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CONVENTIONS

For names of authors and scholars writing in East Asian languages, I follow the East Asian convention in which family names precede given names. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. Where English translations are available, I cite both the original and the translated texts and indicate when modifications to the translation have been made. When unnoted, citations are from the original. In addition to translations, I refer to important expressions in their original scripts and only include transliterations (*rōmaji* or *pinyin*) where pronunciation is important. Japanese language citations follow the *kana* orthography (*kanazukai*) employed in the source.

Introduction Corporeality and the Surplus of Overcoming

To be sensuous, that is, to be an object of sense, to be a sensuous object, and thus to have sensuous objects outside oneself—objects of one's sensuousness. To be sensuous is to *suffer*.

Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (1844)[1]

It is as if a capability that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, has been taken from us: the ability to share experiences. […] A generation that had gone to school on horse-drawn streetcars now stood under the open sky in a landscape where nothing remained unchanged but the clouds and, beneath those clouds, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body.

Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller" (1936)[2]

We must understand resistance and submission in light of the concrete situation. Thus even in the case of the "Overcoming Modernity" symposium, which appears so unsightly today, it seems to me that there is still something to be saved. This problem is in some sense related to how we interpret Kawakami's notion of "intellectual trembling." Resistance has several stages, as does submission. To discard the idea of "overcoming modernity" by identifying it with its legend would be to abandon those problems that we might still succeed to today, and this would act against the formation of tradition. I think we should reclaim the legacy of these ideas with the greatest breadth possible.

抵抗と屈服とは、具体的な状況に照らして見なければならぬので、今日から何とも不様に見える「近代の超克」にしても、まだ一点の救済の余地はあるように私は思われる。問題は河上のいう「知的戦慄」の解釈いかんにかかっている。抵抗にも幾段階もあり、屈服にも幾段階もある。「超克」伝説だけで思想を切り捨ててしまうこのは、そこに提出されている今日継承可能な問題までも捨てることになって、伝統形成には不利である。能う限りの可能性の幅で遺産をとらえなおすのが思想の処理としては正しいと思う。

Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好, "Overcoming Modernity" 近代の超克 (1959)[3]

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[1] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: Prometheus, 1988), 155. Marx's emphasis.

[2] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 3, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, et al., eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 143-144.

[3] Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好, "Kindai no chōkoku" 近代の超克 [Overcoming Modernity], in *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū* 竹内好全集 [Complete Works of Takeuchi Yoshimi], vol. 8, (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1980), 24-25; English translation in

In the aftermath of Japan's defeat in WWII, the political theorist and intellectual historian Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男 (1914-1996) wrote of the characteristics of Japanese literature: "[T]he minds of our writers cling like leeches to natural, sensual phenomena, and lack a really free flight of the imagination, so in one sense all of our literature is 'carnal.'" (感性的=自然的所与に作家の精神がかきのようにへばりついてイマジネーションの真に自由な飛翔が欠けている点で、ある意味じゃみんな「肉体」文学だよ。)[4] This purported prominence of sensuality over detached scrutiny, Maruyama proceeds, contributed to a lack of critical reflexivity in times of political oppression, ultimately rendering Japan vulnerable to fascism. At once proclaiming Japanese literature's excellence in capturing corporeal sensibility and decrying its alleged paucity in "ideas," Maruyama's cultural essentialism feeds into a plethora of discourses continually reified and contested by both Japanese writers themselves and a global readership that gradually accrued after the war.[5] In lieu of a wholesale dismissal, however, my project recalibrates the affordances, both aesthetic and political, of Japanese literature's attentiveness to corporeality during the tumultuous early decades of the Shōwa period (1925-1989). I do so by examining the writings of authors who resorted—often at moments of profound political and personal crisis—to corporeal sensibility as a productive site that resists full containment within ideology.

Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Overcoming Modernity," in *What Is Modernity: Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, ed. and trans. Richard Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 118. (Hereafter "Japanese" and "English.")

[4] Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男, "Nikutai bungaku kara nikutai seiji made" 肉体文学から肉体政治まで [From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics], in *Maruyama Masao shū* 丸山眞男集 [Collected Works of Maruyama Masao], vol. 4 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), 212; English translation by Barbara Ruch in Maruyama Masao, "From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics," trans. Barbara Ruch, in *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. Ivan Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 251.

[5] Kawabata Yasunari's 1968 Nobel Lecture titled "Japan, the Beautiful and Myself" (美しい日本と私) furnishes a fine example for this. Together with the Nobel committee's highly romanticized rationale—"for his narrative mastery, which with great sensibility expresses the essence of the Japanese mind"—Kawabata's self-mystifying gestures served to consolidate an ethnic-essentialism that would continue to inform the global readership to this day. See Gregory Golley, *When Our Eyes No Longer See: Realism, Science, and Ecology in Japanese Literary Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 74.

Along these lines, I follow three generations of Japanese writers as the question of embodied life (*seikatsu* 生活) became no longer self-evident but took on existential weight during times of intense political and intellectual setbacks. The writers are the modernist Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892-1927)[6]; the Marxists Kobayashi Takiji 小林多喜二 (1903-1933) and Nakano Shigeharu 中野重治 (1902-1979); and the postwar democratic thinkers and critics of fascism Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男 (1914-1996) and Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好 (1910-1977). Born roughly a decade apart from one another in the 1890s, the 1900s, and the 1910s, each of the three generations engaged with dominant ideologies of their times. In turn, they each struggled to come to terms with defeat when these ideologies became untenable and risked being "overcome" by new ones: when culturalist modernism (*kyōyōshugi* 教養主義) was feverishly denounced by the proletarian movement during the transition between the Taishō and Shōwa eras in the late 1920s; when Marxism faced escalating government crackdowns and found itself powerless against the rise of fascism during the 1930s; and when, in the wake of Japan's surrender, liberal democracy, imposed by the U.S. occupation forces and sustained by what became known as the postwar regime (*sengo taisei* 戦後体制), was believed to have settled accounts with the nation's fascist past.[7] During these critical moments, as I will demonstrate, the body as the locus of both thinking and feeling—hence a liminal sphere of indistinction between the ideological and the pre-ideological—became for these authors a crucial territory that had to be reconfigured as a vehicle of resistance.

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[6] It bears noting that here I adopt a capacious and arguably more meaningful definition of modernism. To be sure, Akutagawa hailed from well outside both the experimental *Shin-kankakuha* 新感覚派 (New Sensationism) and the small circle of avant-gardists who appropriated techniques like visual poetry. However, both the highly experimental style of his late writings and his largely uncontested status as the ultimate epitome of Taishō, an era remembered as Japan's high modernist years, justify this categorization. See Chapter 1 for an elaborate discussion of this.

[7] To be sure, these ideologies do not fall neatly into a chronology of successive substitutions but rather often co-exist even as one takes over the dominant position from another. However, their shifting currencies—both in absolute terms and relative to each other—throughout early Shōwa history attest to Japan's morphing intellectual and literary landscape. See for example Ōkubo Tsuneo 大久保典夫, "Shōwa bungakushi no shūen ni tsuite no nōto: Sono autorain" 昭和文学史の終焉についてのノオト：そのアウトライン [Notes on the End of Shōwa Literary History], *Shōwa bungaku kenkyū* 昭和文学研究 [Shōwa Literary Studies] 16 (1988): 1-10.

