei* determines to become "a Jew who wanders aimlessly about the world until eternity" (*eien ni chikyū o samayou Yudayajin*) toward the end of the novel, he is at once both deprived of all previously established social relations yet also at the same time given the freedom to go anywhere and "become anyone"

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[78] Abe, *The Frontier Within*, 151.
[79] Terry Eagleton, *Culture and the Death of God* (Yale University Press, 2014), 194.

(*nanimono ni mo nareru*).[80] The only true freedom, as Deleuze puts it, is the freedom of incessant "becoming."

The Reproductive and Productive Power of Money

Perhaps due to the overwhelming emphasis on moneymaking, critics often interpret the novel as celebrating money as the ultimate solution to all predicaments of unfreedom. "The foundation [*kontei*] of Kyū's literature rests on the thought that money is everything [*kane ga subete*]," Okazaki comments rather harshly on the prominence of money in Kyū's fictions, "His disregard [*dogaishi*] of human emotions evokes strong repulsion and discomfort, which eventually turns into a feeling of disgust [*ken'okan*]."[81] To the liberal-minded intellectuals who place collective political resistance above plebian everyday struggles, it is hardly surprising that Kyū's extensive discussion of money in *Honkon* is regarded as a kind of conversion (*tenkō*) or even corruption (*daraku*).

The celebratory interpretation of money, however, seems to contradict the rather bleak tone of the ending, in which Chunmu on the one hand attains freedom that he has never enjoyed before because of the money he makes of the fraud scheme, yet on the other hand he also realizes the irony that such freedom underlies a profound cruelty. In fact, Kyū's understanding of money is not only far more complex and ambivalent than many critics are willing to admit, but it is also fundamentally tied to his literary and political outlook. Unlike those writers who debate about political economy simply as abstract theories, Kyū believes it is not only money, but more importantly the *literary representation of money*, that is deeply political.

Despite the common impression that Kyū was a "self-made billionaire" who built a fortune from scratch, it is worth recalling that he received formal education in Economics at Tokyo Imperial

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[80] Marukawa, *Taiwan*, 140.
[81] Okazaki, 134.

University all the way from undergraduate to doctorate. In fact, Kyū even completed a dissertation

titled "Seisanryoku kinkō no riron" (The Equilibrium Theory of Productive Forces),[82] which was,

however, never submitted to the faculty assembly for defense because he realized that his Neo-

Keynesian approach was at odds with the Marxist atmosphere that dominated early postwar

Japanese academia. In addition, Kyū also showed interest in microeconomic field research, as he

proposed to conduct a survey on the "actual conditions" (*jittai chōsa*) of war victims who were forced

to live in makeshift shelters in the burnt-out ruins of Tokyo. Carried out by the Tokyo University

Social Science Research Group (*Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūkai*), which Kyū co-

founded with his classmate Usu Shin'ichi, this grassroots survey were initially published by the

university newspaper *Tōdai Shinbun* and were later taken up by major national newspapers including

Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei.[83] While it is debatable whether this survey may be considered

a prelude to the postwar record (*kiroku* or *tsuzurikata*) movement, it suffices to say that it reads

remarkably similar to reportage literature that gained popularity in the 1950s as the "everyday life

record movement" (*seikatsu kiroku undō*) swept across Japan.[84]

Regardless of whether this survey was inspired by purely academic interests or humanistic

concerns, it seems unlikely that Kyū was so naïve as to actually believe that "money is everything"

(*kane ga subete*), as Okazaki disparagingly writes. In fact, money is depicted in *Honkon* as something

that is both alienating and liberating at the same time. On the one hand, Kyū is clearly aware that the

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[82] Because Kyū's dissertation was never published, it is impossible to know the details, but according to his autobiography, it develops and refines the Keynesian theory of equilibrium between saving and investment. Kyū believes that the traditional Keynesian fiscal policies alone are insufficient in adjusting business cycles. He instead argues that governments need to adopt more comprehensive policies that include not only fiscal arrangements but also incentives for public and private investments. See *Wa ga seishun no Honkon, Wa ga seishun no Taiwan*.

[83] Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku Shakai Kagaku Kenkyūkai, *Okiagaru hitobito: Gōsha seikatsusha, furōsha no jittai chōsa* (Tokyo: Gakusei Shobō, 1946).

[84] It is perhaps no coincidence that a "survey of actual conditions" (*jittai chōsa*) such as *Okiagaru hitobito* was conducted by university students and published in a university newspaper. National newspapers, which were under heavy censorship by the General Headquarters (GHQ) until the early 1950s, were unlikely to publish surveys that may contradict the press codes, which explicitly prohibited any criticism of the occupation policies.

accumulation of money entails subjecting oneself to the relentless capitalist system which is based on the universal principle of exchange and exploitation. Early in the novel, for example, Chunmu and Lao Li decide to make a living by setting up a food stall to sell dried squid near the bustling Victoria Harbor. It takes little time, however, before they notice the staggering disparity between the spectacular harbor where "the lights glittered like diamonds" and the shantytown, ironically named "Diamond Hill," where the protagonists call home.[85]

Decades later, in a book published around the handover of Hong Kong, Kyū describes the city of Hong Kong itself as an "enormous casino."[86] As such, money is reduced to an abstract symbol based on pure chance and is thus detached from its concrete meanings in everyday life. Stranded in a city known for its unbridled capitalist freedom, Chunmu is quickly forced to realize the futility and even absurdity of existence itself: "People would scream, laugh, grieve, sell, buy, and repeat the simple movement of transferring paper bills stained with blood and sweat from one hand to another."[87] Here, Chunmu's observation about the incessant repetition of exchange underlies a profound paradox: whereas *homo economicus* always act out of their calculated rationality, they seem at the same time quite oblivious to a universal state of existential irrationality: "They probably had no idea why they were always running about. Maybe there was no such thing as a purpose in life to begin with."[88] In other words, what money brings is nothing but a false sense of freedom—that is, a fundamental unfreedom *masquerading* as the freedom to engage in the endless chain of exchange by "transferring paper bills […] from one hand to another."

To consider money simply as a meaningless repetition of exchange, however, is seeing only one side of the coin. In *Honkon*, money is not something that simply reproduces or multiplies itself,

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[85] "Honkon," 310.
[86] Kyū Eikan, *1997: Honkon no yuutsu*, 43.
[87] "Honkon," 309.
[88] Ibid.

but also a source of freedom and productivity. What I mean by productivity here refers neither to Benjamin Franklin's insight that "money can beget money, and its offspring can beget more,"[89] nor to Marx's formula for capital which measures profit by the increase in the value of the commodity (encapsulated in the famous expression: M-C-M'), but rather to a generative power that brings forth the possibility of difference and becoming.

In *Honkon*, the productive aspect of money is reflected on two levels. Before I turn to the analysis, however, I would like to clarify that I do not wish to evoke moral implications by my use of productivity. While the incessant movement of "becoming" constantly produces differences, these differences do not necessarily conform to the moralistic worldview based on the dichotomy between the good and the evil. "To reach a repetition which saves, or which changes life, beyond good and evil," as Deleuze powerfully suggests, "would it not be necessary to break with the order of impulses, to undo the cycles of time, reach an element which would be like a true 'desire,' or like a choice constantly beginning again."[90]

First, on the surface level, money can literally be exchanged for freedom in the novel. When Chunmu was arrested for illegal peddling (*fuhō gyōshō*), for example, the British judge literally puts a price tag on freedom by declaring a sentence of "a fine of twenty dollars, or a three-day detention."[91] Much to Chunmu's chagrin, however, Lao Li refuses to spend twenty dollars to bail him out, as his freedom would come at too high a cost: "With twenty dollars, we can live on minimum life [*saitei seikatsu*] for weeks. […] If I'd just paid those twenty dollars as you wished, we would've been both starving from that very moment!"[92]

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[89] See Jochen Hörisch, *Heads or Tails: The Poetics of Money* (Wayne State University Press, 2000), 130.
[90] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 133.
[91] "Honkon," 314.
[92] Ibid., 316.

If a fine can be exchanged for freedom, it takes little to extend this equation to a more general condition of poverty under capitalism. Already from the beginning, Chunmu is aware of the parallel between money and freedom or, more precisely, the lack of money and the loss of freedom. Having barely managed to escape political persecution by the Nationalist government, Chunmu quickly realizes that he is now trapped in a disguised yet equally precarious state of incarceration:

> He had been captured after all. Scurrying here and there, only to give in like this—it was as if he had jumped right into the prison himself! It had to be. If this right here was not a prison, what else could possibly be? It seemed that he had made an irreparable mistake. If he had been arrested in Taiwan, he might have been banished to the Bonfire Island and forced to spend the next ten years or so growing potatoes. But as long as he served his sentence obediently, all he would have lost were the ten years of his youth and nothing else. […] But he chose instead to flee to Hong Kong, only to serve a sentence of endless exile [*rurō*] in this prison without bars [*kōshi no nai rōgoku*]![93]

Despite his nominal freedom, in other words, Chunmu considers the life of material poverty in Hong Kong, which he describes as a "sentence without a term" (*kigen no nai fukueki*), as more or less equivalent to the state of physical imprisonment in the Bonfire Island, the infamous penal colony for political prisoners during the period of White Terror. However, unlike the externally imposed forms of unfreedom such as compulsory conscription under Japanese colonialism or political persecution under the Nationalist regime, he can at least imagine the possibility that he might one day "buy his way" out of the prison of poverty as long as he manages to accumulate enough wealth.

Chunmu is, of course, well aware of the deep irony underlying the commodity nature of freedom, which is nothing but an illusion to conceal the fundamental *unfreedom* in a capitalist society. In fact, the only freedom that is granted to him is what Marx calls the "double freedom" of the

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[93] Ibid., 300-1.

proletarian, who is "free to sell his labor power as a commodity and is also freed from possession of any of the means of production or subsistence necessary for survival."[94] After the dried squid business falls through, Chunmu tries to make a living by carrying water from the nearest public hydrant back to the slum which has no running water. Despite the intensive labor, his compensation is staggeringly meager: "But the pay he got was merely sixty cents. If he paid the rent, he couldn't afford to eat, and if he paid instead for food, he wouldn't have a place to sleep."[95] If the younger Chunmu at least manages to scrape by, Lao Li, who is unable to perform manual labor due to his weaker physique, can only curse at the unfairness of life: "Damn it! Damn it! Why wasn't I born a woman! If I were, I'd at least still have something to sell [*mada urumono ga aru*], even if I was stripped bare [*suppadaka*]. God is unfair!" (324). In other words, if Chunmu has nothing to sell but his body, in the case of Lao Li, a figure of "bare life" *par excellence*, he is stripped of the very last commodity and is literally left with absolutely nothing to exchange.

If, on the surface, what money produces is not freedom but rather a false sense of freedom, the novel also offers a more positive possibility in the productive power of money, not as the medium of exchange based on equal values but rather as a medium through which alternative social relations are forged. In the second half of the novel, Chunmu is arrested a second time for attempted manslaughter. Knowing that Jinlong spent much of his childhood in the sea, Chunmu suggests that Jinlong should make use of his diving skills to catch lobsters and sell them to seafood restaurants. Stranded penniless in a strange city, Jinlong readily accepts Chunmu's proposal but refuses to divide the profits evenly. Enraged by the unfair treatment, Chunmu absconds one day with the lobsters and rows back to shore while Jinlong is still diving in the sea. After spending a

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[94] Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (University of Georgia Press, 2008), 115.
[95] "Honkon," 323.

night with his lover Lily and entrusting all his money to her, Chunmu is arrested by the police in the next morning.

The reason for Chunmu's reckless move is not so much that he harbors unrealistic hope but precisely the opposite, that he has already given up all hope in life. Compared to the "sentence without a term" in the prison of poverty, he finds consolation and even comfort in a real prison behind the bars. Confined in his cell, Chunmu "realized for the first time how wonderful it was to be alone."[96] Knowing that he might be charged with attempted manslaughter, he even wishes: "If not a life sentence, several years would do. Anyway, it was too much trouble to rely on himself or other people. He thought it would be the best if the government could just keep him alive."[97]

When he learns the next morning that he has been released on bail, Chunmu thus feels "even more surprised than hearing a death sentence."[98] Unlike the first time when he is arrested for illegal peddling, this time Lao Li insists on bailing Chunmu out, despite his own willingness to spend the rest of his life in prison. After bailing him out, Lao Li admonishes Chunmu:

> "I'm not going to blame you for stepping on other people, or for ripping them off, or for leaving that bastard Jinlong behind in the sea. This world [*yononaka*] is unfair to begin with. One man's profit is another's loss. […] But remember, there's no freedom in prison. That's the one thing I was worried about you."[99]

In other words, the reason Lao Li is reluctant to pay twenty dollars to bail Chunmu out the first time but is willing to pay what is likely a much higher amount this time has to do with Chunmu's own changing state of mind. While Chunmu shows an impressive desire to cling to life and dignity the first time, he completely gives in to the bleak reality and ends up seeking a nihilistic "freedom in

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[96] Ibid., 367.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., 368-9.

prison" this time. As such, the bail is not simply a monetary exchange for freedom but rather a symbol of becoming, a potentiality for difference, and an unyielding struggle for life despite its cruelty.

A few months after his release, Chunmu visits Lily at the brothel again and learns that the money he has entrusted to her before his arrest turns out to be, quite literally, a lifesaver. When Chunmu asks how she has been since his last visit, Lily explains: "You see, I'd fallen quite ill and been laid up for a while. If not for the money you gave me, I might have died. You think I lost some weight?"[100] Here, money is depicted as something that is not only productive but perhaps even redemptive. In other words, if money, understood as the vehicle for capitalist exchange, represents a general condition of exploitation and alienation, in this case it functions precisely as the opposite, namely as the medium for forming and restoring human relations. These relations, while stemming from a shared struggle and resistance, remain firmly grounded in the singularities of individual experiences and thus refuse to give rise to an abstract, collective identity such as that of the nation or the state.

Retreat from Politics, or a Space-Clearing Gesture

Although the transition from *Dakusuikei* to *Honkon* has often been characterized as one from politics to money, I would like to reiterate again that the boundary between the two is neither exclusive nor absolute. In the case of *Dakusuikei,* for example, it does recognize the political significance of money despite its primary focus on the collective struggles against Japanese colonialism and Nationalist totalitarianism. In the second half of *Dakusuikei,* the protagonist Lin, disillusioned by the reality in Taiwan after his return from Japan, gradually turns away from political movements and becomes engrossed in moneymaking as a smuggler. Unlike his doppelganger figure Liu, who despises Lin for

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[100] Ibid., 380.

his conversion, Lin himself "didn't think of his new way of life as corruption in the slightest."[101] The reason for Lin's confidence in his new way of life is that he never considers money as something that is detached from or opposed to politics. In fact, he even wishes to "become a demon of money [*kinsen no oni*] and to seize the kind of monetary power [*kinryoku*] that could move politics [*seiji o ugokasu*]."[102]

Despite the unity between money and politics, however, Lin in *Dakusuikei* ultimately sees money as secondary and expedient, that is, a vehicle to serve a higher purpose of "moving politics." In *Honkon*, on the other hand, the protagonists Chunmu and Lao Li no longer consider politics as an abstract, transcendental telos that demands money at its disposal, but rather as something that is necessarily materialized in the concrete, everyday struggle of money. The reason for this change, I argue, lies in Kyū's own increasing suspicion of the traditional political categories at the time of his writing. Specifically, whereas the protagonists in *Dakusuikei* harbor a fantasy in a collective identity of the newly decolonized Taiwanese nation (*minzoku*), the characters in *Honkon* seem to have realized that their fantasy is precisely what it is—a deceptive and illusory fantasy.

After Chunmu is released from prison, he and Lao Li take a stroll to the Kowloon Wharf where a British ship is moored. In his hoarse voice, Lao Li sings along to the melody of "Auld Lang Syne," which is being performed by the orchestra onboard. The lyrics he sings are, of course, not the original poem by Robert Burns but rather the Japanese lyrics "Light of the Fireflies" (*Hotaru no hikari*), which were set to the tune when it was included in the imperial education during the Meiji period. While this may seem like an insignificant detail, I argue that this brief mention of *Hotaru no hikari* needs to be interpreted in light of its particular historical context. In the novel, Lao Li only sings the first two lines, "Light of the fireflies, snow by the window/ Months and days spent reading

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[101] "Dakusuikei," 185.
[102] Ibid.

138

piling up (*hotaru no hikari, mado no yuki/ Fumi yomu tsukihi, kasane tsutsu*)," which ostensibly depict the hardships that students in Meiji Japan endured in their quest for knowledge as they read diligently by the light of fireflies.

Dismissing this song simply as a "syrupy ballad,"[103] however, would be to overlook the fact that it is not only one of the first songs to be incorporated into Japan's modern curriculum, but also a clear manifestation of Meiji Japan's imperial ambition. On the formal level, the combination between, on the one hand, a sentimental Western melody and, on the other, Japanese lyrics about diligence and devotion epitomized, quite literally, Meiji government's effort to bring together "Japanese spirit and Western technology" (*wakon yōsai*). More importantly, as Oguma Eiji notes, the final verse of the Japanese lyrics shows a blatantly expansionist message: "The far reaches of Chishima, and Okinawa, too/ Will be the home guard for Japan" (*Chishima no oku mo, Okinawa mo/ Yashima no uchi no, mamori nari*).[104] As territories of Meiji Japan expanded drastically after the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, the islands of Chishima and Okinawa, often characterized as Japan's "internal colonies," were allegedly replaced by Taiwan and Karafuto, "colonies proper" of modern imperial Japan.

To Chunmu and Lao Li, to be taught this song, along with its imperialist message, as colonial subjects is thus both ironic and also deeply tragic. Chunmu's experience with *Hotaru no hikari*, however, does not end here. In fact, Chunmu "didn't know that famous *Hotaru no hikari* was, in fact, a foreign song [*gaikoku no uta*] until he heard children in the Philippines singing it, and he remembered that he was greatly saddened by this discovery."[105] The reason for Chunmu's sadness lies not only in his realization that he has been "doubly colonized"—that is, displaced from one

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[103] Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 108.
[104] Oguma Eiji, *The Boundaries of "The Japanese," vol. 1: Okinawa 1868-1972, Inclusion and Exclusion* (translated by Leonie R. Stickland, Trans Pacific Press, 2014), 43. I use Stickland's translation with slight revisions.
[105] "Honkon," 369-70.

colony to another, but more importantly in his fundamental disillusionment in the postcolonial identity of the Taiwanese, which turns out to be just as deceptive as that bestowed by imperial Japan: "Just thinking how pathetic it was to imitate [*mane*] the Japanese, who imitated the Westerners themselves, almost brought tears to his eyes. But he wasn't going to cry anymore. No matter how much he cried, the lost dreams [*ushinawareta yume*] wouldn't come back."[106]

Here, Chunmu considers the condition of "double colonization" first and foremost as an experience of "double imitation." Chunmu's understanding of imitation is clearly not as optimistic as that of Homi Bhabha, whose notion of colonial mimicry, which is essentially a "repetition with difference," has the subversive potential to "continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."[107] Although both conceptions rest on an uneasy ambivalence that the colonial Other is "almost the same, but not quite," Chunmu seems to consider difference not as a site of disruption but rather of distortion and disorientation, which always places the colonized at a remove from the supposed source of authenticity—the Westerners (*seiyōjin*).

Notwithstanding his relatively conservative stance, however, Chunmu's resolute refusal to cry (*mō nakumai*) shows his painful realization that the dream of a postcolonial identity has been irreparably shattered. In other words, whether or not the Taiwanese manage to achieve national independence and self-determination, it is always already mediated by and distorted from what he considers to be an "authentic" experience. Chunmu's pessimistic attitude should not, however, be interpreted simply at the textual level as a sign of defeatism or nihilism, but rather as reflecting the rapidly shifting historical context in postcolonial Taiwan itself. In particular, Marukawa Tetsushi sees the change of style (*sakufū*) between *Dakusuikei* and *Honkon* as not only foreboding Kyū's personal transformation into an entrepreneur, but also reflecting a broader structural transition (*tenshin*)

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[106] Ibid., 370.
[107] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994), 86.

among Taiwanese intellectuals who "abandoned political movements and dedicated instead to economic activities in the aftermath of the February 28 Incident."[108]

Although I find Marukawa's historically grounded approach more persuasive than the typical textual analyses, I am unconvinced by his assertation that it was the crackdown by the Nationalist government and the subsequent White Terror that deterred Taiwanese intellectuals from political involvement. In fact, the precise opposite seems to be the case, as many intellectuals became aligned with the independence movement *as a result* of the bloody suppression by the Nationalist regime. Contrary to Marukawa's argument, therefore, I argue that Taiwanese intellectuals, including Kyū Eikan himself, would not have become political dissidents in the true sense of the word, had they not witnessed and experienced the degree of violence and brutality in the White Terror with their own eyes.

If so, it seems somewhat anachronistic to attribute Kyū's stylistic transition in 1955 to the tragic incident in 1947, which, if anything, spurs rather than deters him from writing explicitly about the politics of resistance.[109] Instead, I consider Kyū's change of style as directly related to the immediate historical context, namely the time window between the publication of *Dakusuikei* and that of *Honkon*. As I mentioned earlier, the two novels were serialized on the same literary magazine *Taishū bungei* approximately one year apart from each other: *Dakusuikei* in three monthly installments from August to October in 1954 (although the last installment was removed when the work was submitted to the Naoki committee), and *Honkon* in four installments from August to November in 1955. While most scholars have interpreted the stark transition simply in terms of Kyū's "award-winning strategy," I believe it actually has more to do with the rapid changes in the external political

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[108] Marukawa, *Taiwan*, 148.

[109] Kyū's first fictional work, "Mitsunyūkokusha no shuki," was written in support of his friend Wang Yude's appeal to remain legally in Japan. Wang, as I mentioned earlier, was forced to leave Taiwan in the aftermath of the February 28 Incident. As a result, Kyū's writerly career is inseparable from his own involvement with Taiwanese independence from the yoke of Nationalist dictatorship.

environment as a result of the Cold War regime. Specifically, if the Taiwanese intellectuals had harbored some feeble hope of independence from the Nationalist government, such hope was shattered completely on December 2, 1954 (shortly after the final installment of *Dakusuikei*) when the United States and the Republic of China signed a mutual defense treaty (commonly known as the Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty, or *Zhongmei gongtong fangyu tiaoyue*), which went into effect in the following March. In other words, if the protagonists in *Dakusuikei* are at least allowed to entertain the theoretical possibility of national liberation and independence, such possibility had evaporated completely by the time *Honkon* was published, when Taiwan's military, political, and diplomatic dependence on the United States had become as clear as day. As a result, Lao Li and Chunmu can no longer fantasize about the possibility of achieving national freedom simply by getting rid of the Nationalist regime, because whatever freedom they might manage to attain is always already conditioned by the broader Cold War politics under American hegemony.

Ironically, if the withdrawal from politics in postcolonial Taiwan is directly related to the Cold War policies of the United States, it is paralleled almost perfectly in the case of postwar Japan as well. Whether the initial US-Japan Security Treaty (commonly known as the *Nichibei Anpo jōyaku*) signed in September 1951, or the amended treaty that was renewed in January 1960, in both cases the Japanese literary world reacted rather passively, as writers who debuted around those times were often regarded as fundamentally disinterested in politics. For example, in the case of the "Third Generation of New Writers" (*daisan no shinjin*), many of its members including Yasuoka Shōtarō, Kojima Nobuo, and Yoshiyuki Jun'nosuke achieved widespread recognition as they received the Akutagawa Prize in succession shortly after the initial security treaty went into effect.[110] Despite their remarkable success, however, these writers were often disparaged by literary critics for their

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[110] Members of the *daisan no shinjin* who received the Akutagawa Prize include, in chronological order, Yasuoka Shōtarō (1953, first half), Yoshiyuki Jun'nosuke (1954, first half), Kojima Nobuo and Shōno Junzō (1954, second half), and Endō Shūsaku (1955, first half).

obsession with "everyday life" (*nichijōteki seikatsu*) and a lack of critical engagement with the broader social reality. Hattori Tatsu, for example, famously identifies a few common characteristics in their works, including "a reliance upon simple, existential reality; adherence to the 'I-novel' tradition; the weakening of a critical disposition," and most importantly, "a lack of interest in politics [*seiji-teki kanshin no ketsujo*]."[111] In short, despite their bitter memories of the war, the *daisan no shinjin* writers tend to be associated, often disparagingly, with small-scale (*kotsubu*), autobiographical (*shishōsetsu-teki*) fictions that are devoid of any critical doctrines.[112]

Likewise, when Odagiri Hideo inaugurates the rather pejorative phrase "The Introverted Generation" (*naikō no sedai*) almost two decades later to describe a group of writers including Ogawa Kunio, Hino Keizō, and Gotō Meisei, who made their debut after the height of student movements in the 1960s, Odagiri's censure is targeted specifically at these writers' "distance from political ideology due to a sense of fatigue [*kentai*] and disgust [*ken'okan*]."[113] Similar to *daisan no shinjin*, writers associated with *naikō no sedai* are often characterized by a total retreat from political matters and an escapist fixation with interiority due to a strong sense of frustration and disillusionment with collective political struggles, particularly the student protests against the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty (commonly known as the ANPO protests).[114] Akiyama Shun, for instance, observes a number of features in common among these writers, including an incredulity at grand narratives about social issues and a propensity to depict an existential absurdity of urban life, which he cogently summarizes as "living a meaningless life in a meaningless place."[115]

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[111] Hattori Tatsu, "Shinsedai no sakkatachi," *Warera ni totte bi wa sonzai suru ka*, 300-7, quoted from Van C. Gessel, *The Sting of Death: Four Contemporary Japanese Novelists* (Columbia University Press, 1989), 61. It should be noted that Hattori was, in fact, one of the few critics who strongly empathized with the *daisan no shinjin* writers. See Heitzman, 81-3.
[112] Heitzman, 24.
[113] Odagiri Hideo, "Mada to mō to: manshō jihen kara 40-nen no bungaku no mondai," *Tōkyō shinbun* (*yūkan*), March 23, 1971.
[114] Jason Herlands, *Narrating Intoxication in Japan in the Wake of the 1960s* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009), 19.
[115] Akiyama Shun, "Nichijōteki na genjitsu to bungaku no hatten," *Zōho kaitei sengo Nihon bungakushi nenpyō*. Quoted from Eric Lofgren, "Supplementing Life: Death in Furui Yoshikichi's 'Tani,'" *World Literature Today*, vol. 76, no. 1 (2002), 54.

Characterizing *daisan no shinjin* and *naikō no sedai* writers as apolitical based on their surface

aversion to explicit political engagement, however, runs the risk of overlooking not only the

complexity and ambiguity of their political stances, but also the historical embeddedness of postwar

Japan in the Cold War regime in general. In the case of *daisan no shinjin*, for example, Kendall

Heitzman notes that Yasuoka Shōtarō, one of the most representative writers of the group, is in fact

"deeply political in the only way he could be: through individual, unallied resistance."[116] Similarly,

Jason Herlands considers the obsession of *naikō no sedai* writers with interiority, which is frequently

represented through the unlikely trope of drug intoxication, as "an abstract site that offers rigorous

contestation of contemporary values."[117] In both cases, in other words, the ostensible apoliticality

can be interpreted as concealing a more fundamental political anxiety which, however, refuses to be

subsumed into an organized, coherent, and collective narrative of resistance.

Perhaps more importantly, the simultaneity between the emergence of these groups on the

one hand and the looming presence of American hegemony on the other should not be taken simply

as a historical coincidence. Similar to the shift away from political movements among the Taiwanese

intellectuals, Japanese writers who debuted around the time of security treaties perhaps sensed a

vague yet profound sense of powerlessness. In both cases, engagement with politics becomes almost

meaningless or even absurd due to the absolutely indubitable presence of the United States. For Kyū

and his contemporary Taiwanese intellectuals, their erstwhile resistance against the Nationalist

regime is rendered as a completely futile endeavor, as long as they remain powerless to challenge the

foundational structure of the Cold War scheme under American dominance.

In an essay that is provocatively titled "Taiwanjin o wasureru na!" (Don't Forget about the

Taiwanese! 1957), Kyū recounts an anecdote that perfectly demonstrates the predicament of

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[116] Heitzman, 20.
[117] Herlands, 14.

postcolonial Taiwanese intellectuals. Reminiscing a chance meeting with Edogawa Ranpo at a bar in Ginza, Kyū writes:

> Mr. Edogawa asked where I was from, and I said Taiwan. He then asked, "I see. So you're on Chiang Kai-shek's side?" A little flustered, I explained: "Even though Taiwan is occupied by Chiang at the moment, it doesn't make me one of his supporters." At that, Mr. Edogawa kept pressing: "Then Mao Zedong's side?" Even more flustered, I answered: "Well, I don't belong to any side. I'm more like an independent [*koritsuha*], if I have to choose." When I said that, Mr. Edogawa simply teased me: "Someone is talking like an artist!"[118]

The reason Kyū feels flustered by Edogawa's casual questions stems from the impossibility of unquestioning alliance with either side, because the political reality in postwar Taiwan is haunted by an invisible yet overwhelming "third party." In fact, Kyū suggests that "it makes more sense to see it the other way around, namely from the perspective of the American policies in the Far East."[119] As long as Taiwan remains one of the nodes in the "defensive line" (*bōeisen*) against the Communist bloc, Kyū argues, it is inconceivable that the United States would ever give up Taiwan, which would be tantamount to the "total collapse [*ittōryōdan*] of its defense program in the Far East and likely the total retreat [*sōtaikyaku*] all the way to Hawaii."[120]

In light of the overarching historical context, Kyū's alleged transition from *Dakusuikei* to *Honkon* should thus be apprehended not as an abandonment of politics but rather as an "individual, unallied resistance," as Heitzman calls it in the case of Kyū's Japanese contemporary, Yasuoka Shōtarō. As such, Kyū's retreat from a direct engagement with political matters in *Honkon* can be

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[118] Kyū Eikan, *Nihon tengoku-ron* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1957), 122.
[119] Ibid., 130.
[120] Ibid., 134.

interpreted as a "space-clearing gesture"—that is, a preparatory stance to construct an alternative politics that moves beyond the conventional categories of national paradigms.[121]

The Poetics and Politics of Money

The alternative form of politics, manifested through the unlikely trope of money, is in fact closely related to the critical intervention that Kyū aims to make to the Japanese literary traditions. If the canon of modern Japanese literature, comprised most conspicuously of I-novels that explore human subjectivity and interiority by delving into the realm of sexuality, the unconventional themes in Kyū's literature, ranging from gastronomy to investment, disrupt the very foundation of the literary institution itself. In contrast to the conceptual disposition commonly observed in the canonical works of modern Japanese literature, Kyū's emphasis on the materiality of mundane, everyday life suggests the possibility of conceiving a drastically different "politics of desire."

"Every political economy is libidinal,"[122] as Lyotard famously claims, the realm of politics is at its fundamental level structured by an order of desire that refuses to be reduced to the symbolic or rational dimension. In other words, new forms of politics are necessarily accompanied by a "radical change of the position of desire," which according to Amador Fernández-Savater is "not only a change of one object of desire for another, but a change in the very *way* of desiring, of the *place* itself from which it acts; not only of a change in *what* one wants, but of *how* one wants what one wants."[123] If so, the seemingly abrupt transition from *Dakusuikei* to *Honkon* is not so much replacing one

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[121] I borrow the term "space-clearing gesture" from Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?"

[122] Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* (translated by Iain Hamilton Grant, Indiana University Press, 1993), 108.

[123] Amador Fernández-Savater, "Politics of Desire: To Take Up Again the Intuition of 68." Originally published on *Lobo Suelto!* on December 5, 2018. Emphasis in original. https://autonomies.org/2018/05/may-68-and-the-politics-of-desire-amador-fernandez-savater/. Interestingly, Fernández-Savater's interpretation of libidinal economy is reminiscent of what Jacques Rancière calls the "distribution of the sensible." According to Rancière, the "aesthetics of politics" means a radical reconfiguration of politics itself, "not as a specific single world but as a conflictive world: not a world of competing interests or values but a world of competing worlds" (7). See Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus, Politics and Aesthetics," *Reading Rancière: Critical Dissensus* (edited by Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp, 2011), 1-17.

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political order for another, but rather a complete restructuring of the very ways in which political relations are conceived. Indeed, Kyū envisions his literature as presenting an opportunity to break with the excessive attention to sensuality and sexuality in the I-novels, which have dominated much of modern Japanese literature since the Meiji period.[124] In a memoir that is bluntly titled *Watashi no kanemōke jiden* (My Moneymaking Memoir, 1977), Kyū considers his unconventional topics as a remedy to this obvious loophole, namely, the obsession with sexuality:

> Whatever the readers find interesting are always related to the human desire, which can be, broadly speaking, divided into three categories: desire for food [*shokuyoku*], for sex [*seiyoku*], and for properties [*shoyūyoku*]. Among the three, however, Japanese novelists focus exclusively on the sexual desire. When I flip through serialized fictions in newspapers and weekly magazines, I see nothing but a succession of bed scenes, which makes me wonder if the Japanese people are all sex maniacs [*irokichigai*].[125]

Clearly targeted at the "carnal literature" (*nikutai bungaku*) that took the literary world by storm in the early postwar period, Kyū's humorous remark, while unfairly trivializing its literary and historical significance,[126] does accurately identify the latent contradiction in the "libidinal economy" in postwar Japan, namely, the celebration of transgressive sexuality at the cost of silencing the more immediate, material desires in everyday life. Moreover, the elevation of sexuality to the realm of subjectivity makes the desires for food and money all the more vulgar and thus unsuitable for literary

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[124] One notable exception was the spectacular yet short-lived boom of proletarian literature in the early 1920s, which was regarded as a threat by both the literary world and the increasingly militarist government. If the former saw it as a threat "to the idealized detachment that was supposed to characterize pure art" (Strecher, 368), the latter saw it as a much graver danger in presenting the possibility of a social and political revolution. In other words, whereas the literary society chastised proletarian literature for tarnishing an aesthetic tradition that was concerned, almost exclusively, with interiority and private life, the fascist government felt threatened for precisely the opposite reason, namely, the potential to create a new order rather than to destroy an old tradition. The government thus heavily suppressed writers and artists associated with the communist cause, leading most notably to the death of Kobayashi Takiji, mass arrests, imprisonments, and perhaps more tragically, the forced conversions (*tenkō*) of many others. See, for example, Matthew Strecher, "Purely Mass or Massively Pure? The Division Between 'Pure' and 'Mass' Literature," *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 51, no. 3 (1996), 357-74.

[125] Kyū Eikan, *Watashi no kanemōke jiden* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1977).

[126] See Douglas Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction* (Routledge, 2004).

representation. In fact, whereas the excessive sexuality in carnal literature was sometimes decried for

its amorality,[127] themes of food and money were rarely, if ever, considered to be worthy of inclusion

in the literary discourse proper in the first place.

To be sure, such neglect is hardly surprising in light of the state of rampant poverty,

malnutrition, and homelessness that plagued Japan in the early postwar era. At the same time,

however, the conditions of material want also presented an opportunity to imagine an alternative

"politics of desire." For example, Kyū published a series of essays on his "gastronomic quest" for

Cantonese cuisine, which were later collected under the title *Shoku wa Kōshū ni ari* (Delicacies in

Guangzhou, 1957).[128] Maruya Saiichi praised this essay collection, one of the first gourmet books in

postwar Japan, as one of the three literary masterpieces (*meicho*) on gastronomy, along with Dan

Kazuo's *Danryū kukkingu* (The Dan School Cooking) and Yoshida Ken'ichi's *Watashi no shokumotsushi*

(My Food Book). Similarly, Kyū's interest in the "desire for properties" spawned not only fictions

that feature pecuniary themes, which broadly overlapped with the emergence of "business novels"

(*keizai shōsetsu*) such as Kaikō Takeshi's "Kyojin to gangu" (Giants and Toys, 1957) and Shiroyama

Saburō's "Yushutsu" (Export, 1957), but also books of economic and financial commentaries such

as *Kinsen tokuhon* (The Money Textbook, 1959) and *Tōshika tokuhon* (Textbook for Investors, 1961).