In the course of tracing these writers' reflections on corporeality throughout some of modern Japan's darkest hours, the project ultimately reconsiders the ends and political affordances of literature as an institution that inhabits both the intangible realm of ideas and the embodied domain of aesthetics. While I endeavor to chart a series of ideological shifts during the early Shōwa era, I also make an epistemic attempt to restore "aesthetics" to its proper status as the knowledge of the sensuous (from its Greek origin *aisthētikón*, "pertaining to sensory perception"). With its focus on the transwar period (*kansenki* 貫戦期), this study seeks to make sense of the rise, fall, aftermath, and (as some would claim)[8] residual presence of fascism through the lens of what Walter Benjamin characterizes as "an aestheticizing of political life."[9] As Susan Buck-Morss observes, at stake for Benjamin is the sensory alienation that lies at the source of such an aestheticization, "which fascism does not create, but merely manages (*betreibt*)."[10] To the extent that this process of sensory alienation both predates and outlives fascism itself—Buck-Morss traces it to the Enlightenment invention of the autotelic, "sense-dead" subject since Kant[11]—20th-century efforts to undo it also outlasted the lifespan of Japan's period of total war, although it is no coincidence that the most intense of such endeavors coalesced with the early Shōwa era's political turmoil.

I. "Carnal Literature" and Its Affordances

This study thus uncovers a lineage of Japanese writers whose extreme attentiveness to corporeal sensibility—a trait that Maruyama denounced as "carnal"—at once exposes the limits of

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[8] Harry Harootunian notably characterizes Japan's postwar life as "filled with dormant traces of the past ready to be reawakened." See Harry Harootunian, preface to *Archaism and Actuality: Japan and the Global Fascist Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023), xvi.

[9] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 3, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, et al., eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 121.

[10] Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (1992): 4.

[11] Ibid., 6-10.

thinking and constitutes its repair by re-imagining the body as a site of unassimilable surplus that defies ideological subjugation. By ideology, I refer broadly to systems of beliefs and ideas that come to inform individuals' life choices, political orientations, and modes of comporting themselves. To be sure, following Louis Althusser's thesis, ideology remains inexorably bound to the material world insofar as it "always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" and can exert influence only through individuals' embodied engagement with the world.[12] However, it can nevertheless acquire an autonomy that evades individual efforts of resistance once an ideology becomes institutionalized in the discursive space and hence integrated into a people's or a generation's lifeworlds (*Lebenswelt*), into which individuals are thrown (*geworfen*). Thus, echoing Heidegger's notion of the inauthentic self—namely, when Dasein unreflexively embodies its facticity and fallen-ness in its everyday existence and becomes "the They" (*Das Man*)[13]—the authors studied in this project in effect partook in a shared pursuit of the authentic modern subject by reversing the self-reifying mechanism of ideology.

While I contest (and, to an extent, invert) Maruyama's association of corporeal sensibility—or "carnality" (肉体性), to adopt his term—with a purported cultural inability to resist fascism, it must be noted that an attentiveness to the body, despite its resilience to institutional assimilation, does not automatically translate into an agency of resistance in itself. Rather, I contend, ideological defeats (敗北) always occurred precisely because one ideology failed to claim and defend the sensuous domain of quotidian experience, leaving ordinary people's corporeal sensibilities to be transformed by an antagonistic ideology. As shown in Chapter 2, for example, Japanese Marxists' bid to reclaim their popular basis against the rising popularity of Emperor-System-fascism during the 1930s was crippled by the Left's incapability to drill down to the level of ordinary people's everyday

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[12] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 166.
[13] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 107-122.

life. In his autobiographical *tenkō shōsetsu* 転向小説 (fiction of political conversion), "The House in the Village" (1935), Nakano Shigeharu explored the convoluted political sensibilities of the rural populace that at once evaded full integration into the fascist cult of *kokutai* 国体 (national polity) and stubbornly resisted the elitist proletarian movement's attempt to transform them into socialized forces of change. Similarly, in Chapter 3, while fiercely defending the humanitarian ideals of the postwar constitution in 1960, Takeuchi Yoshimi underlined that, without an embodied effort on the Japanese people's part to reshape their own sensibilities through grass-roots activism like the Anpō Protest, the democratic regime would remain hollow and malleable to totalitarian appropriation as exemplified by Kishi Nobusuke's forceful passing of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (*Anpō jōyaku* 安保条約).

Herein lies the significance of the ontological status of the body as surplus. It is also here that I depart from a conventional phenomenological approach to literature, despite sharing with it an emphasis on pre-reflexive lived experience as the privileged site of inquiry. Unlike phenomenology, this project does not concern itself with the body's relationship with objects *per se*. It does, however, explore the embodied individual's process of orienting him- or herself in times of radical social change. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed attributes her commitment to phenomenology to "its emphasis on the lived experience of inhabiting a body, or what Edmund Husserl calls the 'living body (*Leib*),'" insofar as phenomenology "emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds."[14] Echoing Ahmed's refusal to be "properly" phenomenological, I circumvent discussions of the subject's intentionality toward objects and instead zoom in on how the body makes possible processes of re-orientation or, rather, refusals to be re-oriented by institutional forces such as the literary

[14] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 2.

establishment (*bundan* 文壇) (Chapter 1), the fascist state apparatus (Chapter 2), and the superimposed Cold War political order (Chapter 3). Whereas this project boasts no interest in refining the phenomenological approach as method—nor does it seek to retrospectively name certain Japanese authors' modes of orienting themselves (Takeuchi Yoshimi in particular) as "phenomenological"—it benefits from phenomenology's critique of scientific and historical positivism. That said, in contrast to critics like Kamei Hideo who adopt phenomenology as a means of foregrounding the textual processes of subject formation,[15] my interest ultimately lies not in mapping the morphing of sensibility but in rediscovering a genealogy of "carnal literature" (à la Maruyama) where the sensing—that is, aesthetic—body furnishes an anchoring point despite intense ideological disorientations.

II. "Overcoming" as Paradigm and the Question of "Conversion"

In July 1942, a little over half a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, leading Japanese intellectuals gathered in Tokyo to discuss the question of Japan's cultural identity. At a time when the empire was at war with Britain and the United States, both of which once represented the civilized West in whose image Japan had striven to shape itself, the ramifications of modernity (*kindai* 近代) provoked both nationalistic zeal and intellectual anxiety.[16] If Japan's modernization/Westernization since the Meiji period had catapulted it into the ranks of great powers, the outbreak of the Pacific War presented intellectuals with an unprecedented existential question regarding the nation's "world-historical standpoint" (世界史的立場).[17] In spite of the

[15] See Michael Bourdaghs, "Editor's Introduction: Buried Modernities—The Phenomenological Criticism of Kamei Hideo," in Kamei Hideo, *Transformations of Sensibility: The Phenomenology of Meiji Literature*, trans. Michael Bourdaghs (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002), vii-xxviii.