If politics is structured by an order of desire, it is possible to reverse Lyotard's verdict and

argue that every libidinal economy is also necessarily political, in the sense that conflicting desires are

necessarily materialized in concrete political alliances and antagonisms. In fact, what Kyū perceived

as political is not so much the specific content of desire than the act of writing about previously

disparaged forms of desire. "While it is a matter of course to expect elements of entertainment in a

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[127] Maruyama Masao, for example, fears that people in future generations "would get the idea that in about 1949 the Japanese people had their heads filled constantly with the business of coitus." Maruyama Masao, "From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics," *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*. Quoted from Slaymaker, 11.
[128] See Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature* (University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 158.

novel," Kyū contends, "the axis [*shinbō*] of a novel should always be a character of anti-commonsense [*han-jōshiki*], anti-establishment [*han-taisei*], and anti-society [*han-shakai*]."[129] In light of the postwar "liberalization" (*jiyūka*) of literature, Kyū suggests that the thematic of sexuality had lost its erstwhile subversive edge and is reduced to a banal celebration of carnal pleasure. As a result, he dismisses the criticism by those "art for art's sake" writers who condemned his literary "corruption" (*daraku*) and argues instead that his "writings on money aren't simply about the knacks [*hautsū*] but are rather a philosophy that determines one's way of life."[130]

Kyū's "moneymaking philosophy" can in fact be regarded as harkening back to a tradition of *chōnin* (townspeople) culture in the height of the Edo period, a time when wealthy merchants were seen as a source of subversion and disruption because their monetary power seemed capable of "replacing a hereditary status system with a fluid hierarchy, a sort of meritocracy of the marketplace."[131] The merchant class, which supposedly occupied the bottom rung of the social hierarchy based on the Neo-Confucian ideologies, in reality possessed far more power and influence than the ruling class had ever wished.[132] Celebrating a lifestyle of pleasure, idleness, and extravagance, the townspeople who indulged in sensual experiences of the "floating world" (*ukiyo*) jeopardized, at least from the perspective of the governing elites, the official ideology of the Tokugawa shogunate, which was based on principles of diligence, productivity, and frugality. This "culture of play," as Harry Harootunian calls it, was seen as a serious threat to the social order precisely because "the boundaries between work and play, the everyday and the non-everyday

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[129] Kyū, *Watashi no kanemōke jiden*, quoted from Okazaki, 93.
[130] Ibid.
[131] David Gundry, *Parody, Irony and Ideology in the Fiction of Ihara Saikaku* (Brill, 2017), 22.
[132] The Edo society is supposedly divided into four classes: warriors (*shi*), peasants (*nō*), artisans (*kō*), and merchants (*shō*). As the economy gradually shifted from rice to money over the course of the Edo period, however, the merchant class became increasingly influential and indispensable to the coffers of the shogunate (*bakufu*) and the regional lords (*daimyō*) alike.

collapsed in such a way that the logic of the non-everyday pervaded the everyday, or the everyday folded into the non-everyday."[133]

Thanks to the ascent of the merchant class and its concomitant values and aesthetics, themes of money and body came to occupy a central position in the early modern Japanese culture. As a result, in Edo literature and theater, the center stage was no longer monopolized by courtiers and warriors as in the preceding centuries, but was rather extended to include commoner or even outcast figures such as pleasure quarter connoisseurs (*tsūjin*) and the courtesans and entertainers whom they patronized and idolized.[134] It is thus all the more curious that while sexuality became celebrated for its liberating or even radically subversive power, whether in the context of naturalist fictions such as Tayama Katai's "Futon" (The Quilt, 1907) or in the postwar carnal literature such as Tamura Taijirō's "Nikutai no mon" (The Gate of Flesh, 1947),[135] the other branches of desire, namely that for food and money, continued to be disparaged as vulgar and unworthy of literary representation, criticism, and scholarship.

Kyū challenges the marginality of money in the popular discourse by turning the hierarchy in Edo Japan on its head. "In the past only a samurai was called a man [*otoko*]," Kyū writes defiantly against the essentialization of the samurai spirit, "so to quit being a man [*otoko o yameru*] means to

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[133] Katsuya Hirano, *Politics of Dialogic Imagination: Power and Popular Culture in Early Modern Japan* (University of Chicago Press, 2013): 82. It should be noted, however, that the extent to which the Edo government was concerned with the influence of pleasure quarters and kabuki theaters is open to question. As Satoko Shimazaki shows, the word *akusho*, which is commonly translated as evil places and associated with brothels and theaters, was originally used by commoners rather than government officials. "*Akusho* was a term that commoners applied to the pleasure quarters for their *own* sake," Shimazaki notes, "as a means of inoculating themselves against the catastrophic losses its temptations could occasion" (21). On the historical usage of *akusho*, see Shimazaki, *Edo Kabuki in Transition: From the Worlds of the Samurai to the Vengeful Female Ghost* (Columbia University Press, 2016), 19-21.

[134] Much like Kyū's literature, the chōnin culture rests on an intricate balance between celebration and disavowal of money. Cecilia Segawa Seigle suggests, for instance, that it was the attitude of indifference to and disdain for wealth, more than the extravagant spending itself, that made a connoisseur (*tsū*) of a man. See Seigle, *Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan* (University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 71. Interestingly, the insistence on the irrelevance of money, despite its obvious centrality, can perhaps be considered in terms of Octave Mannoni's famous definition of fetishism, a paradoxical attitude that "*je sais bien, mais quand-même*" (I know very well, but nevertheless).

[135] Following Isoda Kōichi, who considers Tayama the "forerunner of *nikutai bungaku*," Douglas Slaymaker points out that "there is an important lineage in the understanding of carnality in Japan that begins with Tayama's 'Futon' and stretches to Tamura's 'Nikutai no mon.'" See Slaymaker, 24.

quit being a samurai and to become, instead, a low-ranking warrior who could engage in business. Being a samurai isn't the only way of life!"[136] Kyū's choice to focus on the plebian desires in everyday life can thus be read positively as a deliberate rebellion against the literary establishment, which was concerned primarily with the carnal desire of sexuality and its implications for subjective formation in the dominant form of the I-novels.[137]

It seems possible, therefore, to consider Kyū's literature as a "minor literature" in a double sense. On a surface, his literature remained at the margin of the literary circle, even while its "literary quality" had been recognized by the Naoki committee. "While literary awards were supposed to help one stand on his own [*hitoridachi*]," Kyū reflects on his literary career some thirty-five years after he received the Naoki Prize, "it didn't work so well in my case. Editors at big-name magazines and newspapers decided from their unconscious prejudice that there's no place in a Japanese living room [*chanoma*] for novels in which none of the main characters were Japanese, so I didn't get many serious requests [*chūmon rashii chūmon*]."[138]

While it is impossible to gauge the actual level of interest among the reading public, the editors' "unconscious prejudice" (*muishiki no sennyūkan*) might not be so wide of the mark. It seems unlikely, in short, that a postwar Japan that was so engrossed with economic development would pay much heed to novels that were set in "foreign" lands by a "foreign" author, despite the fact that these "foreign" elements had been part of the Japanese Empire until a few short years ago. Chasing commercial profits as they tried to discern literary works that had the best chance of making to the "Japanese living rooms," these editors served, perhaps inadvertently, as gatekeepers to a literary

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[136] Kyū Eikan, "Otoko o yameru hanashi" *Kyū Eikan jisenshū, vol. 3: Otoko o yameru hanashi* (1972), quoted from Okazaki, 167.

[137] Slaymaker makes note of the punning contrast between *nikutai* (carnal body) and *kokutai* (national body) and suggests that the postwar celebration of carnality undermined the oppressive wartime ideology based on the unconditional sacrifice of individual *nikutai* for the sake of the imperial cause, namely, the *kokutai*. See Slaymaker, 8-12.

[138] Kyū Eikan, "Maegaki," *Kyū Eikan Tanpen shōsetsu kessakusen*, 10.

society that was increasingly dominated by an aesthetics of introversion, whether in terms of the individual psyches of the fictional characters, the general trope of a constricting yet fragmented family, or the imagination of a homogenous national space based on a pervasive, if not universal, "middle-class" mentality.[139]

More importantly, Kyū's literature should be considered "minor" in the sense of what Deleuze and Guattari outline in their influential treatise on Kafka, in which they celebrate minor literature not only for its political and collective values, but more importantly for its ability to "deterritorialize" the major language from within.[140] Much like Kafka who writes as a Czech Jew in German, Kyū's writings disrupt or "short-circuit" the major (imperial) language by shattering its complacent illusion of a sense of "sameness, middleness, homogeneity that lay at the core of postwar Japanese democracy."[141] As someone who *cannot not* write as a former imperial subject who, however, ends up being forced to flee a decolonized Taiwan, Kyū's insistence on the "vulgar" thematic of food and money embodies the potential to deterritorialize a literary discourse based on an ideal of purity and artistry.

Indeed, even as the role of literature was thrown into question in the "Politics and Literature Debate" (*Seiji to bungaku ronsō*), arguably the most important literary debate in postwar Japan, the center of contention had been the proper place of literature rather than a total reconceptualization of the literary field itself. Whether one believed in "art for art's sake" or "art for politics' sake," in other words, the key question "never became 'What is literature?' but always 'What can literature do?'"[142] In other words, regardless of their conflicting views on the autonomy of literature versus the primacy of politics, writers who participated in the debate shared, at the very least, a common

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[139] On the "middle-class postwar," see Gluck, "The 'End' of the Postwar."
[140] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "What Is a Minor Literature," *Mississippi Review*, vol. 11, no. 3 (1983), 13-33.
[141] Gluck, "The 'End' of the Postwar," 8.
[142] "Introduction," *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52*, viii.

understanding of the boundaries of literature, as well as a conviction in the "absolute power of literature" in shaping the course for a new Japan.[143]

It is not difficult to imagine, of course, that money was never deemed as worthy of critical evaluation, regardless of the position one took in this debate. In fact, one's very involvement in literary criticism and, even prior to that, one's membership in the bundan had already precluded the possibility of having money tarnish the literary enterprise to begin with. Whatever purpose it was believed to serve, the world of "literary arts" had been, since its establishment in the Meiji period, imagined to be based on artistic rather than market values.[144] Indeed, as Edward Mack suggests, the incursion of commercialism into cultural production caused so much anxiety that "authors and critics found it essential to assert the existence of an alternate economy of value, one that could *not* be conflated with a text's commercial viability."[145] In short, the allergy to commercialism was, quite ironically, a reaction to and repression of the capitalist origin of modern Japanese literature.

The "Season of the Sun" and the "End of the Postwar"[146]

If Kyū's *Honkon* attempted but failed to deterritorialize the postwar bundan by instigating a new order of desire, it was Ishihara Shintarō's sensational literary debut and the ensuing emergence of the taiyōzoku (sun tribe) that actually transformed the postwar literary and cultural landscape. Crowned with the most prestigious literary prize, *Taiyō no kisetsu* garnered so much attention from the mass media that it was considered as a kind of "turning point" for the literary establishment itself.

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[143] Ibid.

[144] On the establishment of "pure literature" (*junbungaku*), see Strecher and Mack (particularly Chapter 4).

[145] Mack, 140, my emphasis.

[146] Incidentally, on September 4, 1994, *Yomiuri Shinbun* looks back on the "fifty years of the postwar" (*sengo gojunen*) and lists "taiyōzoku" and "mohaya sengo de wa nai" among the "words of the year" (*ryūkōgo*) in 1956. See *Yomiuri Shinbun*, September 4, 1994.

Broadly speaking, the significance of *Taiyō no kisetsu* in literary history is twofold. On the one hand, the Akutagawa judges' insistence on its novelty effectively creates a rupture with the preceding literature, in particular that of the *daisan no shinjin* who had been monopolizing the award prior to Ishihara's appearance. Echoing the verdict of the "end of the postwar," *Taiyō no kisetsu* marks the beginning of a "post-postwar" culture, as Michael Raine calls it, that was twice removed from the bitter memories of war and defeat. In other words, the judges' assertation of its freshness was not simply descriptive but rather prescriptive, as it stipulates, however vaguely, a quality that was deemed suitable and desirable of a new literature. On the other hand, the unprecedented popularity of *Taiyō no kisetsu* usurps "popular literature" of its proper place and blurs the purported distinction between the pure and the popular. Rather than erase the boundary altogether, however, the popularization of *Taiyō no kisetsu* further delegitimized "popular literature," which was not only, from the beginning, impure but also, quite ironically, no longer popular. In short, *Taiyō no kisetsu* was regarded as something of a "paradigm shift"—it was detached vertically from the previous literary traditions and horizontally from the other, often considered less prestigious, genres. In what follows, I argue that these perceived breaks were based not so much on the inherent quality of the novel than on the desire at the level of the "political unconscious" to usher postwar Japan into an era of material affluence and historical flatness.

Despite the controversies it aroused, *Taiyō no kisetsu* is surprisingly conventional in terms of its plot. To give a brief synopsis, the protagonist Tatsuya, an athletic high school student, meets Eiko when he enjoys the nightlife in Tokyo with his friends from the boxing club. Both from wealthy families, Tatsuya and Eiko quickly develop a physical relationship, but neither seems particularly interested in pursuing anything beyond sexual pleasure. Their relationship changes, however, when Eiko visits Tatsuya at his home in Zushi on her way to the nearby Hayama, where

her family owns a summer villa.[147] Tatsuya takes Eiko out to sailing along the scenic Shōnan coast

and, after a romantic night at sea, Eiko falls in love with Tatsuya and feels, "for the first time ever,

that she wasn't all alone [*hitorikkiri*]."[148]

However, Eiko's love for Tatsuya is met with his "ruthless disposition" (*zannin na shūsei*), as

Tatsuya not only seduces and rapes another woman just to make Eiko jealous, but he even bets his

own brother over whom Eiko will sleep with and, in the end, "[sells] her off like a slave."[149] When

Eiko informs Tatsuya of her pregnancy a few months later, he callously blurts out: "Whose baby is

it?" Despite his cruelly indifferent attitude, however, Tatsuya feels a "vague sense of pride" at the

thought of fatherhood and acquiesces in Eiko's proposition to give birth to the baby. Yet, Tatsuya's

wish to have the baby is far from genuine, as he "wanted the baby in the same capricious [*kimagure*]

way as he wanted a tie all of a sudden when walking past a shop window."[150] It is thus hardly

surprising that he casually changes his mind when he "[sees] a newspaper picture of a champion

boxer holding a baby"[151] Frowning at the boxer's foolish (*darashinai*) grin, which shows "no trace of

his virile expression in the ring," Tatsuya makes up his mind to "get rid of [*shimatsu*] the baby for the

sake of his peculiar affectation [*myō na kidori*] as a sportsman."[152] Eiko reluctantly accepts Tatsuya's

request, which she has expected all along, and receives an abortion. Four days later, she dies of

peritonitis as a surgical complication. At the funeral, Tatsuya is unable to withstand the "challenging

gaze" (*idomu yōna metsuki*) in Eiko's smile and smashes her photograph with an incense burner.

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[147] About forty miles south of Tokyo, Zushi and Hayama are both famous beach resorts in Kanagawa Prefecture. Needless to say, only the most privileged class could afford to have vacation villas in the Shōnan area in the early postwar period.

[148] Ishihara Shintarō, "Taiyō no kisetsu," *Ishihara Shintarō no bungaku, vol. 9: Tanpenshū I* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjūsha, 2007), 100. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.

[149] Ibid., 106.

[150] Ibid., 114.

[151] Ibid. I have consulted the translation by John Mills, Toshie Takahama, and Ken Tremayne (Tuttle, 1966).

[152] Ibid.

Glaring angrily at the shaken mourners, he storms out of the ceremony, shouting "None of you understand anything!"

While readers today may assume, quite justifiably, what made *Taiyō no kisetsu* so scandalous was its sensational depiction of carnal excitement, the celebration of sexual indulgence and moral decadence was, in fact, quite commonplace in early postwar literature. Already in 1946, almost ten years before *Taiyō no kisetsu*, Tamura Taijirō inaugurated the "carnal literature" (*nikutai bungaku*) with his "Nikutai no akuma" (The Devil of Flesh, 1946), followed shortly by his more influential "Nikutai no mon" (The Gate of Flesh, 1947).[153] Moreover, as Sherif notes, it is arguable whether Ishihara can even claim the famous (or infamous) scene of Tatsuya's erection as truly original, because Takeda Taijun, a member of the so-called "*après-guerre* school" (*sengo-ha*), featured a similar episode in his short story "Igyō no mono" (The Misshapen Ones, 1950), in which a novice monk repeatedly thrusts his erect penis through the shōji when the fellow novices in the seminary are (or at least pretending to be) asleep.[154]

In short, despite the common belief that *Taiyō no kisetsu* subverts the mainstream literature, it would be misleading to consider it as either opposite to or outside of the literary traditions. In fact, Mishima Yukio places *Taiyō no kisetsu* within an established lineage that can only be defined in relation to a tradition of canonical or classical works. In his *kaisetsu* to one of Ishihara's collected works, Mishima comments enthusiastically: "I was surprised to realize that, despite all the scandals it evoked, the only way to read *Taiyō no kisetsu* was to read it as a pure adolescent fiction [*junketsu na shōnen shōsetsu*], a classic romantic fiction [*koten-teki na ren'ai shōsetsu*]."[155] Here, Mishima's verdict that

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[153] On Tamura, see Chapter 3 in Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*.
[154] See Sherif, 197. It should be noted, though, that Takeda's story, compared with the exuberant adventures in *Taiyō no kisetsu*, is decidedly more abstract and philosophical in its tone. Set in a Buddhist seminary in Kyoto, "Igyō no mono" focuses primarily on the homosocial interactions among the celibate monks rather than on the romantic or erotic relationships between men and women. For an English translation, see Edward Seidensticker, "The Misshapen Ones," *The Colombia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature, Abridged*, 636-58.
[155] Mishima Yukio, "Kaisetsu," *Shin'ei bungaku sōsho vol. 8: Ishihara Shintarō-shū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1960), 257. Following a line of logic much akin to the phenomenological concept of "bracketing," Mishima disapproves of the

Taiyō no kisetsu falls squarely within established literary genres suggests not only that the work follows a set of "pure" and "classic" literary conventions, but also that the scandals it evoked at the time of publication were merely incidental and thus tangential to the inherent quality of the novel.

As such, the reason *Taiyō no kisetsu* was regarded as so disruptive to the literary establishment is perhaps not as straightforward as it appears at first glance. At the content level, members of the bundan were offended by the unabashed depiction of sex and violence in the novel, not necessarily because they feared that carnality would lead to moral decadence, but rather because they found the extravagant, carefree lifestyle that made possible such indulgence at odds with a literary tradition that valued thought (*shisō*) over action (*kōdō*).[156] At the formal level, some critics felt uneasy at the work's distinctly cinematic quality and its underlying "feeling of speed," not simply because of the stylistic newness but more importantly because of its confluence with the mass media and its involvement with the emerging "middlebrow culture."[157] As such, Ishihara's taiyōzoku novels seem to fit nicely

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typical moralistic reading of Ishihara's works. This is shown most clearly in his interpretation of *Kanzen na yūgi* (The Perfect Game, 1957), a story about a gang of delinquent youths who committed a string of atrocities including abducting, confining, gang raping, and eventually murdering a mentally ill woman by pushing her off a cliff. In defense of such controversial plot, Mishima suggests that it is necessary to "focus on the emptiness [*munashisa*] in the uncanny parallel between, on the one hand, the internal void of the obedient madwoman [*otonashii kyōjo*] as pure flesh [*junsui na niku*] and, on the other, the falsehood and meaninglessness in the youths' reckless actions [*gamushara na kōdō*]." In other words, Mishima "brackets" the moral judgments in order to arrive at a pure aesthetic judgment. "The string of revolting physical and sexual violence passed like a transparent flow [*tōmei na nagare*]." However, as Karatani Kōjin suggests, it is crucial not only to bracket morality but also to un-bracket it: "As another example, when we see films whose heroes are Mafia or Yakuza gangsters, it is ridiculous to criticize them for their immorality […]. Once you leave the theater, [however,] you have to un-bracket." See Karatani, "Thing as Other," *Anything* (edited by Cynthia Davidson, MIT Press, 2000), 255-9.

[156] In her analysis on Futabatei Shimei's *Ukigumo* (1887), often considered the first modern Japanese novel, Janet Walker argues: "Thought, not action, is the heart of the novel: time is slowed down to a leisurely pace and stretched to accommodate the vacillations of Bunzō's mind, rather than rushing forward to meet the demands of physical action." See Walker, *The Japanese Novel of the Meiji Period and the Ideal of Individualism* (Princeton University Press, 1979), 35.

[157] Michael Raine perceptively notes that taiyōzoku novels often "narrate a play of gazes and moments of self-conscious perception, linked by cinematic devices such as abrupt flashbacks and even superimpositions." In fact, film director Ōshima Nagisa even credits Nakahira Kō's adaptation of *Kurutta kajitsu* (1956) with heralding, quite literally, a "new wave" in Japanese cinema: "Sensitive people heard in the sound of the woman's skirt tearing and the roar of the motorboat that cut through the older brother a petrel's cry announcing a new age of the Japanese cinema." While it may be a stretch to attribute the advent of the New Wave cinema to Ishihara's taiyōzoku fictions, it would perhaps be equally misleading to deny their relevance altogether. See Raine, 221.

with Fredric Jameson's characterization of postmodernism, a cultural logic in which the divide between high culture and low culture becomes increasingly blurred and untenable.

At the same time, what made *Taiyō no kisetsu* so dangerously disruptive was precisely what made it so attractive as well. Indeed, several Akutagawa judges expressed this kind of ambivalent feelings in their selection comments. Ishikawa Tatsuzō, for instance, writes: "It had many problems in terms of ethics and 'aesthetic temperance' [*bi-teki setsudo*]. But what a newcomer worthy of the name [*shinjin rashii shinjin*]! I thus recommended him, knowing full well the stakes. Or perhaps I consider him a worthy newcomer precisely because of the stakes [*kiken dakara koso shinjin*]."[158] Inoue Yasushi also concurs: "I saw many problems in Ishihara Shintarō's *Taiyō no kisetsu*, but at the same time I couldn't close my eyes to his skillfulness [*tasshasa*] and freshness."[159] Nakamura Mitsuo, despite his reservations on the quality of the work, shows a similar hesitancy: "Even though I voted in favor of him, I felt for a brief moment a kind of guilty conscience [*ushirometasa*], as if I had made a terrible, irredeemable [*torikaeshi no tsukanu*] mistake."[160] Criticizing the "unfinished state" [*miseihin*] of the work, Nakamura nonetheless concedes that he is captivated by "an intense vitality [*seimeiryoku*] that exuded from its unfinished state." Indeed, regardless of their conflicting evaluations, nearly every judge detected an ineffable appeal in *Taiyō no kisetsu*, which they described variously as a "watery freshness" (*shinsen na mizumizushisa*, Inoue Yasushi), a "youthfulness and newness" (*wakasa to atarashisa*, Niwa Fumio), a "youthful passion" (*wakawakashii jōnetsu*, Takii Kōsaku), and an "astute grasp of the times" (*eibin-ge na jidai kankaku*, Satō Haruo).[161]

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[158] *Akutagawa shō zenshū, vol. 5* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjūsha, 1982), 447.
[159] Ibid., 448.
[160] Ibid., 449.
[161] According to Uno Kōji, among the nine judges, Funahashi Seiichi and Ishikawa Tatsuzō strongly advocated Ishihara's awarding, Takii Kōsaku, Kawabata Yasunari, Nakamura Mitsuo, and Inoue Yasushi supported somewhat reluctantly (*shibushibu*), and Satō Haruo, Niwa Fumio, and Uno Kōji vehemently opposed the decision. Interestingly, even the opposing members acknowledged its newness and boldness, which was, however, regarded negatively as a tasteless celebration of "blatant obscenity" (*inwai*) seen only in "worthless vulgar fictions" (*kudaranu tsūzoku shōsetsu*, Uno). Ibid., 454.

The judges' willingness, even eagerness, in asserting a kind of newness in *Taiyō no kisetsu* is all the more striking when compared with their reluctant approval of the *daisan no shinjin* who immediately preceded Ishihara.[162] Despite the impressive achievement by this literary coterie—five members received the prize within a short span of two years, the awards were often bestowed grudgingly. With the exception of Endō Shūsaku, who received the award at his first nomination (33rd term, first half of 1955), the other awardees had all been shortlisted four times before finally winning the prize. Moreover, the award decisions were often based on the recognition of their perseverance rather than literary talents. When Yoshiyuki Junnosuke finally won the 31st prize (first half of 1954) at his fourth nomination, for example, Kawabata Yasunari reluctantly acquiesced in the decision by virtue of his tireless efforts. "If we limited the discussion to the entries [*kōhosaku*], I had nothing in particular to recommend," Kawabata writes, "but once we broadened the scope to consider not just the specific works but also the candidates [*kōhosakka*], I decided to vote for Yoshiyuki."[163] Although not particularly satisfied with his award-winning work "Shūu" (Sudden Shower, 1954), Kawabata nonetheless justified the committee's decision on the ground that "[w]hat seemed to be lacking in Yoshiyuki's 'Shūu' could be more than made up for by his previous works."[164]

Half a year later, when Kojima Nobuo and Shōno Junzō shared the 32nd prize (second half of 1954), Ishikawa Tatsuzō similarly hesitated over whether the award was supposed to recognize the literary quality of the particular works or the overall contribution of the writer: "I was relieved by

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[162] The grouping of *daisan no shinjin* writers under a single banner is, in fact, both reductive and problematic. While the members certainly shared some common concerns and motifs in their writings, it would be misleading to overlook their diversity and individuality. In English-language scholarship, Van Gessel's *The Sting of Life: Four Contemporary Japanese Novelists* provides an overview of the group as well as four case studies of the key members. More recently, Kendall Heitzman offers a close study dedicated to Yasuoka Shōtarō, the first among the *daisan no shinjin* to win the Akutagawa Prize.

[163] *Akutagawa-shō zenshū, vol. 5*, 426.

[164] Kawabata was by no means the only judge to take into account Yoshiyuki's previous works. Uno Kōji also considers "Shūu" to be "slightly better than the several works that were shortlisted in the previous terms." Ibid., 419-27.

the thought that they have already published a lot, so even if people have some doubts about the award-winning works, it shouldn't cause too much controversy. […] The opinions were divided on whether to choose the [best] writer or the [best] work."[165] Similarly, Niwa Fumio, while unimpressed by Shōno's "Pūrusaido shōkei" (A Scene by the Poolside, 1954), managed to convince himself that the decision was more like a "service award" (*kōrōshō*) that recognized Shōno's continuing efforts over the years.[166] Finally, much like his ambivalent comment on Yoshiyuki's awarding in the previous term, Kawabata wrote somewhat apologetically: "I feel we have caused them enough trouble over the years [for having them wait for so long], so I would like to see them graduate [*sotsugyō*] from the Akutagawa Prize. It is best not to be too obsessed with the award."[167]

Despite Kawabata's apologetic tone, his message is clearly not as amicable. In short, the Akutagawa judges were impatiently ushering the "old faces" out of the waiting room of the prize, not only for the awardees' own sake so that they can finally move on to more fruitful careers, but also for the sake of the award itself, which was anxiously anticipating the advent of a "newcomer worthy of the name." In other words, if it was Ishihara's "novelty" that earned him the prize, it was the precise opposite reason for the *daisan no shinjin*—they were hustled to "graduate" with perfunctory "service awards" that recognized their diligence rather than ingenuity.[168] Compared with the consistent yet lackluster literary output by the *daisan no shinjin*, the Akutagawa judges clearly harbored higher hopes in the dangerous appeal in *Taiyō no kisetsu* for revitalizing the award, if not the very enterprise of "pure literature" itself.

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[165] Ibid., 434.
[166] Ibid, 430.
[167] Ibid, 431.
[168] In fact, the very designation of *daisan no shinjin* (which literally means "the third newcomers") embodies an internal contradiction. Coined by literary critic Yamamoto Kenkichi, this paradoxical appellation seems to suggest that even their originality is already somewhat compromised, as it can only be apprehended as a continuation or even repetition of the past literature.

Interestingly, contrary to the common conception of a rupture, the traits that purportedly characterize *daisan no shinjin* can be applied quite seamlessly to Ishihara's early fictions. In particular, despite the exhilarating adventures involving sex and violence, the taiyōzoku novels often depict, sometimes obsessively, an unspeakable sense of suffocation and blockage (*heisokukan*) which is, however, absent of direct engagements with the broader social and political circumstances. Indeed, critics are often disappointed that the theme of youthful rebellion is taken up rather superficially through the lens of material gratification rather than political awakening. As Sherif points out, the protagonists show their rebellion against the older generations in visual terms through the "preoccupation with recreational pastimes such as boxing and sailing, or with certain aspects of material culture, such as aloha shirts and ukuleles."[169] Similarly, Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, commenting specifically on the adapted films, poignantly suggests that despite the radically new appearances of the rebellious characters, their "defiant behavior still comes from rather old-fashioned problems concerning parent–child relationships or sibling rivalry."[170] In short, the taiyōzoku culture portrays an defiant and exuberant lifestyle which, however, lacks the critical substance to affect any real changes to the postwar society beyond a surface rebellion.

If the newness in *Taiyō no kisetsu* derives neither from the formal structure nor the latent content, on what ground, then, did the Akutagawa judges assert so forcefully its difference? The answer, it seems, can only be found at the symbolic level, namely in the numerous references to Western, in particular American, material culture. Indeed, Hirano Ken admits that he is most captivated by the exotic elements in the novel such as boxing and sailing, which "opened up a new world" for him.[171] Yet at the same time, as Mishima perceptively notes, *Taiyō no kisetsu* needs to be

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[169] Sherif, 198.

[170] Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, "Questions of the New: Ōshima Nagisa's *Cruel Story of Youth*," *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (edited by Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer, Routledge, 2007), 173. Although Yoshimoto's critique is targeted at the taiyōzoku films, it seems aptly applicable to Ishihara's original fictions as well.

[171] Inoue Yasushi, et al., "Bungakukai shinjinshō," *Bungakukai*, July 1955. Quoted from Sherif, 196.

situated, despite its seemingly iconoclastic appearance, within a genealogy of "classics" (*koten*) in modern Japanese literature. Indeed, the very fact that *Taiyō no kisetsu* receives the Akutagawa Prize means that the novel needs to be recognized first and foremost as partaking in the discourse of "pure literature." If this is the case, the intricate balance between the surface novelty and structural conventionality makes *Taiyō no kisetsu* not so much a challenge as perhaps a catalyst for an already shifting cultural terrain. Ishihara's casual use of unfamiliar or even "exotic" visual symbols thus breathe new life into the "classical" literary form by endowing it with a flashy, modern, and essentially "American" appearance. Indeed, as Yoshimoto rightly suggests, the "old-fashioned problems" are never truly resolved, but simply rearticulated in a new, foreign-sounding language.[172]

One such aspect, for instance, is the egalitarian depiction of sensual pleasure, as Tatsuya and Eiko are equally characterized by their promiscuous indulgence.[173] Unlike earlier fictions in which sexual gratification is often the exclusive privilege of male characters, in the case of *Taiyō no kisetsu*, Eiko is portrayed as just as sexually active, if not aggressive, as Tatsuya. In particular, whereas Tatsuya regards all women as "indispensable accessories" (*sōshingu*),[174] Eiko similarly treats all men as her "bedroom decorations" (*neya no kazari*).[175] This is, however, as far as Eiko's subversion goes. Rather than envisioning the possibility of new gender relations that move beyond the banal logic of sexual objectification, Eiko concludes that her attraction to men stems ultimately from their "Western" demeanors and appearances. "In the end, weren't all men she was drawn to the same to her? It was always something as arbitrary as his un-Japanese-like [*Nihonjin-banare*] big eyes, the beautiful tunes he plays on a Saxophone, his handsome looks in Western clothes, or the vibrant

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[172] I would like to reiterate that my intention is not to dismiss or trivialize the "surface rebellion" in *Taiyō no kisetsu*. Quite the opposite, I argue that if *Taiyō no kisetsu* did in fact instigate any rupture in postwar literature at all, it needs to be grasped precisely in the seemingly arbitrary pastiche of visual symbols.
[173] Sherif, 202.
[174] "Taiyō no kisetsu," 87.
[175] Ibid., 91.

impressions he gives in a boxing ring."[176] As a result, Eiko not only trivializes the radical potentials

in her voracious sexuality, but she also eventually submits herself to Tatsuya's capricious scheme and

subjects herself to the traditional structure of male domination.

Whereas Eiko fails to escape the stereotypical gender roles, Tatsuya is similarly unable to

break the shackles of the patriarchal family, despite its more democratic façade. About halfway

through the novel, Tatsuya's father appears for the first time in a somewhat contradictory manner.

Tatsuya, exhausted from the training sessions, grumbles at the dinner table that he would like to get

a second-class train pass. Hearing this, Tatsuya's father lowers the newspaper and scolds him:

"Enough of that nonsense. You're still a student, so stop being so cocky [*namaiki*]. If the training

tires you out so much, then just quit it. First of all, daddy [*papa*] isn't so rich to just throw money

away like that."[177] Here, in contrast to the way he addresses himself, which gives the impression of a

caring father commonly seen in the American family television shows,[178] the message is a sharp

admonition typical of a traditional Japanese patriarch. In short, the father's affectionate self-address

as "papa," which merely sugarcoats his stern reprimand, shows a traditional paternal figure who puts

on a seemingly more modern, democratic, and "American" mask.

The Feeling of Speed in *Taiyō no kisetsu* and *Honkon*

Ishihara's *Taiyō no kisetsu* and Kyū's *Honkon* are typically thought to be at opposite poles of the

literary spectrum. Apart from the obvious difference in their significance in literary history, the two

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[176] Ibid.

[177] Ibid., 85-6.

[178] Although the Western address terms have been introduced to Japan since the late Meiji years, they were largely regarded as inappropriate and disrespectful. Matsuda Genji, then serving as the Minister of Education, harshly denounced these "absurd words" (*baka na kotoba*) in an interview in 1934, which he feared would tarnish the "authority of the national language" (*kokugo no ken'i*) and destroy the "Japanese way of filial piety since ancient times" (*Nihon korai no kōdō*). See Matsuda, "Papa mama to wa nanigoto jā!" *Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun*, August 30, 1934. In the postwar years, however, these address terms were restored, perhaps as a result of the American Occupation, as signs of equality and democracy. While slightly later than the publication of *Taiyō no kisetsu*, the introduction of American family television shows (*hōmu dorama*, literally home drama) in the late 1950s was likely also responsible for popularizing these terms.

works seem to differ even at the most fundamental level. After all, whereas *Taiyō no kisetsu* is known today as a romantic novel belonging to the tradition of "pure literature," *Honkon* is categorized as an entertainment fiction about the various schemes and adventures about moneymaking. A closer look at the two works, however, reveals that they in fact share more similarities than one might expect. For example, both novels are often characterized as "un-Japanese" (*Nihon-banare*), albeit for different reasons. On the one hand, *Taiyō no kisetsu* seems almost "ahead of its time," as the various aspects of Western material culture, from the aloha shirts and ukuleles to passenger cars and pleasure boats, would be quite unfamiliar (indeed, far beyond reach) to most Japanese readers in the mid-1950s. If the exotic appeal in *Taiyō no kisetsu* stems from its flashy and modern appearances, in the case of *Honkon*, it appears exotic for precisely the opposite reason. Everything from the squalid settings to the sly characters give the impression of a backward, lawless "social jungle" that seems far removed from a peaceful, democratic, and economically thriving postwar Japan.

Another aspect that is taken up in both works, although again for different reasons, is the complex relations between the material and the sentimental. In *Honkon*, the concept of money, as I explained earlier, is not simply reproductive but also actively productive in the sense that it embodies the possibility of envisioning social relations that go beyond money itself. In contrast, whereas Kyū considers the material as the foundation of human relations, Ishihara seems to think otherwise. Following a logic of what he calls the "materialization of sentiments" (*kanjō no busshitsuka*), the narrator in *Taiyō no kisetsu* likens the friendship among the boxing club members to a "ledger that shows the precise amounts of debits and credits."[179] Because those who "only made entries in the deficit column" would eventually be shunned by the others, these spoiled adolescents "never attempted to make transactions [*torihiki*] that would upset the balance sheet." In addition, when Eiko finds out about the bet between Tatsuya and his brother, she insists on making payments to redeem

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[179] "Taiyō no kisetsu," 84.

herself. After a few times, Tatsuya feels "strangely touched [*kimyō na kandō ni utareta*]" when he realizes that Eiko has paid an absurd amount of twenty thousand yen.[180] Ironically, his feeling of being touched appears impossible without the resorting to the calculus of money: "In the end, wasn't he measuring the hearts of people [*ningen no kokoro*] through the mediation of that thing called money [*kane to iu mono*]?"[181] In short, characters in *Taiyō no kisetsu* seem to take for granted that human relations and sentiments can (and perhaps should) be articulated in pecuniary terms.