[16] For an account of the symposium's historical context, see Richard Calichman, "'Overcoming Modernity': The Dissolution of Cultural Identity," introduction to *Overcoming Modernity: Cultural Identity in Wartime Japan*, ed. and trans. Richard Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1-41.

[17] In a series of colloquia held between 1941 and 1942 titled "The World-Historical Standpoint and Japan" (世界史的立場と日本), several second-generation Kyoto School philosophers—including Nishitani Keiji, Kōyama Iwao, Kōsaka

participants' enthusiasm and its subsequent notoriety after 1945, the "Overcoming Modernity" (*Kindai no chōkoku* 近代の超克) symposium made little intellectual progress beyond its own premise, namely, a rallying call to overcome (Western) modernity propelled by an "intellectual trembling" amidst Japan's "holy war" against major Western powers.[18]

While the Hegelian-fascist dialectical logic of the symposium has since been widely (and rightly) denounced, its contested legacies remain to be further unpacked to this day. To denounce the "Overcoming Modernity" symposium as merely a product of fascist "brainwashing" not only inevitably reproduces the problem elsewhere (Wherefore the power of this mechanism of "brainwashing"?) but also "throw[s] the baby out with the bathwater,"[19] as Karatani Kōjin (paraphrasing Takeuchi Yoshimi) puts it, by completely circumventing the intellectual dilemma that it set out (but failed) to resolve. In his 1959 critical re-evaluation of the symposium, Takeuchi contrasts the event's prominent status as a legend with its intellectual paucity—that is, its power as ideology with its disproportionate meekness as thought.[20] In separating the two dimensions of a singular event—namely, the ideological/institutional and the ideational/individual—from each other, Takeuchi in effect points to a much more common phenomenon in modern Japanese history where modern rationalistic (*kindai gōrishugi* 近代合理主義) thinking finds itself powerless against sweeping ideological shifts and cannot but be "overcome."

On the ideological level, this project covers three such "overcomings," as it were: the overcoming of modernism-culturalism by Marxism; that of Marxism by fascism; and that of fascism by the postwar liberal democratic order. Furthermore, these dialectical overcomings all sprang from

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Masaaki, and Suzuki Shigetaka—gathered to advocate for Japan's active role in bringing about a multipolar world against the Eurocentric world order dominated by the West. See John W. M. Krummel, "The Kyoto School's Wartime Philosophy of a Multipolar World," *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary* 201 (2022): 63-83.

[18] See Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Kindai no chōkoku" [Overcoming Modernity], Japanese, 24-25; English, 118.

[19] Karatani Kōjin, "The Discursive Space of Modern Japan," trans. Seiji Lippit, in *History and Repetition*, ed. Seiji Lippit (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 62.

[20] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Kindai no chōkoku" [Overcoming Modernity], English, 103-105.

Japanese intellectuals' wrestling with the influx of Western ideas. Indeed, even fascism, which masqueraded under the Emperor System and the myth of a timeless *kokutai*, was a remarkably hybrid product whose origin has to be traced in part to Meiji Japan's self-refashioning after the Prussian model.[21] Comparing Japan's seemingly more successful modernization with that of China, Takeuchi contends that, in contrast to China's fierce resistance, Japan forwent the opportunity of proper subject-formation and merely submissively embodied the slave's desire to become the master without challenging the hegemonic regime that constantly reproduces this power imbalance.[22] This linear conception of world history (an inherently spatio-temporal cognate), already implicit in the Meiji ideal of "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika* 文明開化), was in turn reinforced by Japan's sense of belatedness in relation to Euro-American nations. This geopolitical "belatedness," moreover, speaks to modernist culture's paradoxical relationship to temporality. As Perry Meisel contends, writing of literary modernism: "The will to modernity that we commonly equate with the structure of modernism as a whole is largely a defensive response to the increasingly intolerable burdens of coming late in a tradition."[23] Thus, if what Takeuchi frames as Japan's "honor student culture" (優等生文化) is informed by an intently felt unevenness of the modern world, this drive toward "overcoming" further coalesced with modernity's own project of incessant self-negation.

In this light, the successive ideological shifts *qua* overcomings bespeak a stillbirth of national identity capable of sustaining itself. Underlying the Japanese intellectuals' ambitious wartime attempt to "overcome modernity" is an unwitting acknowledgement of a crisis, namely, that Japan will be—

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[21] See for example Perry Anderson, "The Prussia of the East?" *boundary 2* 18, no. 3 (1991): 11-19; Bernd Martin, "The German Role in the Modernization of Japan — The Pitfall of Blind Acculturation," trans. Peter Wetzler, *Oriens Extremus* 33, no. 1 (1990): 77-88.

[22] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "What Is Modernity? (The Case of Japan and China)" in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, ed. and trans. Richard Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 72

[23] Perry Meisel, *The Myth of the Modern: A Study in British Literature and Criticism after 1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 2.

or has been—overcome by modernity. Indeed, as Harry Harootunian, addressing this apparent paradox, would have it:

> But because modernity itself constituted a constant overcoming, Japanese found themselves facing the impossible task of temporally overcoming what was already an overcoming. This dilemma could only remind them of the inevitable succession of historical phenomena, the excess of historical consciousness, and a common destiny that they would always remain overcome by modernity.[24]

That is, whereas the symposium sought to exempt themselves from the indefinite chain of eventfulness and hence to institute the be-all and end-all of overcomings, as it were, it inevitably finds themselves trying to leave the planet by pulling their own hair, to adopt Lu Xun's metaphor.[25] Insofar as "its status as an event only guaranteed that it would remain merely another episode in the process of modernity,"[26] the symposium could only modernity's own ideological project of eternal renewal. "Overcoming," thus, always inexorably prefigures its own defeat.

It is in this sense that the two historically loaded terms that featured prominently in early Shōwa discourses, "overcoming" (*chōkoku* 超克) and "conversion" (*tenkō* 転向), reveal themselves to the two sides of the same problem, with both being conditioned by the ineluctable limits of disembodied ideologies *qua* ideologies. In an effort to parse the

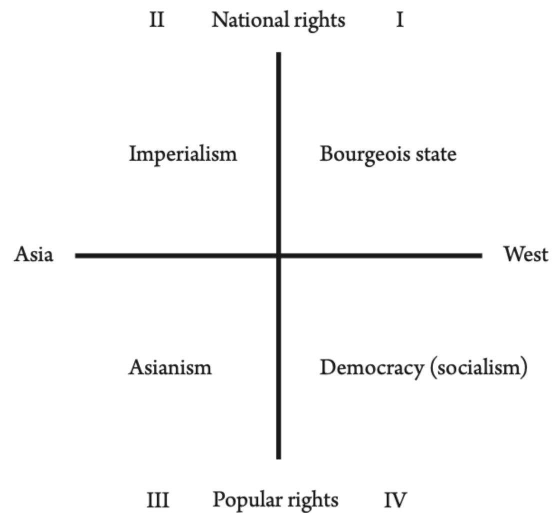

Figure 1 The Discursive Space of Modern Japan, from Karatani Kōjin, *History and Repetition*, 56

[24] Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 33.
[25] In a 1932 essay, Lu Xun describes a "third type of person" who indulges in pure artistic creation and tries to situate themselves outside the political divides. Dismissing them as devoid of their own subjectivity, Lu Xun points out the untenability of such a position by comparing them to fools ignorant of the law of gravity. See Lu Xun 魯迅, "Disanzhongren" 第三種人 [The Third Type of Person], in *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 [Complete Works of Lu Xun], vol. 4 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006), 450-456.
[26] Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Moderntiy: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*, 45.

convoluted discursive space of modern Japan, Karatani Kōjin highlights repetitive patterns through which ideological themes and problematics recurred throughout history. Significantly, Karatani observes that all ideological factions sought to navigate the two perpetual sets of tensions, i.e., between Asia and the West, on the one hand; between national and people's rights, on the other hand. Accordingly, he draws out the discursive space of modern Japan with these two sets of tensions as two axes (Figure 1).[27] Defined by the inherent conflicts of the many ideals of the Meiji Restoration, the four quadrants each represent a distinct set of ideologies, with the right-hand side driven by the will to Westernization and de-Asianization and the left-hand side by the reverse. "However, it is difficult to place individuals within the spaces sketched out by this diagram." Karatani allows, "For individuals *circulate among* (*tenkai suru* 転回する, lit.: 'to rotate, to revolve') these domains. It is for this reason that the discursive space of modern Japan becomes so complicated."[28] Indeed, after the Meiji 20s (1880s-1890s), "many supporters of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (quadrant IV) shifted to the national rights camp (quadrant I), and furthermore to imperialism (quadrant II)."[29] In this sense, the recanting of popular rights in favor of the national polity that happened *en masse* among leftist intellectuals only repeated this pattern.[30]

Drawing from Karatani's axial coordinates, I arrive at a more capacious understanding of both "overcoming" (*chōkoku*) and "conversion" (*tenkō*) beyond their respective local contexts. Whereas "conversion" conventionally refers to the historical phenomenon of Marxists renouncing their political beliefs under duress and, in many cases, turning toward the national polity during the early 1930s (see Chapter 2), Karatani's thesis presents it as a universal experience of modern

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[27] Karatani Kōjin, "The Discursive Space of Modern Japan," 56.
[28] Karatani Kōjin, "Kindai Nihon no gensetsu kūkan" 近代日本の言説空間 [The Discursive Space of Modern Japan], in *Rekishi to hanpuku* 歴史と反復 [History and Repetition] (Tokyo Iwanami shoten: 2004), 73; English in ibid., 60. My emphasis. Translation modified.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Note, however, that this is by no means to dismiss the uniqueness of *tenkō* as a phenomenon rooted in the cultural and political context of the early 1930s, as will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Japanese intellectuals. Rather than merely denoting the binaristic choice between Left (Marxism) and Right (fascism), that is, "conversion" takes on the broader meaning of individuals' rotations (*tenkai*) between ideological positions while failing to secure an anchoring point at moments of "disorientation." In a similar vein, what the "Overcoming Modernity" symposium envisions as linear successions of historical consciousness instead reveals itself to be no more than rotations—on the massive level—of the Japanese nation between dominant ideologies. That is, rather than a Kuhnian "paradigm shift" that suggests a fundamental change in principle, "overcoming" itself constitutes an enduringly powerful paradigm that signals a crisis of subjectivity in modern Japan. It is for this reason, I contend, that Japanese writers' rediscoveries of corporeal sensibility represented endeavors to remedy the subjectlessness of disembodied ideologies and, in so doing, furnished potential lines of escape from the rise of fascism.

III. Corporeality and (Dis-/Re-)Orientations

Inflecting the questions of "overcoming" and "conversion" into a problematic of (dis-/re-)orientations, this study thus turns to corporeality as that which makes subjective orientation possible in the first place. Here again, I draw from Sara Ahmed's phenomenological reconsideration of what it means to orient oneself. In "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?", Kant grounded the question of intellectual orientation in the physical experience of orienting oneself. Beginning with the example of walking blindfolded, Kant underlined that to know one's direction depends on the feeling of difference between the right and left sides of one's body. Foregrounding it as a corporeal process, Kant explains: "I call this a *feeling* because these two sides outwardly display no designatable difference in intuition."[31] Following Kant's emphasis on bodily inhabitating as the

[31] Immanuel Kant, "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, trans. Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5.

ground of one's knowledge of where to turn, Ahmed avers: "Space then becomes a question of 'turning,' of directions taken, which not only allow things to appear, but also enable us to find our way through the world by situating ourselves in relation to such things."[32] To the extent that space, both physical and discursive, depends on inhabitance, it follows, corporeality—as well as the self-consciousness of having a body—becomes the precondition of any "turning." If orientation inevitably entails knowing which way we are facing before knowing which way to turn, returning to the body at moments of ideological turmoil, rather than registering total intellectual defeat, may well furnish a techne of self-anchoring.

As noted earlier, the early decades of Shōwa (from the late 1920s to the 1950s) witnessed intense ideological instabilities manifested in a series of "overcomings" which both continued and demarcated from Meiji Japan's (1868-1912) national enterprise of "enriching the country, strengthening the armed forces" (*fukoku kyōhei* 富国強兵). After Japan's decisive victory against Russia in 1905 formally established the nation as a great global power, the Meiji ideology was deemed already accomplished and was in turn replaced by the more individualistic bourgeois culture of the Taishō era (1912-1926). As many have observed, the accomplishment of national *Bildung*, as it were, also instituted a transition from the old ideal of "*risshin shusse*" 立身出世 (rising in the world), which bound individual self-interests to the prosperity of the state,[33] toward what became known as "culturalism" or self-cultivation (*kyōyō shugi* 教養主義).[34] The decoupling of the personal from the state purportedly consolidated the modern subject as a self-responsible individual under the politically lenient regime of Taishō democracy.[35] Nevertheless, as Karatani's analysis of intellectuals'

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[32] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 6.

[33] See Timothy J. Van Compernolle, *Struggling Upward: Worldly Success and the Japanese Novel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1-23.

[34] See Harry Harootunian, "Introduction: A Sense of an Ending and the Problem of Taishō," in *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō Democracy*, eds. Bernard S. Silberman and Harry D. Harootunian (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 3-28.

[35] See for example Gennifer Weseinfeld, "Mavo's Conscious Constructivism: Art, Individualism, and Daily Life in Interwar Japan," *Art Journal* 55, no. 3 (1996): 64-73.

disorientated—and disorienting—rotations between radically divergent ideologies (as well as Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation) demonstrates, this modern subjectivity frequently found itself incapable of asserting its own integrity/identity and, eventually, proved powerless against the rise of fascism.