Yet, the most notable intersection between *Taiyō no kisetsu* and *Honkon* is that both works are characterized by a distinct narrative speed which, however, reveals drastically different perceptions of history. In the case of Ishihara, the contemporary writer Ōe Kenzaburō once praises his "feeling of speed" (*supīdo no kankaku*) in creating a "sense of tension" (*kinchōkan*) within a few short sentences, among which includes the famous opening in *Taiyō no kisetsu*: "Tatsuya was mesmerized by Eiko in the same way he was mesmerized by boxing. It was the same mixture of shock and pleasure [*kyōgaku no irimajitta kaikan*] that he felt whenever he was knocked down in the ring."[182] What Ōe leaves out in this enthusiastic appraisal, however, is Ishihara's heavy reliance on the passive voice. Indeed, Isoda Kōichi notes that a total of four verbs are used in the passive voice in this short opening passage. While recognizing the "almost prophetic meaning for literature in the Shōwa 30s" in these sentences, Isoda nonetheless suggests that Ishihara's "foundation of sensitivity" (*kanjūsei no kitei*) rests precisely upon his sense of passivity.[183] "Because one always presupposes the 'other' [*tasha*] in relation to the 'self' [*jiko*] in the passive voice," Isoda explains, "Tatsuya's 'pleasure' is

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[180] According to the data provided by the Bank of Japan, 20,000 yen in 1955 would be roughly equivalent to 120,000 yen (about 1,500 U.S. dollars) today, based on calculations from the Consumer Price Index (CPI). See Nihon Ginkō. "Shōwa 40 nen no ichiman'en o, ima no okane ni kansan suru to dono kurai ni narimasu ka?" https://www.boj.or.jp/announcements/education/oshiete/history/j12.htm/.

[181] "Taiyō no kisetsu," 111.

[182] Ibid., 65.

[183] Isoda, "Kaisetsu," *Nihon no bungaku, vol. 76* by Ishihara Shintarō, Kaikō Takeshi, and Ōe Kenzaburō (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1968), 540.

clearly connected to a sense of fulfillment in life, which stems from his self-negation based on the other [*taishō ni yoru jiko hitei ni yoru seimei no jūjitsukan*]."[184]

Incidentally, Ann Sherif also identifies a distinct "feeling of speed" in *Taiyō no kisetsu*. Unlike Ōe, however, Sherif associates the narrative speed with the Cold War sensibilities of materialism and consumerism, which she considers as leading to "a prosperous mass culture and a bright future."[185] While I agree fully with her insights about the aesthetics of speed, I am less convinced that such "feeling of speed" would necessarily gesture toward a bright future. In fact, the recurring themes of sudden (and often violent) death, abortion, and miscarriage in Ishihara's early fictions seem to point to the opposite conclusion. In other words, the speed that Ishihara so obsessively depicts is something that ends up running in circles rather than rushing forward to an idealized future. In the last pages of *Taiyō no kisetsu*, for instance, Tatsuya not only loses his lover and the unborn baby in a violently abrupt manner ("Four days later, peritonitis set in and Eiko died"), but he also experiences a profound sense of emptiness in the premonition that "he was irrevocably tied to Eiko for the rest of his life."[186]

While one may be tempted to discredit Tatsuya's feelings as disingenuous on account of his amorality, the impossibility of procreation is all the more striking in *Haiiro no kyōshitsu* (The Ashen Classroom, 1954), which appeared half a year earlier. In *Haiiro no kyōshitsu*, the female protagonist Michiko, much like Eiko in *Taiyō no kisetsu*, insists on giving birth to the baby. When her boyfriend Yoshihisa casually asks about the cost of getting an abortion, she immediately riposted: "No! I won't let you kill my baby [*shinase wa shinai*]."[187] One day, when Yoshihisa is playing billiards with a friend, he is suddenly struck by the ominous thought that "the red ball that was rolling with a dry sound felt

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[184] Isoda, 540.
[185] Sherif, 207.
[186] "Taiyō no kisetsu," 115.
[187] Ishihara, "Haiiro no kyōshitsu," *Ishihara Shintarō no bungaku, vol. 9*, 49.

like the lump of baby [*akanbō no katamari*] wriggling about for life in Michiko's stomach."[188] Perhaps as a result of his guilty conscience, Yoshihisa eventually gives in to Michiko's insistence and, in the end, even looks forward to the arrival of the baby. Contrary to their avid anticipation of parenthood, however, Yoshihisa's presentiment quickly comes true, as Michiko falls down the stairs and miscarries. When informed of the unfortunate news, Yoshihisa quietly mutters: "That was my child… I really wanted the baby," pretending not to notice the surgeon's sardonic look. The novel ends with Yoshihisa, unable to bear the "aimless anger" (*ate no nai ikari*) that wells up inside him, walking out of the hospital as a car passes by on the empty street, its blaring horns sounding like the "faint cries of the baby who died alone in the darkness without ever seeing the sun."[189]

To be sure, babies are often used symbolically in postwar Japanese culture to represent the hope of national rebirth. However, regardless of whether the babies are wanted, it simply seems impossible to conceive of the traditional heterosexual relationship as capable of leading to healthy procreations anymore. If this is the case, the youthful energy and exuberant lifestyle in the taiyōzoku novels, rather than depicting the rosy prospect of a bright future, functions as a disguise for an existential barrenness. What is ironic, however, is that Ishihara seems to envision his "aesthetics of speed" as a remedy, rather than a catalyst, to such infertility. About halfway into *Taiyō no kisetsu*, Ishihara writes: "On this parched earth [*kawaita jiban*], they cultivated new sentiments and new morals with their own hands, which in return gave birth to a new generation of youths [*atarashii ningen*]. It is all the more tragic that they flourished, like the blooming cacti that stood proudly on the arid desert, without regard to the barren soil that they stood upon."[190] While these sentences may be interpreted positively as a triumphant declaration to tear down traditional values such as family and society, they ultimately fail to provide any alternatives in their place and thus ring hollow. In short,

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[188] Ibid., 51.
[189] Ibid., 62.
[190] "Taiyō no kisetsu," 84-5.

the "deterritorialization" in Ishihara's taiyōzoku novels are followed not by a constructive "reterritorialization" but rather by a total sterility from which nothing can be (re)born.

The contradiction between the hedonistic surface and the nihilistic kernel in *Taiyō no kisetsu* thus creates a sense of historical emptiness, one which flattens out the distinction between the past and the future, the outside and the inside. If temporally, the characters are caught in a state of "perpetual present" because their youthful energy fails to materialize into the possibility of procreation, spatially they inhabit an indistinct limbo in which the (Western) outside and the (Japanese) inside seem to blend into one another. What I mean here is not simply the numerous references to the Western material culture, but more importantly the casual way in which these symbols are brought up. Indeed, foreign names and terminologies of boxing and sailing are used so naturally as if they are common knowledge that require no introduction or explanation whatsoever. For example, in a scene where Tatsuya and Eiko gaze at the "endless string of lights of hotels and villas" as they sail along the Zushi Beach, Tatsuya murmurs that the scenery reminds him of the Riviera and then kisses Eiko. Here, the setting of this scene is, without doubt, a Japanese beach town located on the Shōnan coastline. However, the irony lies in the fact that it needs to be transposed, through Tatsuya's fantastic imagination, to the exotic Mediterranean coast in order for the romantic kiss to happen. In other words, Zushi is at once both itself and somehow more than itself, as it cannot be recognized *as it is* without a contrapuntal reflection through the Western Other. In short, what I would like to suggest is that these Western symbols or, indeed, "simulacra" should not be dismissed as insignificant, superfluous decorations.[191] To the contrary, it is precisely the seemingly incidental references that constitute the ineffable lure of this otherwise conventional novel by endowing it with a symbolic surplus.

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[191] Simulacra, according to Jean Baudrillard, are "never that which conceal[] the truth—[they are] the truth which conceals that there is none." See Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings* (edited by Mark Poster, Stanford University Press, 1988), 166-84.

Whereas the distance between the outside and the inside disintegrates as symbols of Western material culture enter into the "domestic space" of postwar Japan, it becomes all the more apparent that something else is missing from the picture. In particular, the "perpetual present" in *Taiyō no kisetsu* not only tacitly elides the history of Japan's imperial past but also erases the voices of the colonial Other. As a result, it seems possible to interpret the envious gaze toward the romanticized West as filling the void left by the withdrawal of the imperial gaze. To be sure, my intension is not to ask for the impossible, in the sense that Ishihara, who was only thirteen when Japan surrendered, obviously has no direct experience of the war. My point, rather, is to point out the structural analogy between, on the one hand, the postwar romantic imagination of the West and, on the other, the exotic fantasy about the colonial Other. Indeed, as Isoda suggests, it is quite impossible to perceive the existence of "the self" (*jiko*) without any reference to "the other" (*tasha*). In other words, the absence of the colonial Other seems to unconsciously assume that the West, however vaguely conceived, is the only possible Other through which one can establish a sense of subjectivity.

Whereas the "feeling of speed" in *Taiyō no kisetsu* is predicated on a sense of historical flatness and spatial blurriness, Kyū's *Honkon*, on the other hand, is characterized by a narrative speed that is grounded in the concrete realities of postcolonial Taiwan. Temporally, compared with the opening in *Taiyō no kisetsu*, in which Tatsuya's outward virility paradoxically manifests his passive predisposition, the opening paragraph in *Honkon* gives a palpable sense of action, one which is so intense that it leaves little room for psychological or philosophical contemplation. Like *Taiyō no kisetsu*, *Honkon* opens with a short sentence in the passive voice: "He is being chased [*kare wa owareteiru*]." Immediately in the following sentence, however, Chunmu is forced to exercise the last bit of his agency in order to escape from the abyss of total dispossession: "For now, running away is his one and only purpose." Then, in a string of compact sentences, the narrator creates an effect of dazzling montage by recounting how Chunmu manages to make it out of Taiwan alive by hopping

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from truck to truck and sneaking into a smuggling boat. Before moving on to his adventure in Hong

Kong, however, the narrator closes the paragraph by circling back to the broader historical context:

"It was the summer of 1949, just about the time when the Nationalist Government, faced with the

impending Battle of Nanjing [*Nankin kessen*], was about to flee [*nigegoshi*] to Taiwan."[192] Embedded in

the complex history of postcolonial Taiwan, Chunmu's desperate journey of escape cannot be

regarded simply as a tragic occurrence that befalls a wretched individual. Rather, it needs to be

apprehended as metonymic of a transnational phenomenon of exile and statelessness in the context

of decolonization.

Not only does the novel open with a nod to the past, but it also closes with a sense of

anxious anticipation of the future. Specifically, the novel concludes with Chunmu's bitter realization

of the existential loneliness that stateless people like him are fated to endure. However, as I

mentioned earlier, the ostensibly gloomy message about the cruel nature of the "path toward

freedom" should not be taken literally as a gesture of passive resignation, but rather as showing

Chunmu's strong resolve to live fully and freely without relying on anyone else, whether it is his

compatriot or his lover. In this sense, whereas *Taiyō no kisetsu* presents a picture of a seemingly

vibrant yet essentially infertile future, *Honkon* offers, on the other hand, the vision of an uncertain

and perilous future which, however, opens up endless possibilities of "becoming."

Spatially, contrary to the disintegration of frontiers in *Taiyō no kisetsu*, in which the "West"

seems to permeate seamlessly into postwar Japan, *Honkon* is characterized by a sharp sense of

isolation and rupture. Indeed, nearly all the characters find themselves displaced and stranded in an

alien city, unable to go back or move forward. Chunmu's decision to leave Taiwan at the beginning

of the novel and his resolve to remain in Hong Kong at the end constitutes a structural symmetry

that symbolically suggests the tremendous difficulty, if not impossibility, of overcoming national

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[192] "Honkon," 293.

borders. In fact, this sense of physical demarcation and obstruction is observed not only at the state level, but also within the city limits as well. The strict hierarchy based on wealth and power is mapped to the physical space as the invisible, yet no less palpable, boundaries that prevent people from moving freely across the city. Residents in the shantytown, which is ironically named the "Diamond Hill," can only gaze enviously at the spectacular Victoria Harbor that "glittered like diamonds" without being able to readily cross over to the other side. In fact, they "always had to prepare ten cents for the ferry fare in case of an unlucky day, lest they swim a whole mile back to the shacks."[193] Unlike the wealthy adolescents in *Taiyō no kisetsu* who move freely about in their luxurious cars and pleasure boats, characters in *Honkon* are doubly immobilized, first by the political persecution that drives them away from their homeland, and then by the state of material destitution that bars them from escaping the miserable life in the ghetto.

As a result, even though Ishihara and Kyū share a similar sense of existential crisis, they approach it rather differently in their writings. On the one hand, Kyū grounds the feeling of imprisonment in the prosaic struggle against poverty, which is, to be sure, inseparable from the concrete historical reality of the *longue durée* of decolonization. On the other hand, Ishihara seems unable to articulate the sense of suffocation and stagnation in his taiyōzoku novels. In fact, the repetitive and sometimes even compulsive efforts at materializing this vague sense of anxiety seems to suggest precisely the fundamental futility and even impossibility of such endeavor. For example, the intense emotion Yoshihisa feels at the loss of his baby at the end of *Haiiro no kyōshitsu* remains elusive and ambiguous: "Despite his efforts to rationalize everything that happened, he still felt somewhat dazed, as if there was something left unaccounted for [*nazeka warikirenu mono ga nokotta*]. He could sense an aimless anger slowly welling up inside him."[194]

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[193] Ibid., 324.
[194] "Haiiro no kyōshitsu," 61.

The difference between Kyū's and Ishihara's expression of this sense of blockage is, I argue, as much the result of their stylistic choices as of their sensibility to the depth to history. In particular, characters in *Taiyō no kisetsu* cannot express their feelings of irritation and frustration because they live in a seemingly homogenous yet ultimately empty and sterile world, despite its extravagant and exuberant appearance. It is characterized, on the one hand, by a state of "perpetual present" of the postwar (or even the "post-postwar," according to the Economic White Paper), and on the other, by the pervasive Western material culture under the Cold War regime. In contrast, unlike the privileged youths in *Taiyō no kisetsu* who move freely in a romanticized postwar Japan, characters in *Honkon* are temporally locked in an unchanging, dreary life for bare survival and spatially in an impoverished slum in an alien (and alienating) city. However, despite the seemingly hopeless state of poverty and incarceration, these exiles have an astute grasp of the historical conditions of existence, which derive from a tradition of resistance to oppressive powers and lead to a grim yet not wholly hopeless "path toward freedom."

To be clear, my point is not merely to suggest that the understanding of history in *Honkon* is more profound or sophisticated than that in *Taiyō no kisetsu*, although I do believe that to be the case. Rather, I argue that *Taiyō no kisetsu* has its own particular historical significance, which is no less trivial than that of *Honkon*. However, its significance lies precisely in the apparent lack of historical awareness, that is, its sense of "depthlessness." In other words, whereas *Honkon* has a sense of inner depth to history (even though it is perforated by folds and ruptures from numerous moments of violence), the narrative of *Taiyō no kisetsu* is characterized by an unchanging flatness that radically denies the possibility of "becoming."

The Politics of Literary Awards

I conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of the politics of literary awards and its

relation to historical sensibility. In particular, I consider the significance of bestowing *Taiyō no kisetsu*

with the Akutagawa Prize, which putatively celebrates the best work of "pure literature" (as opposed

to "popular literature), despite the fact that *Taiyō no kisetsu* was, in fact, far more popular than

anything else that was published in the same year. My concern here, it should be noted, is not to

ascertain whether *Taiyō no kisetsu* is inherently or objectively "purer" than *Honkon*, because to do so

would be accepting the distinction and even opposition between the two categories as given. Indeed,

as Edward Mack convincingly shows, the alleged dichotomy in literary values and tastes was, more

often than not, "retroactively naturalized so as to appear to be resulting from a neat aesthetic

consensus, which never existed."[195] In fact, even the Akutagawa judges themselves expressed

uncertainty whether it was necessary or even possible to uphold such binary when pure literature

and popular literature were increasingly merging into a more eclectic category of "middlebrow

literature."[196]

Despite such confusion, however, the boundary between the "pure" and the "popular,"

while itself subject to constant shifts, never ceased to exist completely. In fact, as Mack suggests, the

two literary awards are often more prescriptive than descriptive, as they continuously produce and

reify the division between two separate categories, however nebulously defined, that it eventually

appears as ontological reality. As a result, certain aesthetic styles and qualities, once associated with

the notion of "literary purity" through the recognition of the Akutagawa Prize, constitute an

"alternate economy of value" by asserting autonomy from and authority over the "capitalist

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[195] Mack, 6.

[196] For example, in his senpyō for the 37th term, Funahashi Seiichi writes: "If we were to follow the common wisdom that middlebrow literature lacks thought (*shisō*)—which I don't fully agree with—then all these entries are more or less middlebrowish (*chūkan shōsetsu-teki*)." *Akutagawa-shō zenshū, vol. 5*, 479. It should be noted, however, that my main focus is not so much to investigate the accuracy and validity of such literary categories from a historical perspective than to examine the actual effects of "categorization," that is, the making of these categories.

economy of value" based on the logic of the marketplace. In other words, contrary to the common conception, what defines pure and popular literature is often the result of, rather than the reason for, the awarding decisions, which are in return subject to contingent circumstances such as the judges' personal tastes, the dynamics within the committee, or even their "guilty conscience" for having kept the candidates waiting for too long, as in the case of members of *daisan no shinjin*.

For the 34th term of the Akutagawa Prize, for instance, Fujieda Shizuo's *Yasegaman no setsu* ("On False Pride," 1955) was in fact a close runner-up to Ishihara's *Taiyō no kisetsu*.[197] From the generally approving selection comments, it would not have been inconceivable if the award went to Fujieda rather than to Ishihara, which would quite possibly have altered the postwar literary and cultural landscape.[198] Once again, my interest is neither to endorse nor oppose the Akutagawa committee's decision, but rather to point out that the commonly accepted literary history is often the result of complex and contested factors which are, in themselves, historically constructed.[199] Once recognized by the award, however, these contingent factors would take firm hold and retroactively establish themselves more or less as a matter of course. As a result, the surface freshness in *Taiyō no kisetsu*, along with its ineffable "feeling of speed," is seen only in retrospect as representative of a new literature, which in return happens to coincide with the "end of the postwar."

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[197] Among the nine judges, six showed varying degrees of support for Fujieda's work. Specifically, Satō and Takii showed strong support; Inoue, Nakamura, Uno, and Niwa showed moderate support; Ishikawa, Kawabata, and Funahashi neither supported nor opposed. In their comments, Satō regrets that he "supported this rejected work [*rakusensaku*]" even after the decision was announced. Other judges also praised Fujieda's work to varying degrees: "It was the most properly-written [*ichiban shikkari kakareteite*] among all the entries" (Nakamura); "Even though it felt a little weak, it was the most well-organized [*ichiban gacchiri mamomatteita*]" (Niwa); "I thought it was the best [*ichiban yoi to omotta*]" (Takii); and "It might be the most skillful [*ichiban umai kamo shirenai*]" (Uno). In comparison, the same number of judges voted in favor of Ishihara's *Taiyō no kisetsu* (Ishikawa, Funahashi, Inoue, Nakamura, Takii, and Kawabata), but the rest of the committee (Niwa, Satō, and Uno) showed intense distaste for it. Given the committee members' approval of Fujieda's "skills," which can be interpreted as a recognition of his literary maturity, it seems possible that the award eventually went to Ishihara precisely because he *lacked* such literary craft and maturity. Ishihara's "freshness," in other words, can be framed positively as a departure from previous literary conventions or negatively as a deficiency of the necessary experience in the literary world.

[198] Even though Fujieda's hypothetical awarding might not have diminished the influence of *Taiyō no kisetsu*—given its tremendous popularity even *prior to* its awarding, it would have at least made the Akutagawa Prize less socially conspicuous than it is today.

[199] Mack makes a similar argument in his study. See Mack, 225.

If *Taiyō no kisetsu* is indeed emblematic of the "zeitgeist" of its age, in short, it is predicated

on a sense of homogeneity and emptiness at the level of the "political unconscious." The awarding

of *Taiyō no kisetsu* thus valorizes and even legitimizes, whether intentionally or not, a stance that

moves, on the one hand, away from active and direct engagements with politics and, on the other,

toward an aestheticized and romanticized imagination of postwar Japan as permeated with symbols

of Western materialism. Needless to say, although the emergence of the taiyōzoku culture and the

advent of the economic miracle are largely independent and coincidental from a historical point of

view, both phenomena are more or less tied to a conceptual return to the "nation" and the

construction of the "myth of homogeneity" (*tan'itsu minzoku shinwa*) in the postwar.[200]

On the literary front, this centripetal turn is reflected perhaps most conspicuously in the

"Politics and Literature Debate" (*Seiji to bungaku ronsō*),[201] in which members of the bundan debated

extensively about the primacy of politics versus the autonomy of literature. Interestingly, despite the

intensity of the debate, few seriously questioned the premise of positing "a seamlessly continuous

'Japan' from the prewar to the postwar present."[202] As a result, regardless of the actual content of

the debate, the very gesture of contraction from empire to nation has, in itself, profound and

complex political implications. Additionally, while the debate never rendered any unanimous

conclusions, it tends to be framed today as a triumph of writers associated with *Kindai bungaku* who

believed in the autonomy in literature.[203] This is partly due to the fact that *Kindai bungaku* members,

who were younger than their opponents affiliated with *Shin Nihon bungaku*, simply had more

opportunities to reframe the narrative in their favor, but also due to the fact that their stance of "the

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[200] See Oguma Eiji's discussion of the "myth of ethnic homogeneity" in *A Genealogy of "Japanese" Self-Images*.

[201] For an overview of the debate, see "Introduction" in *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52*.

[202] Ibid., xxvi.

[203] The reality is, of course, far more complicated than the neat narrative suggests, not only because some writers belonged to both groups, but also because the two groups agreed as much as, if not more than, they disagreed. Ibid., xii-xiii.

'literary' untainted by the 'political'" better aligns with broader Cold War scheme to create the image of a new, democratic Japan.[204]

Likewise, the Akutagawa judges may have wanted to avoid showing excessive political interest in the awarding decisions as well. Firstly, it is often assumed that artistic judgments would be prejudiced when involved with practical concerns, whether economic, social, or political. Thus, in order to maintain the façade of neutrality and objectivity, the judges often framed their preferences primarily in terms of stylistic or aesthetic qualities. Moreover, it is not impossible that the committee feigned political disinterest in order to keep distance from the award's troubled past of complicity in Japan's expansionist policy during the war. In fact, out of the twenty terms by the end of the war, a total of fourteen award-winning works were about people or places outside of metropolitan Japan.[205] Indeed, according to Kawamura Minato, the prewar prize was responsible, at least partly, for "stimulating the appearance of a literature that collaborated with foreign expansion strategies,"[206] as judges frequently justified their decisions on the ground of "political situations" (*jikyoku*) or the "state of affairs" (*jisei*).[207] In contrast, the selection comments in the postwar terms rarely evoked the works' political efficacy and instead focused on their artistic values and techniques, even for texts that had clear political relevance and ramifications.[208]

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[204] Ibid.

[205] The list includes Ishikawa Tatsuzō's *Sōbō* (1st term), Tsuruda Tomoya's *Koshaman-in ki* and Oda Takeo's *Jōgai* (both 2nd), Tomizawa Uio's *Chichūkai* (3rd), Hino Ashihei's *Fun'nyōtan* (5th), Nakazato Tsuneko's *Noriai basha* (8th), Handa Yoshiyuki's *Niwatori sōdō* (9th), Samukawa Kōtarō's *Mitsuryōsha* (10th), Tada Yūkei's *Chōkō deruta* (13th), Kuramitsu Toshio's *Renraku-in* (16th), Ishizuka Kikuzō's *Tenzoku no koro* (17th), Yagi Yoshinori's *Ryū Kanfu* and Obi Jūzō's *Tōban* (both 19th).

[206] Kawamura, "Akutagawa-shō senpyō o yomitoku," 204–5, quoted in Mack, 205.

[207] See, for example, Mack, 202-17; Ukai Tetsuo, *Akutagawa-shō no nazo o toku: Zen senpyō kanzen dokuha* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjūsha, 2015), 56-73; Kawaguchi Norihiro, *Akutagawa-shō monogatari* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjūsha, 2013), 32-50.

[208] Hotta Yoshie's *Hiroba no kodoku* and *Kankan* (26th term) and Kikumura Itaru's *Iwo Jima* (37th) are two cases in point. To be fair, some judges touched, if fleetingly, on the political implication in Hotta's case. Kishida Kunio, for example, commends Hotta's skillfulness in depicting Tokyo as a "colonial landscape" (*chokuminchi fūkei*), which is, however, immediately associated with the "exotic atmosphere (*ikoku-teki fuinki*) of Shanghai." Ishikawa Tatsuzō also praises Hotta's "skin sensitivity to the sense of the times" (*jidai o kanzuru hifu no eibinsa*). However, the judges' focus on *Hiroba no kodoku* seems to obscure, whether intentionally or not, the historical significance of *Kankan*, which deals with the issue of the war responsibility of Chinese collaborators under Japanese imperialism. See Seiji Lippit, "Spaces of Occupation in the Postwar Fiction of Hotta Yoshie," 299.

If the wartime awards were, according to Kawamura, "running a three-legged race with the period's social trends and the ideology of national policy,"[209] the postwar awards, particularly those in the mid-1950s, were not necessarily more insulated from the nation's political interests and needs. My contention is that the disparity between the awards' wartime involvement in imperial expansion and the postwar retreat from the political realm is the result of the shifting foundational narrative itself. In other words, it seems possible that the postwar awards only *appeared* as apolitical because they were, just as during the war, reflective of and parallel to the foundational national discourse, which was itself increasingly gearing towards economic growth and political indifference. As such, the recognition of *Taiyō no kisetsu* by the Akutagawa Prize committee should not be taken at surface level as a neutral lack of politicality, but rather as a tacit attempt of political sanitization that leads to a discursive return to the nation.

If the appearance of apoliticality in *Taiyō no kisetsu* is an inadvertent move of depoliticization, so is the awarding of *Honkon* with the Naoki Prize. As the award for the best "popular fiction" or, as Mack nicely phrases, the "best of the rest," the Naoki Prize does grant certain benefits and privileges to the selected works such as increased readership and the prestige to be included in anthologies. At the same time, however, such recognition also "relegate[s] it into a category—popular literature— that immediately affect[s] its reception and that often exclude[s] it from serious consideration."[210] Indeed, the division between the Akutagawa and the Naoki Prizes is at once both the result of the perceived disparity and hierarchy between "pure" and "popular" literature, and also the catalyst for solidifying this very distinction.

In short, bestowing the Naoki Prize on *Honkon* was, to be sure, a remarkable honor that recognizes Kyū's literary talents, particularly given the fact that he was the first Taiwanese writer to

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[209] Kawamura, "Akutagawa-shō senpyō o yomitoku," 204–5, quoted in Mack, 205.
[210] Mack, 222.

ever receive a major literary award in Japan.[211] Yet at the same time, it also inadvertently diminishes the work's political significance by relegating it to the realm of "popular entertainment." Therefore, it seems possible to interpret the coincidental simultaneity of awarding *Taiyō no kisetsu* with the Akutagawa Prize and *Honkon* with the Naoki Prize as deriving from an "unconscious desire" to conform to the postwar foundational narrative under the Cold War regime. In particular, the celebration of a vague yet distinct "feeling of speed" in *Taiyō no kisetsu* as quintessential of the "literature of a new age" effectively identifies the ideals of literary purity with a sense of "perpetual present" that is disconnected from both the past and the future. In return, its belief in the present moment is representative of an affluent, democratic "new Japan" that was imbued with symbols of Western consumerism such as passenger cars and sailing boats, which were seen as emblematic of "modern values" such as leisure, luxury, and free movement.

On the other hand, Kyū's awarding of the Naoki Prize shows that the complex realities of decolonization in Japan's former colonies were no longer of much concern to a postwar Japan that was engrossed in economic recovery and development, despite the fact that such growth was largely the result of Japan's tacit participation in the Cold War under the American banner.[212] Reduced to a form of enjoyment or entertainment, *Honkon* was interpreted rather frivolously and superficially as a tale of adventure that took place in a distant, exotic city. Contrary to the standard literary history that acclaims Kyū's reception of the Naoki Prize as an unprecedented achievement among Taiwanese

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[211] Kyū was to be followed by two more Taiwanese writers: Chin Shunshin (Chen Shunchen) whose *Seigyoku shishi kōro* (The Sapphire Lion Incense Burner) won the 60th term (1968, second half), and more recently Higashiyama Akira (Wang Zhenxu) whose *Nagare* (Flow) won the 153rd term (2015, first half). It is worth noting that Higashiyama's *Nagare* also revolves around the Nationalist takeover of Taiwan and the ensuing February 28 Incident. Unlike Kyū, who grew up in a distinguished family in Tainan, Higashiyama's grandfather was a Nationalist soldier who originally came from the Shandong Province in mainland China. In fact, the author's penname Higashiyama is a wordplay of Shandong by inverting the order and then reading it in the kunyomi.

[212] Several recent studies have examined the context of postwar Japan's economic miracle. See, for example, Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*; and Lisa Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins*.

writers, I consider his awarding as a case of "dismissive recognition" which,[213] much like Agamben's

notion of "exclusive inclusion," thwarts a genuine reflection of the responsibility, both in Taiwan

and in Japan, to properly decolonize and, to borrow Kuan-Hsing Chen's term, deimperialize.[214]

To conclude, contrary to the common belief in its autonomy, literature as an institution can

never be fully outside of the political realm. In fact, even the surface apoliticality can be profoundly

political, because such appearance of apoliticality is rarely an objective description but rather a

retrospective effect of depoliticization, which is itself politically motivated to silence or suppress

alternative discourses that may throw the "foundational narrative" into question. Through the

pretension of apoliticality, in other words, the act of depoliticization elides the opportunity to

genuinely engage with the pains and traumas of historical violence, which is, in itself, a form of

historical violence.

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[213] Kyū is, in fact, doubly subject to the politics of "dismissive recognition," as he was not only treated lightly by the Japanese bundan as a writer of "popular fiction," but also dismissed by his fellow writers who remained in postcolonial Taiwan. In sharp contrast to his contemporaries such as Wu Zhuoliu, Zhang Wenhuan, Yang Kui, and Wu Yongfu, who have been remembered and, indeed, memorialized as the founding fathers of modern Taiwanese literature, Kyū was largely forgotten and even obliterated from Taiwan's literary history. While I do not have the space to fully explore this issue, it suffices to say that he was marginalized, both in Japan and in Taiwan, largely because of his involvement in the business world. When Kyū returns to Taiwan in 1972, after nearly twenty-five years of political exile, Wu Zhuoliu writes derisively in a literary magazine that "everyone in the cultural world, particularly the budding writers who grew up in this cultural desert [*wenhua shamo*], looked up to this literary giant [*taidou*] and hoped to gain some guidance from him." However, much to their chagrin, Kyū "only talked about the economy but never mentioned the culture." Wu thus questions, rather harshly, if Kyū has abandoned his literary ideals: "I wonder, how is it possible that an accomplished writer only cares about moneymaking and disregards his responsibilities and duties to guide the younger generation? If his sole purpose of coming back [to Taiwan] is to make profits, how is he different from any other businessman [*putong shangren*]?" See *Taiwan wenyi*, vol. 39 (1973, April). It should be noted, however, that Wu wrote this sardonic article after he sought financial help from Kyū and was turned down. In other words, it is questionable whether the Taiwanese intellectuals actually regarded Kyū as a pioneering writer who risked his life and career to expose the Nationalist dictatorship, or simply as a financial benefactor who had little to offer than his wealth. On the disagreement between Kyū and Wu, see Okazaki, 126.

[214] Kuan-Hsing Chen makes an important distinction between decolonization and deimperialization. Whereas the former is the "attempt of the previously colonized to reflectively work out a historical relation with the former colonizer, culturally, politically, and economically" (3), the latter refers to the "work that must be performed by the colonizer first, and then on the colonizer's relation with its former colonies" (4). In other words, the responsibility of transnational decolonization and deimperialization rests not only in postwar Japan but also in all its former colonies. See Chen, "Introduction: Globalization and Deimperialization" in *Asia as Method*.

Chapter 3

Devouring the Outside: Colonialism and Cannibalism in Postwar Literature

> They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—you so remote from the night of first ages—could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future.
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> —Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 1899

When Ōoka Shōhei began serializing his best-known work *Nobi* (Fires on the Plain) on the literary magazine *Tenbō* in January 1951, postwar Japan's reverse course to rearmament and remilitarization had been well underway. At the outbreak of the Korean War in June of the previous year, the Allied occupation forces in Japan were thinned down significantly when the U.S. Eighth Army, the mainstay of the occupation forces, was reassigned to the Korean battlefield. As a result, the General Headquarters and the Japanese government quickly agreed on the need to establish a "National Police Reserve" (*keisatsu yobitai*) in the event of any "disturbances [*jihen*] and riots [*bōdō*]" that might arise from the perceived threat of the spread of Communism.[1]

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[1] See John Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878-1954* (Harvard University Council on East Asian Studies, 1979), 378.

To postwar Japan, the consequences of the Korean War were deeply paradoxical. On the one hand, the massive orders for military procurements led to the "Korean War boom" that helped Japan shake off its economic stagnations and achieve an astonishing recovery within a few short years after its devastating loss in 1945. In fact, Yoshida Shigeru, then Prime Minister of Japan, went so far as to describe the Korean War as "a gift from the gods."[2] To many, the so-called "special procurement boom" (*tokuju keiki*) was indeed a blessing from heaven, not only because it was seen as a remedy to the pervasive conditions of poverty and scarcity in the postwar society, but also because it offered a way to move discursively away from the bitter memories of loss and defeat by indulging in material gratification.

On the other hand, however, Japan's participation in the Korean War, however implicit or indirect, also brought back memories of the horrors of war and militarism, especially at a time of great uncertainty when many feared that the rearmament of the "police reserve force," which was renamed tellingly as the "National Safety Forces" (*hoantai*) in 1952 and later the "Ground Self-Defense Force" (*rikujō jieitai*) in 1954, might eventually lead to open military conflicts with the Soviet Union and the Communist China. The unease about the haunting memories of war and defeat was exacerbated by the ironic fact that postwar Japan's economic recovery was founded on none other than the numerous deaths and massive destruction in a former colony that had, until recently, been under the yoke of Japanese imperialism for more than three decades. Indeed, postwar Japan prospered by providing military bases and producing weaponry[3] that resulted in the extensive firebombing campaigns that left nearly every city in North Korea in ashes and rubble, a sight not unfamiliar to many Japanese themselves. Japanese cities were rebuilt, quite literally, on the burnt-out ruins in North Korea.

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[2] Ibid, 316.

[3] Japan's ability to produce weaponry was officially sanctified by the GHQ on March 8, 1952. See Sawai Minoru, "Tokuju seisan kara bōei seisan e," *Nanzan Daigaku kiyō*, vol. 14 (2018), 41-61.

The contradiction between the repression of traumatic memories of war through economic recovery and the inevitable "return" of the repressed horrors created an internal split or what Katō Norihiro calls a "twist" (*nejire*),[4] which induced one to forget and remember at the same time. In other words, postwar Japan was faced with a conundrum that the economic boom, while apparently offering an escape from its troubled past, always threatened to bring back the horrifying memories of smoldering ruins and charred corpses insofar as the boom came at the cost of another war, one that could easily embroil a postwar Japan on its (reverse) course to remilitarization.

Within a short span of five years, Ōoka Shōhei, who returned to Japan from the Philippine battlefield at the end of 1945, witnessed with shock and horror that Japan, in order to recover from the bitter loss and defeat, was moving in the direction of fighting another pointless war. Like many of his contemporaries, Ōoka's literary career and life course were greatly altered by the Pacific War and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the Korean War and its lasting repercussions. Born in 1909 in a relatively wealthy family,[5] Ōoka attended the junior high school affiliated to the Aoyama Gakuin, a Methodist mission academy, and came under the influence of Christianity. In his adolescent years, Ōoka made acquaintance with notable figures such as Kobayashi Hideo, Nakahara Chūya, and Tominaga Tarō, who would later become central members in the literary and intellectual community. After graduating from the Department of French at Kyoto Imperial University in 1932, Ōoka immersed himself in French literature, particularly works by Stendhal, Radiguet, and Gide, which he studied and translated with great enthusiasm. Realizing that he could not live on his

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[4] Katō's discussion of *nejire* is beyond the scope of this chapter. It is worth noting, though, that in his nuanced reading of the symbolic importance of Gojira, a giant monster in Honda Ishiro's *tokusatsu* (special effects) films, Katō suggests that Gojira "returns" to Tokyo from the South Seas as a disastrous reminder of the war dead to the postwar society that moved forward without coming to terms with its troubled past. By wrecking the city of Tokyo, in other words, Gojira compels the postwar society to confront the painful memories of war. See Katō, *Sayonara, Gojira-tachi: Sengo kara tōku hanarete* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010). He discusses the mechanism of *nejire* more thoroughly in his more influential and arguably more controversial essay *Haisengo-ron* (On Defeat, Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1997).

[5] Ōoka's father was a stockbroker in Kabuto-chō, the economic and financial center of modern Japan since early Meiji.

writings alone, however, Ōoka joined the Imperial Oxygen (Teikoku Sanso), a French-Japanese joint

company (today Air Liquide Japan) in 1938, and later moved to Kawasaki Heavy Industries in 1943.

In March 1944, Ōoka was drafted into the army at the age of 35 and was sent to Mindoro

Island four months later, with little more than some rudimentary training and meager provisions.

Following the Allied invasion of Mindoro that began on December 15, Ōoka was soon captured by

American forces in January 1945 and, after spending about a year at the POW camps in Leyte

Island,[6] he returned to Akashi, where his family was evacuated, at the end of 1945. Ōoka's writing of

Nobi thus needs to be understood both in terms of his immediate wartime experiences in the

Philippines, as well as of the sweeping changes in the social, political, and historical milieu in

postwar Japan.

Technically speaking, the serialization of *Nobi* on *Tenbō* was a reworking of an earlier story

that was originally published on another literary magazine *Buntai*, but it was left incomplete when the

magazine folded in July 1949. Ōoka later explained his decision to return to this novel after putting

it off for a year and a half in terms of the enormous changes in the "surrounding circumstances"

(*shūi no jōsei*). He recalls that while his original intention was merely to "recover from the sense of

guilt on the front lines [*zensen no tsumi no ishiki kara no kaifuku*]" when he published in *Buntai* in

December 1948, by the time he began serializing the revised version in *Tenbō* in January 1951, he

"couldn't help feeling outrage at the ongoing remilitarization."[7] When *Nobi* finally appeared in book

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[6] Ōoka was first treated at a POW hospital in Tacloban for malaria, which he contracted, like many of his fellow soldiers, in the Philippine mountains due to inadequate supplies. After his recovery in March, he was transferred to another POW camp, where he stayed until his repatriation in December.

[7] Ōoka Shōhei, "'Nobi' no ito," *Bungakukai*, October 1953, reprinted in *Ōoka Shōhei zenshū, vol. 11* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1974), 177-93. Ōoka explained that the reason he decided to write this essay was because he wanted to "get everything off his chest [*sukkari hakidashite shimai tai*] while he still had lingering attachments [*miren*]" before departing for the United States as a Fulbright scholar at Yale University. It turns out that Ōoka was not, after all, able to move on from his wartime experiences after spending a year abroad, as he continued to write about the battles in Leyte Island even decades later.

form in February 1952, Ōoka made further changes to the *Tenbō* version by adding three chapters, in which the protagonist explicitly points out the absurdity of becoming embroiled in another war.

What is interesting is that the three chapters, added towards the end of the novel as sequels (*gojitsudan*), are set in postwar Japan six years after the main story that takes place on Leyte Island in the final days of the Pacific War. While the three final chapters are often regarded negatively as "useless addition" (*dasoku*, literally meaning legs on a snake), I argue that Ōoka's decision to include a narrative perspective from the "postwar present" greatly expands the interpretative horizon of the novel, as readers were reminded that the story was unfolding "in real time" rather than sealed off in a distant past, in a remote island. In this chapter, I examine the significance of Ōoka's narrative strategy in bringing what appears to be a story of the wartime past into the postwar present, focusing specifically on the tropes of madness, cannibalism, and Christianity.

Thanks to its added layer located in the postwar, *Nobi* is narratologically speaking more complicated than works examined in the previous chapters. Broadly speaking, the story can be divided into two parts, despite the fact that the first part occupies significantly more weight, both in terms of lengths and critical attentions, than the second. The first part, which covers the first 36 chapters and thus makes up the bulk of the novel, depicts the desperate journey of survival of a Japanese soldier named Tamura, who slowly devolves into insanity and cannibalism as he clings to his life in the Philippine jungles.

The novel begins with a short yet shocking sentence: "I was slapped across the face [*watashi wa hoho o utareta*]."[8] It is shocking not simply because the content is surprising, but more importantly because the narrator's detached, almost matter-of-fact tone which seems more like a declaration than

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[8] Ōoka Shōhei, "Nobi," *Ōoka Shōhei zenshū, vol. 2* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1973), 128. The translations are mine, but I have consulted Morris' English translation in *Fires on the Plain: A Novel* (Tuttle, 2001). In cases where I use partially or fully Morris' translation, I give two page numbers separated by a semicolon: the first refers to the Japanese, the second to Morris' translation.

a description. While extremely brief, this sentence is full of action and tension that it creates a physical, even visceral, impression upon the readers, who might feel they are slapped across the face themselves. It soon becomes clear that Tamura is slapped by his squad leader for returning from the field hospital. Complaining that the company has no room for consumptives like Tamura, whose inability to fight or forage for food makes him nothing but a burden, the squad leader promptly sends him back to the field hospital, perfectly aware that the hospital, itself facing severe food shortage, would never admit an invalid like Tamura. Banished from his own unit with nothing except six potatoes and a hand grenade to "carry out [his] one and only duty to [his] country" (*tatta hitotsu no gohōkō*),[9] Tamura embarks on a death march, both into the Philippine mountains and also into his own heart of darkness.

After wandering aimlessly for several days, Tamura stumbles upon an abandoned farmland which resolves his most pressing crisis—hunger.[10] Having satisfied his immediate needs, Tamura is faced with a new problem that seems almost luxurious: He feels bored in his new-found "paradise" (*rakuen*). Tired of idling away his final days, Tamura makes it a daily routine to survey the nearby areas. One evening, he catches sight of a glittering object at a distance, which he recognizes to be a cross on top of a church in a seaside village. Tamura experiences an "almost physical shock" (*nikutai-teki ni chikai shōgeki*) at his discovery, not only because the cross is a sign of civilization that he seeks desperately in his loneliness and boredom, but also because it represents a symbol which he has been fascinated with since childhood. Unable to check his curiosity, Tamura descends into the village, but only to witness a macabre scene of carnage. Contrary to his avid anticipation, he finds neither consolation nor salvation in the village but a pile of badly decomposed corpses of Japanese

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[9] Ibid., 128.

[10] Interestingly, Tamura rarely mentions hunger in his account, and even when he does, he tends to state it as a matter of fact rather than describe it in any detail. Hunger, in other words, is depicted as something outside of himself, as if it is something that he can only passively *realize* rather than something that he immediately *feels*.

soldiers, probably killed by the local guerillas when they were plundering the village, piled up at the steps of the church.

The transformation of the church into a slaughterhouse, filled with the stench of death, forebodes Tamura's own degeneration into a killer. When night falls, a Philippine couple returns to the village, waking Tamura up from his nap. He approaches the couple and asks if they have a match, but the woman only shrieks at the sight of Tamura (and, of course, his rifle) without responding to his request. Flustered by the woman's reaction, Tamura feels an irrepressible rage and fires a shot that promptly ends her life. On his way back, Tamura concludes that the woman's death is, after all, a mere "accident" (*gūzen*): Had she not entered the presbytery where he was hiding, or had she not let out the "beastlike screeches" (*kemono no koe*), she would not have died.

Feeling a lingering sadness but not any remorse, Tamura makes his way back to his paradise but finds it ransacked by three Japanese soldiers (*dōhō*), who inform Tamura that all troops in Leyte are ordered to fall back on Palompon. What awaits the straggling soldiers of what remains of the Japanese army, however, is a perilous journey of hunger, disease, onslaughts by American forces, and skirmishes by Philippine guerillas. Narrowly escaping death, Tamura withdraws once again into the mountains where he meets a dying officer who, in his final moment of lucidity, offers his emaciated left arm to Tamura as food. Despite the officer's permission, Tamura experiences a strange dissociation that prevents him from cannibalizing: his left hand grips the wrist of his right hand as soon as it draws the bayonet.

Days later, Tamura finally collapses from starvation and hallucination. When he wakes up on a dry riverbed, he finds himself crawling unconsciously to a severed human foot, apparently wanting to eat it. Just then, he notices that someone is training the muzzle of a rifle on him from across the field. To his surprise, the person who emerges from the woods is Nagamatsu, a fellow soldier whom Tamura has acquainted with while squatting together outside the field hospital. Nagamatsu offers

Tamura some food which he describes as "looking like black rice crackers [*kuroi senbei no yō na*]" and

"tasting like dry cardboard."[11] When asked about the source of the food, Nagamatsu explains that it

is "monkey meat." It soon turns out that Nagamatsu has actually been hunting straggling Japanese

soldiers at the order of Yasuda—a cunning, middle-aged soldier who was similarly banished from

the hospital. The alliance between Tamura, Yasuda, and Nagamatsu quickly crumbles, however, as

the supply of "monkey meat" dwindles away. In the climax scene, their erstwhile friendship finally

devolves into the "survival of the fittest" as they turn against each other. Nagamatsu, who kills

Yasuda, is in turn killed by Tamura, who claims to have lost his memory thereafter.

While the *Tenbō* version, serialized between January and August 1951, ends here, the book

version published by Sōgensha half a year later includes three short yet important chapters, which I

consider to constitute a separate narrative frame in the novel. Intended as a sequel to the main story,

the second part, which covers Chapter 37 *Kyōjin nikki* (Diary of a Madman), 38 *Futatabi nobi ni* (Once

Again to the Fires on the Plain), and 39 *Shisha no sho* (Book of the Dead),[12] is written six years after

Tamura's return from Leyte Island. Now a patient at a mental hospital on the outskirts of Tokyo,

Tamura explains that he writes these accounts at his doctor's recommendation in order to recover

his lost memories due to retrograde amnesia,[13] probably caused by the Philippine guerillas when he

was captured, and schizophrenic (*seishinbunretsubyō*) symptoms which prohibit him from partaking in

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[11] "Nobi," 205. Notably, in Ichikawa's film version (1959), Tamura never once cannibalizes. When Nagamatsu offers Tamura the dried meat, Tamura spits it out, along with some of his teeth, and explains: "I can't eat it. My teeth fall out. My gums are soft." As William Hauser suggests, for Tamura the meat is "too tough, […] both physically and morally." See Hauser, "*Fires on the Plain*: The Human Cost of the Pacific War," *Reframing Japanese Cinema*, 206. For a more detailed analysis on the implications of Ichikawa's different handling of cannibalism, see Erik Lofgren, "Ideological Transformation: Reading Cannibalism in *Fires on the Plain*," Japan Forum, vol. 16, no. 3 (2010): 401-21.

[12] The Japanese title of the final chapter, *Shisha no sho*, can be translated either as "Book of the Dead" or "Writings of the Dead," due to the multivalent meanings of the Japanese character *sho*, which can refer either to physical books (as in *shoten*, or bookstore) or the act of writing (as in *shodō*, or calligraphy). The reason I choose the former is to suggest a possible reading that the "shisha no sho" refers not just to this particular chapter but the entire narrative, including his accounts in the first part of the novel.

[13] To be sure, Tamura's memories are not truly lost but merely repressed by his instinctive defense mechanism. Just like it would be impossible to create something out of nothing, Tamura cannot possibly remember something that no longer exists.

any food composed of organic matter. Hallucinating countless prairie fire rising invisibly into the sky, Tamura claims to have remembered everything that has lapsed from memory, though he concedes that his recollection may be nothing but an illusion that he creates while writing. In the final chapter, Tamura's consciousness returns once again to the scorched plain in the Philippines where he imagines himself to be a fallen angel who chastises the mankind for tormenting God. Surrounded by the spirits of the dead, Tamura prays: "May the glory be to God!" (*Kami ni sakae are*).

The Autobiographical and the Fictional

Nobi stands out among Ōoka's writings from the same period for two reasons. Firstly, *Nobi* strikes a balance between autobiographical and fictional elements that is rarely seen in his other early writings. Broadly speaking, Ōoka's early works can be divided into two categories: those on the war (*sensō-mono*) and those on romantic love (*ren'ai-mono*). The most notable example of the former is *Furyoki* (Taken Captive, 1948-51), a collection of autobiographical essays based on Ōoka's personal experience in the Philippines and stories he gleaned from other Japanese soldiers at the POW camp on Mindoro Island; whereas the latter refers primarily to *Musashino fujin* (A Wife in Musashino, 1950), a bestseller novel that explores themes such as adultery and incest during the transitional period in the postwar, when traditional morality crumbled in the face of Western values brought by the Occupation forces.

This thematic division is complicated by what some scholars perceived to be a formal difference between the two categories. Whereas Ōoka's *sensō-mono* is often included in the nebulous realm of the "I-novel" under the assumption of "the single identity of the protagonist, the narrator, and the author,"[14] the latter category of *ren'ai-mono* tends to be regarded as unproblematically fictional. In a 1952 article, for example, Kusunoki Michitaka examines Ōoka's literary works thus far

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[14] Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford University Press, 1996), 6.

and concludes: "Except the two fictional novels [*kyokō shōsetsu*], namely *Musashino fujin* and *Kinomiya shinjū* [Love Suicide in Kinomiya], which are both romantic novels, all his other works are I-novels [*shishōsetsu*]."[15]

Despite the fact that *Nobi* is often grouped with *Furyoki* as representative of Ōoka's early *sensō-mono*,[16] it is different, both stylistically and structurally, from the more autobiographical, almost documentary-like *Furyoki*. Most significantly, *Nobi* contains some clearly fictitious elements such as Tamura's descent into madness and cannibalism. At the same time, however, it is undeniable that *Nobi* is imbued with a certain autobiographical quality, particularly in terms of Tamura's meditative, intellectual disposition, which is in sharp contrast with the rough, uncultivated deportment of his fellow soldiers. Ōoka was, in fact, acutely aware of the predicament posed by the blurring of the fictional and the autobiographical elements, especially when it concerns a "potentially embarrassing event" that his readers may "interpret […] referentially."[17] Indeed, Ōoka explains on several different occasions that the novel is completely fictional, lest the readers associate the author with actual practices of cannibalism. For example, in "Jinnikushoku ni tsuite" (On Cannibalism), a speech he gives at a Yomiuri Book Club seminar in summer 1973, Ōoka assures the audience that the plot about cannibalism is a sheer creative invention:

> The question I get the most is whether it was my own experience. Of course it is fictional! It would be terrible [*taihen*] if I have partaken in cannibalism. That [*Nobi*] is set in Leyte Island, but I was actually on Mindoro Island. Even though they were both in the Philippines, Mindoro is a little to the north, and the battles weren't nearly as fierce as those in Leyte.[18]

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[15] Kusunoki Michitaka, "Ōoka Shōhei 'Nobi' ron," *Kindai*, vol. 1 (1952), 9-15.

[16] Ōoka would return to the Pacific War, especially the battles in the Philippines, throughout his career. He later published *Mindoro-tō futatabi* (Once Again to Mindoro Island, 1969), *Reite senki* (A Record of the Battles in Leyte Island, 1971), and *Nagai tabi* (A Long Journey, 1982).

[17] Lofgren, "Ideological Transformation," 411.

[18] Ōoka Shōhei, "Jinnikushoku ni tsuite," *Ōoka Shōhei zenshū, vol. 13*, 438.

In short, whether intended or not, *Nobi* has been read more or less autobiographically, perhaps on account of the shared "intellectual" (*interi*) aura between Tamura and Ōoka himself. As a result, Ōoka often found himself in the awkward position to repeatedly reassure his curious readers that it was, after all, the fictional character Tamura and not the actual author Ōoka who has partaken in cannibalism in the Philippines.

At the same time, however, Ōoka was deeply aware that it was impossible to fully dispense with autobiographical elements in *Nobi*, as he not only strived to achieve a "sense of reality" (*genjitsumi*) through meticulous description (*shajitsu*), but also incorporated personal experiences and sentiments into the novel. In "'Nobi' no ito," for example, Ōoka admitted that "I did feel a sense of alienation [*kairi-kan*], that I somehow couldn't get used [*najimenai*] to things around me after my return—that much was I-novel-like [*shishōsetsu-teki*]."[19] In fact, *Nobi* was motivated, to a certain extent, by a desire for authorial or autobiographical authenticity from the stage of conception. For example, Ōoka explains that *Nobi* was initially intended as a supplement (*hoi*) to the earlier "Furyoki,"[20] but not for the purpose of adding a fictional twist but, on the contrary, of getting rid of the contrived devices:

> I wrote "Furyoki" with the intention of making my battlefield experiences as logical as possible [*rikutsu ni awasete*] and as acceptable to myself as possible [*jibun de nattoku ga yuku*], but there remained things that could not be explained in terms of logic alone [*dōshite mo warikirenai*]. It was impossible to convey the chaotic thoughts and emotions [*shikō, kanjō no konran*] of a crippled soldier with the techniques I used in "Furyoki." […] I made the

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[19] "'Nobi' no ito," 180.
[20] Here, Ōoka is most likely referring to the short essay "Furyoki," which was subsequently renamed as "Tsukamaru made" (Before Capture) when it was included in the collection, which took on the name of the initial essay *Furyoki*. Hereafter I use "Furyoki" to refer to the essay "Tsukamaru made," and *Furyoki* to refer to the essay collection, which is translated into English by Wayne Lammers as *Taken Captive: A Japanese POW's Story* (Wiley, 1996).

protagonist [in *Nobi*] a madman [*kyōjin*] […] as a convenient [*bengi*] means to represent the chaos as it was [*konran o konran no mama*].[21]

Here, Ōoka's use of the expression "*konran o konran no mama*" is particularly striking because of its resemblance to "*ari no mama*," a key phrase often associated with the ideal of mimetic realism of the I-novel. Curiously, contrary to the common conception of "Furyoki" as autobiographical, Ōoka actually considers it as insufficient to communicate his feelings as accurately as possible. In other words, despite the autobiographical appearance of "Furyoki," the conflation of the authorial voice, located in postwar Japan, and the narrative voice, mired in the desperate final days of the Pacific War, makes it impossible to divulge the innermost confusions and horrors he experienced on the battlefield. He could only convey the emotional maelstrom, which was too complex and conflicting to be reduced to a single, neat narrative governed by reason or logic (*rikutsu*), by resorting to the unlikely strategy of fictionalization. The most effective expression of autobiographical authenticity, it turns out, is achieved through the mouth of a madman.

Even aside from Ōoka's ambivalent feelings, the reception of *Nobi* was largely immaterial to authorial intentions, especially in the case of modern Japan where the reading public are predisposed to autobiographical literature. As Ōoka himself explains, "Because of the I-novel tradition in Japan, readers are prepared [*yōi*] in advance to read literature in that way."[22] In fact, many people *did* read *Nobi* as an I-novel, assuming everything from the settings to the gruesome details of cannibalism to be accurate depictions of what actually happened in the Battle of Leyte. In fact, Ōoka found it troubling that so many readers regarded *Nobi* as an autobiographical or even factual account that he felt the urgency to write *Reite senki*, some twenty years after the war, in order to rectify the misinformation in *Nobi*:

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[21] "'Nobi' no ito," 178.
[22] Ōoka Shōhei, *Sakka no jiden vol. 59: Ōoka Shōhei* (edited by Tomioka Kōichirō, Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentā, 1997), 252.

My purpose [in writing *Reite senki*] is to correct the mistakes I made in *Nobi* about the ground

battles in Leyte due to the lack of materials at the time and the unreliable hearsays from the

POWs. Even though these details had little to do with the overall themes [in *Nobi*], many

people read them all as facts [*jijitsu*]. For the sacrifices of those who died fighting bravely in

Leyte Island, I needed to atone my sins for promoting the fiction [*fikushon o shuchō shita tsumi*

o tsugunau].[23]

Here, the readers' reception of and reaction to *Nobi* became Ōoka's motivation to revisit a sealed

past and to bring it back into the present. Following poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques

Derrida and Roland Barthes, literary practices always involve the continuous negotiation among the

author, the reader, and the text. In the case of *Nobi*, the reading generates multivalent meanings and

implications depending on whether one adopts a fictional or autobiographical frame of

interpretation.

If the conundrum of the I-novel rests, as Tomi Suzuki suggests, on the "single identity of the

protagonist, the narrator, and the author," scholars have attempted to resolve the contradiction

between fictionality and authenticity in *Nobi* by dissociating the narrator from this chain of identity.

Jennifer Lee, for example, regards Ōoka's introduction of an insane protagonist, whose "split

consciousness or multiple voices can be interpreted as negating a single-voiced (monologic)

narrative,"[24] as a way to transcend the limits of the I-novel, as well as the supposed unity of narrative

voices. The fractured subjectivity of Tamura, which resembles the internal split in autobiographical

narratives between the narrator and the narrated, thus implodes the very genre of the I-novel.

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[23] Ibid., 264.

[24] Lee, "Ōoka Shōhei's *Fires on the Plain*: The Challenge of the 'I,'" *Ōoka Shōhei* Nobi *sakuhin ronshū* (edited by Kamei Hideo, Tokyo: Kuresu Shuppan, 2003), 369.

Similarly, Dennis Washburn points out that *Nobi* "overtly fictionalizes that experience by the striking rhetorical maneuver of problematizing the trustworthiness of autobiographical memory."[25] In particular, his interpretative strategy is centered on the narrative break at the crucial moment of anagnorisis in Chapter 36, "Diary of a Madman," in which it becomes clear that the preceding account is told from the perspective of a self-claimed madman (*kyōjin*). This revelation, which Washburn considers to be an "illusion of autobiographical narrative," creates a hermeneutic circle that "forces the reader to reconsider the meaning of everything that has been told to that point."[26] In other words, the madman's attempt to reclaim a unified subjectivity always comes up short due to the inherent impossibility of autobiographical accounts, which require the narrating subject to keep a critical distance from the narrated subject. As a result, the supposedly authentic experience of the narrated self, once articulated by the narrating subject, becomes restructured and reinvented in a somewhat fictional manner, regardless of the latter's sincerity and intention.

In short, while Ōoka seems to believe that certain authentic feelings can only be articulated through the veil of fiction, Lee and Washburn question the very possibility of autobiographical authenticity. From Ōoka's perspective, in other words, as long as autobiographical narratives are governed by the principle of reason, it is ultimately impossible to express "chaos as it was" (*konran o konran no mama*) without undermining the authenticity of the narrative itself. Lee and Washburn, on the other hand, regard the very notion of "autobiographical writing" with suspicion, on the ground that such practice is always already premised on an inevitable split between the narrating and the narrated self. As a result, the "authentic" is necessarily relegated to the realm of the "fictional" at the very moment of narration.

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[25] Dennis Washburn, "Toward a View from Nowhere: Perspective and Ethical Judgment in *Fires on the Plain*," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 23, no.1 (1997): 116.
[26] Washburn, *Translating Mount Fuji*, 210.

At the same time, however, it would be possible to argue the opposite—namely, that the fictional is also autobiographical, although not in the usual sense that any fiction, however fantastic, is necessarily grounded in some kind of physical reality. While the events depicted in *Nobi* are not autobiographical in the literal sense of being based on the author's personal experience, they can nonetheless be considered as autobiographical at a social or collective level. In an essay titled "Wa ga bungaku ni okeru ishiki to muishiki" (The Conscious and the Unconscious of My Literature, 1966), Ōoka first reassures his readers that "*Nobi* is a fiction through and through [*junzen taru fikushon*]. Apart from two or three details about the Battle of Leyte that I heard from the fellow POWs at the camp in Tacloban, the themes are completely fictitious [*fikutishasu*]."[27] However, he quickly goes on to explain that these "fictitious themes" were based not on his whimsical imagination but rather on the actual experience of the Japanese soldiers in the Pacific War:

> This situation (hunger and cannibalism) is something that no other nation has experienced in this great war [*konji no taisen*]. In this respect alone we Japanese have experiences unknown to the Europeans. Japan has lost the war, but if we manage to realize unprecedented themes [*michi no daizai o jitsugen suru*] in the realm of literature, then we have at least won culturally. […] I have written at length that I grew up under the influence of European thoughts and literature, which I have assimilated [*sesshu*] over the years. But that alone wouldn't have given rise to such excessive desire [*hōgai na ganbō*] as to rank among literature of the world. It was possible only because of the sour grapes of the defeat [*haisen kara kuru makeoshimi*] and my distorted patriotism [*yuganda aikokushin*].[28]

Setting aside Ōoka's problematic claim about the motivations for creating *Nobi*, which is uncannily reminiscent of the wartime rhetoric of Japanese spirituality, it is interesting that Ōoka, on the one

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[27] "Wa ga bungaku ni okeru ishiki to muishiki," 253-4.
[28] Ibid., 253, 255.

hand, strives to keep themes such as hunger and cannibalism at bay by claiming that they were "completely fictitious," yet on the other hand asserts that such extreme experiences were not only real but also unique to the Japanese. In a way, Ōoka's "distorted patriotism" verges on the fetishistic perversion that I mentioned in Chapter 1, a mentality which encourages victims to not only claim exclusive ownership but also sentimentalize and essentialize their sufferings as the discursive foundation for something new, whether in the form of a cultural victory or economic recovery.

Overlaying Landscapes: From Leyte Island to the Musashino Plain

The second aspect that distinguishes *Nobi* from Ōoka's other early works is its unconventional narrative structure, particularly the spatial and temporal multiplicity. While the preponderance of the novel takes place in the wartime Philippines, the last three chapters, as I noted earlier, are narrated from the present moment in postwar Japan. Before moving on to the analysis, however, it is perhaps helpful to trace the changes in the novel's structure over the different versions. The initial *Buntai* version, serialized from December 1948 to July 1949, opens with three introductory chapters, "kutsumigaki no shōnen" (The Shoeshine Boy), "Jūkō" (The Muzzle), and "Nobi" (Fires on the Plain)—the last of which eventually becomes the title of the work. While these chapters differ considerably from the final three chapters in the definitive version, both in terms of plot and style,[29] they nevertheless share the same geographic setting in postwar Japan. Moreover, the opening chapters in the *Buntai* version, much like the concluding chapters in the book form, seem awkwardly disjointed from the main narrative set in the wartime Philippines.

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[29] Most importantly, the opening chapters in the *Buntai* version are told from the perspective of Tamura's friend, a fellow POW from Leyte, who encourages Tamura to write down his experience as a treatment of retrograde amnesia. The friend explains that he decides to publish this account because Tamura, who entrusts him with the manuscript, has already "died of madness" (*kyōshi*).

When Ōoka restarted the serialization in *Tenbō* in January 1951, he decided to remove the opening chapters in the earlier *Buntai* version altogether. As a result, the *Tenbō* version is set entirely in Leyte Island during the war. The definitive version, which appeared in February 1952 and formed the basis for all subsequent reprints and complete works (*zenshū*), resembles, for the most part, the *Tenbō* version, except that Ōoka restored the three chapters set in postwar Japan and placed them toward the end of the novel. Thoroughly revised from the *Buntai* version, the final chapters in the book version bears little formal resemblance to the corresponding chapters in *Buntai*. Contrary to the *Buntai* chapters, which are characterized by their lucid style and dramatic development, the final chapters in the definitive version contain no substantial plot but rather a peculiar combination of calm reflection on the one hand and disturbing and disorienting hallucination on the other.

Most critics have either dismissed the final chapters for their relative insignificance or criticized them as a digression that detracts from the novel's overall greatness. Nakamura Mitsuo, for example, suggests that the novel would have been better, both structurally and stylistically, without the final three chapters.[30] Ivan Morris, the English translator of *Nobi*, similarly questions the necessity of including the sequel,[31] which diminishes, from his perspective, the dramatic tension in the "main narrative" of Tamura's wartime experience in the Philippines:

> Among the Western readers who admire *Fires on the Plain*, including myself, many harbor
> doubts about the ending, which deviates drastically from the dramatic realism [*geki-teki na*
> *riarizumu*] that gives life to the novel from the beginning. I find it hard to believe that the
> novel closes so quietly when Tamura is described as descending into such desperate

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[30] Ōoka Shōhei, "'Nobi' ni okeru Furansu bungaku no eikyō," *Ōoka Shōhei zenshū, vol. 13*, 426-7.

[31] In Morris' English translation, there is a blank page inserted between Chapter 36, "In Praise of Transfiguration" and Chapter 37, "Diary of a Madman," which begins under the header "Epilogue." In contrast, in Ōoka's original, there is no visual indicator that separates the final three chapters from the preceding narrative in the Philippines, apart from Tamura's statement that he is writing this account six years later. In other words, the English translation conveys a sense of rupture that is largely absent in the Japanese original.

conditions after the two fellow soldiers [Yasuda and Nagamatsu] have met tragic ends. What

seems even more unconvincing [*nattoku no ikanai*] is the slow pace at which the story unfolds

after Tamura checks himself into the mental hospital. The novel, which has been so full of

tension [*kinpakukan*] and intimation [*anji*], is suddenly turned into a loose [*shimari no nai*],

blatantly obvious commentary [*meimeihakuhaku no kaisetsu*]. This lengthy, unexciting [*jōchō na*

moriagari no nai] epilogue […] is a typical example of the preference for confessional literature

[*kokuhaku-tai bungaku*] in many of Japan's modern novels.[32]

In this extended quote, Morris explains that his dissatisfaction with the novel's ending stems from its

blandness that defuses the narrative tension in Tamura's death march in the first thirty-six chapters.[33]

What is more interesting, however, is Morris' association of the changing pace with the general

propensity for the "confessional literature," a term that is sometimes used interchangeably with

autobiographical writings or the "I-novel." Following this line of logic, it seems possible to interpret

Ōoka's decision to gear down the narrative speed in the final chapters as a "return," not only

physically to the space of postwar Japan but also discursively to the literary convention of the "I-

novel," which purportedly characterizes much of modern Japanese literature.

Not every scholar, to be sure, regards this break as superfluous or detrimental to the novel's

worth. Dennis Washburn, in particular, considers the narrative transition as constituting the "most

important element of the design of the novel."[34] If the fracture between wartime Philippines and

postwar Tokyo creates, on the fictional level, the "effect of multiple perspectives" in Tamura's

conflicting attempts to "deal directly with both the experience of war and the circumstances of the

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[32] Ivan Morris, "'Nobi' ni tsuite" (translated by Takeda Katsuhiko), *Ōoka Shōhei* Nobi *sakuhin ronshū*, 138.
[33] Morris goes on to propose what he perceives to be a "more effective conclusion (*kōka-teki na ketsumatsu*)," which happens to coincide with the ending sequence in Ichikawa's adapted film: "Ichikawa Kon's excellent film version ends with the scene in which Tamura, having just killed Nagamatsu, stumbles towards the fires on the plain. The lengthy hospital scene was completely cut out." Ibid., 309.
[34] Washburn, "Toward a View from Nowhere," 106.

story's composition," it also gives rise to a "dialectical tension […] between the inherent limits of human perspective and the desire to get beyond the self to an objective view."[35] In other words, if the "remembered Tamura" in the first thirty-six chapters is bound by his inescapable subjective limits, the "remembering Tamura" in the final three chapters aims to achieve a sense of detachment and autonomy, which Washburn considers to be the prerequisite for any ethical judgment.

Either way, whether one considers the final three chapters as superfluous or essential to the "main body" (*hontai*) of the narrative, it is undeniable that they create effects of a "parallax shift" from multiple, competing perspectives that is unseen in Ōoka's other works from the same period.[36] While *Nobi* embodies a narrative tension—effective or not is immaterial to the discussion—between the wartime Leyte and the postwar Japan, his other early works are bound by one or the other. All the essays in *Furyoki* are set in the wartime Philippines, with the exception of the last chapter titled Going Home" (*kikan*), which ends tellingly as the vessel, packed with homesick soldiers, sails slowly towards Japan: "Bearing a cargo of two thousand POWs, each carrying with him his own personal joy or indifference, the repatriation ship [*fukuinsen*] *Shinano-maru* steamed ever closer to Japan at a speed of eight knots."[37] Much like the denouement in *Kemono-tachi*, the narrative in *Furyoki* ends promptly before reaching postwar Japan, as if to keep the burdens of wartime memory from intruding into the discursive space of "home."

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[35] Ibid., 107.
[36] I borrow the concept of "parallax" from Slovaj Žižek's book, *The Parallax View* (MIT Press, 2006), which is, in turn, inspired by Karatani Kōjin's *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* (translated by Sabu Kohso, MIT Press, 2005). In both works, Žižek and Karatani reinterpret the Hegelian dialectics in terms of the phenomenon known as the "parallax," or the apparent displacement of an object caused by observations from different perspectives. The parallax view (or what Karatani calls "transcritique") differs from the traditional understanding of the Hegelian dialectics in that it does not presume the existence of an unproblematic synthesis stemming from the contradiction between the thesis and the antithesis. Rather, the thesis and antithesis would remain, according to the parallax view, as irreducibly opposed to each other. In this view, the synthesis is not a given entity but rather an endless movement, or a "parallax shift," between the thesis and antithesis.
[37] *Taken Captive*, 299.

On the other hand, *Musashino fujin*, which was published slightly before the *Tenbō* version of *Nobi*, is confined within the space of postwar metropolitan Tokyo. Opening with an introduction of the history and geography of an area known as "Hake," located in the titular Musashino Plain somewhere between Kokubunji and Koganei, *Musashino fujin* is a novel about the tragic fate of a woman who adheres to the traditional morals amidst the rapidly disintegrating values in the immediate postwar years. Due to the drastic differences between *Furyoki* and *Musashino fujin* in terms of styles, themes, genres, and even geographic settings, most readers have regarded the two works as belonging to disparate systems (*keiretsu* or *keitō*). However, as I show later in this chapter, there are subtle connections, both in terms of the plot and broader historical implications, that unite the *sensō-mono* and the *ren'ai-mono*. Most obviously, *Musashino fujin* picks up where *Furyoki* leaves off. The chain of misfortunes that befall the otherwise peaceful family in *Musashino fujin* is set in motion by the unexpected return of Tsutomu, an ex-soldier from Burma.

Despite the potential continuities, *Furyoki* and *Musashino fujin* are both narrated from single, unified perspectives, even though they are set, at least nominally, in different times and spaces. If we take *Nobi* into account, however, it is possible to see its layered narrative structure as a space of contact. Tamura's paradoxical attempts to "cure his own madness," represented by the inherent impossibility of narrating oneself from a perspective that is "neither wholly detached nor wholly subjective,"[38] serve not so much to unify as to "short-circuit" the dichotomies between the wartime Leyte and the postwar Japan. The fusion of landscapes and memories in Tamura's final hallucinations thus allows these entities, which usually remain discrete in the foundational narrative, to become entangled with one another. In this way, Tamura's impossible "writings of the dead" (*shisha no sho*) not only bring the gruesome memories of the war into the postwar, but also rekindle the prairie fires he has once witnessed in the Philippines on the Musashino Plain.

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[38] Washburn, *Translating Mount Fuji*, 192.

Fragmentation and Transfiguration

If the mainstream of modern Japanese literature is characterized by the withdrawal into the space of interiority,[39] *Nobi*, much like the works I analyzed in previous chapters such as Abe Kōbō's *Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu*, Kyū Eikan's *Dakusuikei* and *Honkon*, and Ishihara Shintarō's *Taiyō no kisetsu*, is more concerned with action and movement than with stasis and immobility. However, unlike Kyūzō and Kō who traverse the Manchurian wasteland in order to board the repatriation ship, Chunmu and Lao Li who leave Taiwan to evade political persecution, and Tatsuya and Eiko who move freely to pursue material and sexual gratification, Tamura's wandering in Leyte seems both purposeless and pointless. Banished from his company, which would itself be annihilated in a heavy bombardment shortly after, Tamura is bound by no formal obligations to the routed Japanese army.

Interestingly, even after learning about the order to gather in Palompon, Tamura quickly gives up on the prospect of evacuation due to the overwhelming presence of the American military. In contrast with the characters in previously examined works whose movements are motivated by a certain purpose—however illusional or deceptive it might be, Tamura's journey seems to be driven, from the beginning, by a sense of absolute futility stemming from his resignation to his inevitable death.[40] After the shelling of the field hospital, for example, Tamura confesses that he is driven by something "inexplicable" (*meijōshigatai*): "It became painfully clear that only death and calamity awaited me at the end of my journey, but I was driven on by a murky curiosity [*kurai kōkishin*] to

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[39] One of the most significant examples of such spaces of interiority is the "second-floor room" (*nikai no heya*) in Futabatei Shimei's *Ukigumo*, in which the introverted protagonist Bunzō spends the bulk of his time in solitude in his "second-floor room," agonizing over his burgeoning romantic feelings toward Osei. See Maeda Ai, "From Communal Performance to Solitary Reading: The Rise of the Modern Japanese Reader," *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity* (edited by James Fujii, Duke University Press, 2004), 223-54.

[40] This sense of futility is expressed even more explicitly in *Furyoki*, in which the narrator mocks the sergeant commanding his squad of his naïve optimism: "Underlying his position was the myopic presumption that the island of Luzon remained, and would continue to remain, an invulnerable safety zone" (4). In contrast, the narrator clearly believes that nothing would possibly alter the impending doom for the Japanese army no matter where they retreat to.