In this sense, my project sheds light on the broader genealogy of Japanese intellectuals' philosophical pursuit of alternative modes of subjectivity than that of the West, in particular through the frustrations and pitfalls of the pursuit. If Kobayashi Hideo's designation of modern Japanese literature as one "of the lost home" (*kokyō o ushinatta bungaku* 故郷を失った文学) intuitively names an experience of disorientation that followed Meiji Japan's allegedly successful modernization-via-Westernization,[36] the sense of nausea brought on by the national success coalesced with philosophical assays to address a crisis of identity that perpetually haunted Japanese intellectuals and, in some cases, translated into dire consequences. Venturing to overcome this cultural historical nihilism, Kyoto School philosopher and one of the most prominent participants in the "Overcoming Modernity" symposium, Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治 (1900-1990) aligned his notion of "subjective nothingness" (*shutaiteki mu* 主体的無) with fascist Japan's effort to interpellate its citizens into an identity as imperial subjects under the principle of "self-annihilation in devotion to the nation" (*messhi hōkō* 滅私奉公).[37] In an attempt at "a figuration of the unfigurable *par excellence*," to borrow Calichman's words,[38] Nishitani in effect sought to inject positive valence into what would otherwise emerge as a crisis, albeit colluding with the nation-state's atrocious enterprise of total destruction.[39] In contrast to Nishitani's invocation of the state as a means of turning subjectlessness

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[36] See Kobayashi Hideo, "Literature of the Lost Home," in *Literature of the Lost Home: Kobayashi Hideo—Literary Criticism, 1924-1939*, trans. Paul Anderer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 46-54.
[37] Richard Calichman, "Guest Editor's Introduction," *positions: asia critique* 17, no. 1 (2009): 7.
[38] Ibid., 8.
[39] For a discussion of the historical context and implications of Nishitani's philosophy, see Fabian Völker, "Overcoming Nishitani: Nihilism and Nationalism in Keiji Nishitani's Political Philosophy," in *Religious Experience, Secular Reason and Politics around 1945: Sources for Rethinking Religion and Spirituality in Contemporary Societies*, eds. Hans Schelkshorn and Herman Westerink (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 117-164.

into a tool of national mobilization, Takeuchi turned his attention overseas for intellectual resources. Japan's lack of resistance to the hegemonic logic of the West was, in his view, an inauthentic and intrinsically slavish attitude compared to China's resistant self-renewal. At any rate, both Nishitani and Takeuchi identified a crisis of subjectivity as the source of the perpetual sense of dislocation underlying modern Japanese intellectuals' facile submissions to emerging ideologies. My own project thus aims to revisit this crisis by excavating resources of resistance from within Japan (including Takeuchi himself).[40]

In response to the same crisis, I argue, writers like Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Nakano Shigeharu, and Takeuchi Yoshimi sought to re-establish a new form of subjectivity that would resist such rotations ("revolutions"?)—that is, defy "overcoming/being overcome" on the level of mass ideological shifts and "conversion" on the level of individual ethical choices. To suspend expository thinking and return to the flesh, as it were, simultaneously amounts to a refusal to be oriented and re-oriented—or rather, to be "overcome" and "converted"—and, in turn, constitutes an endeavor to parse the very disorientation that conditions the unmastered now. As Ahmed writes of the shattering disorientations that often characterize queer experience:

> And, for sure, bodies that experience being out of place might need to be orientated, to find a place where they feel comfortable and safe in the world. The point is not whether we experience disorientation (for we will, and we do), but how such experiences can impact on the orientation of bodies and spaces, which is after all about how the things are "directed" and how they are shaped by the lines they follow. The point is what we do with such moments of disorientation, as well as what such moments can do—whether they can offer us the hope of new directions, and whether new directions are reason enough for hope.[41]

[40] It is worth noting, however, that this "within" never truly stays inside Japan insofar as the authors studied in each chapter were simultaneously pioneers in their translational effort to remediate Japan with world cultures. Notably, the three major figures discussed here, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Nakano Shigeharu, and Takeuchi Yoshimi, all graduated from Tokyo Imperial University with degrees in foreign literatures: Akutagawa in English literature; Nakano in German literature; and Takeuchi in Chinese literature.
[41] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 158.

Indeed, to retrieve "hope" from disorientation is also to come to terms with one's own contingency by fully suffering what Merleau-Ponty calls the "vital experience of giddiness and nausea."[42] In this sense, the texts studied in this dissertation—from Akutagawa's thematization of intellectual culture's alienation of bodily sensibility to Nakano's laborious parsing of the convoluted everyday experience of Japanese farmers—serve as testimony to a resilient archive of hope during the nation's darkest times. Translating the crisis of subjectivity into a crisis of corporeal sensibility, these writers in effect re-imagined moments of disorientation as sites of radical potentiality.

IV. Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1 examines Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's thematization of the crisis of sensibility in his late writings. An event widely regarded as marking the end of the Taishō era, Akutagawa's suicide in 1927 has long been seen as an allegory for the demise of aestheticism and intellectualism in his time. Recalibrating both the purportedly apolitical nature of Akutagawa's oeuvre and the critical discourses that designated his death as the "defeat of literature," this chapter brings together two segments of his late writings seldom examined together: Akutagawa's autobiographical tales such as "Cogwheels" (1927) that frequently featured paranoid artists no longer capable of accessing the sensory world, on the one hand; and his more realistic and (overtly) political works like "The Folding Fan of Hunan" (1926) that nevertheless always designated politics as radically other and illegible, on the other hand. In so doing, I show that, together, these two groups of Akutagawa's late works underline a radical schism between the depoliticized intellectual culture of the Taishō era and latent possibilities of social unrest that stubbornly defied full integration into literary representation. Drawing on Akutagawa's long-standing fascination with and horror at the violent imagery of decapitation, the chapter further calls into question the critical apparatus that contained (and, largely,

[42] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 296.

continues to contain) the author's death within the Taishō culture of unpoliticality as itself a form of beheading. In selectively preserving Akutagawa's convoluted legacies by reiterating his status as a doomed aesthete, this critical apparatus partook in an alienation of aesthetics from its proper concern with the sensuous world and, in turn, colluded with the state's gradual ostracization of the intelligentsia from the public sphere where meaningful political engagement was possible. Along these lines, instead of the end of Taishō, I re-assess Akutagawa's death as the primal scene that instituted Shōwa literature and his late writings as marked by a persistent endeavor to re-imagine the body as a coherent site of both critical reflections and political passions.

Chapter 2 follows the reappropriations of the I-novel by two prominent Marxist writers, Kobayashi Takiji and Nakano Shigeharu, against a backdrop of intensifying state crackdowns. Having proclaimed itself as the vanquisher of the bourgeois modernist culture that Akutagawa allegedly epitomized, Marxism encountered its own defeat during the 1930s amidst the phenomenon of *tenkō*, or the recanting of leftist beliefs by JCP (Japanese Communist Party) leaders and proletarian intellectual *en masse* under duress. Mapping two divergent attempts to reassert revolutionary subjectivity that both foreground the everyday subject and its corporeal sensibility, I juxtapose Kobayashi Takiji's unfinished novella *Life of a Party Member* (1933) and Nakano Shigeharu's short story "The House in the Village" (1935). Whereas the former inverts the I-novel narrative by imagining a complete obliteration of everyday life for the sake of a purely political life, the latter calls into question the alleged pre-political nature of everyday life and reconceptualizes the quotidian agent of living (*seikatsusha*) as a political subject. Through a close reading of both texts, I show that the turn toward corporeality among Japanese proletarian writers, in particular Nakano, as a site of tension reveals not so much the limits of the Marxist ideology but those of "the political" as such. Further bringing Nakano's portrayal of rural life in dialogue with Kyoto School Marxist Tosaka Jun's thesis on everydayness as a space of resistance, the chapter ultimately contends that, precisely

because of the embodied quotidian subject's occupation of a sphere of indistinction between the political and the pre-political, it must be parsed, contested, and defended from fascist assimilation.