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witness my loneliness and despair until the moment when I was to breathe my last in the corner of some unknown tropical field."[41] It is perhaps for this reason that Paola Di Gennaro regards Tamura as a modern incarnation of Cain, whose biblical journey of atonement becomes an archetypal representation of a "pattern of wandering as an expiation of a guilt [which has] no functional purpose within the narrative; that is, the wandering of the characters must be practically aimless in relation to the plot."[42]

While Tamura's exasperating hunger march is full of dramatic elements which seem to leave little room for interiority, his physical journey is at the same time a metaphorical one into his own psyche.[43] In fact, as Karatani Kōjin points out, the "discovery of landscape" (*fūkei no hakken*) and the "discovery of interiority" (*naimen no hakken*) are merely the two sides of the same coin called "modernity."[44] As Tamura wanders aimlessly in Leyte, he descends not only into the actual atrocities of murder and cannibalism, but also into the depth of his own unconscious, which is retrospectively identified, in the postwar moment of recollecting his lost memory through the act of writing, as symptoms of madness. In fact, Tamura often describes his movements in "unconscious" terms, as if he has no control whatsoever over his own body. For instance, he seems to have little idea of where his legs bring him. Ostracized from his unit, Tamura "begins walking without knowing it [*itsuka arukidashiteita*]."[45] After walking for a few days, he even begins to feel that his legs "move forward mechanically [*kikai-teki*] of their own accord."[46] In fact, Tamura's subjectivity becomes ever more disintegrated and fragmented as he continues his solitary journey, until he finally split into two selves

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[41] "Nobi," 150; 59.

[42] Paula Di Gennaro, *Wandering Through Guilt: The Cain Archetype in the Twentieth-century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 2.

[43] Arthur Kimball makes a similar argument in *Crisis in Identity and Contemporary Japanese Novels* (Tuttle, 1973), 31.

[44] Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (edited by Brett de Bary, Duke University Press, 1993).

[45] "Nobi," 134.

[46] Ibid., 153.

in the last chapter, "Writings of the Dead," in which he returns once again to the Philippine plain in his fantastic reconstruction of the lost memories:

> It is once more the image of myself walking between the hills and the plains with a rifle on my shoulder. My green uniform has faded to a light brown and there are holes in the sleeves and shoulders. The figure is barefoot. Yes, from the indentations of his emaciated neck as he walks a few paces ahead of me, I can tell that this is certainly I, First-Class Private Tamura.
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> But then who can be this "I" who is now looking at the other I? It also is I. After all, who is to say that "I" cannot consist of two people?[47]

In contrast to the doppelganger figures in previous chapters such as Kyūzō and Kō, or Chunmu and Lao Li, here Tamura is divided into two selves: one who is observing, narrating, and remembering in the present in postwar Japan, and one who is trapped in Leyte, in the past, while being observed, narrated, and remembered as belonging to the world of the "dead" (*shisha*).

In any case, if Tamura's unconscious movements of his legs can be interpreted as simply rhetoric, his loss of control over the left hand, which seems to take on a life of its own, at the point of his attempted cannibalism of the dying officer is more problematic. Curiously, even before he experiences the internal conflict between his two hands, Tamura seems to understand intuitively the contradiction embodied in the license to transgress one of the most ingrained taboos: "'You may eat this,' the words my victim [*watashi no giseisha*] had murmured before his last breath haunted me. It was strange that this supposedly gracious permission [*onchō-teki na kono kyoka*] to my famished stomach acted instead as a prohibition [*kin'atsu*]."[48] Here, the division between Tamura's right hand, holding the bayonet in order to remove the flesh from the officer's arm, and his left hand, which grips the wrist of his right hand to prevent it from doing so, represents the fundamental paradox of

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[47] Ibid., 223; 241-2.
[48] Ibid., 199.

taboos: the formal prohibition is always accompanied by the possibility of transgression. Similarly, Ōoka's *Musashino fujin*, which revolves around the forbidden love between Tsutomu and his married cousin Michiko, demonstrates that it is the taboos of adultery and incest that make their romantic attraction all the more tantalizing.

Aside from his strange experience of dissociation, Tamura's word choices, particularly his use of "onchō" and "kin'atsu," are also noteworthy, not only because of their excessive formality but more importantly because of their potential religious connotations. "Onchō," for example, is a term that is used almost exclusively to refer to the Divine Grace of God (as in *Kami no onchō*). Similarly, "kin'atsu," while not as specific or rarely used as "onchō," tends to be associated with religious prohibitions. It is thus unsurprising that as Tamura undergoes the internal fracture involving his two hands, he is ordered by a mysterious voice: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth!" The voice then issues another injunction, "Arise, I say unto thee, arise," which Tamura follows obediently: "So I stood up. This was the first time that I was moved by others [*tasha*]." As he steps away from the officer's corpse, his left hand finally loosens its grip on the right hand, finger by finger.

Just like Tamura's left hand which represents his struggles against sin, the two sentences uttered by the mysterious voice are imbued with religious implications. Both are, in fact, taken from the New Testament: the former from Matthew 6:3, and the latter, Mark 2:11. In addition to these biblical references, the note of Christianity is undergirded by an aura of absolute authority and solemnity in the mysterious voice, which Tamura recalls that he has heard before: "It was not the beastlike voice made by the woman I killed. No, it was that enraptured, magnificent voice [*uwazutta, kyodai na koe*] that had called to me in the village church."[49] Here, Tamura is referring to an auditory

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[49] Ibid., 201. Morris translates *uwazutta* as hollow, but I wonder if it would make more sense to follow another meaning of *uwazuru*, namely, a shrill voice due to excessive excitement.

hallucination (*genchō*) he has experienced in the seaside village. Weeping at the irony that he makes his way to this abandoned village only to witness the deformed corpses of his countrymen, Tamura suddenly hears the words "De profundis!" reverberating through the empty church. "I felt the voice belonged to someone I knew," Tamura thinks, "but at the time I couldn't remember who it was."[50]

Curiously, while the narrated Tamura is unable to recall the owner of the mysterious voice, the narrating Tamura hastens to explain: "Now I know. It was my own voice whenever I become agitated. If I am insane now [*genzai*], it was then that my insanity started."[51] "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice," the voice utters, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."[52] Tamura's appeal goes unanswered, however, in this deserted church. Intuiting that his "every connection to the outside world was torn asunder," Tamura resigns himself to the realization that "nothing in this world [*chijō*] would ever answer my cry for help."[53]

If the voice Tamura hears while kneeling next to the officer's body is the same as that which he hears in the abandoned church, it is not an auditory hallucination that he suspects but rather his own voice raised in unconscious. Following his hands and legs, in other words, Tamura's lips also move of their own accord. However, while the voice in the church appeals to God for help, in this case it issues an injunction, as God's incarnation, that prevent him from transgressing. In fact, to the narrated Tamura, he gives up cannibalizing not out of his own volition but of what he perceives to be the act of the "other" (*tasha*). The intervention from a transcendental, outside power calls to mind both the Buddhist notion of *tariki*, or salvation through external aid, and perhaps more pertinently the Christian notion of the Divine Grace of God.

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[50] Ibid., 170.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid, 170-1. These two sentences come from Psalm 130:1 and 121: 1.
[53] Ibid, 171.

In any case, the invocation of Christianity at the moment when Tamura is on the verge of cannibalism is significant for two reasons. First, while some critics disparage Tamura's appeal for divine intervention as contrived or pretentious, Ōoka actually considers it as indispensable to the ethical message he tries to convey in the novel. In response to Okuno Takeo's scathing criticism of the novel as an "absurd fantasy that shows off [the author's] dubious theology [*ayashige na shingaku o furimawashita guretsu na romanesuku*],"[54] for example, Ōoka insists that he introduces "the transcendental existence [*chōetsu-teki sonzai*] of God as a necessary recourse for people to adhere to their [ethical] decisions lest they lose sanity."[55] In other words, Tamura's yearning for the divine intervention, and by extension Ōoka's invocation of God both in the novel and in his actual battlefield experiences,[56] is not merely a literary ornament or a whimsical "intellectual game" (*chisei no yūgi*) that he can "graduate" (*sotsugyō*) from, as insinuated by Kusunoki Michitaka. To the contrary, Ōoka regards God as an "inevitable necessity" (*sakegataku hitsuyō*), as Morikawa Tatsuya suggests, in extreme circumstances when the everyday morality is rendered utterly meaningless. "In this case," Morikawa writes, "God would be unnecessary if there is bread. But precisely because there was no bread, God becomes necessary. Of course, I'm not saying that God is a substitute [*daiyōhin*] for bread. No, it is the state of lack [*ketsujo no jōtai*] that makes God appear [*shutsugen saseru*]."[57]

In this connection, to digress for a moment, Tamura's solitary death march might be interpreted metaphorically as the Way of the Cross, which in Japanese is known as *jūjika no michiyuki*.

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[54] Okuno uses the word Romanesque, which in English usually refers to an architectural style in medieval Europe, but in Japanese it comes closer to the original meanings in French, which range from the romantic to the fantastic or the novelistic. According to the definition in Encyclopedia Nipponica (*Nihon Daihykka zensho*), Romanesque is "derived from 'roman' (shōsetsu) and means that something is as strange (*kii*), fanciful (*kūsō-teki*), fantastic (*denki-teki*), preposterous (*kōtōmukei*). As a literary term, it refers to the characteristic that transcends the limits of the theories and phenomena of reality and reaches into the realm of fantasy through free imagination. However, it is often used to refer to the rounded, dignified style in Roman architecture, which is contrasted to the pointed style in Gothic architecture."

[55] "Jinnikushoku ni tsuite," 439.

[56] I cannot go into details here, but Ōoka discusses his moment of epiphany in more detail in *Furyoki*. Although he abandons his own "naïve theology" (*shōni-teki na shingaku*) in the later chapters, he cannot fully dispense with the idea of divine intervention and decides to refashion it in *Nobi*.

[57] Morikawa Tatsuya, "'Nobi' to genzai no mondai," *Ōoka Shōhei* Nobi *sakuhin ronshū*, 175.

If Jesus Christ carries the Cross on the Way of Suffering (*Via Dolorosa*) through the winding streets of Jerusalem, Tamura carries a Type 38 rifle as he wanders through the Philippine mountains and forests. Interestingly, as Tamura gradually descends into madness, he comes to see the rifle less as a lethal weapon and more as an instrument of God's wrath. Immediately after his killing of the Philippine woman, for example, Tamura cannot help feeling nauseated when he looks down at the rifle: "It shone with a sinister gleam in the moonlight. It was a Type 38 rifle. Because it was requisitioned from a school where it had been assigned for military training [*gunji kyōren*], the chrysanthemum crest on the breechblock cover had been scratched out with a X [*batten*]. I felt a surge of nausea [*ōki*]."[58] Given that the chrysanthemum crest represents the imperial seal of Japan, the fact that it is crossed out with a *batten*, a word tends to be associated with defect, error, and erasure, shows that Tamura is critical of the state that forces the weapon on him.

However, in his hallucinatory return to the Philippine plain in the final chapter, Tamura describes the rifle rather differently: "I saw myself quietly raising the gun [*sashiageru*]. From below, my beautiful left hand, the most conceited part of this mortal body [*nikushin*], was holding up the rifle whose chrysanthemum crest had been crossed out [*jūji de kesareta*]."[59] Whereas the rifle evokes a visceral reaction of disgust in the previous excerpt, here it is described with a sense of reverence or even solemnity. In particular, Tamura uses the verb "*sashiageru*," which is most commonly used as an honorific for offering something to a social superior. In this case, while it is certainly possible to read it simply as an objective description of Tamura's action, it seems more reasonable to interpret it as indicating his hallucination that he is chastising the "insolent humans" (*fuson naru ningen*) and offering them, quite literally, as sacrifices to God. More significant, however, is Tamura's choice to replace "*batten*" with another word "*jūji*," which contains unmistakable Christian references to the crucifix

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[58] "Nobi," 174; 118-9.
[59] Ibid., 224; 224-5.

(*jūjika*).[60] In short, Tamura is increasingly drawn to Christianity as he descends further into his heart of darkness, which is in turn taken as signs of his aggravating madness.

Ōoka's use of religious symbolism in *Nobi* is clearly intended for ironic purposes. Rather than conform to any rigid Christian doctrines, Tamura's invocation of God, befitting the fragmented psyche of a madman in desperate hunger, serves as an expedient moral anchor that affords him a sense of integrity and salvation, however fleeting it might be. Interestingly, Morikawa's comparison between God and bread, which I mentioned briefly before my digression, points inadvertently to a fundamental paradox underlying the relation between cannibalism and Christianity, and by extension between savagery and civilization that they respectively symbolize. Before his attempted cannibalism, Tamura first tries to suppress his hunger by sucking the blood out of the mountain leeches crawling all over the officer's body. As he crushes the leeches, Tamura reflects on the contradiction between his reluctance to "lay his hands directly [*jibun de te o kudasu*]" on the corpse and his readiness to "drink human blood through [the medium of] other living creatures."[61] He further wonders whether it makes any difference between squeezing out the leeches and using his bayonet to rip open the flesh, given that both are mere "tools" (*dōgu*) for achieving the same purpose.

Setting aside the intriguing difference between cannibalism and vampirism,[62] it is worth noting that Tamura not only (attempts to) eat the flesh of the dead officer but also drinks his blood. As several scholars note, Tamura's behavior is clearly a parody of the Eucharist, one of the most central sacraments of Christianity in which wine and bread are believed to transform into the blood

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[60] While she only touches briefly on it, Aoyama Tomoko makes a similar observation in *Reading Food in Modern Japanese Literature*, 233, note 49.

[61] "Nobi," 200; 185.

[62] See, for example, Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me with those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Representations*, vol. 8, no. 8 (1984): 107-33, and Richard Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires: The History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians* (Routledge, 2011).

and body of Jesus Christ.[63] In fact, Tamura regards the officer as a transfiguration of Jesus Christ not only because of the "gracious permission" he gives to Tamura, but also because the officer's emaciated arm reminds Tamura of the strained arm of Jesus on the crucifix in the abandoned village church. The association between cannibalism and Christianity is made even more explicit when Tamura actually commits cannibalism by chewing on the mysterious object offered by Nagamatsu, which is described as resembling "black rice crackers [*kuroi senbei no yō na*]," a clearly euphemistic term for the sacramental bread (*hostia*).[64]

The Contingent and the Inevitable

While it may be tempting to dismiss Ōoka's analogy between cannibalism and Christianity simply as an outrageous sacrilege, the implicit reference to the Eucharist is, I believe, far more revealing than it is usually acknowledged. The Eucharist, it turns out, occupies a rather troubling position not only within the Christian traditions but more importantly in the history of Western imperialism, which was, after all, carried out under the pretext of spreading Christianity and, often interchangeably, modern civilization. The irony, of course, is that while the Europeans regarded the rest of the world as hopelessly barbaric and cannibalistic,[65] the rite of the Holy Communion, which is central to the Christian doctrine and, by extension, the purported superiority of Western civilization,[66] presents a disturbing intimacy to the practice of cannibalism. Indeed, as Maggie Kilgour importantly argues,

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[63] Morris, "'Nobi' ni tsuite," 141; Hugh Davis, "'Monkey Meat' and Metaphor in Shōhei Ōoka's *Fires on the Plain*," *Exchanges*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2020), 209; Erik Lofgren, "Christianity Excised: Ichikawa Kon's *Fires on the Plain*," *Japanese Studies* vol. 23, no. 3 (2003): 267.

[64] Morris, "'Nobi' ni tsuite," 152.

[65] In fact, the very appellation "cannibal" derives from an accidental misspelling by Christopher Columbus of what has since been called the "Caribbean." Columbus' misreading, however, is merely catalytic or reflective, rather than causative, of the Western discourse of cannibalism, which springs from the intersection between an insatiable desire for colonial conquest and a structure of racialization and discrimination. For a discussion on the genealogy of the word "cannibal," see Jennifer Brown, *Cannibalism in Literature and Film* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 8.

[66] It should be noted, however, that the Church was frequently on tense and sometimes hostile terms with the State. When it comes to Europe's colonial expansion, however, the two often worked hand in hand.

cannibalism is located not among the indigenous tribes in the distant "New World" but rather in the core of Christianity and the colonial mission it entails. In other words, the charges of cannibalism, usually leveled against the "racial others" both as evidence of their cultural or biological inferiority and as justification for subjugating and even exterminating them in the name of "taming the cannibals," are ironically found in Europe's own heart of darkness.

Indeed, the colonial authorities often viewed the Eucharist with ambivalence and unease. For the Spaniards, for example, the Catholic Church insisted on the centrality of this sacrament "not just [as] one of many Iberian practices that colonial actors aimed to transfer to Spain's new possessions [but as] a fundamental element of early modern Catholic identity and belief."[67] At the same time, however, the Church could not readily ignore the dangerous parallel between the sacred ritual and the indigenous atrocity, which often blurred and even reversed the division between the civilized and the savage, and, by extension, between the "white" and the "black." In fact, as Jennifer Brown observes, African slaves regarded the European slave trades as "desiring black bodies, not for economic reasons but for culinary ones."[68] More tellingly, Homi Bhabha gives the example of a Christian missionary trying to teach the Holy Communion to Indian Hindus, who reacted with horror and abhorrence to the idea of eating Christ's body and drinking his blood.[69] In these cases, it is the European, Christian, (supposedly) civilized, colonial masters who are seen as the true cannibals.

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[67] Rebecca Earle, "Spaniards, Cannibals, and the Eucharist in the New World," *To Feast on Us as Their Prey: Cannibalism and the Early Modern Atlantic* (edited by Rachel Herrmann, University of Arkansas Press, 2019), 84.

[68] Brown, 20.

[69] Quoted in Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (Routledge, 1995), 153. It is possible, though, that Young misinterprets the message here. In Bhabha's essay, he quotes a conversation between Anund Messeh, one of the earliest Indian catechists, and the Hindu elder. Anund, who explains that "these books [the Bible, translated into Hindi] teach the religion of the European Sahibs. It is their book; and they printed it in our language, for our use." The elder replies, "Ah! No, that cannot be, for they eat flesh." Later, the new converts, while willing to be baptized, refuse to perform the sacrament on the ground that "the Europeans eat cow's flesh." While the Hindus are clearly revolted by the idea of eating flesh, it is arguable whether their disgust stems from the thought of eating the body of Jesus Christ or cow's flesh. See Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, no.1 (1985): 145-6.

The accusation of cannibalism in Western Christianity is not merely a rhetorical move. Rather, it inadvertently reveals the intrinsic savagery in Europe's colonial enterprise under the guise of civilization and modernity. In English literature, the homology between cannibalism and colonialism is manifested in characters such as Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe and Joseph Conrad's Kurtz, who cannibalize, whether metaphorically or literally, the colonial world through their involvements in ivory and slave trades. James Joyce, for instance, considers Robinson Crusoe the "true prototype of the British colonialist" who embodies the "whole Anglo-Saxon spirit […]: the manly independence; the unconscious cruelty; the persistence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; the sexual apathy; the practical, well-balanced religiousness; the calculating taciturnity."[70] If Crusoe is the prototype of the British colonialist, his taming of Friday, the prototype of the savage cannibal and, more tellingly, the subservient slave who is tamed or "redeemed" by Western civilization, is in itself a cannibalistic act at a metafictional level. After all, cannibalism is based on a mechanism of incorporating and assimilating the "other" into, and for the sake of, the "self."

If Crusoe is the epitome of Europe's "civilizing mission," Conrad's Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* represents its precise antithesis: the fear of "going native." As Jennifer Brown rightly notes, Kurtz, who claims ownership over everything in sighing "'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my'—everything belonged to him,[71] counters the "fear of being swallowed by the darkness and wilderness of the African jungle [with his] fantasy of swallowing the world."[72] Moreover, Kurtz's participation in the "unspeakable rites," a euphemism commonly used in Victorian literature to refer to the practice of cannibalism,[73] suggests the possibility that Kurtz's cannibalistic desire is more than a simple metaphor.

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[70] James Joyce, "Daniel Defoe," translated by Joseph Prescott, *Buffalo Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1964), 24-5. Quoted in Jamaica Kincaid, "Introduction," *Robinson Crusoe: 300th Anniversary Edition* (Restless Books, 2019), vii.
[71] *Robinson Crusoe*, quoted in Brown, 41.
[72] Brown, 42.
[73] Ibid., 41.

In Western literature, in short, the trope of cannibalism is inseparable from the racial and colonial discourse of the "savage other," a source of both fascination and horror. The cannibal encounters, in other words, are often accompanied by and equivalent to the colonial encounters. Moreover, such encounters serve both as an explanation for and a justification of the racial hierarchy and the colonial structure of domination: the cultural and biological superiority of the white, European, Christian colonialists is tautologically confirmed by the inferiority of the black or brown, indigenous, superstitious, savage cannibals.

In comparison to the examples of Crusoe and Kurtz, Tamura's cannibalism in *Nobi* seems impertinent to the colonial discourse that is so central in the Western imagination of cannibalism. After all, the acts of cannibalism in *Nobi* occur within the ranks of the Japanese army and thus have little to do with the encounters with racial others. In addition, it is questionable whether the imperial Japanese soldiers, who are portrayed rather negatively as famished, shabby, and sickly throughout the novel, can be considered as belonging to a "superior race" representing modern civilization. Moreover, while cannibalism is often depicted in Western culture as a widespread, if not universal, custom among the "savages and barbarians" who make up the world outside Europe, it seems more like a sporadic, tragic accident in times of extreme starvation than a systematic practice in *Nobi*.

However, as Giorgio Agamben shows, the "state of exception" is sustained by a structural ambivalence in the limits of any normative order that defines itself negatively by its opposite. In other words, the particularity of the miserable conditions of the Japanese army in Leyte cannot be divorced from the broader historical context that gave rise to Japan's imperial ambitions in an age characterized by colonial expansion and conquest. In other words, while Tamura's thought of cannibalism may appear as an accident or epiphany—depending on how literally one takes the analogy between the dying officer and Jesus Christ—at the prohibited invitation "You may eat this," there is a certain sense of the inevitability of cannibalism, which is suggested throughout the novel.

211

When Tamura descends into the abandoned village, for example, he notices that "some corpses that were lying face down had the clothes over their buttocks torn, exposing the bare bones underneath."[74] The narrated Tamura, who has yet to think of possibility of cannibalism, tells himself that the macabre sight is the doing of the "dogs and crows that so infested this otherwise deserted village."[75] His first thought of cannibalism occurs after his return to the "paradise" where he encounters the fellow Japanese soldiers who, trying to dissuade Tamura from following them to Palompon, claim that they have survived New Guinea by eating human flesh, and threaten to eat Tamura if he fails to catch up.

If the thought of cannibalism has only entered Tamura's mind passively so far, his desire for human flesh surfaces after he has depleted the salt found in the village church. Noticing that all the bodies by the roadside are missing the flesh on their buttocks, just like the ones in the seaside village, Tamura finally arrives at the answer when he feels an irrepressible urge to eat the flesh of a corpse that still "retained some trace of living suppleness."[76] As Tamura's hunger progresses, in other words, his cannibalistic desire becomes less accidental and more inevitable. What is more significant, however, is that such impulse is not a discrete occurrence but rather a universal desire that plagues the whole of the imperial Japanese army in Leyte.[77]

Shortly after his initial impulse to consume human flesh, Tamura experiences a horrifying encounter with a fellow soldier: "I understood [*rikaishita*] the expression in his eyes when he stopped and looked me up and down as if to assess [*shiraberu*] my body. He also appeared to have understood my expression."[78] Here, contrary to the usual meaning of understanding (*rikai*) as denoting some

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[74] "Nobi," 169; 106.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 196; 177.
[77] Indeed, as historian Tanaka Toshiyuki notes, "cannibalism was often a systematic activity conducted by whole squads and under the command of officers. Throughout periods of starvation and cannibalism, discipline was maintained to an astonishing degree." Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Westview Press, 1996), 127; quoted in Hugh Davis, 203.
[78] "Nobi," 197; 179.

sort of rapport or empathy, the mutual understanding between Tamura and his fellow soldier is

based on a resignation to the hopeless zero-sum game in the Philippine jungles, where one's survival

comes at the expense of another's demise. If Tamura is, in the end, reduced to a madman for

committing the ultimate sin of cannibalism, such madness is deeply embedded in the crazed pursuit

of resources and territories—that is, in the blind pursuit of colonial modernity itself.

These references to cannibalism, whether direct or implicit, would appear as mere accidents

when examined in isolation. However, the frequency at which these supposedly chance events recur

throughout the novel transforms them into something inevitable. In fact, Tamura recognizes from

the beginning of his death march that accidents, once taken together, cease to be mere accidents.

Banished from his unit, Tamura experiences a "strange feeling of confusion" (*kimyō na kankaku no*

konran) at the sight of a number of prairie fires (*nobi*) that happen to appear on his way to the field

hospital. "Surely these fires were not lit wherever I went because of me," Tamura thinks, "It must be

a coincidence [*gūzen*] that they were lit in the same order [*junjun ni*] as the route I had chosen in my

lonely march."[79] The reason for Tamura's unease (*fuan*), though, derives not from his "realistic

concern [*genjitsu-teki konkyo*] that people must be lurking nearby these fires on the plain."[80] "These

fires did not have much significance in themselves," Ōoka explains in a speech in 1972, "What really

matters was the order and the number in which they appeared."[81] In other words, it is the ordered

repetition, rather than any intrinsic symbolism, that endows the prairie fires with meaning, without

which they would remain a set of accidents or coincidences (*gūzen*).

The "inevitability of the accident" is, in fact, a recurring theme in Ōoka's early writings.[82] In

Nobi, this paradox is discussed more explicitly in Tamura's reflection on the Philippine woman's

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[79] Ibid.,138.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ōoka, "'Nobi' ni okeru Furansu bungaku no eikyō," 427-8.
[82] Here, I focus on the role of "accidents" in *Nobi* and, to a lesser extent, *Furyoki*. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter, the notion of the "accident" is equally important in the death of Michiko, the female protagonist in *Musashino*

arbitrary death in the presbytery. Tamura tries to absolve himself of any moral responsibility by attributing her death to a series of sheer accidents (*gūzen*):

> I had no regrets. Killing was an everyday occurrence [*nichijō sahanji*] on the battlefield. It was chance [*gūzen*] that had made me a killer. She died because of the coincidence [*gūzen*] that she and her lover entered the house I happened to have been hiding in.
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> But why did I shoot? Because she screamed. This, however, was only a motive [*dōki*] that I pulled the trigger but not the cause [*gen'in*]. It was pure chance that the bullet struck a vital part in her chest. Since I hardly aimed, it was just an accident [*jiko*]. But if so, why do I feel so sad?[83]

Interestingly, the woman's death is an accident in a double sense. It is not only Tamura who pulls the trigger but also the author Ōoka himself who are shocked by the rapid unfolding of events. Ōoka explains in an essay that Tamura's killing of the woman is "completely unexpected" (*mattaku yosōgai no kekka*) and derails the development of the story: "In the original plan, […] the protagonist gets angry, fires and misses—it was supposed to end in 'failure' ['*atehazure' de sumu hazu*]. But because a person is killed, the novel was thrown off course, and it pained me to get it back on track."[84] Just as Tamura claims to have lost control of his rifle, in other words, Ōoka also seems to lose control of his pen, which proceeds of its own accord.

Despite Tamura's justification in terms of chance and accident, his reasoning seems dubious because he, immediately after killing the woman, attempts to fire at her lover, who only manages to escape because Tamura forgets to load his gun. Regardless of his insincerity, Tamura feels sadness because he understands, at least intuitively, the inherent contradiction in his own reasoning that

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fujin. For a discussion on Michiko's death, see Stahl, *The Burdens of Survival: Ōoka Shōhei's Writings on the Pacific War* (University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 176.

[83] "Nobi," 174. I have consulted Morris' and Stahl's translations of this scene.

[84] "'Nobi' no ito," 184-5.

killing cannot be an "everyday occurrence" (*nichijō sahanji*) and an "accident" (*jiko* or *gūzen*) at the same time. In other words, while the particular woman's death, caused by a particular Japanese soldier named Tamura, in a particular Philippine village might indeed be an accident, the countless deaths caused by Japan's aggressions throughout its empire can only be considered in terms of a systematic violence that goes beyond the intentions and resolves of any particular soldiers.

While Tamura's knowledge that the "accidental" atrocity becomes inevitable at the structural level is somewhat hampered by his guilty conscience,[85] it is stated more forcefully and objectively in *Furyoki*, in which the narrator, supposedly modeled on Ōoka himself, wonders if his decision to refrain from shooting an exposed American soldier is the result of his ethical choice or mere chance that a sudden burst of gunfire in the distance draws the enemy away. In the end, however, the narrator's moral principles, or the lack thereof, matter little compared to the grand schemes of animosity among modern states:

> The situation in which two soldiers come face to face in the remote jungles of the Philippines is so meaningless it is doubtful whether it even deserves to be called a 'battle' of modern war. Even in the grandest engagements, when foot soldiers—members of that most lowly and scorned branch of the army—encounter one another, this kind of meaninglessness inevitably emerges. Why is it necessary for worthless soldiers to kill each other meaninglessly? Because it is kill or be killed. This is the consequence of our carrying deadly weapons [*kyōki*]. These weapons, however, were not taken up by us of our own free will.[86]

While the encounter between the two particular soldiers is indeed a chance occurrence, in other words, Ōoka notes the profound irony that such meaninglessness inevitably emerges regardless of

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[85] Washburn notes the ambivalence or contradiction in Tamura's rationalization: "Ethically, the narrative cannot have it both ways—Tamura recognizes that he cannot excuse himself by virtue of both his will and chance. He wants inevitability and contingency to somehow coexist. He wants to reassert his autonomy and yet somehow be absolved of responsibility." See Washburn, *Translating Mount Fuji*, 212.
[86] Translated by David Stahl, quoted in *The Burdens of Survival*, 91.

any individual's willingness to fight and kill "enemies" who are arbitrarily designated by the state. Once they are pitted against each other on the battlefield, the arbitrariness of their encounters is replaced by a certainty of death. Therefore, the apparently opposed results of the narrator's sparing of the American soldier in *Furyoki* and Tamura's "accidental" killing of the Philippine woman in *Nobi* are merely the two sides of the same coin—both are, in fact, derived from the same structural violence of modern wars.

Cannibalism, or the Savagery of Modernity

Years later, Ōoka explains his motives for penning *Reite senki* in terms of the gap between the contingency at the individual level and the inevitability at the structural level: "To the soldiers, everything on the battlefield appeared as accidents [*gūzen*]. However, a significant part of these accidents was the result of the strategies devised by the army's and the division's staff officers and the decisions made by the commanders."[87] However, as an insignificant soldier who is unable or unwilling to confront the "inevitability of the contingency," Tamura contents himself by relegating his battlefield experiences to the realm of pure chance. In "*Kyōjin nikki*," the demobilized Tamura, now confined to a mental hospital on the outskirts of Tokyo, reflects on the principle of chance:

> Since my unwilling [*fuhon'i*] return to the world of the living [*kono yo*], everything in my life has become arbitrary [*nin'i*]. Before I went to the war, my life was based on individual necessity [*kojin-teki hitsuyō*] and was, at least for me, inevitable [*hitsuzen*]. But once I was exposed to the capricious authority on the battlefield [*senjō de kenryoku no shii*], everything became a matter of chance [*gūzen*]. As a result, my present life [in this mental home] is also a matter of chance.[88]

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87 Ōoka, "Firipin to watashi," *Ōoka Shōhei zenshū, vol. 13*, 581.
88 "Nobi," 219. See also Morris' and Stahl's translations: Morris, 233; Stahl, 137.

Interestingly, in order to restore his erstwhile "necessary" (*hitsuyō*) and "inevitable" (*hitsuzen*) life, which is disrupted by a string of "arbitrary" (*nin'i*) and "capricious" (*shii*) accidents (*gūzen*), Tamura resorts to the act of writing. "If there is a way to transform the chance [*gūzen*] in my present life into the inevitable [*hitsuzen*], it must be by joining my present life with the [past] in which chance was imposed on me by authority [*kenryoku*]. It is for this reason that I am writing these notes."[89] Tamura's efforts to organize the fragmented memories into a coherent narrative thus serve a therapeutic purpose that sutures his fractured subjectivity, which is manifested by the recurrence of the internal struggle between his two hands.

Dennis Washburn interprets Tamura's undertaking of writing in a positive light as "a highly charged act of political resistance" through which he is able to assert his "individual autonomy over the political and military authorities."[90] Through writing, in other words, Tamura gains access not only to his repressed battlefield memories but also to a sense of continuity and inevitability that dominates his previous everyday life, which is shattered by the arbitrary authority of the military. At the same time, however, the contradiction between the autobiographical appearance of Tamura's recount and the numerous self-serving justifications problematizes the reliability of his act of writing, which is, after all, a form of representation and symbolization. Insofar as Tamura's writing is motivated by a desire to reintegrate the fragmented accidents (*gūzen*) into a coherent and necessary (*hitsuzen*) whole, it is always accompanied by the danger of embellishing the ugly, brutal, and innately conflicting battlefield experiences into a harmonious narrative about his journey of the "discovery of interiority." Indeed, as Theodore Adorno reminds us in his famous dictum "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," the efforts to "smooth over" the rifts and contradictions in reality, which

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[89] "Nobi," 219; 234.
[90] Washburn, *Translating Mount Fuji*, 204.

always remain somewhat unspeakable and unrepresentable, are tantamount to averting from the actual horrors wrought by the blind pursuit of enlightenment and modernity.[91]

To be sure, what I mean is not that Tamura evades talking about the atrocities he has witnessed or committed in the battlefield. In fact, he (and, for that matter, Ōoka himself) persistently and even sometimes compulsively returns to these scenes of brutalities. For Tamura and Ōoka, however, the point of writing is to recuperate from the horrors and traumas of war and to reintegrate into the postwar society. If Tamura's writing of the notes is "an extension of the free-association treatment" that his doctor recommends, Ōoka's writing of *Nobi* itself is to make sense of what he failed to capture in *Furyoki*, namely, to represent "chaos as it was." In other words, while Ōoka writes through the disguise of Tamura, he is nonetheless guided by a similar desire to assimilate and integrate his raw battlefield experiences into the symbolic order in order to position himself, both physically and psychologically, within the postwar society.[92]

Over the course of his narrative, Tamura expresses a range of emotions from the initial indifference to sadness and remorse, and finally to what he imagines as a "divine anger" emanating from God's wrath. What is noteworthy, however, is that Tamura's depictions of the macabre scenes, in particular the acts of cannibalism, are always mediated by a rhetorical veil and thus remain, to some extent, indirect and symbolic. Of course, the fact that Tamura's recounting of cannibalism is symbolically mediated is, in itself, hardly surprising, insofar as any writing is necessarily a linguistic move. My point, however, is that the acts of cannibalism tend to be embellished with rhetorical

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[91] See Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 39-40.

[92] Through the lens of trauma and PTSD studies, David Stahl carefully traces Ōoka's formulative and reconstitutive process over the course of his writerly career in *The Burdens of Survival* (2003). While I find Stahl's approach somewhat teleological, I fully agree with his observation that Ōoka chooses writing as the "means of unburdening himself and coming to terms with his traumatic battlefield experience" (7).

devices such as allusions, metaphors, and symbolizations that render the brutal reality somewhat abstract and inauthentic.[93]

As I mentioned earlier, the thought of cannibalism first dawns on Tamura when he feels an impulse to "eat the flesh of a corpse that still retained some trace of living suppleness." Interestingly, he asserts that its occurrence stems not from his natural instinct but rather from the associations of cannibalism in other cultures and historical contexts:

> But I harbor the doubt [*gimon*] if I would ever resort to human flesh to alleviate my hunger had I not known about the famous story [*hanashi*] of the Raft of the Médusa, or the rumors [*uwasa*] of the hungry soldiers who cannibalized at the Guadalcanal front, or the hints [*anji*] by the veterans from New Guinea whom I had traveled with temporarily.[94]

In other words, Tamura's cannibalistic desire does not arise independently or autonomously, but is rather "activated," so to speak, by stories (*hanashi*), rumors (*uwasa*), and hints (*anji*) from the outside. Indeed, Tamura goes on to explain: "The reason I was able to ignore the social prejudices [*shakai-teki henken*] was that I happened to *know* [*shitteita*, emphasis in original] such extreme exceptions [*kyokutan na reigai*]."[95] Much like the officer's dying words that function simultaneously as an invitation and a prohibition, it is Tamura's "knowledge" that sanctifies his "desire" (*yokubō*) to transgress one of the most ingrained social taboos. If there is indeed a binary between savagery and civilization, Tamura finds knowledge on the wrong side of that division.

Another tactic Tamura uses to conceal the savage nature of cannibalism behind a façade of civilization is the use of false symbolization. After he collapses on the riverbed due to prolonged hunger, Tamura is brought back to life by Nagamatsu who feeds him some objects that look like

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[93] With a different focus, Washburn also notes that the sense of transcendence and authenticity in Tamura's writing is only "an illusion of language." See Washburn, *Translating Mount Fuji*, 210-1.

[94] "Nobi," 196.

[95] Ibid., 197.

"black rice crackers" and taste like "dry cardboard." When inquired about the nature of the object, Nagamatsu averts his eyes and answers: "It's monkey meat." Doubt immediately flashes across Tamura's mind, "Tell me, you didn't mistake me for a monkey, did you?"[96] Here, Tamura's suspicion arises from an almost visceral instinct—after all, the images he recalls after he regains consciousness are a sinister combination of a severed human foot on the dry riverbed and the muzzle of a rifle in the mottled rushes across the field. Just as his realization that the missing flesh on the corpses' buttocks could not be the doing of dogs and crows, which have altogether disappeared with the advent of the rainy season, Tamura knows, intuitively at least, that the meat could not have been harvested from monkeys, which he has never once seen in his wandering through the Philippine mountains and jungles.

What is more disturbing, however, is that Tamura continues to act *as if* he is ignorant of the true source of the meat even after the moment of anagnorisis, in which Tamura witnesses with his own eyes the true identity of the "monkeys" that he has been living on. Hearing a gunshot in the distance, Tamura figures that Nagamatsu has succeeded in hunting a monkey. When he arrives at the scene, however, he sees only a "disheveled, barefoot Japanese soldier in a green military uniform,"[97] fleeing the dry riverbed where Tamura was himself "rescued" a few days earlier. "'That was the monkey,'" Tamura thinks, "I had, of course, expected [*yoki*] this all along."[98] Walking back to the riverbed, he promptly discovers a heap of "amputated body parts that were gastronomically useless [*shokuyō no kenchi kara fuyō na*]."[99] However, faced with the ghastly spectacle that "defies all efforts at description [*jujutsu*]," Tamura feels strangely calm: "But I would be exaggerating to say I was

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[96] Ibid., 206.
[97] Ibid., 213.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.

shocked by the sight. Human beings are capable of accepting even the most extraordinary situations. A kind of distant feeling [*yosoyososhisa*] came in to prevent my feelings from being stirred up."[100]

To be sure, Tamura's recollection of his feelings is ambivalent. He is, of course, shocked by this grisly discovery—in fact, his shock is so overpowering that it severs his emotional ties to the outside world by replacing it with a sense of distance and indifference. Tamura's inability to "describe" (*jojutsu*) the horrendous sight is, in other words, a manifestation of his instinctive psychological defense.[101] At the same time, the ease with which he locates the "putrid mess" suggests that he has expected (*yoki*), however vaguely and intuitively, the true identity of the monkeys from the beginning. The revelation is thus little more than a confirmation of something that Tamura has already known, if only covertly and unconsciously.

In fact, it is only with the anticipation of what he might find out that Tamura is able to engage in the following conversation with Nagamatsu:

> [Nagamatsu:] "You saw it?"
>
> [Tamura:] "I did."
>
> [Nagamatsu:] "You've eaten it too, you know."
>
> [Tamura:] "I already knew that [*shitteita*]."
>
> [Nagamatsu:] "The monkey got away."
>
> [Tamura:] "What a shame [*zannen datta*]."
>
> [Nagamatsu:] "Who knows when we'll find another. Monkeys don't really come this

way."[102]

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Stahl makes a similar observation in *The Burdens of Survival*, using more clinical concepts in in PTSD and trauma studies such as psychic numbing and desymbolization.

[102] "Nobi," 213-4.

In this exchange, Tamura and Nagamatsu talk in such a casual way *as if* they really are talking about hunting monkeys rather than fellow human beings (and fellow Japanese soldiers at that). The irony, however, lies in the fact that despite their mutual knowledge of each other's culpability, they refuse to openly acknowledge it by resorting to a mechanism of deliberate misrecognition and false symbolization. As they continue to refer to the Japanese soldiers as "monkeys," in other words, they enter into a tacit agreement to morally exonerate themselves from the collective cannibalism and *pretend as if* they are unaware of the nature of their hunt.

Their psychological defense mechanism to distance themselves from the brutal reality of cannibalism, and by extension the ethical burden it necessarily entails, is achieved through the ruse of language, which is, in turn, inseparable from the Darwinian theory of evolution and classification, one of the cornerstones of modern knowledge. The misrepresentation of fellow Japanese soldiers as monkeys is founded, in other words, on the taxonomy of the primates into monkeys and humans, and the subordination of the former to the latter within a structure of evolutionary pyramid. By degrading and dehumanizing their victims, Tamura, Nagamatsu, and Yasuda establish a hierarchical order, in which the superior "human beings" are entitled to prey on the "inferior monkeys," and thus absolve themselves from the sin of cannibalism, which is, after all, defined as the consumption of members of the "same species."[103]

In fact, the theme of cannibalism in postwar Japanese culture is rarely represented plainly and simply as the ingestion of human flesh. Rather, it tends to be accompanied by a discourse of alienation, othering, racialization, and dehumanization, as shown in, for instance, Hara Kazuo's widely controversial documentary *Yukiyukite, shingun* (1988). Hara's film, which traces the hidden "truth" behind rumors of cannibalism in New Guinea through the eyes of a mentally unstable ex-

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[103] See Luo Wuheng, *Man-eating, Fiction, and Culture: Of Chinese and Japanese Corporeality* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1994), 73.

222

soldier Okuzaki Kenzō, shows a similar instance of false symbolization.[104] About halfway into the

film, Okuzaki barges in an eel restaurant run by ex-medic Hamaguchi for a confession of whether

the unit had executed two low-ranking Japanese soldiers for cannibalistic purposes.[105] Confronted by

two angry relatives of one of the missing soldiers, Hamaguchi unsurprisingly denies the charge and

reassures them: "In my unit at least, we never ate Japanese soldiers—this much I can tell you."

However, he goes on to divulge that the Japanese were spared from such miserable end only at the

expense of the "black pigs" (*kurobuta*) and the "white pigs" (*shirobuta*), which euphemistically refer to

the black indigenous people (*dojin* or *genjūmin*) and the white POWs respectively. What is curious,

though, is that the act of cannibalism appears narratable, or indeed conceivable, only through the

disguise of misrepresentation. As the sister of one of the executed soldiers puts it: "If you call them

pigs, then you can eat them, isn't that right?" In this case, as the line between the human and the

animal blurs, so does the boundary between the cannibal and the carnivore.

In a later scene, ex-captain Koshimizu, whom Okuzaki suspects to have issued the order to

execute the two low-ranking privates, explains that the practice of cannibalism was carried out

according to military orders based on racial categorization: "We were told that the white [*shiro*] were

out of the question, but the black [*kuro*] were permitted. Black pigs [*kurobuta*], I mean. […] That was

the order [*gunmeirei*] I received."[106] Koshimizu's confession reveals two important facts that make the

act of collective cannibalism all the more appalling. First, cannibalism in New Guinea was not

something that happened secretly and discretely but was rather acquiesced and tacitly approved by

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[104] Despite the general impression of authenticity, the reliability of the confessions in the film is often called into question, not only because of Okuzaki's blatant performance (*engi*) in front of the camera but also because of the director Hara's intrusive camerawork and his indifferent attitude when Okuzaki assaults, both verbally and at times physically, the ex-soldiers he interviews. Hara even admits that he has orchestrated, to some extent, the whole project, for it is Hara himself who leads Okuzaki on his investigation in the first place. See Hara Kazuo, *Camera Obtrusa: The Action Documentaries of Hara Kazuo* (Kaya Press, 2009), 145-92; Kenta McGrath, "White Pigs and Black Pigs, Wild Boar and Monkey Meat: Cannibalism and War Victimhood in Japanese Cinema," *(In)digestion in Literature and Film: A Transcultural Approach* (edited by Niki Kiviat and Serena J. Rivera, Routledge, 2020): 81-5.
[105] This scene starts around 1:01:10 and ends around 1:03:50.
[106] *Yukiyukite, shingun*, 1:13:36-1:14:32.

223

the military headquarters. In fact, the practice of cannibalism was so prevalent that the commanders felt the urgency to provide guidelines on what is permitted and what is prohibited. Second, what set the "acceptable" forms of cannibalism apart from the forbidden ones is based on a racial hierarchy which is, in turn, based on the shade of the skin. While it is debatable to what extent the individual units adhered to the orders from above,[107] it is remarkable that racism is at work even in the most extreme manifestation of savagery. In *Yukiyukite, shingun*, in other words, cannibalism is not only represented in the disguise of eating something else, something both distinct from and inferior to the human, but it is further complicated by a discursive system of race and racialization.

In both *Nobi* and *Yukiyukite, shingun*, then, the apparent barbarity of cannibalism intersects, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, with the practice of classification and racialization, both of which were fundamentally intertwined with the discursive tradition of modernity and enlightenment in Western civilization. Indeed, the division between the human and the animal seems to follow the same logic of taxonomy that distinguishes between the permitted "black pigs" and the prohibited "white pigs," as well as between the "edible" flesh on the buttocks and the "gastronomically useless" parts that were cut off and thrown away.

Moreover, as Foucault shows, the pursuit of modernity is both a catalyst of and a rationale for the quest for knowledge. If the practice of cannibalism demonstrates the ironic "savagery of civilization" through the depiction of racialization and dehumanization, it also shows the dark side of knowledge, in particular the horrors in the impossible task to "know thyself." In *Nobi*, despite his reluctance to confront the cruel reality, Tamura always seems to have some sort of a presentiment of cannibalism before its actual occurrence. He not only "expects" (*yoki*) the true identity of the

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[107] One (in)famous counterexample, though happened far away from the New Guinea front, is the Ogasawara Incident (*Ogasawara jiken*, also known as the Chichijima Incident, based on the name of the island), in which some high-ranking Japanese naval officers executed and cannibalized a number of white, American airmen who were captured by the Japanese units stationed on the island.

monkeys, but he also confesses that he has "already known" (*shitteita*) the true source of the meat from the beginning. When he finds the heap of "gastronomically useless" body parts, Tamura also claims that he feels no particular shock at this grisly discovery.

In the following chapter titled "*Tenshin no shō*" (In Praise of Transfiguration), the last chapter before Tamura's return to postwar Japan, Nagamatsu and Yasuda finally turn against each other. Nagamatsu, waiting patiently on a hill overlooking the only source of water to ambush Yasuda, emerges victorious in this bloody showdown, as he "sprang out and swiftly [*subayaku*] chopped off [Yasuda's] wrists and ankles with his bayonet."[108] Tamura's unsettlingly calm tone, however, is contradicted by his visceral reaction to the macabre details of the slaughter: "With the steaming, cherry-colored flesh before my eyes, I simply vomited. My empty stomach brought forth nothing but a yellowish fluid."[109]

Here, Tamura's instinctive revulsion is directed not only at Nagamatsu's cannibalistic act but also at his apparent "deftness" (*subayaku*) at amputating the "gastronomically useless" parts of the human body. Moreover, the yellow bile Tamura vomits up is clearly contrasted with the "cherry-colored flesh" (*sakurairo no niku*), which turns, in an ironic twist, the cultural symbolism of *sakura* (cherry blossom) on its head. In this case, *sakura* is associated neither with the poetic tradition and aesthetic refinement nor with the "national spirit" of self-sacrifice, known euphemistically as the "scattered flowers" (*sange*), but rather with the butchering of an imperial Japanese soldier by his "comrade in arms" (*sen'yū*).[110] In fact, the association between the cherry blossom and the *tokkō*

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[108] "Nobi," 215.
[109] Ibid.
[110] In fact, Yasuda and Nagamatsu enter into a "pseudo-father-and-son relationship" (*giji fusei kankei* or *gisei no oyako kankei*) early in the novel. Nagamatsu, son of a maid (*jochū no ko*) who was deserted by his birth parents, identifies Yasuda, who has abandoned an illegitimate child he had with a maid in his student days, emotionally as a pseudo-father. In this sense, Nagamatsu's killing of Yasuda is not only fratricide but also patricide. Kamei Hideo analyzes the relationship between Yasuda and Nagamatsu through the lens of the Oedipus complex. See Kamei, "Muishiki no kokufuku," *Ōoka Shōhei* Nobi *sakuhin ronshū*, 244-67.

seishin (suicide attack spirit) is so entrenched in wartime propaganda that Tamura's invocation of the imagery of *sakura* seems profoundly scornful and critical of the Japanese military policies.[111]

What is even more intriguing is that Tamura's horror stems not from the atrocity per se but rather from his "expectation" of it from the beginning: "The most horrible thing, however, is that I had been expecting [*yoki*] these, down to the very details [*hosome*], all along!"[112] In other words, the horror Tamura experiences comes not so much from the external reality of murder and cannibalism as from within—that is, from his own "heart of darkness." In fact, the recurring association of cannibalism with Tamura's knowledge (*shitteita*) and anticipation (*yoki*) seems to suggest that the true source of horror lies in the classical dictum to "know thyself."

"I Killed Them, but I Didn't Eat Them"

If Nagamatsu's killing of Yasuda is motivated by cannibalistic purposes, one wonders what drives Tamura's subsequent killing of Nagamatsu. While Tamura claims that he is possessed by a "supernatural force" (*shizen o koeta chikara*) that represents God's wrath, his claim is undermined by the memory loss that conveniently ensues: "I don't have the memory of whether I shot him at that moment. But I do know that I didn't eat [his] flesh. This I would certainly have remembered [*oboeteiru hazu*]."[113] Tamura's reasoning is premised on the assumption that he would have remembered something as horrendous as cannibalism, but perhaps the opposite is true: precisely

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[111] Some famous examples of the use of cherry blossom in wartime propaganda include the popular war song *Dōki no sakura* (Under the Same Cherry Tree), which compares the falling petals of cherry blossoms with the premature death of soldiers who graduate from the military academy. Perhaps more telling is the naming of the suicide attack aircraft (*tokkō heiki*), which was developed toward the very end of the Pacific War, as *Ōka* (cherry blossom), thus making the metaphoric connection a reality of coerced "self-sacrifice."
[112] "Nobi," 215.
[113] Ibid.; 224.

because of the gravity of cannibalism that he instinctively represses his memories as an unconscious

defense against traumatic experiences.[114]

Indeed, Tamura's insistence on his innocence is contradicted in the final chapter *Shisha no*

sho, in which he finally recalls or, perhaps more accurately, reconstructs his lost memories in Leyte.

In his imaginative return to Leyte, Tamura describes how he attempts to fire at the Filipinos as a

"divine punishment" (*korashime*) for their defilement of God's body. His indulgence in the fantasy of

the "divine mission," however, is checked by an arising doubt that it might be nothing but a self-

serving pretext for his secret desire to eat human flesh:

> Yet in my previous existence [*mae no yo*] before I carried the rifle as a fallen angel, I might
>
> have really wanted to eat the humans as a means of chastisement [*korasu tsumori*]. Perhaps
>
> this is precisely where lies my secret desire [*himitsu no ganbō*] to search for people whenever I
>
> spot the prairie fires.[115]

It is at the very moment when Tamura is "on the verge of falling into sin" (*tsumi ni ochiyō to shita*) that

he is struck by an "unknown assailant" (*fumei no shūgekisha*) on the back of his head. In fact, Tamura's

recounting of his loss of memory and subsequent capture is a reworking, with minor changes, of a

story Ōoka heard in the POW camp,[116] which is included in *Furyoki*. In a chapter ironically titled

"Comrades in Arms" (*Sen'yū*), Ōoka records the circumstances in which a group of straggling

Japanese soldiers came to be captured. Provoked by an NCO's suggestion to kill and eat the next

Filipino they find, one soldier of the group fired at a Philippine peasant, yet he not only missed the

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[114] David Stahl points out that Tamura experiences four distinct memory losses throughout his narrative, each of which occurs when he is starving by a corpse. See Stahl, *The Burdens of Survival*, 108.

[115] "Nobi," 224.

[116] In "'Nobi' no ito," Ōoka explains that compared to Tamura's reconstructed memory in the book version, which is a blend of recollection, imagination, and hallucination, the original plan in the *Buntai* version is actually much closer to the "true story" (*jitsuwa*) recounted in *Furyoki*. See "'Nobi' no ito," 179-80; 186.

target but also exposed the group's position, and they were quickly surrounded and captured by some thirty well-armed Filipinos.[117]

Regardless of Tamura's true intentions, he insists, at least formally, on the absolute difference between killing and eating. In his hallucination in the final chapter, Tamura finds himself surrounded by the dead (*shisha-tachi*) who utter a horrifying "celestial laughter" (*tenjō no warai*), at which point he is struck by an epiphany:

> Now I remember [*omoidashita*]. They are laughing because I didn't eat them. I killed them, to be sure, but I didn't eat them. I killed them because of forces beyond myself [*watashi igai no chikara*] such as war, God, and chance [*gūzen*], but I certainly refrained from eating them out of my own will [*ishi*]. That's why I'm gazing at the black sun [*kuroi taiyō*] with them in this land of the dead [*shisha no kuni*].[118]

While the distinction between killing and eating is framed as one between the contingency of external reality versus the necessity of ethical choice, Tamura clearly perceives the difference as a categorical and hierarchical one. In short, while the former is an "everyday occurrence" (*nichijō sahanji*) on the battlefield that he feels no particular remorse or responsibility, the latter is considered so abominable that its commission would be tantamount to the corruption of his subjective will. Insofar as murder and cannibalism are both acts of wartime atrocities, Tamura's privileging of killing over eating on an ethical scale seems, logically speaking, unnecessary and untenable. His reasoning makes more sense, however, when approached from the perspective of the perceived degree of civilization: whereas cannibalism tends to be associated with primitive savagery, killing is often taken

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[117] "Furyoki," 312.

[118] "Nobi," 224; 245. Washburn importantly notes that the "image of the dark sun in the land of the dead" echoes the mythic incidents in *Kojiki*. See Washburn, "Toward a View from Nowhere," 128. From a different perspective, Hanazaki Ikuyo interprets the black sun as representing divine anger. In a largely neglected work titled *Kuroi Taiyō* (1953), Ōoka explains that the black sun is a metaphor for the solar eclipse, which is, in turn, an ominous sign of various misfortunes in ancient mythology. This interpretation is consistent with Tamura's obsession with the notion of "God's wrath." See Hanazaki, "Ōoka Shōhei ni okeru 'hikari' no imēji to imi," *Ōoka Shōhei* Nobi *sakuhin ronshū*, 315-6.

as a measure of efficiency, technology, progress, and even modernity itself, as shown in Adorno's and Horkheimer's critique of the blind pursuit of rationality in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944).

The difference between killing and eating is also taken up by Takeda Taijun, one of Ōoka's contemporaries who has, like Ōoka himself, experienced the brutality of war in the Chinese front. In "Hikarigoke" (Luminous Moss, 1954),[119] a short story that similarly revolves around an incident of cannibalism by imperial soldiers who shipwrecked off the coast of Hokkaidō in the depth of winter, Takeda engages Ōoka in a direct conversation by questioning Tamura's assertation of his innocence: "Despite the fact that he meaninglessly [*muini ni*] shoots and kills a native woman, he seems perfectly capable of ethical reflections [*rinri-teki ni hansei*] in claiming that 'I killed them, but I didn't eat them.'"[120] Takeda goes on to question Tamura's reasoning by pointing out that the real difference between the two lies in the fact that "whereas murders today are so commonplace [*heibon*] that they are easily within view in our twentieth century, cannibalism has almost completely disappeared from the earth."[121] In other words, while murder may evoke feelings of horror (*kyōfu*) and antipathy (*hankan*), cannibalism conjures up nothing but an instinctive and visceral reaction of nausea (*ōki*).

Insofar as the modern history is saturated with incidents of mass murder, in other words, people can develop a kind of "psychological immunity" through desensitization and overexposure. The rare occurrences of cannibalism, on the other hand, are relegated to the realm of "the uncivilized and barbaric [*mikai yaban*], the violent, the sacrilegious, the kind of thing, in short, that has absolutely nothing to do with us and is, indeed, beyond our imagination."[122] Following this line

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[119] A thorough analysis of "Hikarigoke" would be beyond the scope of this chapter. For studies that touch on "Hikarigoke" in recent English scholarship, see Tomoko Aoyama, *Reading Food in Japanese Literature* (2008), 112-5, and Robert Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery* (2010), 192-7. Although slightly dated, Arthur Kimball also discusses "Hikarigoke" in *Crisis in Identity and Contemporary Japanese Novels* (1973), 37-42.

[120] Takeda Taijun, "Hikarigoke," *Takeda Taijun zenshū, vol. 5*, (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1971), 184. I have consulted the translation by Yusaburo Shibuya and Sanford Goldstein in *The Outcast Generation; Luminous Moss* (Tuttle, 1967), 113. The page numbers of Shibuya's and Goldstein's translation, whenever consulted, are given after those of the Japanese, separated by a semicolon.

[121] Ibid., 184; 113-4.

[122] Ibid., 184.

of logic, Takeda chides Tamura for a hypocritical sense of pride and complacency that places the modern atrocities of murder above the putative savagery in cannibalism:

It is as though we have decided from our conventional wisdom [*sōba*] that murder is a far more ordinary [*ippan nami*] and sophisticated [*kōkyū*] crime than that of cannibalism, which is simply peculiar [*tokushu*] and debased [*katō*].

While "the civilized men" [*bunmeijin*] are perfectly capable of committing murder, they cannot afford to disgrace themselves [*taimen ni kakawaru*] with cannibalism. The claim that our nation [*wa ga minzoku*], our race [*wa ga jinshu*] might kill people but never eat them warrants us the illusion [*sakkaku*] that we are indeed a superior nation [*yūshū minzoku*] and an advanced race [*senshin jinshu*] that deserves God's divine grace (*kami no megumi*). The kind of reflection [*hansei*] that the protagonist of *Nobi* makes in claiming that "I killed them, but I didn't eat them" is a clear manifestation of such illusion that puts on the airs of a civilized man [*bunmeijin butteiru*]."[123]

In this quote, Takeda interprets the difference between killing and eating that Tamura insists on as a sign of "smug complacency" ensconced in the illusion of civilization.[124] In other words, the reason

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[123] Ibid., 184-5. Despite Takeda's critical attitude here, he speaks highly of the artistic achievements of *Nobi* elsewhere. See, for example, "Ōoka Shōhei 'Nobi,'" *Takeda Taijun zenshu, vol. 12* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1972), 271-4. It is worth noting, though, that the timing of the publication of "Hikarigoke" might be deliberate. In particular, Takeda published "Hikarigoke" when Ōoka happened to be visiting abroad as a Rockefeller scholar at Yale University. Ōoka recalls later that even though he was greatly displeased when he read "Hikarigoke," he was not able to defend himself, and when he returned to Japan a year later, his anger had already abated. See Ōoka, "Jinnikushoku ni tsuite," 437-8. Despite this episode, Takeda was one of Ōoka's most enthusiastic supporters. In fact, Ōoka even counts Takeda as the "only person who understood my global ambitions [*kokusai-teki shōdō*] at the time." See Ōoka, "Wa ga bungaku ni okeru ishiki to muishiki," 254.

[124] To be sure, Ōoka's position is far more nuanced than Takeda gives him credit for. In *Furyoki*, for example, Ōoka sharply points out the fundamental irony in the humane and even courteous (*shinsetsu*) treatment of the POWs by the Allies: "The notion of caring for sick and wounded combatants without regard to their nationalities arose at a time in history when the development of modern weapons brought about dramatic increases in the number of battlefield field casualties, and the new character of military service under the modern state meant that the vast majority of those casualties were the common people [*jinmin*]. […] The spirit of the Red Cross, like other charity enterprises, embodies a contradiction: It improves the results without removing the causes [*gen'in o nozokazu ni kekka o aratameru*]." In other words, Ōoka is clearly aware of the inherent contradiction between the "civilized appearance" of modern wars and its savage nature. See "Furyoki," 240; Lammers's translation with minor modifications.

Tamura deems murder as somehow more acceptable and, indeed, more "sophisticated" (*kōkyū*) than cannibalism lies, according to Takeda, not so much in the distinction between contingency and necessity that he claims, but rather in the hierarchy between the "modern civilization" and "primitive savagery." The irony Takeda intends, of course, derives from the contradiction that the civilization of "a superior nation and an advanced race" is attested not by the degree of peace and progress but rather by the "technical superiority of his weapons of destruction and his heightened concern for his reputation."[125]

In a somewhat paradoxical way, then, Takeda seems to believe that the raw brutality of cannibalism delivers a far more poignant critique of modern violence than the refined and sophisticated crimes of murder. In an essay published in 1948, roughly half a year before Ōoka began serializing on *Buntai*, Takeda makes a similar argument in his reflection on the recent Imperial Bank Incident (*Teigin jiken*), in which a man who claims to be a public health official convinces all sixteen employees at a branch of the Imperial Bank (*Teikoku Ginkō*) to drink some liquid that would purportedly inoculate them against a sudden outbreak of dysentery. It later turns out that the "public health official" was actually a bank robber, and the liquid he handed out was a lethal toxicant that ended up taking the lives of twelve employees. Reflecting on the arbitrary, indiscriminate killing in this appalling incident, Takeda writes: "What might be idiosyncratic [*kosei-teki*], original [*dokusō-teki*], and fateful [*unmei-teki*] to the perpetrator is perhaps surprisingly close to ourselves and is embedded [*naihō*] within the very civilization that we have given birth to [*wareware no umidashita bunmei*]."[126] In other words, cruelty and barbarity is neither antithetical to nor insulated from technological progress in modern civilizations. To the contrary, they are born from the very kernel of enlightenment and modernity.

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[125] Tierney, 193.

[126] Takeda, "Mukankaku no botan: Teigin jikan ni tsuite," *Takeda Taijun zenshū*, vol. 12 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1972), 105.

While Takeda does not mention cannibalism in this essay, he makes a very similar point by comparing two modes of killing: killing by swinging an axe and killing by pushing a button.[127] Whereas the former method, which he uses Raskolnikov's killing of the old woman in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* as an example, embodies a "gravity [*jūdaisei*], danger, difficulty, and painfulness all congealed in that one strike" and thus highlights the perpetrator's "muscle fatigue, his bone-piercing tension [*honemi ni kotaeru kinchō*], the greasy sweat on his face and tremors in his hands,"[128] the latter is a "gentle everyday act [*otonashiyaka na nichijō kōi*] that lacks the kind of instantaneous bloodlust [*shunkan-teki sakki*] and the tautness in the muscle [*kinniku-teki kinchō*] in raising an axe."[129] In short, if killing by an axe evokes "the horror conferred by the difficulty of murder [*satsujin no konnansa no ataeru osoroshisa*]," killing by pushing what Takeda calls a "button of indifference" [*mukankaku no botan*] evokes the precise opposite, namely, the "horror conferred by the ease [*tayasusa*] of murder."[130]

Curiously anticipating Fredric Jameson's verdict of the Vietnam War as the "first terrible postmodernist war" for its sense of distance and depthlessness in mass media coverage,[131] Takeda argues that compared with the "primitive [*genshi-teki na*], exaggerated [*ōgesa na*], and therefore humanly act [*ningen-teki na kyodō*] that makes one's whole body and soul shudder [*zenshin zenrei o*

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[127] This difference is actually fleshed out in Takeda's 1947 fiction "Mamushi no sue" (The Descendants of Vipers; translated as "This Outcast Generation" by Shibuya and Goldstein), in which the protagonist Sugi uses an axe against a Japanese military man named Karajima, who was, however, killed by a knife that pierced his chest even before the axe struck him. Takeda vividly depicts the brutal physicality involved in swinging an axe: "The second time it plunged deeply into his body somewhere. He caught hold of me. But what actually happened was that his heavy body had collided with mine, leaning against me. That caused me to fall violently, Karajima's body pinning me down. My head and the palms of my hands touched the cold ground. I struggled to get away. Then Karajima's body slid heavily away from on top of me. I jumped to my feet. Karajima was moaning. I was searching for my axe. He remained where he had fallen. He was lying face down. He twisted his body in jerks and starts. For the first time I could clearly see his face. A white face, a handsome face, but totally transformed from its usual appearance. Oily, life less. Exceedingly tense. Almost deranged. He was trying to stand up. I readied my axe, and when he had just about half-risen, I struck at the back of his neck. He fell face forward." Takeda, "The Outcast Generation," translated by Shibuya and Goldstein, 76.
[128] Takeda, "Mukankaku no botan," 107.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 1991), 44.

ononokaseru],” the capacity to kill indiscriminately and indifferently using the most advanced missiles and drones erases the “reality of the battlefield [*senjō no senjō rashisa*], where everything ends without the stinking smell of blood, the dreadful sights, the screams, the sounds, the flashes, in short, all the unfolding cruelties of war.”[132] The scientific and mechanic killings, which require no more than “a single flip of the switch or a single push of the button,” thus create a sense of “modern indifference” [*kindai-teki mukankaku*] or, perhaps somewhat anachronistically, even a certain “postmodern” indifference in the total detachment from the innate brutality of violence.

The distinction Takeda makes in this essay between the two modes of killing is analogous to that between murder and cannibalism in “Hikarigoke,” published six years later. In other words, the kind of “modern indifference” that underpins Tamura’s assertation that “I killed them, but I didn’t eat them” effectively sanitizes and civilizes the fundamental savagery in the very heart of civilization, as well as the sense of “smug complacency” in the discourse of progress, rationality, enlightenment, and modernity itself. On the other hand, it is precisely the kind of “human primitivism” (*ningen no genshisei*) in cannibalism, as well as its capacity to evoke the visceral reactions of shock and nausea (*ōki*), that makes it possible to see through the façade of civilization and to discover instead the universal, fundamental barbarism in all violence, modern or otherwise.[133]

A Madman in Musashino

It is perhaps because of Tamura’s privileging of murder over cannibalism that he only returns partly to postwar Japan, the world of modern civilization. Given that Tamura clearly remembers his killing

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[132] Ibid., 109.

[133] The primitive sensations (*kankaku*) of horror and revulsion that Takeda writes about interestingly calls to mind the concept of “divine violence” by Walter Benjamin. In an essay titled “Critique of Violence,” Benjamin posits the “mythic violence,” which is lawmaking or law-preserving insofar as it constitutes a “means to a preconceived end,” against what he calls the “divine violence,” a pure means without ends because it is law-destroying and thus open-ended and non-teleological. See Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” translated by Edmund Jephcott, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, vol. 1, 1913-1926* (edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Harvard University Press, 1996), 236-52.

of the Philippine woman and Nagamatsu yet experiences memory losses whenever he is "starving by a corpse,"[134] it seems fair to conclude that his "unsavory" memories related to cannibalism, whether attempted or accomplished, are barred from returning to the postwar society. To be sure, Tamura's self-imposed incarceration in the mental hospital on the outskirts of Tokyo is deeply paradoxical. On the surface, he is physically reincorporated into the space of postwar Japan. Yet at the same time, his confinement within the mental home makes him an "alterity" or a "bone in the throat," as Žižek might put it, to the normative society of postwar Japan.[135] In other words, his physical inclusion and reintegration is predicated precisely on its antithesis: the exclusion from a sanitized and civilized postwar society. Indeed, as Jennifer Lee suggests, while Tamura's confinement could be interpreted positively as a resistance against the unconscious desire to forget the past, it could also be read as the precise opposite, namely, a sign of "his 'acceptance' or 'acknowledgement' that he needs to be contained (or even excised) for the community/state to return to normality."[136]

In this light, Tamura's repatriation is not only a physical return but also a discursive one, in the sense that his memories conform, whether consciously or not, to the normative, foundational narrative characterized by the modern values of peace, democracy, and progress. Postwar Japan, which has shed the last vestige of the "feudal remnants" (*hōken isei*) under the tutelage of the American occupation forces, has little room for the "primitive savagery" of cannibalism. Therefore, while the incidents of murder are considered narratable as "everyday occurrences" in modern violence, the tales of cannibalism are either repressed from memories or else disguised under the veil of hallucination and misrepresentation.

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[134] See Stahl, *The Burdens of Survival*, 108.

[135] To use the Lacanian term, this excessive, indigestible "bone in the throat" is the *objet petit a*. See Slavoj Žižek, "Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, Please!" *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* by Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek (Verso, 2000), 117.

[136] Jennifer Lee, 359.

This transition in narrative frame from wartime Leyte to postwar Japan in Chapter 37, "Diary of a Madman," thus needs to be taken as a pivotal moment in understanding the novel. Coincidentally,[137] another fiction by the same title offers some important insights into the intricate relations between cannibalism, madness, and modernity.[138] Lu Xun's short story "Diary of a Madman" (*Kuangren riji*, 1918),[139] the first text written in the modern vernacular Chinese, presents itself as a diary by an "awakened madman" who is convinced that his family members and the villagers, following a tradition of cannibalism "since the creation of heaven and earth," conspire to eat his flesh. While Ōoka was apparently unaware of Lu Xun's fiction when he wrote *Nobi*,[140] both works, particularly if we take into account the original *Buntai* version of *Nobi*, surprisingly share a layered narrative structure that problematizes the boundaries that separate the insane from the insane, and the exceptional from the everyday.

Compared to the definitive book version of *Nobi* in which the narrative transition happens toward the end of the novel, the *Buntai* version opens with an introductory chapter told from the perspective of one of Tamura's fellow POWs, who is entrusted with Tamura's manuscript after his "death in madness" (*kyōshi*). Explaining that "I couldn't decide if [Tamura's] personal feelings, which he described in his pitiful sophistry [*santan taru kiben*], were capable of evoking any general interests and sympathies," the narrator decides to "copy out his writing without altering a single word,"[141]

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[137] Actually, it is not pure coincidence that the two fictions share the same title. They are, in fact, both inspired by Nikolai Gogol's famous short story of the same title "Diary of a Madman" (1835).

[138] The trio of cannibalism, madness, and modernity is, of course, central in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as well.

[139] I translate the title of Lu Xun's story as "Diary of a Madman" to be consistent with that of "kyōjin nikki" in *Nobi*. For an English translation of "Kuangren riji," see "A Madman's Diary," translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature* (edited by Joseph Lau and Howard Goldblatt, Columbia University Press, 2007), 8-16.

[140] "Kuangren riji" was first translated into Japanese in 1926 by Inoue Kōbai. It was re-translated by Takeuchi Yoshimi in 1955, years after Ōoka published *Nobi*. Ōoka touches on Lu Xun's work in a speech in 1973, in which he explains that because he devoted the bulk of his time to French literature, he had little time to dabble in Japanese literature, much less Chinese literature. In addition, given that Ōoka mistakenly believes that the work was never included in previous anthologies due to its sensitive (*bimyō*) theme, it seems safe to assume that he was indeed unaware of Inoue's 1926 translation. See "Jinnikushoku ni tsuite," 432-3.

[141] Ōoka, "Nobi (bubun)," *Ōoka Shōhei zenshū, vol. 14* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1975), 406.

thus leaving the interpretation to the readers' own judgment. This introduction, which ensconces the narrator at a safe distance from the "paranoia" (*henshitsu*) and "mania" (*kyōsō*) seeping from Tamura's writing, is uncannily reminiscent of the opening paragraph in Lu Xun's work, also told by another, apparently "sane" narrator who faithfully reproduces the madman's diary shown by his brother: "I have not altered a single illogicality in the diary and have changed only the names, even though the people referred to are all country folk, unknown to the world and of no consequence."[142] It turns out, in fact, that the madman has already recovered from his "persecution complex" (*pohaikuang*) and taken an official post (*houbu*) in the Qing government.

What is intriguing about this short introduction in Lu Xun's fiction is not only that it is told by a separate narrator from the outside, but also the fact that it is written, unlike the main narrative in the modern vernacular, in classical, literary Chinese. In other words, the narrator of the introduction not only comes from and therefore represents the traditional, "normal" society, but he also records the madman's symptoms, which are intended for "medical research," for the sake of a normal and, indeed, normative society. Much like the alternating narrative frame in the opening chapter in the *Buntai* version of *Nobi*, the introduction in Lu Xun's work is predicated, albeit with a hint of sarcasm, on the structural return to a world of sanity and normalcy.

Perhaps more significantly, however, is the fact that the madman in Lu Xun's story has since recovered from his insanity and taken a post within the imperial bureaucracy. In other words, the "cure" of madness is tantamount to the incorporation and assimilation into the normative and disciplinary society, which, as Foucault sarcastically notes, must be defended from the "abnormal" in order to function smoothly.[143] In addition, as Gang Yue points out, the contradiction between the "diegetic foreclosure" in the introduction and the "mimetic text" in the main narrative (namely, the

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[142] Lu Xun, "A Madman's Diary," 8.
[143] See Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France, *Abnormal* (1974-75) and *Society Must be Defended* (1975-76).

diary itself) is highlighted by the very title of the work, which is named by none other than the madman himself after his recovery.[144] The paradoxical title "Diary of a Madman" thus indicates that the madman is able to recognize his own "madness" only retrospectively after his reintegration into the normal and normative society, which is governed by the traditional values and represented by the classical language.

As Lu Xun's text shifts from the literary language into the vernacular, the narrative also descends into the realm of insanity, because the creation of the modern vernacular is necessarily regarded as a form of madness.[145] Such madness, however, is not something that springs out of thin air but is rather deeply ingrained in the "four thousand years of man-eating history (*siqiannian chiren lüli*)." At one point in the story, the madman, unable to sleep for fear of being eaten, stays up late in order to look up the historical precedents of cannibalism in Chinese history:

> I tried to look this up, but my history has no chronology [*niandai*], and scrawled all over each
> page are the words: "Virtue and Morality [*renyi daode*]." Since I could not sleep anyway, I read
> intently half the night, until I began to see words between the lines [*zifeng*], the whole book
> being filled with the two words—"Eat people."[146]

The madman's epiphany that "ancient Chinese civilization is nothing but an endless cannibalistic banquet," as David Der-Wei Wang points out, lays bare the fundamental contradiction between the façade of "virtue and morality" and the "obscene ritual of man-eating [that] is played out" in a long history of civilization.[147]

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[144] Gang Yue, *The Mouth That Begs: Hunger, Cannibalism, and the Politics of Eating in Modern China* (Duke University Press, 1999), 86.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Lu, 10.