Chapter 3 departs from the domain of literature *per se* and investigates how the lineage of "carnal thinking" continued in postwar criticism. Here I examine the discourses on corporeal sensibility by two leading postwar thinkers, political scientist and intellectual historian Maruyama Masao and Sinologist and literary critic Takeuchi Yoshimi. In response to the rise of "carnal literature" after Japan's defeat and its nihilistic demand that literature "return to the flesh," Maruyama extends the connotations of the so-called "carnal literature" to indicate the entire Japanese literary tradition's privileging of bodily sensibility over distanced reflexivity, to which he in turn attributes the fateful takeover of fascism. By contrast, Maruyama's lifelong friend Takeuchi Yoshimi consistently underlines the radical political potentiality of the non-transcendental, embodied subject. Takeuchi's insistence on corporeal sensibility, I show, took on significance most prominently during the Anpō protests and was best illustrated in two influential speeches delivered a few months apart, "Our Constitutional Feeling" (1960) and "Asia as Method" (1960). Diving into corporeal subjectivity as the common thread between these two works, I contend that Takeuchi's advocacy for critical reflections on embodied experience opens up new dialogic spaces for rethinking the postwar political order and the role of Asia in a Eurocentric world.

CHAPTER 1 Modernism's Corpse: Decapitating and Re-membering Akutagawa Ryūnosuke

> "It is important—even necessary—for us to become acutely aware of the fact that we can't trust ourselves. The only ones you can trust to some extent are people who really know that. We had better get this straight. Otherwise, our own characters (*jinkaku*) could fall off like Xiao-er's head at any time. This is the way you have to read all Chinese newspapers."
>
> 「我々は我々自身のあてにならない事を、痛切に知つて置く必要がある。実際それを知っているもののみが、幾分でもあてになるのだ。そうしないと、何小二の首が落ちたように、我々の人格も、いつどんな時首が落ちるかわからない。――すべて支那の新聞と云うものは、こんな風に読まなくてはいけないのだ。」
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> Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介, "The Story of a Head That Fell Off" 首が落ちた話 (1917)[1]

> 51. Defeat
>
> The hand taking up the pen had started to tremble. He drooled. His head, only after a 0.8 dose of Veronal did it have any clarity. But even then, only for half an hour or an hour. Day to day he lived in this semi-darkness. The blade nicked, a slim sword for a stick.
>
> 五十一　敗北
>
> 彼はペンを執る手も震へ出した。のみならず涎さへ流れ出した。彼の頭は〇・八のヴエロナアルを用ひて覚めた後の外は一度もはつきりしたことはなかつた。しかもはつきりしてゐるのはやつと半時間か一時間だつた。彼は唯薄暗い中にその日暮らしの生活をしてゐた。言はば刃のこぼれてしまつた、細い剣を杖にしながら。
>
> Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介, "A Fool's Life" 或阿呆の一生 (1927)[2]

[1] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介, "Kubi ga ochita hanashi" 首が落ちた話 [The Story of a Head That Fell Off"], in *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū* 芥川龍之介全集 [Complete Works of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke] (Hereafter *ARZ*), vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996), 62; English translation by Jay Rubin in "The Story of a Head That Fell Off," in *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006), 119. Translation modified.

[2] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介, "Aru ahō no isshō" 或阿呆の一生 [A Fool's Life], in *ARZ*, vol. 16, 67; English translation by Will Petersen in "A Fool's Life," in *The Essential Akutagawa*, ed. Seiji Lippit (New York: Marsilio, 1999), 203.

On July 24, 1927, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892-1927) committed suicide by drug overdose,[3] leaving a note expressing a "vague anxiety" (*bonyari shita fuan* ぼんやりした不安).[4] Spanning little over a decade (1914-1927), Akutagawa's short but productive literary career has all but become eponymous of the thriving literary culture of the Taishō period (1912-1926).[5] Highly publicized at the time, Akutagawa's suicide amidst deteriorating physical and mental health has since been regarded by many as bringing to an end an episode of full-blown intellectualism and aestheticism in modern Japanese literary history.[6] Following the Marxist critic Miyamoto Kenji's 宮本顕治 (1908-2007) famous inscription of the event as the quintessential "defeat of literature,"[7] scholars like Seiji Lippit have consistently highlighted its symbolic weight as a "historical allegory" that transcends personal tragedy.[8]

This chapter does not contest the status of Akutagawa's death as an era-defining event but reconceptualizes its significance as a moment not (only) of "defeat" but also of lost possibilities and, in turn, as not only an ending (of Taishō) but also a beginning/origin (of Shōwa [1926-1989]). In foregrounding a crisis of corporeal sensibility co-produced by the modernist project of artistic autonomy and the intellectuals' retreat from politics, Akutagawa's late writings, I will show, furnish a

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[3] The exact kind of sleeping pills that Akutagawa took remains a matter of debate. For a discussion of the cause of death and circumstantial evidence, see Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi 関口安義, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to sono jidai* 芥川龍之介とその時代 [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and His Time] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1999), 663-668.

[4] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Aru kyūyū e okuru shuki" 或旧友へ送る手記 [A Note to a Certain Old Friend], in *Arz*, vol. 16, 3-8.

[5] While Akutagawa published his first story "Old Age" (老年) in 1914, his first major publication was the short story "Rashōmon" 羅生門 in *Teikoku bungaku* 帝国文学 in November 1915, when he was a student at Tokyo Imperial University. Despite its lukewarm reception at the time, subsequent stories including "The Nose" 鼻 (January 1916) in *Shinshichō* 新思潮 and the praise from Natsume Sōseki would formally establish Akutagawa as a rising star in the literary establishment. See Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to sono jidai* [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and His Time], 137-262. See also "Chronology," in *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories*, xiii.

[6] See, for example, Inoue Yoshio 井上良雄, "Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to Shiga Naoya" 芥川龍之介と志賀直哉 [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Shiga Naoya], in *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke kenkyu shiryo shusei* 芥川龍之介研究資料集成 [Compilation of Research Materials on Akutagawa Ryūnosuke], ed. Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi 関口安義 (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentā, 1993), vol. 7, 36.

[7] Miyamoto Kenji 宮本顕治, "'Haiboku' no bungaku: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke-shi no bungaku ni tsuite" 「敗北」の文学──芥川龍之介氏の文学について [The Literature of "Defeat": On Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's Literature], in *Miyamoto Kenji bungei hyōron shū* 宮本賢治文芸評論集 [Collected Essays of Literary Criticism by Miyamoto Kenji], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha, 1980), 3-32.

[8] Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 39.

poignant critique of Taishō culture's escalating detachment from lived realities, the dire consequences of which would only materialize later in the Shōwa era's war-ridden early decades. By problematizing the conventional conception of the writer's suicide as an aesthetic incident in line with Taishō literature's "implosion" into self-enclosure,[9] I do not, however, intend to proffer a "political" reading as an *alternative*. For to stage a duel between the artistic and the political inevitably colludes with both modernism's self-proclaimed "unpoliticality" and the Japanese regime's ostracism of intellectuals from the domain of public affairs (*ōyakegoto* 公事) into the private realm (*watakushigoto* 私事).[10] Rather, I contend that Akutagawa's insight—often disguised as a desperate "blindness," à la Paul de Man,[11] due to his waning mental health—lies precisely in uncovering the untenability of such a demarcation and in re-imagining the body as a site of indistinction between the private and the public.

This re-reading thus demands an acknowledgement at once of the heterogeneity of Akutagawa's prolific late writings and of common themes and threads uniting them. A tale of a troubled artist's gradual descent into madness widely considered the hallmark of the author's late period,[12] the posthumously published short story "Cogwheels" 歯車 (1927) has understandably often been interpreted in light of Akutagawa's autobiographical turn during his final years, together with thematically adjacent pieces such as "Daidōji Shinsuke: The Early Years" 大道寺信輔の半生 (1925), "Death Register" 点鬼簿 (1926), and "A Fool's Life" 或阿呆の一生 (1927). Nonetheless, I propose instead to juxtapose the extremely introspective/paranoid narrative of "Cogwheels" alongside the writer's more (overtly) "political" works of this period—most notably his recount of China's

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[9] Here I draw from Lippit's metaphor. See ibid., 14.

[10] For a discussion of late Meiji intellectuals' collusion in the shrinkage of the public sphere, see Harry Harootunian, "Between Politics and Culture: Authority and the Ambiguities of Intellectual Choice in Imperial Japan," in *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō Democracy*, eds. Bernard S. Silberman and Harry D. Harootunian (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 110-155.

[11] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

[12] See for example Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*, 37-71.

revolutionary turmoil as experienced through the aftermath of a public beheading in "The Folding Fan of Hunan" 湖南の扇 (1926) but including, among others, the sketch of a political activist whose passion wanes with age in "One Socialist" 或社会主義者 (1926) and the allegorized social critique of "Kappa" 河童 (1927). Just as the first-person protagonist's struggle with impending madness in his head simultaneously translates into a sensory alienation in the body in "Cogwheels," sense and sensibility profoundly implicate each other in Akutagawa's final moment of crisis. A fault line thus inheres within the writer's late writings between the often fragmented, "modernist" autobiographical narratives where Akutagawa's alter egos find themselves invariably trapped in an overwhelming web of ideas and tropes, on the one hand, and the more socially-embedded, "realist" works which nevertheless designate embodied politics as always radically exterior and inaccessible, on the other hand. The task here is a forensic one, insofar as making sense of a bodiless head necessarily entails recovering a headless body. Along such a line of incision, this chapter is severed into two parts with an interlude connecting them.

If Akutagawa's death invited—and, indeed, continues to invite—eager commemorations propelled by a collective "sense of an ending," to probe its meaning beyond a nostalgic celebration of the Taishō era that he has all but come to epitomize requires a re-membering/re-assembly of both Akutagawa's fragmented late writings and the precarious borders between literature and politics during the late Taishō and early Shōwa years. The first half of the chapter, "Winged Visions," thus re-examines the profoundly troubled, disembodied artistic mind that Akutagawa's paranoid late style thematizes. Focusing on Akutagawa's translational appropriation of the *Künstlerroman* ("artist novel") genre, conventionally preoccupied with an artist's growth into maturity, and his inversion of it, I argue that the schizophrenic narrative of "Cogwheels" points to an anxiety over modernism's program of artistic autonomy, which arose in response to an increasingly professionalized literary establishment in the dawning age of mass media. The interlude then interrogates how the modernist

pursuit of "pure" art augmented intellectuals' self-conscious severance from politics, a trend already in place since the failure of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (*Jiyū minken undō* 自由民権運動) in the late Meiji period (1880s) and was further exacerbated by the Taishō ideal of self-cultivation (*kyōyō* 教養). Along these lines, the second half of the chapter, "Invitation to a Beheading," then turns toward the convoluted modalities of "politics" in Akutagawa's late writings, "The Folding Fan of Hunan" in particular. Situating Akutagawa's veneration of Chinese people's revolutionary passion (*jōnetsu* 情熱) in his longstanding yet morphing fascination with and horror of decapitation, literal and metaphorical, I contend that Akutagawa's belated attempt at making sense of his 1921 journey to China partakes in a critique of modernist culture's complicity in the intensification of state control over public life. Finally, drawing on David Wang's characterization of decapitation as the "'the primal scene' of the twentieth-century Chinese imagination of national, ethnic, and personal trauma,"[13] I delve into the literary historical reification of Akutagawa's own death as the disturbing "primal scene" of Shōwa literature and, in so doing, identify an impulse underlying the Japanese critical apparatus—which itself arose from the modernist ideology—to contain its meaning within a disembodied sphere of depoliticized aesthetics that Akutagawa himself lamented as "literary, all too literary."

I. Winged Visions: Akutagawa, Joyce, and the Anti-*Künstlerroman*

On June 18th, 1919, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke purchased two books by James Joyce including the first edition of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Huebsch, 1916) at the Maruzen Bookstore in Nihonbashi, Tokyo. The acquisition was presumably informed by Noguchi Yonejirō's 野口米次郎 (known in the West as Yoné Noguchi, 1875-1947) enthusiastic commendation of the

[13] David Der-wei Wang, *The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 10.

novel more than a year earlier in the literary magazine *Gakutō* 学燈, for its incisive critique of the Irish condition and Joyce's experimental style. Within the next year or so, Akutagawa would applaud the Irish writer's linguistic virtuosity and attempt a partial translation of the first chapter, posthumously titled "Dedalus" ("*Dīdarasu*" ディイダラス).[14] The short passage (two pages in Akutagawa's *zenshū* or anthologized complete works) records young Stephen Dedalus sitting in the study hall of Clongowes Wood College and listing on the geography textbook his name, class, school and so on in ascending order until "The Universe":

ステファン・ディイダラス	Stephen Dedalus
	Class of Elements
クロンゴオスウツド学校	Clongowes Wood College
サリンズ	Sallins
キルデェア州	County Kildare
愛蘭土	Ireland
欧羅巴	Europe
宇宙	The Universe[15]

The translation ends with Stephen's classmate Fleming's parody on the opposite page:

ステファン・ディイダラスはわが名なり	Stephen Dedalus is my name
愛蘭土はわが国家ぞ	Ireland is my nation.
クロンゴオスはわが住む地なり	Clongowes is my dwelling place
さて天	And heaven my expectation.[16]

Akutagawa's choice, while peculiar, is not incomprehensible. The somewhat bland scene of writing in an institutionalized space of discipline marks the juvenile artist-to-be's first attempt at placing himself in a world measured by abstract entities of varying scales. Although this short translation never came into full fruition and remained unpublished during Akutagawa's lifetime, it nevertheless speaks to his enduring interest in the *Bildung* of the artist or, better, in its antithesis.