[147] David Der-Wei Wang, *The Monster That is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China* (University of California Press, 2004), 35.

What is important, moreover, is not simply the fact that the "madman" is able to discern

cannibalism in Chinese history but also *how* he discerns it. Cannibalism, in short, is not something

that is openly documented in the history books. Rather, it needs to be read through the surface of

"virtue and morality"—that is, it needs to be read, quite literally, "between the lines" (*cong zifeng li*,

literally meaning "from the crevices in words"). What the madman achieves, in other words, is not

simply "a kind of clarity of social vision" but more importantly "a certain kind of hermeneutics,"

that is, a hitherto unknown mode of interpretation which is in turn represented in an "invented"

vernacular language that seems to verge on madness.[148] "What is at stake," as Carlos Rojas argues,

"is not merely a simple dialectics between surface visibility and hidden meaning, but rather the ability

to recognize the (potential) meaning in what was (always) already 'visible' in the first place."[149]

In *Nobi*, the trope of cannibalism in Tamura's wartime recollection similarly needs to be read

through the disguise of repression, hallucination, and misrepresentation. Just like the history books

in Lu Xun's story which masquerade the brutal reality of "eating people" as a history of civilization

boasting "virtue and morality," Tamura's discursive knowledge of cannibalism serves more to

obscure than to illuminate the fundamental savagery in the ideals of enlightenment and modernity.

At the same time, however, if we shift our attention to the postwar chapters (namely, the last three

chapters in the definitive version), it seems possible to discern a metafictional cannibalism on a

broader scale. The overlapping landscapes between Leyte and Musashino, in particular, seems to

suggest a homologous relation between postwar Tokyo and its newly developed suburbs on the one

hand, and on the other between the imperial center and its vast colonial territories.

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[148] Carlos Rojas, "Cannibalism and the Chinese Body Politic: Hermeneutics and Violence in Cross-Cultural Perception," *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3 (2002).

[149] Rojas. It is worth noting that the ability to discern cannibalism is a key theme in Takeda's "Hikarigoke" as well. In the latter half of the story, the audience at the trial of the captain, who is charged with cannibalizing the shipwrecked crews, are shown to be cannibals themselves. Moreover, since the trial takes the form of a closet drama which invites the readers to "play out" the trial in their own imagination, it is implied that the readers are also cannibals who are, however, oblivious of their own participation in the cannibal feast.

While wandering through in the Philippine mountains and forests, Tamura constantly recalls the landscapes in Musashino with nostalgia. On his way back to the field hospital, for example, Tamura is struck by a sentimental thought as he walks under oak trees that "resembled those in Japan" (*kokoku no ki ni nita*): "In quietness, the newly fallen leaves made the same rustling sound as when I walked along the road in Musashino."[150] Descending into the deserted village, Tamura once again reminisced nostalgically as the sea breeze caresses his skin: "A wind, with the same moistness and scent as the summer winds that blew on the seashore at home, crossed the sparkling surface of the sea and wrapped around my body, a single dot of solitude [*kodoku no itten*]."[151] Later, after his encounter with the dying officer, Tamura experiences an inexplicable sense of familiarity as he passes through a valley: "It was the same landscape that I had seen many times along the railway in Japan. […] For some reason, I had enjoyed the sight of the valley ever since childhood, and I always gazed out of the window whenever the train passed through it."[152]

An inversion takes place, however, after Tamura's return to postwar Japan. When he visits the mental home on the outskirts of Tokyo for the first time, for example, Tamura recalls fondly the landscapes in the Philippines: "When I saw the building buried in the gentle green of the Japanese oak trees, so similar to the green of the Philippine hills, I realized that I had finally come to the place where I belonged in this world [*kono yo*] and regretted not having known about it sooner."[153] Later, as he tries to recollect his repressed memories in order to "join [his] present existence with the past memories from the Philippine mountains,"[154] he experiences auditory and visual hallucinations as he imagines hearing "a muffled sound as of drums beating in rapid succession" and seeing "countless prairie fires rising invisibly into the air from the low horizons of the Musashino Plain encircling the

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[150] "Nobi," 132; 16.
[151] Ibid., 168; 102.
[152] Ibid., 201; 189.
[153] Ibid., 218; 230-1.
[154] Ibid., 221; 237.

hospital."[155] As Tamura regards the Philippine and Japanese sceneries in reference to each other, in other words, the boundaries between past and present, outside and inside gradually become blurred and indistinguishable.[156]

In both cases, Tamura's sentimentalism is triggered by nostalgic memories of natural landscapes that seem devoid of any human presence. His decision to divorce his wife, who has narrowly escaped death in the Tokyo air raids herself, and to seclude himself in the mental home is predicated on a desire to keep away from city life and the social relations it necessarily entails. It is worth noting here that the hospital is set quite specifically in the "outskirts of Tokyo (*Tōkyō kōgai*)," meaning that it is located neither in the heart of the city nor too far away from it. More importantly, as Kota Inoue points out, the concept of *kōgai* is defined as much by geographic proximity as by its subordinate relation to the city.[157] Considering the importance of Musashino, both in terms of the literary and poetic traditions since ancient times and its economic centrality to the Kantō Plain in modern days, the geographic setting of the mental home in Musashino becomes all the more significant.

Historically speaking, Musashino figures prominently, albeit negatively at times, in classical writings as a "place of renown" (*nadokoro* or *meisho*). Far away from the capital in Kyoto, Musashino is represented in the classical literary canon as "a bleak backwater or a distant frontier—a definitive other" that evokes sentimental feelings of loneliness and desolation.[158] Created within a cultural geography that centers unequivocally in the capital, the literary space of Musashino serves as a rustic counterpoint to Kyoto and thus reinforces an aesthetic tradition firmly anchored in the ideal of

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[155] Ibid., 221; 239.
[156] See Lee, 361-2.
[157] Inoue notes that "*kōgai* normally refers to a peripheral, primarily agricultural, space that is converted into residential, or at times industrial, use. […] In these cases, the term is used because of the area's subordinate relationship with, as well as its geographic relation to. the city." See Inoue, *The Suburb as Colonial Space in Modern Japanese Literature and Cinema* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2004), 9.
[158] David Spafford, *A Sense of Place: The Political Landscape in Late Medieval Japan* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 40.

courtly poetics.[159] In other words, Musashino tends to be evoked in classical literature not so much

in and of itself as in relation or, perhaps more accurately, subordination to the court and the capital

in Kyoto.

As the seat of power gravitates to the east over the centuries, culminating in the relocation of

the capital to Tokyo in the Meiji period, the Musashino Plain, both as a literary geography and as an

actual space, also begins to change. What remains unchanged, however, is its subordinate relation to

the political center, now the modern metropolis of Tokyo. While Musashino has been gradually

claimed, cultivated, and populated from around the thirteenth century,[160] it witnesses the most

drastic developments following the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, when much of its rural areas

were transformed into residential and industrial spaces for commuters.[161] The suburbanization of

Musashino was, in turn, made possible by the rapid expansion of the rail network in the Meiji

period, particularly the opening of the Kōbu Line, running between Shinjuku and Hachiōji, in

1889.[162] About ten years later, when Kunikida Doppo publishes his famous work "Musashino"

(1898, originally titled "Ima no Musashino," or Today's Musashino), the Musashino Plain is well on

the way to transform itself "from a form of relatively self-sufficient human habitat into *kōgai* in a

broad sense, a spatial relation in which the resources in the outskirts are mobilized and appropriated

for the sake of the urban center."[163] "*Kōgai*," as Inoue write, "was a new kind of space created by

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[159] To be sure, the literary image of Musashino changes over time, as the political and military center itself gradually shifts eastward. Regardless, the imagination and idolization of a refined courtly culture never disappears, even as the Kyoto-based court itself diminishes in importance. "Access to courtly culture (particularly if not exclusively in the form of poetry) had always been a hallmark of social prominence," Spafford write, "even as the success of itinerant poets' efforts to cultivate the sensibilities of provincials made that culture less exclusively courtly, literary patronage and the acceptance of longstanding poetic practice reassured provincial lords of their proximity to the political center and of their membership in Japan's elite." See Spafford, 73.

[160] Spafford notes that *Azuma kagami*, the official history of the Kamakura bakufu, already mentions the need to develop parts of Musashino for agricultural purposes. Ibid., 47.

[161] Inoue, 21. Also worth mentioning is the proliferation of the so-called "culture houses" (*bunka jūtaku*) following the devastation caused by the earthquake, which Inoue examines in his reading of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's *Chijin no ai*.

[162] The Kōbu Line was electrified (between Ochanomizu and Nakano) in 1904 and became part of the Chūō Main Line (*Chūō honsen*) in 1906.

[163] Inoue, 44. My mentioning of Doppo is based on the conjecture that Ōoka was writing, at least partly, in response to Doppo. Not only were they both familiar with the geography of Shibuya, but Ōoka also named several of his works after

capitalist economy, more than a mere geographical extension of the city."[164] Beneath the surface of

an "intimacy between life and nature [*shizen to seikatsu to ga missetsu shiteiru*]" that Doppo eulogizes, in

other words, lies the cold reality of economic exploitation and power concentration in the city.

Writing three years after Japan's victory over China in the first Sino-Japanese War and its

acquisition of the first colony of Taiwan, Doppo's extolment of Musashino also needs to be read in

relation to the expanding ambitions or "appetites" of the Japanese Empire. The mechanisms of

suburbanization and colonization, according to Inoue, are governed by a surprisingly similar logic:

"The circulation of goods, information, and people is oriented toward, and in service of, the city,

and, as in some colonies, the development of transportation networks such as the railways serves to

establish a centralized system of economy and politics, placing the geographic periphery in a

subordinate position."[165] The empire's appropriation of its colonial possessions is thus refracted

through the encroachment into the rural spaces in Musashino by Tokyo, the monstrous imperial

capital. The "discovery of landscape" (*fūkei no hakken*) that Karatani famously writes about, in other

words, is inexorably motivated by and accompanied with the devouring of lands and resources.

When Empire Comes Home[166]

If Kunikida Doppo's "Musashino," written at a time when the nascent Japanese empire was about

to take off as an emerging world power, disguises a colonial sensibility to devour the periphery, one

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Doppo's. For example, the original title Ōoka conceived for *Musashino fujin* was simply *Musashino*, and he changed it to the present only as a result of his editor's suggestion. Moreover, according to Maeda Ai, it was Doppo's who first came up with the idea of adding "fujin" to a place name, as in his "Kamakura fujin" (1902). Ōoka also wrote another short story titled "Wasureenu hitobito" (The Unforgettable Ones). While Ōoka's work, an autobiographical one about his military life, differs greatly from Doppo's, it is worth noting that Doppo wrote a story by the same title, which Karatani Kōjin discusses in detail in *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*. From these coincidences, Maeda Ai speculates that Ōoka might have harbored a sense of rivalry (*taikō ishiki*) with Doppo. See Maeda Ai, "Musashino fujin: Koigakubo," *Gunzō: Nihon no sakka, vol. 19: Ōoka Shōhei* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1992), 161-3.
[164] Inoue, 90.
[165] Ibid.
[166] The title of this section is drawn from Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home*, which offers a careful and comprehensive study of the experiences of repatriation by different populations.

might be tempted to think that the postwar evocation of Musashino, when the empire has "spit out" all its colonial possessions, shows a reversion to a primordial state of autonomy and self-sufficiency. Contrary to such expectation, the collapse of the empire only serves to exacerbate the subsumption and incorporation of *kōgai* into the postwar Tokyo, which was faced with tremendous food and resource shortages when millions of settlers and soldiers returned from the overseas territories. The postwar projects of development (*kaihatsu*) and recovery (*fukkō*) were, in fact, uncannily reminiscent of the colonial campaigns, in the sense that the suburban lands and resources were mobilized for the sake of the urban center, much like the extraction and exploitation of the colonial territories by the imperial metropole.

While the power relation between Musashino and Tokyo is touched upon only tangentially in *Nobi*, the subordination of the former to the latter figures more prominently in *Musashino fujin*, written in the lapse between the *Buntai* and the *Tenbō* versions of *Nobi*. In comparison to Ōoka's "writings on the war" (*sensō-mono*), as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, *Musashino fujin* tends to be considered as belonging to an entirely different category of "writings on romantic love" (*ren'ai-mono*). On the surface, such demarcation seems natural, given that *Musashino fujin* revolves around the unrequited love of a woman who finds suicide the only way to reconcile her wifely obligations on the one hand, and her adulterous and incestuous love for her cousin on the other. However, if we consider her death as a trope for the cannibalistic relations between the city and the suburbs, and by extension between modernity and tradition that they respectively represent, it seems possible to read *Musashino fujin* and *Nobi* both in terms of the tropes of incorporation and cannibalism.

The title *Musashino fujin*, translated by Dennis Washburn as "A Wife in Musashino," refers to the female protagonist Miyaji Michiko, the last descendant of a once prosperous hatamoto family in a place called Hake in Musashino. Married to a university professor in French literature who

specializes in Stendhal, Michiko falls in love with her younger cousin Tsutomu who has returned from the Burmese battlefield. The novel ends tragically as Michiko commits suicide in order to protect the family estate, which her husband schemes to take over in order to start a new life with his lover. Oblivious of Michiko's lonely death in Musashino, Tsutomu on the other hand is lost in a meaningless, decadent life of sexual gratification in his cramped apartment in Tokyo.

On the surface, Michiko's tragic demise brings to mind the love suicide plays (*shinjū-mono*) in Edo kabuki,[167] in which death is presented as the only solution to reconcile the contradiction between *giri* (obligations) and *ninjō* (sentiments). However, whereas the star-crossed lovers in the Edo *shinjū* plays commit double suicides in hopes of being "reborn together on the same lotus" (*ichirentakushō*), the illicit love in *Musashino fujin* ends with Michiko's lonely death but not Tsutomu's. The asymmetry in their fate is, I believe, more than a mere coincidence. In fact, it seems possible to argue that Michiko sacrifices herself, as well as the traditional morals and values she represents, so that the demobilized Tsutomu can start anew in postwar Tokyo, just like the devastated city itself. Leaving half of the estate to Tsutomu in her will, Michiko utters unconsciously on her deathbed: "Tomu-chan. I've left it for you. I'm poor now, but I'll give you everything I have. Please don't be so reckless [*mucha*]."[168] Tsutomu's life, in other words, is conditioned on Michiko's death, much like the postwar urban development (*toshi kaihatsu*) of Tokyo was made possible by the incorporation and exploitation of *kōgai* in Musashino. As the postwar Tokyo rose from the ashes, in other words, it absorbed the rural outskirts by converting them into residential spaces for commuters, who were

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[167] To be sure, the most direct inspiration for *Musashino fujin*, according to Ōoka, is Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839), which centers, much like Ōoka's work, on an ill-fated love that ends tragically.
[168] Ōoka, "Musashino fujin," *Ōoka Shōhei zenshū, vol. 2*, 125; Washburn's translation, 142. The page numbers of Washburn's English translation, whenever used in full or in part, are given after those of the Japanese text, separated by a semicolon.

transported into the urban center through the rapidly expanding railways in the same way that blood is pumped to the body through veins.[169]

To be sure, it is not uncommon that the urban encroachment into the countryside is framed through the trope of cannibalism and its sibling, vampirism. One of the key aspects in understanding *Musashino fujin*, I argue, lies in the geographic ambiguity of Musashino, which is proximate enough to, yet also decidedly different from, the urban center of Tokyo. With the rapid (sub)urbanization in the postwar period, however, Musashino was fated to be incorporated into the ever-expanding metropolis, culminating in the consolidation of the "capital region" (*shutoken*) with the promulgation of the "National Capital Region Planning Act" (*Shutoken seibi-hō*) in 1956. The Musashino Plain, much like Japan's former colonies in Burma and the Philippines which were ruthlessly exploited for raw materials and natural resources, was seen as a land of boundless potential, waiting to be reclaimed and reappropriated by and for the national center.

The ambiguity of Musashino is embodied most clearly in the figure of Michiko, the only character in the novel who is deeply rooted in and identified with Musashino and its cultural traditions. Much like Musashino itself, Michiko is depicted, as Dennis Washburn points out, as a kind of anachronism who would lamentably yet inevitably disappear in a postwar world of carnal pleasure and material gratification, as depicted, for example, in Ishihara Shintarō's *taiyōzoku* novels. While Ōoka claims that one of his goals in writing *Musashino fujin* was to defend Michiko's "old-fashioned modesty" (*kofū na teishuku*),[170] this phrase paradoxically shows the contradiction between

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[169] In a different context, Franz Prichard examines the construction of a highway interchange in Musashino in Abe Kōbō's 1967 novel *Moetsukita chizu* (The Ruined Map), where he argues that "there remained a discrepancy between the newly delineated ward boundaries and the earlier strata of mixed agriculture and small-scale industrial or sericulture households found in the Musashi Plain region of western Tokyo. With the planned construction of a highway interchange, worlds apart collided in the remaking of outlying zones on the frontline of Japan's Cold War urbanization." See Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan* (Columbia University Press, 2019), 60.

[170] Ōoka, "'Musashino fujin' no ito," *Ōoka Shōhei zenshū, vol. 11* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1974), 98.

"her role and status as traditional wife and the anachronism of that role in 1947."[171] Michiko's tragic fate derives, in other words, from the fact that her elegance, forbearance, and insistence on wifely obligations and moral principles were left behind by a postwar society that has shed much of its "feudal remnants." In fact, the conception of the novel is inseparable from the repeal of the adultery law (*kantsūzai*) in 1947, according to Article 14 of the postwar constitution which stipulates the equality under the law. However, Ōoka is less concerned with the "conditions for adultery" (*kantsū no jōken*, title of one of the chapters) per se than with the "breakdown of the family" (*ie no hōkai*) amid the drastic transformations in the social morals.[172] In this sense, *Musashino fujin* is an elegy for the past, much like Dazai Osamu's *Shayō* (The Setting Sun, 1947) which similarly laments the inevitable passing of an age in a rapidly changing world.

What further complicates the relationship between Tsutomu and Michiko, and by extension between the postwar Tokyo and the Musashino *kōgai*, is the fact that the former bears the traumatic memories of war, defeat, and captivity. Apart from the difference that Tsutomu experiences the war in Burma rather than the Philippines, it seems possible to regard him as a younger version of Tamura. Just like Tamura who cannot help overlapping the Japanese and Philippine landscapes, Tsutomu is overcome with a sense of confusion and disorientation: "Memories of the mountains in Burma flooded back to him. Tropical jungles drop their leaves with no regard to season, and the forest paths are narrow. When he was in Burma, Tsutomu often recalled the forests of Musashino. Now, in this June forest of Musashino, he thought of the lush jungles of Burma."[173]

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[171] Washburn, *Translating Mount Fuji*, 184.
[172] See Ara Masahito, "*Musashino fujin* ron," *Nihon bungaku kenkyū shiryō sōsho: Ōoka Shōhei, Fukunaga Takehiko* (Tokyo: Yūseidō Shuppan, 1978), 8.
[173] "Musashino fujin," 31; Washburn's translation, 36.

However, compared with the peaceful scenery of the rustling sounds of leaves and the moistness of sea breeze that Tamura recalls nostalgically, the hallucination that assaults Tsutomu are decidedly more violent and traumatizing:

> Suddenly he would be caught up in the illusion that the green fields of Burma had sprung open around him. […] Cannons would roar and people would groan. Afraid that his hallucination [*gensō*] would turn into reality, he could not look up. Although he would eventually come to his senses and realize that he was simply in a corner in the capital of Japan [*Nihon no shuto no ikkaku*], the hallucination inevitably disrupted his thoughts.[174]

Interestingly, what Tsutomu's abrupt realization that he is, after all, "in a corner in the capital of Japan" reflects is not a source of assurance but rather a sense of alienation from and misplacement in the postwar society. Much like the sense of homelessness that Kobayashi Hideo famously writes about in "Literature of the Lost Home" (*Kokyō o ushinatta bungaku*, 1933),[175] Tsutomu's difficulty in distinguishing between Burma and Japan seems to suggest that what supposedly serves as the foundation of his return is already irretrievably lost. In fact, after his repatriation at the Uraga port, Tsutomu "went straight through Nakano, where his family's house was, and proceeded immediately to Hake […] because he figured the house in Nakano had burned down."[176]

Having little expectation of surviving the war himself, Tsutomu views everything with a cynical indifference that seems devoid of the kind of nostalgic sentimentalism as in Tamura's memories. Towards the end of the novel, for instance, Tsutomu is struck by the realization that his obsession with topography is little more than a fantasy (*gensō*) about a pristine nature before human civilization, which never existed in the first place: "Even the forests of Musashino that people talk

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[174] Ibid., 17; 20.
[175] For an English translation, see "Literature of the Lost Home," translated by Paul Anderer, *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature: Abridged*, 365-71.
[176] "Muasshino fujin," 15; 17.

about so much, weren't they all planted just to protect generations of peasants from the wind? Factories, schools, airfields, the sprawling residences of the citizens of Tokyo [*Tōkyō tomin*]. These things are Musashino now [*ima no Musashino*]."[177] Tsutomu's reflection that even what is perceived as "pure nature" is simply the result of generations of human activities shows that the Musahsino landscape is not natural but rather "naturalized."[178] While it is unclear if Tsutomu's epiphany is intended as an irony of Doppo's ideal of a harmonious "intimacy between life and nature," the astonishing transformation of Musashino into industrial and residential spaces for the "citizens of Tokyo" wakes him up from the "geographic delusions" (*chirigaku-teki meimō*) and alerts him to the cannibalistic relation between city and *kōgai*. As such, the scenery Tsutomu presently observes in postwar Japan, which bears little resemblance to what he remembers from his childhood, is just as unfamiliar and menacing as the Burmese battlefields.

In fact, even though Tsutomu only spends a few years at the front, his personality and sensibility seem completely shaped by the battlefield experiences. When he approaches Michiko's house in Hake for the first time in the novel, for example, he is depicted as if he is sneaking up on an enemy. Feeling a "mysterious joy" as he enters through a latched wood door, for example, he "thought it was simply the joy of a childish prank, but this kind of secretive behavior was also a habit he had acquired at the front, where he had been forced always to make surprise attacks [*kishū*]."[179] Later, as he conceals himself in a hollow and observes Michiko from afar,[180] he realizes that "this was the first time in his life that he had been able to watch her in a leisurely manner" and thinks "it a very strange state of affairs [*jōkyō*]," which the narrator hastens to add is the "vocabulary

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[177] "Muasshino fujin,"113; 129.
[178] One of the chapters in Kota Inoue's study is titled, quite tellingly, as "Narrating the Emerging Empire: Naturalized Landscape of 'Musashino.'" See Inoue, 25-68.
[179] "Muasshino fujin," 18; 21.
[180] An almost identical scene happens toward the end of the novel. In that scene, however, Tsutomu watches Michiko drinking the lethal mixture of seltzer and sleeping pills without realizing that Michiko is about to kill herself.

of a soldier [*heitai no yōgo*]."[181] Indeed, Tsutomu's entire way of thinking and action, from his "sensitivity to precision and economy in movement" to the "interest in the topography of unfamiliar landscapes," are invariably derived from his "soldierly habits" (*heishi no shūkan*) that he has acquired on the battlefield.[182]

Insofar as Tsutomu represents, quite literally, the unrealized ambitions of the Japanese empire, his unexpected return to the Hake estate, which brings nothing but destruction and death, can be read as a bitter reminder of the catastrophes wrought by the failed imperial project itself. Finding himself "in the position of family destroyer because of his love for his married cousin," Tsutomu is "shocked to think that a family was so fragile it could shatter with a single push."[183] The way in which Tsutomu inadvertently tears apart the traditional, suburban family resembles metaphorically the tragic consequences of the forced incorporation of Musashino into the postwar order of urban development and recovery, which in turn follows the same kind of logic that governed Japan's imperial policies based on the extraction and exploitation of lands, materials, and resources in the colonies.

While Tsutomu is not depicted as the kind of menacing threat typical of demobilized soldiers as in, for example, Kurosawa Akira's film noir *Nora inu* (Stray Dog, 1949),[184] his abrupt reappearance in Hake, like a phantom from the past, disrupts the foundational narrative of the postwar by stirring up the traumatic memories of loss and defeat. In this connection, it is striking that Michiko commits suicide by taking the sleeping pills that were supposedly meant for the "*ichioku gyokusai*" (the total

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[181] "Musashino fujin," 18; 21. Here, the word "jōkyō" is not written in its common form (状況) but rather in the more technical form (情況). While the two words tend to be used interchangeably today, the latter "jōkyō," according to the *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, contains the following meaning: "changes in military surroundings and conditions (*gunjijō no kankyō ya jōtai no henka*)."

[182] Ibid., 18; 34.

[183] Ibid., 47; I have consulted Washburn's (55) and Stahl's (153) translations. *A Wife in Musashino*, 55; *The Burdens of Survival*, 153.

[184] For a discussion of *Nora inu*, see Chapter 1 in Igarashi's *Homecomings*.

suicide of one hundred million) in the event of Japan's surrender: "The tablets Michiko mixed with seltzer in that glass were the sleeping pills Akiyama had obtained at the end of the war, when rumors flew that the American army would land at the nearby airfield."[185] By an ironic twist of fate, Tsutomu happens to be observing Michiko from afar as she drinks the lethal mixture without knowing the substance of its content. Lying *prostrate* (*"fuse" no shisei*, emphasis is original) in order to conceal his presence, just like he would when making a surprise attack in battles, Tsutomu's final visit to Hake symbolizes metonymically that the war has spilled over into the supposedly peaceful and tranquil everyday life in the postwar.

If Tamura's confinement in the mental hospital is a sign of his willingness to conform to the postwar foundational narrative of recovery and reconstruction, Tsutomu's untimely homecoming shows precisely the opposite, namely, the tragic consequences of failing to do so. For the postwar society to function smoothly, in other words, the traumatic past needs to be tightly locked up, marked as exceptional, and excluded from the everyday normalcy, lest it tear apart the façade of tranquility and prosperity. If we consider cannibalism not simply as the rare battlefield occurrences but rather as a trope for appropriative and exploitive violence in general, it seems possible to regard *Musashino fujin* as belonging to the same genealogy as *Nobi* and *Furyoki*, despite their stylistic and thematic differences on the surface.[186] By adopting a contrapuntal approach or a parallax view, in other words, it becomes possible to discern a persistent and compulsive desire to "devour" the periphery, whether it is the empire's forced incorporation and assimilation of the colonies, postwar Tokyo's subsumption and transformation of the Musashino *kōgai*, or postwar Japan's burgeoning economy from its participation in conflicts that reduced its erstwhile colonial cities to ruins.

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[185] "Musashino fujin," 115; 131.

[186] It is perhaps for this reason that Kusunoki Michitaka considers *Nobi* an "apex that synthesizes [*tōgō*] the series of works that descend from *Furyoki* and those that descend from *Musashino fujin*." In other words, Kusunoki sees *Nobi* as embodying the possibility to join Ōoka's *sensō-mono* and *ren'ai-mono*. See Kusunoki, 23.

Epilogue

The Polyvalent Postwar

The aim of this dissertation has been to examine the ways in which the boundaries of Japan were reimagined and reinscribed in the early years of the postwar. As the national space was refashioned, under the supervision of the Allied Occupation forces, from an expansive, multiethnic empire to a mostly monoethnic nation, confined to its home islands on the far edge of a new geopolitical order,[1] Japanese literature was similarly reinvented as a homogeneous, national literature based on the unity (*ittai*) of nationality, language, and culture.[2] The transformation of the literary space both conformed to and, at times, deviated from the shifting currents of the national discourse. On the one hand, much of postwar literature aligned itself with what Yoshikuni Igarashi calls the "foundational narrative" of the postwar by retreating to confined spaces centered on the individual—both physical spaces such as the neighborhood (*danchi*) and the family, as well as the metaphorical space of individual interiority. Just as the "foundational narrative" means not simply an official narrative but literally a narrative that laid the foundation for reconceptualizing the postwar, many works that formed the core of the postwar literary canon were premised on the need and desire to move away from a bitter past and toward a brighter future.[3] On the other hand, the foundational narrative was never able to fully monopolize the discursive space, where competing narratives not only existed

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[1] As I have explained in the introduction, many scholars including John Dower, Carol Gluck, Oguma Eiji, and Lori Watt have pointed out the caveats of the postwar myth of Japanese homogeneity (*tan'itsu minzoku*), such as the presence of former colonial subjects, now ironically known as the "third-country nationals" (*daisankokujin*), and the systematic repression and discrimination they faced on a daily basis.

[2] Komori Yōichi argues that "modern Japanese literature" is based on the structural confounding of state (*kokka*, Japan), nation (*minzoku*, Japanese people), language (*gengo*, Japanese language), and culture (*bunka*, Japanese literature). See Komori, *"Yuragi" no Nihon bungaku* (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai, 1998).

[3] To be sure, what I mean is not that postwar literature stayed away from memories and experiences of the war. My point, rather, is that even the works that returned, sometimes obsessively, to the past were written with a sense of closure that leaves the past behind and looks forward to a slow yet inevitable process of recovery. As I mentioned in the Introduction, some notable examples include Umezaki Haruo's "Sakurajima" (1946), Mishima Yukio's *Kinkakuuji* (1956), and Shimao Toshio's *Shi no toge* (1960-1976).

alongside but also disrupted and destabilized the foundational narrative. In other words, the discourse of the postwar was a layered structure that consisted of, on the surface, an apparently dominant foundational narrative that emphasized a break with the past and, underneath, a number of marginal and, indeed, marginalized narratives that continued to relativize and problematize the temporal and spatial boundaries upon which the "postwar" was discursively constructed.

These competing narratives, rather than directly confronting the dominant narrative, tended to critique it in a somewhat oblique manner. It is perhaps for this reason that they have often been brushed aside as insignificant and irrelevant. The three chapters in this dissertation have proposed that one effective way to activate the critical potential of these marginalized narratives is to adopt a contrapuntal approach that brings the ostensibly absent, flawed, mundane, and unsavory aspects to the fore of understanding postwar Japanese literature. In chapter 1, I have argued that the seemingly unsuccessful ending in Abe Kōbō's *Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu* can in fact be read as a powerful critique of the autobiographical narratives of return (*hikiage-mono*). In particular, the tropes of madness and metamorphosis, while operating at a linguistic or rhetorical level, constitute an important site to reflect on the possibility of decolonization. In chapter 2, I have compared two contemporaneous fictions: Kyū Eikan's *Honkon* and Ishihara Shintarō's *Taiyō no kisetsu*, and I have suggested that literary awards, while supposedly based on objective and purely "aesthetic" qualities, were complicit in producing and policing the boundaries of the literary establishment (*bundan*). The distinction between the "pure" and "popular" literature, and the domination of the former over the latter, catalyzes a centripetal turn away from Japan's imperial past and toward a kind of narcissistic identification afforded by the postwar economic success. In chapter 3, I have examined the contradiction between Christianity and cannibalism in Ōoka Shōhei's *Nobi*, and I have suggested that Japan's coloniality, far from dissipating with the demise of the empire, was actually reincarnated within the postwar society itself. In particular, the wartime colonization and the postwar

suburbanization were both predicated on a cannibalistic relation insofar as the "center," whether imperial or urban, was able to survive and thrive only thanks to the nourishment provided by the "peripheries." In this connection, bitter memories of loss and defeat were similarly refashioned in a positive light as the essential nutrients for "building a new Japan" (*Nihon no atarashii kunizukuri*), as the 1956 Economic White Paper put it.

While this dissertation has focused primarily on literary works produced in the 1950s, in the pages that follow, I would like to jump out of this timeframe and to reflect on the lingering traces of the war that continued to haunt postwar society, even some forty years later, in Takahata Isao's anime film *Hotaru no haka* (Grave of the Fireflies, 1988). In lieu of a typical conclusion that glances back at the main chapters, I would like to dwell briefly on the ways in which the past and the present remain in motion and, at times, in contradiction with each other in *Hotaru no haka*. Rather than subsume the painful memories of the past under the rhetoric of forging a new Japan from ashes and ruins, Takahata's film presents the past as it is—a "hard kernel" that refuses to be incorporated into the symbolic order of the dominant narrative of the present.[4] In other words, while memories of a traumatic past and the reality of a prospering present somehow coexist alongside each other, they always remain in a tense relation that can perhaps be best described as a "dialectics without synthesis."[5]

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[4] Žižek describes the "hard kernel," or the Lacanian Real, as something that "resist[s] symbolization, dialecticization, persisting in its place, always returning to it." See Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Verso, 2008), 181.

[5] I borrow this concept from a recent study by film scholar Yamamoto Naoki. This concept, according to Yamamoto, derives from Hanada Kiyoteru's interpretation of Lenin's observation of dialectics: "The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute." As a result, "the conflicting standpoints of a thesis and an antithesis," Yamamoto writes, "are not absolute but always relative and in motion." See Yamamoto, *Dialectics Without Synthesis: Japanese Film Theory and Realism in a Global Frame* (University of California, 2020), 20.

Adapted from Nosaka Akiyuki's 1967 fiction of the same title,[6] which won the Naoki Prize in the following spring with another short story "Amerika hijiki," the anime film *Hotaru no haka* tells the harrowing story of a fourteen-year-old boy Seita and his four-year-old sister Setsuko, who die in short succession of chronic starvation and malnutrition *after* Japan's surrender in August 1945.[7] Rather than provide a comprehensive analysis of the film, which would be beyond the scope of this epilogue, I will focus on the depiction of the overlapping yet conflicting temporalities presented in the beginning and ending sequences of the film, while paying attention to the historical implications of a seemingly tangential diegetic detail on the sibling's father's service in the imperial navy.

The film opens with a frontal shot of Seita, who looks straight at the camera and calmly says in a voiceover: "September 21, Shōwa 20… That was the night I died."[8] Glowing an ominous red hue, Seita glances down as the camera shifts to focus on a pillar inside a train station, enveloped in the same eerie color (Figure 2). Within a few frames, the glowing red light disappears, and an emaciated Seita, cast in normal lighting, slumps against the pillar whose tiles appear to be peeling off (Figure 3). "As if brought forth by some mental power (*nenriki ga umidasu ka no yō ni*)," as the storyboard elaborates, "the gloomy train station is transformed into the one in September 1945 when the tiles have flaked off."[9] The glowing Seita, who the viewers now realize is a spirit calmly

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[6] The story is based mostly on Nosaka's own experience in the final days of the war. One major difference, however, is that while Nosaka's adopted sister is only about one-year-old when she died, he raised Setsuko's age to four so that she can engage in meaningful conversations with her brother. Takahata follows Nosaka's story in terms of Setsuko's age.

[7] Takahata's *Hotaru no haka* was originally released as a double feature with Miyazaki Hayao's *Tonari no Totoro* (My Neighbor Totoro, 1988). Apart from the fact that both films center on two siblings, these two works differ dramatically in their stories, settings, emotional tones, and even art styles. Whereas *Tonari no Totoro* is "a gentle fantasy of childhood imagination in the pastoral setting" in 1950s Tokorozawa, a rural town about fifty kilometers to the west of Tokyo, *Hotaru no haka* is set in the bombed-out ruins of Kobe in the final days of the war. Unsurprisingly, *Tonari no Totoro* also looks far more colorful and cheerful than *Hotaru no haka*, which unflinchingly depicts brutal scenes of burnt bodies covered in flies and maggots. See Wendy Goldberg, "Transcending the Victim's History: Takahata Isao's *Grave of the Fireflies*," *Mechademia*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2009), 39.

[8] Shōwa 20 is 1945. Quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the English subtitles of the DVD, released by Sentai Filmworks (2012), with minor modifications for more literal renditions. I have consulted David Stahl's summary of the opening sequences in "Victimization and 'Response-ability': Remembering, Representing, and Working Through Trauma in *Grave of the Fireflies*," *Imag(in)ing the War in Japan: Representing and Responding to Trauma in Postwar Literature and Film* (edited by David Stahl and Mark Williams, Brill, 2010), 188-90.

[9] Takataha Isao, *Sutajio Jiburi ekonte zenshū, vol. 4: Hotaru no haka* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 2001), 8.

narrating his own death, approaches his dying self, dressed in tattered rags, who stares vacantly at the ground and seems as if he might stop breathing at any moment.

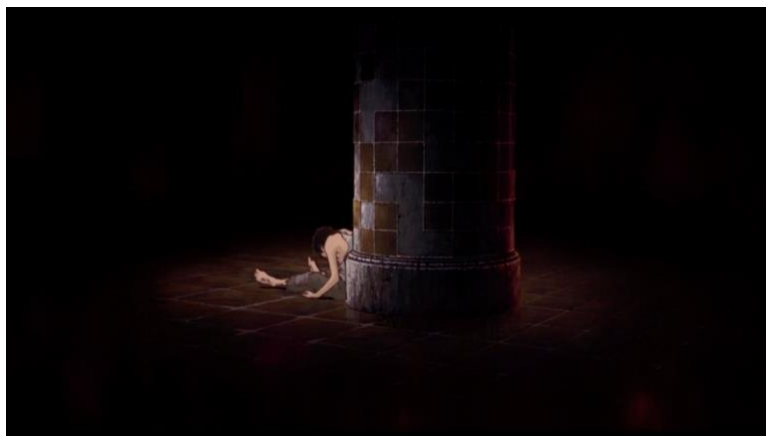
Figure 2: The red-washed Sannomiya Station

Figure 3: Sannomiya Station in normal lighting

In the next sequence, the camera cuts to a top shot that looks down at Seita, showing commuters who walk busily about the bustling station carefully avoiding (*taihi*) the dying boy. The reason for their avoidance, however, is neither pity nor sympathy but disgust and shame, as viewers hear several passengers make indifferent comments such as "How disgusting (*kitanai na*)!" "Is he dead?" and "The Americans will be arriving any day now. What a disgrace (*haji*) to have these

[urchins] inside the station."[10] Although a lady is kind enough to leave a rice ball by his side, Seita is apparently too weak to even react to such acts of kindness. As the camera closes up on his profile from the side, the background noises of the passengers and the trains gradually subside and give way to the voice of a spirited young girl calling out "Mama!" This is then followed by Seita's own inner voice, as if asking the audience: "What day is it?" as he slowly collapses to the floor.

A station attendant approaches the prostrate Seita, prods him with the broomstick, and mutters to himself: "Another one (*mata ka*)." In the background, a few other dying war orphans can be seen slumping, just like Seita, against the tiled pillars. As the station attendant searches through Seita's belongings, a candy tin falls out of his bellyband and clatters to the floor. Unable to open to rusty lid, the attendant walks over to the station exit, winds up like a pitcher, and hurls the tin into the grassy fields outside the station. Bouncing a few times on the ground, the lid of the tin pops open and the contents come out: some bones and ashes of Setsuko. Startled by the clattering tin, numerous fireflies rise from the grasses, glowing a yellowish green light which, however, quickly turns red as Setsuko, dressed in the air raid hood, slowly stands up and turns to face the camera. Here, Takahata establishes the symbolic connection between Setsuko and the fireflies for the first time by suggesting that it is not just Setsuko's remains but also her innocent spirit that are released from the candy tin. Just as Setsuko is about to rush to her brother's prostrate body, Seita's spirit, clad in a brand-new national uniform (*kokumin fuku*), gently places his hand on her shoulder and smiles at her. As Seita crouches down and picks up the candy tin, it is immediately "transformed from its soiled, battered state back into its original pristine condition."[11]

In the following scene, the two siblings board an empty train carriage, bathed in the glowing red light. As if to reassure the audience that the tin has really transformed from a casket containing

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[10] Viewers familiar with the original story would know that Seita has become incontinent by this point, which is unsurprisingly omitted in the anime film.
[11] Stahl, "Victimization and 'Response-ability,'" 189.

Setsuko's remains into a can filled with sweet hard candies, Seita and Setsuko sit side by side and happily share the fruit drops. As they turn to look out of the window, however, they see an ongoing firebombing campaign that supposedly set in motion the narrative of the film, as numerous "sparks and embers 'rain' down from the sky."[12] This scene well encapsulates the multivalent and contradictory meanings in the imagery of the "fireflies," which symbolizes, on the one hand, the innocence and evanescence of the children and, on the other, the massive deaths and destruction wrought on civilians in the firebombing campaigns. Indeed, Tahakata's and Nosaka's choice for "firefly" in the title is not the usual character 蛍 but rather a peculiar combination of 火垂る, which literally means something like dangling flames, clearly indicating, as Wendy Goldberg suggests, the imagery of "destruction, such as the widespread burning of the wooden houses in Kobe and other places in Japan."[13]

In fact, it has recently become clear that the double meaning of "hotaru," referring to both fireflies and firebombs, is hidden in one of the posters of the film. Thirty years after the film's release, a Japanese Twitter user revealed the secret in the poster by turning up the brightness of the image, unveiling an object that is normally difficult to see in the darkness.[14] While the original poster (Figure 4) shows Seita and Setsuko playing happily as they are surrounded by a field of fireflies, the brightened image (Figure 5) clearly shows a bomber flying above the innocent siblings and dropping incendiary bombs. In other words, whereas the round glows in the lower half of the poster are lights emitted by the fireflies, the longer ones in the upper half are actually "sparks and embers 'rain[ing]'

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[12] Ibid., 190.
[13] Goldberg, 51.
[14] @comicloverhouse (Kominami Na), "Hotaru no haka no posutā no hotaru ga subete hotaru ja nai to iu setsu o ima yonde, gazō o kaiseki shite mitara hontō datta. Shiranakatta desu…" (I just read a theory that the hotaru in the *Grave of the Fireflies* poster aren't all fireflies, so I tried to analyze the image and it's really true. I had no idea…). *Twitter*, April 13, 2018, 9:40 a.m., https://twitter.com/comicloverhouse/status/984833719579041792?s=20.

down from the sky" that destroyed the city of Kobe and took away lives of countless innocent civilians, including Seita's and Setsuko's mother.

Figure 4: Poster of *Hotaru no haka*, original   Figure 5: Poster of *Hotaru no haka*, brightened

The symbolism of the firefly does not end here. While the film does not delve into the biological classification of the fireflies, they are described specifically in the original fiction as the "Heike fireflies" (*Heike-botaru*), which are smaller in size and emit weaker light compared to another species known as the "Genji fireflies" (*Genji-botaru*).[15] The species of the fireflies seems to have little bearing on the development of the story, other than to invoke the cultural reference of the tragic demise of the Heike clan in the Genpei War in the late 12th century.[16] The loss of the Heike, particularly its decisive defeat by the Genji in the naval battle of Dan-no-ura, seems to parallel the ultimate fate of the Imperial Japanese Navy, whose proud Combined Fleet (*rengō kantai*) was routed

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[15] See Kanda Sakyō, "Genji-botaru to Heike-botaru no na," *Hotaru* (Tokyo: Nihon Hakkō Seibutsu Kenkyūkai, 1936): 16-22.

[16] A staple in classical Japanese literature, the Genpei War is best known for its depiction in the *Heike monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike).

by the American Navy in the decisive battle of Midway in June 1942, followed by a series of equally devastating debacles in the battle of the Philippine Sea, the battle of Leyte Gulf, and finally the battle of Okinawa. This reading is corroborated by the fact that the siblings' father is a navy officer serving on Maya, a heavy cruiser that was sunk at Leyte Gulf on October 23, 1944. Nosaka's invocation of the "Heike fireflies" seems to suggest, in other words, that the sailors and officers of the Imperial Navy who perished in the Pacific War were reincarnations of the Heike warriors and aristocrats, including the child emperor Antoku, who drowned in the sea at Dan-no-ura almost a millennium ago.

Setting aside the double meaning of the fireflies, the opening minutes set the tone for the rest of the film by alerting the audience to the inevitable, tragic fate awaiting Seita and Setsuko who, much like lovers in Edo shinjū plays, can be united only in death.[17] What is striking, however, is that Takahata presents the narrative through a layered structure which, through his masterful manipulation of color schemes, rejects the kind of singular, coherent, and linear temporality conforming to the foundational narrative of the postwar. As is clear from the plot summary, the opening sequences alternate between the eerily red glows and the unfiltered, normal colors, as shown in the subtle transition from Figure 2 to Figure 3, in which the pillar cast in red light, all its tiles intact, transform almost unnoticeably into a dilapidated one, its tiles flaking off, depicted in normal colors.[18] Here, the difference in color schemes indicates two distinct temporalities: the red lighting indicates the present moment in the late 1980s when the film was released,[19] whereas the

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[17] In fact, Nosaka and Takahata both claim to be inspired by the love-suicide plays by Chikamatsu Monzaemon, particularly his *Love Suicide at Sonezaki* (1703). See "Interview with Nosaka Akiyuki and Isao Takahata," *Animage*, June 1987; quoted in Goldberg, 47.

[18] I am indebted to Michael Emmerich for pointing out the significance of this transition.

[19] In Figure 2, it can be vaguely seen that there is an object to the right of the pillar, which, when compared with the footages included in the DVD extras (*tokuten*), was actually an ashtray in the contemporary Sannomiya Station when the film crew did the location scouting in 1987. See Okada Toshio, "Okada Toshio zemi: Hontō wa 10 bai kowai *Hotaru no haka*," *YouTube*, uploaded by Okada Toshio, April 21, 2018, https://youtu.be/1YD51SO3s2k.

normal lighting represents the past or, more specifically, the moment when Seita draws his last breath inside the Sannomiya Station in September 1945.

If the subtle change in coloration in the above sequences serves as a device to suggest a flashback to Seita's final moments, the conflicting color schemes sometimes coexist within the same frame, as in the following example (Figure 6), in which Seita's spirit, glowing red, enters the frame from the right and walks over to his dying self, slumping against the tiled pillar, some forty years ago. Here, Takahata seems to suggest that Seita has become a *jibakurei*, a ghost who is forever trapped inside the Sannomiya Station—his place of death. The juxtaposition between the dying Seita and his ghost, dressed in wartime national uniform and bound forever to the red-washed station, serves as an uncanny reminder that while Japan emerges as an economic powerhouse in the late 1980s, the spirits of the war orphans who died miserably and meaninglessly were still unable to "move on" even four decades after the war. Japan's economic might at the peak of its bubble was, it turns out, incapable of exorcising memories of a painful past.

Figure 6: Seita's spirit approaching the dying Seita

In this connection, it is significant that Setsuko and Seita both die shortly *after* Japan's defeat. In fact, the last thought that crosses Seita's mind before he dies is "What day is it?" Seita's obsession with the date seems ironic, since his knowledge of it (or the lack thereof) would have no effect whatsoever on his impending death. For the siblings, Japan's surrender was too little too late for a

miraculous recovery from their precarious life during the war. To be sure, the children's deaths are not entirely inevitable—towards the end of the film, Seita is shown to withdraw 3,000 yen from his mother's bank account to buy chicken, eggs, and a watermelon. However, they were a bit too late for Setsuko, who dies while waiting for Seita to make the rice gruel. Setsuko, as Goldberg points out, is "as much [Seita's] victim as a victim of the war."[20] If only Seita had withdrawn the money a little sooner, Setsuko might have lived.

On the other hand, because Seita loses his will to live after Setsuko's death, one wonders if he might also have lived if Setsuko manages to pull through. In fact, if Seita had simply swallowed his pride and apologized to the widow, who did take the siblings in after their mother was fatally wounded in the firebombing, both would most likely have survived the war. To a certain extent, it is Seita's own reckless decision to move out and live on their own in an abandoned bomb shelter that leads to their demise. In fact, the term used to describe the bomb shelter is *yokoana* (literally, "side hole"), which as Dennis Fukushima Jr. points out is used to refer to tombs in ancient times,[21] suggesting that Seita's and Setsuko's "new life together" is, from the beginning, a journey "further towards their own death."[22] These hypothetical situations notwithstanding, however, the point I wish to make here is that the siblings' deaths, like so many other nameless war orphans who perished of hunger and disease *after* Japan's defeat, are reminders of the contested boundaries of the postwar. "Moving on" was out of the question for Seita and Setsuko, insofar as the postwar is a mere continuation and prolongation of their miserable life in starvation and malnutrition during the war.

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[20] Goldberg, 41.
[21] Fukushima, D. H., Jr. "Hotaru no Haka," quoted in Dani Cavallaro, *Anime and the Art of Adaptation: Eight Famous Works from Page to Screen* (McFarland, 2010), 29.
[22] Cavallaro, 29.

In comparison, others in the opening minutes of the film seem to feel no contradiction whatsoever at the sweeping changes brought about by the "end of the war." The commuters not only walk hurriedly about the station without paying the slightest attention to the dying war orphans, but someone even goes so far as to call the war orphans a "disgrace" (*haji*) that needs to be removed from sight before the Americans' arrival. In other words, this passenger, who represents the mentality that forms the core of the foundational narrative, not only readily accepts, if not actively welcomes, the advent of a new social order under the American occupation, but he also considers, whether consciously or not, the war orphans as an embarrassing reminder of Japan's surrender and, by extension, inferiority to the Americans.

If the passerby's acrid remark shows a tacit desire to embellish the postwar reality of defeat and occupation, the station attendant's treatment of the war orphans reflects more subtly the desire to bid farewell to the past and to move toward a better future. His indifference at spotting "yet another" (*mata ka*) corpse, his rough way of prodding and searching through Seita's belongings, and his casual disposal of the fruit drops tin, which contains both Setsuko's happy memories and her meager remains, by throwing it like a baseball, suggest that the postwar society regards the war orphans as nothing but nuisances to be cast away.

What is particularly curious, however, is the way in which the station attendant hurls the tin into the darkness. Winding up like a pitcher, the station attendant's action represents metonymically the revival of the "American sport" of baseball, which was first refashioned during the war to conform to the "spirit of Bushido" and subsequently banned altogether as the war intensified. In fact, as Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu shows, baseball was militarized and Japanized in as early as the late 1930s. Beginning in 1937, for example, everyone at the National Middle-School Tournament from

players to spectators was made to bow in the direction of the Imperial Palace.[23] Professional baseball similarly tried to "domesticate" the game in light of the rising anti-American sentiments by dropping English nicknames, replacing English words with Japanese ones, altering the rules to demonstrate the "true fighting spirit of the imperial subjects," and even purging uniform numbers in order to get rid of individualism that allegedly characterize the enemy culture.[24] Such preemptive measures notwithstanding, the professional league was officially suspended in the fall of 1944, following other major events such as the National Middle-School Championship in 1941 and the National Middle-School Tournament in 1942.

In this light, while it seems possible to interpret the station attendant's windup as a celebration of liberation from the yoke of militarism, the fact that it is Setsuko's bones and ashes—an uncomfortable reminder of the heavy cost of the war—that he hurls so forcefully away from the Sannomiya Station makes such reading less tenable. In other words, while the windup seems to symbolize a gesture of rebellion against the wartime repression, it is, quite ironically, an act of repression of wartime memories itself. The performance of the "American sport" merely weeks after the surrender encapsulates, in other words, postwar Japan's readiness to accept and welcome the Americans and the new order they represent on the one hand, and on the other the implicit desire to sweep away the burdens, both moral and actual, imposed by the dying war orphans.

The first five minutes of the film are, for the most part, faithful renditions of the opening pages of Nosaka's original fiction. Takahata's ingenuity, however, is that he introduces a layered narrative structure through contrastive lighting and colorations to represent two distinct and conflicting temporalities. While the past seems to slide effortlessly into the present, as the dilapidated station transitions easily into the red-washed world, the dual color schemes remain

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[23] Guthrie-Shimizu, *Transpacific Field of Dreams. How Baseball Linked the United States and Japan in Peace and War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 173.
[24] Ibid., 178.

separate and never blend with each other, as shown in Figure 6. In other words, the film begins in the contemporary moment in 1988 when it was released, but it quickly goes into an extended flashback that occupies almost the entirety of the film. This layered structure is repeated once again in the final scene, which closes the narrative as if Seita is waking up from his reminiscence, creating an effect that the past is encased in, but not subsumed to, the prosperous contemporary society.

Toward the end of the film, Seita puts Setsuko and her meager belongings in a woven casket and cremates her. In a nearly static long take, Seita is seen sitting by the pyre and gazing vacantly at the flames, which slowly diminish as the azure sky is painted red by the sunset glow and eventually darkens.[25] When the flames are about to extinguish, numerous fireflies rise from the grasses and float in the sky, symbolizing that Setsuko, freed from all pains and sufferings, has finally passed to heaven. In the next scene, the camera cuts to a side shot showing Seita biting on a sweet potato as the voiceover explains that he puts Setsuko's ashes into the candy tin and descends the mountain. Here, the depiction of Seita's appetite and his calm narration are signs of his unconscious attempts to dissociate himself from acknowledging his own complicity in causing Setsuko's tragic death.

The next moment, the music suddenly intensifies and becomes more sorrowful as Setsuko calls out to Seita in her cheerful and innocent voice, at which point Seita is transposed, as in the opening scene, to the red-washed world. His threadbare clothing is replaced by the brand-new national uniform, and the sweet potato becomes the fruit drops tin. In an over the shoulder shot, Setsuko is seen running toward Seita, climbing onto a bench, smiling happily, and sitting next to Seita, who hands her the candy tin and puts her to sleep. Reunited with her brother, Setsuko seems

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[25] Significantly, in Nosaka's original fiction, Seita is described to feel an urge to defecate while gazing at the flames. Setsuko's cremation thus marks the beginning of Seita's loss of control of his own body, culminating in his total collapse in the train station where his futile efforts to crawl to the toilet is mistaken by the passing commuters as a "hunger crazed urchin playing with his own running shit." Needless to say, these excremental references in the original fiction are excised in the adapted film. See Nosaka, "Hotaru no haka," *Chikuma gendai bungaku taikei, vol. 92: Nosaka Akiyuki, Itsuki Hiroyuki, Inoue Hisashi shū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967), 137. Translation by James Abrams (1978) with slight changes.

to feel relieved and quickly falls asleep, but Seita looks sternly at the camera, as if lost in thought. In the last scene before the credits roll, the camera shifts to an extreme long shot and slowly cranes up to reveal the distant skyline of modern-day Kobe (Figure 7). In fact, the storyboard stipulates that the skyscrapers and highways be depicted,[26] lest the viewers mistake the contemporary, thriving city for the burnt-out ruins in the early postwar years.

Figure 7: Seita and Setsuko gazing at modern-day Kōbe

Like the beginning of the film, the introduction of the opposing colorations in the closing sequence is Takahata's original idea and is not found in Nosaka's fiction. This is, to be sure, hardly surprising, given that the film was made twenty years after the novel, which is, in turn, written more than two decades after the end of the war. The impressive skyline depicted at the end of the film was, in other words, largely nonexistent when Nosaka published the original story in 1967, despite the fact that much of Japan had not only recovered from the wartime destructions but also managed to reestablish itself in the global arena by then, particularly with the milestone achievement of the Tokyo Olympics three years ago.

The difference in social contexts notwithstanding, Takahata and Nosaka were both driven by the changing historical circumstances that problematize the sense of the everyday in the postwar

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[26] *Sutajio Jiburi ekonte zenshū, vol. 4*, 505.

society. For Nosaka, the trigger was the escalating hostilities in Vietnam, particularly the "images of the aerial bombing and napalming of Vietnamese cities, towns, rural villages and jungles [which] functioned to resurrect 'forgotten' memories of Nosaka's home front traumas."[27] Much like Ōoka Shōhei who resumed serializing *Nobi* as the Korean War intensified, Nosaka explains that he felt an urgency to remind his fellow countrymen that Japan could easily become embroiled in this seemingly unrelated war in a distant land: "Complacently living as we do in peace and prosperity, we naturally think that Vietnam has nothing to do with us. But one misstep, war breaks out and women and children suffer."[28] For Tahakata, on the other hand, it was Emperor Hirohito's grave illness, unprecedented surgery, and impending death that had most likely influenced the timeframe of the conception, production, and release of the film. As David Stahl notes, Takahata mentions in an interview that the "idea of animating 'Grave of the Fireflies' came up suddenly and that he and his production team were working against the clock since the release date had been preset for March, 1988,"[29] less than a year before the Emperor's death in January 1989.

Both Nosaka and Takahata were prompted, in other words, by a sense of suspicion at the complacent feeling that permeated the postwar society in the high-growth period and the discursive distance it unconsciously maintained from the bitter memories of the past. Whereas Nosaka explicitly condemns the stupidity in repeating the indiscriminate bombing and mass destruction that killed and rendered homeless tens of thousands of innocent civilians, Takahata implicitly questions whether Emperor Hirohito's death would wipe away the horrifying legacies of the war altogether. With the demise of Hirohito, who was clearly responsible yet not held accountable for Japan's

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[27] Stahl, "Victimization and 'Response-ability,'" 167.

[28] Nosaka, *Nihon dojin no shisō* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1969), 195; quoted in Stahl, "Victimization and 'Response-ability,'"167.

[29] Stahl, "Victimization and 'Response-ability,'" 186. The actual release date was delayed for about a month to April 16, 1988.

imperial aggressions, it appears as though postwar Japan has managed to turn over a new leaf and refashion itself as a country of peace, democracy, and prosperity.

In this light, the significance of Tahakata's work is twofold. On the one hand, his faithful adaption of Nosaka's original fiction and the meticulous attention to details makes it possible to depict the cruelty of war as accurately and realistically as possible. On the other hand, his creative deviation from the original work in implementing a layered structure through the use of contrastive color schemes rejects the foundational narrative which posits the painful sacrifices as steppingstones for building a prosperous future. As I mentioned earlier, the way Seita stares at the camera in the final scene shows neither relief nor contentment but rather a look of concern and hesitation. In fact, the storyboard describes Seita's expression using the word "*uttaeru*,"[30] which means something like appealing to the audience. In other words, Seita and presumably Takahata are directly engaging with the viewers, asking whether it is truly possible to exonerate themselves of moral responsibilities as the Shōwa era was about to draw to a close, with the impending death of the Emperor, and to move on to a new age of peace and prosperity when the deaths of countless war victims, both in Japan and in the former colonies, remain repressed and unredressed.[31]

Also significant is the composition in Figure 7, in which the spirits of the children glowing red at the bottom of the frame and the cityscape of high-rise buildings cast in normal lighting at the top seem not only separate from but even somewhat opposed to each other. The contrasting colorations between the upper and lower halves gives the impression that Seita and Setsuko, while present in the frame, are merely observing the thriving postwar society at a distance without

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[30] *Sutajio Jiburi ekonte zenshū, vol. 4*, 505.
[31] In this connection, David Stahl raises a crucial yet insufficiently answered question: "What is the precise nature of the relationship between largely ignored, unacknowledged, premature, grotesque, devalued and officially 'forgotten' civilian deaths and the prolonged, dignified, collectively recognized, nationally honored, mourned and memorialized passing in old age of the most powerful and influential (at least in symbolic terms) wartime figure in Japan, and thus arguably the most culpable in political, legal, ethical and spiritual terms for the disastrous Asia Pacific War and its aftermath?" See Stahl, "Victimization and 'Response-ability,'" 197-8.

partaking in its economic success. They are, in this sense, caught in a liminal space, located inside the frame yet somehow outside of it. Such ambiguity is similarly seen in the contrast between the cold colors of the bright, florescent lights in the city and the warm colors of the faint lights emitted by the fireflies whirling on the hill—the former both echoing and eclipsing the latter.

Compared with Nosaka's original fiction, which mentions the night view of the city rather fleetingly: "In the evening sky there were stars; looking down, there were sparse lights in houses in the valley which he had not seen in a long time—the blackout was lifted only two days ago,"[32] Takahata's decision to end the film with this particular scene in which Seita's spirit gazes at the modern-day Kobe is noteworthy. Its significance lies not only at the visual level in terms of composition and coloration, but also, I suspect, at the historical level through a subtle yet crucial reference to the location from where the gaze is likely emanated.

Given that Seita dies in the Sannomiya Station, it seems reasonable to speculate that the hill depicted in the final scene is located somewhere within its proximity. Mount Moya, located about 20 kilometers to the north of the Sannomiya Station, seems the most likely candidate for two reasons.[33] First, the night view of Kobe from the top of Mount Maya is known as one of the "three best night views in Japan" (*Nihon sandai yakei*),[34] or even the "million-dollar night view" (*hyakuman doru no yakei*), allegedly based on the estimated electricity expenses of the nearly five million light bulbs installed in Osaka, Amagasaki, Kobe, and Ashiya—the four cities that made up the splendid night view.[35] In other words, Mount Maya witnesses, quite literally, postwar Japan's miraculous recovery from burnt-

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[32] Nosaka, 152.
[33] Mount Rokkō, arguably the more famous in Kobe, is located about five kilometers farther to the east than Mount Maya.
[34] The other two are the view of Hakodata from Mount Hakodate and the view of Nagasaki from Mount Inasa. It is unclear who made the ranking, but an organization known as the Night View Convention and Visitor Bureau announced the "three new greatest night views in Japan" (*shin Nihon sandai yakei*), which listed Nagasaki, Sapporo, and Kitakyushu as the top cities with the best night views in Japan.
[35] "Mukashi *hyakuman doru* no yakei, ima wa issenman doru… Endaka to denkidai kōtō de," *Yomiuri Shinbun Onrain*, October 7, 2020.

out ruins to brightly-lit skylines. The impressive cityscape teeming with high-rise buildings shown in the final scene of the film therefore attests to the astonishing degree of material affluence that Japan enjoys at its peak of economic bubble.

If Mount Maya is best known for affording spectacular night views in the postwar period, it is known for quite a different reason during the war: an eponymous warship of the imperial navy on which the siblings' father happens to have served. One of the four Takao-class heavy cruisers,[36] Maya sank to the bottom of the ocean on October 23, 1944 in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, supposedly taking the children's father, the captain of the ship, down with it. Ironically, Seita only learns about his father's ultimate fate after Japan's unconditional surrender when he withdraws the money at the bank, almost a year after his father's death. It is not surprising, given the origin of the ship's name, that Maya's memorial monument honoring those who died at Leyte Gulf was housed within the grounds of Tenjō-ji Temple located at the top of Mount Maya.

In an earlier scene when the siblings have just moved out of the widow's house into the deserted bomb shelter, they catch dozens of fireflies as substitute for lamps and release them inside the mosquito net, transforming the cave into a fantastic canvas on which their imagination runs free. Interestingly, Seita imagines the flickering lights of the fireflies as war planes and battleships, recalling a naval review (*kankanshiki*) that he has witnessed before Setsuko was born. Seita's father is seen saluting on the bridge of an imposing warship, illuminated and fully dressed. Impressed by the grand spectacle of the review—the mighty fleet, military band, cheering crowds, and fireworks, Seita sings a war song and shoots at imaginary enemy planes, thus "transform[ing] the lovely image of the

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[36] The other three were Takao (after which the class was named), Atago, and Chōkai. Among the four Takao-class heavy cruisers, three (Atago, Maya, and Chōkai) were sunk in the Battle of Leyte Island between October 23 and October 25, 1944.

fireflies in the cave into propaganda."[37] As the night deepens, however, the lights gradually become

weaker until they finally extinguish, foreshadowing the transient splendor of the Combined Fleet.

Given Seita's age, the only naval review he could have witnessed is the one in 1936,[38] one of

the largest in the history of Imperial Japanese Navy in which a total of one hundred vessels gathered

in Osaka Bay, covering the entirety of the sea area.[39] The details of the review, from its preparation

to the procession, are carefully recorded in a commemorative volume published by the Kobe

Municipal Office in the following year. Even a cursory comparison between the images in Seita's

recollection (Figure 8) and the photographs included in the booklet (Figures 9 and 10)[40] makes clear

that the film crew were not only aware of the volume, but they have most likely consulted it when

depicting this spectacular scene.[41] If this is the case, it is rather surprising, especially given the

meticulous details in the film, that the film crew overlooked the fact that Maya—the heavy cruiser

on which Seita's and Setsuko's father served as the captain—was actually not at the review in

question.[42]

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[37] Goldberg, 45.

[38] It differs slightly from Nosaka's original fiction, in which Seita recalls watching the naval review in 1935 on Mount Rokkō. This is probably due to Nosaka's misremembering, since there were no reviews in that year. The previous review, in 1933, was in the port of Yokohama, and the one before that, while in Kobe, happened in 1930, which was definitely before Seita was born. As the war situation continued to worsen, there was only one more naval review after the one in 1936, which was again in Yokohama, in 1940.

[39] Kōbe Shiyakusho, *Shōwa jūichinen kaigun tokubetsu daienshū: Kankanshiki Kōbe-shi kinenshi* (Kōbe: Kōbe Shiyakusho, 1937), 5.

[40] Both images are from *Shōwa jūichinen kaigun tokubetsu daienshū*, 169.

[41] One critical difference, though, is that the naval parade took place in the day. See *Shōwa jūichinen kaigun tokubetsu daienshū*, 32. The images in Seita's imagination are based not on the actual review but on the celebratory illuminations that evening. In any case, the fact that the film crew drew from the photographs in the commemorative volume indicates that they were most likely aware of the discrepancy, and they probably chose visual splendor over historical accuracy.

[42] This crucial fact first came to my attention when I read a Japanese blog "Zenpen: *Hotaru no haka* o reikoku ni jidai kōshō shitemiru," *Nora rekishika no rekishi tantei*, https://yonezawakoji.com/hotarunohaka_part1.
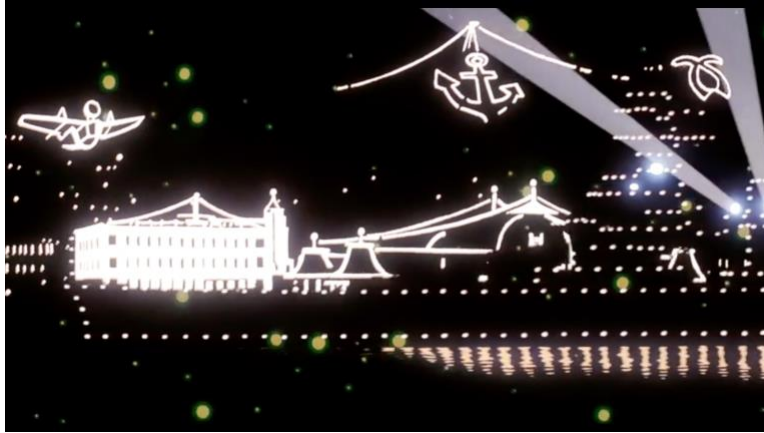
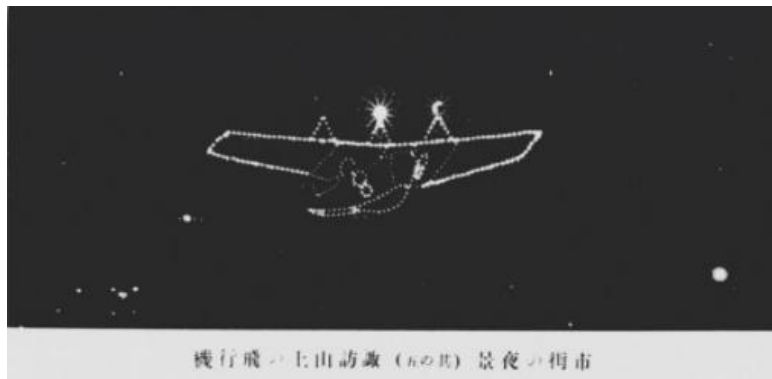Figure 8: Seita reminiscing the naval review

市街の夜景 (其の五) 諏訪山上ノ飛行機

Figure 9: Celebratory illuminations after the naval review

市街の夜景 (其の七) 兵庫縣廳

Figure 10: Celebratory illuminations after the naval review

There are, of course, a number of reasons that might explain the discrepancy between the fictional representation of the naval review and the historical fact, the most obvious of which being

271

that the film crew simply followed the setting in the original novel, which describes that "their father at the time was on the crew of the cruiser Maya, Seita searched with all his might for the shape of that ship, but was unable to locate a ship with that precipitous cliff-like bridge particular to the Maya."[43] Another possibility would be that it simply did not matter—after all, it is an insignificant detail that appears only once throughout the entire film and has little to do with the narrative itself. Yet it could be equally argued that since the film crew went to so much trouble to render the details as visually accurate as possible, they could have easily resolved this contradiction had they so wished. In other words, if Takahata was indeed aware of the fact that Maya was not at the naval review, might it not be possible, then, that he was actually trying to convey some kind of message through this deliberate inconsistency?

I am, of course, aware of the stakes of conflating fiction with reality, nor am I suggesting that artistic representation should be bound by historical accuracy. My point, rather, is that when a particular detail deviates from the overall realism of the work, as in the case of the name of the town Baharin in Abe Kōbō's *Kemono-tachi wa kokyō o mezasu*, it might actually contain or conceal important messages that could greatly expand the work's interpretative possibilities. In this case, my surmise is that Takahata makes a subtle yet crucial critique of the sense of complacency in postwar Japan, particularly during the period of bubble economy when memories of the war were quickly fading, through the polyvalent meaning of "Maya" in the film.

The uncanniness of "Maya" rests in the fact that it refers both to the warship that sank to the bottom of the ocean towards the end of the Pacific War and to the mountain in Kobe where not only the spirits of the ship's crew were memorialized but also where the spirits of their children were overlooking the "million-dollar night view" of the modern-day Kobe at a distance. In other words, it seems to suggest that the past is never put to rest and may come back at any moment to haunt the

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[43] Nosaka, 148; translation by Abrams.

peaceful and prospering everyday of the present. The visual contrast between the bright cityscape of contemporary Kobe and the hill, glowing an ominous red light, on which spirits of the war orphans who die miserably in the home front also seems to raise an important question: Is it truly possible to celebrate the postwar without fully accounting for the lives lost in the past. In an important scene immediately following Setsuko's death, a group of wealthy girls return, probably after months of evacuation (*sokai*) in the countryside, to their mansion and puts a record on the gramophone. They look out of the balcony and exclaim nostalgically "I've missed this view [*natsukashii keshiki ya wa*]," while the music of "Home Sweet Home" can be heard playing in the background. The camera then cuts to the deserted bomb shelter where Setsuko's "ghost" plays house and waits anxiously for her brother's return, saying "Come back soon [*hayō okaeri*]!"

The harrowing contrast between the girls who return safely to their mansion, unscathed in the heavy firebombing, and the siblings who have lost everything—their house, their parents, and ultimately, their very lives, encapsulates some of the questions that I have attempted to address in this dissertation: What is home and who can return? What are the costs of "moving on"? The writers and directors I have examined in this study have offered ways to reconceptualize the postwar as a layered structure: while it appears to be dominated by a foundational narrative predicated on a discursive rupture from the past, there also exists marginal and marginalized narratives that continue to relativize and problematize this foundational narrative. For Abe Kōbō, such a possibility rests on the ironic metamorphosis that thwarts the attempts of return at the last moment, thus questioning the very meaning of homecoming and, by extension, of "home" (*kokyō*) itself. For Kyū Eikan and millions of "former Japanese" who became stateless overnight, the postwar is a mere prolongation and continuation of the wartime condition of scarcity and precarity. Their outcry for justice and independence is muffled as popular entertainment and relegated to the margins of the postwar literary enterprise. For Ōoka Shōhei, the repressed memories of the past are always on the verge of

returning and devouring the present. The postwar urban development, much like the wartime

colonial expansion, is based on a logic of cannibalistic incorporation. Finally, for Takahata Isao, the

past and the present, while coexisting in the same visual frame, refuse to be subsumed into a unified,

coherent, and linear temporality conforming to the foundational narrative of the postwar. Memories

of the war, rather than sink to the bottom of the sea, continue to watch over the postwar society,

apparently peaceful and prosperous.

This is not to say, to be sure, that the past and the present cannot achieve a "fusion of

horizons" that Hans-Georg Gadamer speaks of. Such fusion, however, refers neither to the total

subjection of the present to the past, as in attempts to reproduce a history of the past which usually

end in total disaster, nor to the subsumption of the past into the present, as in narratives of linear

progression that posit the past as steppingstones for the present. "The horizon of the present cannot

be formed without the past," Gadamer writes, "There is no more an isolated horizon of the present

in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired."[44] In other words, the text,

which belongs to the past, is always mediated by the reader's subjective interpretation and

intervention in the present. Just as the word "postcolonial" is not about the end of colonization,[45] so

the "postwar," it seems to me, is not simply about the end of the war. This dissertation has been an

attempt to demonstrate the multivalence of the postwar, not as a historical timeframe but rather as a

discursive space where the past and the present, the outside and the inside, the author and the reader

come into relation with each other. If the foundational narrative of the postwar is one that was

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[44] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Continuum, 2004), 305.

[45] In an interview with Julie Drew, Stuart Hall famously declares: "So, postcolonial is not the end of colonisation. It is after a certain kind of colonialism, after a certain moment of high imperialism and colonial occupation—in the wake of it, in the shadow of it, inflected by it—it is what it is because something else has happened before, but it is also something new." See "Cultural Composition: Stuart Hall on Ethnicity and the Discursive Turn," *Race, Rhetoric, and the Postcolonial* (edited by Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham, State University of New York Press, 1999), 230. Hall approaches the contentions surrounding the boundaries of the "postcolonial" in another essay: "When Was 'the Post-Colonial'? Thinking at the Limit," *The Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (edited by Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, Routledge, 1996), 242-60.

coherent, progressive, and dominant, the competing narratives that this dissertation have aimed to

present were, and would always remain, multiple, fragmented, decentered, and dissident.

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to iu setsu o ima yonde, gazō o kaiseki shite mitara hontō datta. Shiranakatta desu…" *Twitter*,
April 13, 2018, 9:40 a.m.,
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