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[14] Kawaguchi Kyōichi 川口喬一, *Shōwa shonen no Yurishīzu* 昭和初年の『ユリシーズ』 [*Ulysses* in the Early Shōwa Period] (Tokyo: Misuzu shobō, 2005), 7-14.
[15] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Dīdarasu (kari)" ディイダラス（仮） [Dedalus (tentative)], in *Arz*, vol. 22, 352; James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12. Note that a few lines from the original text ("Class of Elements," "The World") are omitted in Akutagawa's translation. This could be either a slip of hand on Akutagawa's part or out of an uncertainty over how to accurately render certain expressions in Japanese.
[16] Ibid.

Often hailed as the finest representative of the Taishō era (1912-1916),[17] Akutagawa with his keen interest in *Bildung* joins with the epoch's characteristic ideal of self-cultivation or "culturalism" (*kyōyō shugi* 教養主義) and a shifting ideological focus from the Meiji concept of "civilization" (*bunmei* 文明) to a more individualistic notion of "culture" (*bunka* 文化).[18] Having graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1916 with a thesis entitled "Young (William) Morris" and acclaimed as a rising star in the literary establishment (*bundan* 文壇),[19] Akutagawa had likely found an echo in both Stephen's sense of dislocation and the youthful hero's naïve faith in a transcendental universalism that can be achieved through an artistic "coming of age." In his own sustained literary engagement with the motif of *Bildung*, nevertheless, Akutagawa frequently inverts the narrative scheme and thematizes instead the artist's downfall, a tendency that began with early tales like "Hell Screen" 地獄変 (1918) and intensified in "Cogwheels" (1927) and "A Fool's Life" (1927). "Cogwheels," a portrait of the artist as a madman written months before Akutagawa's death, most strikingly upends the mythic metaphor that Joyce's Stephen bears in his Greek surname. Whereas *Portrait* chronicles its youthful hero's initiation into artistic creation, "Cogwheels" records an established writer's descent into madness. Comparison between similar winged visions respectively experienced by Stephen Dedalus and by Akutagawa's first-person narrator only affirms this diametrical difference, as the ancestral figure of Daedalus in the former promises emancipation while Akutagawa's doomed Icarus anticipates the falling apart of the sensible world.[20]

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[17] For an accessible account of Taishō literature and the rise of Japanese literary modernism(s), or "*modanizumu*," during the period, see William J. Tyler, introduction to *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan, 1913-1938*, ed. William J. Tyler (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'I Press, 2008), 1-48.

[18] See Harry D. Harootunian, "Introduction: A Sense of an Ending and the Problem of Taishō," in *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō Democracy*, 3-28.

[19] Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to sono jidai* [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and His Time], 137-262.

[20] Mats Karlsson is right to characterize the short story as "Akutagawa's attempt at *A Portrait of the Artist as Insane*." Mats Karlsson, "Writing Madness: Deranged Impressions in Akutagawa's 'Cogwheels' and Strindberg's *Inferno*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 46, no. 4 (2009): 642.

Reading Akutagawa against the grain, I seek to go beyond the "defeat" narrative that has been reiterated since Miyamoto Kenji's impactful diagnosis by contextualizing "Cogwheels" within the writer's literary criticism during the same period. In an endeavor to map Japanese modernisms in terms of a multi-layered process of "disintegration," Seiji Lippit reads the paranoid fragmentation of "Cogwheels" as a manifestation of the author's loss of faith in the novelistic form.[21] Despite the frequently grim portrayals of Akutagawa's final days, nevertheless, the period immediately preceding his death witnessed some of the most intense reflections on the meaning and ends of literature in modern Japanese history, notably his famous debate, in 1927, with Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎潤一郎 (1886-1965) over the value of plot and the nature of "pure" literature (*junbungaku* 純文学). Taking place across a number of literary journals between April and July, the debate would pave the ground for perennial parleys over the divide between the high and low in Japan's literary establishment.[22] Revisiting in particular the essay "Literary, All Too Literary" 文芸的な、余りに文芸的な (1927), part of Akutagawa's response to Tanizaki, I seek to go beyond conventional understandings of the Akutagawa/Tanizaki debate that either reduce it to a dispute over techniques or celebrate its enduring legacy in critical discourses. Instead, in line with his "anti-*Künstlerroman*," Akutagawa's advocacy for "plotless fiction" bespeaks an acute insight into the stakes of literature as a techne of imposing structure on life. As literary theory, Akutagawa's narrative probes literature's threat, as an autonomous institution, to subsume the artist's embodied sensibilities under a totalizing tropological regime and to turn the labor of sensemaking into a psychotic obsession with narrative enclosure. While taking Lippit's point that Akutagawa's final transgeneric turn was symptomatic of a crisis in representation, I depart from his alignment of the generic dissolution in Akutagawa's final works with a disintegration of the concept of "universality" as modernity's organizing principle. Quite the

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[21] See Chapter 1 of Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*, 37-72.
[22] See Matthew C. Strecher, "Purely Mass or Massively Pure? The Division between 'Pure' and 'Mass' Literature," *Monumenta Nipponica* 51, no. 3 (1996): 357-374.

contrary, I will show, it is from this very universalizing (if not already universal) regime of semiotic excess that the mental collapse of "I" springs, putting at stake not the autonomy of literature but that of sensory life itself.

(1) The Semiotic Economy of Paranoia

Akutagawa's investment in the artist novel (*Künstlerroman*) is confirmed by the recurrent image of the (usually frustrated) artist in his oeuvre, from the eccentric Yoshihide who sacrifices his family in exchange for the brilliance of his painting in "Hell Screen" (1918) to the titular character of "Daidōji Shinsuke: The Early Years" (1925) for whom there was no knowledge that did not come from books. Nowhere is this obsession manifested more intensely than in "Cogwheels," which registers the mental collapse of the narrator whose descent into madness mirrors that of the author himself. The protagonist *Boku* ("I"), addressed by others (or exactly one other, a fan that he runs into) as "Mr. A" ("*A-sensei*"), who struggles with mental illness and the ominous death of his brother-in-law, and the inability to write, all but invites such an identification.[23] Indeed, Akutagawa attempted suicide on the day of the manuscript's completion, only to be rescued by his wife and friend who arrived narrowly in time.[24] While "Cogwheels" has been variously interpreted in light of what Seiji Lippit characterizes as Akutagawa's loss of faith in the novelistic form or what Pau Pitarch-Fernandez construes, in a more optimistic vein, as the author's conscious self-designation in a genealogy of mad geniuses throughout world literary history,[25] such readings shortcircuit the critical potential of the narrative by indiscriminately postulating Mr. A's mental collapse as Akutagawa's own and hence, in their diagnostic stance, circumventing Akutagawa's insight into

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[23] Miyoshi Yukio 三好行雄, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke ron* 芥川龍之介論 [On Akutagawa Ryūnosuke] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1976), 300-301.
[24] Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to sono jidai* [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and His Time], 565-579.
[25] See Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*, 37-72. Pau Pitarch-Fernandez, "Cultivated Madness: Aesthetics, Psychology and the Value of the Author in Early 20th-Century Japan" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2015), 197-246.

paranoia not only as a personal affliction but also as a symptom of his time. Instead, Akutagawa's paranoid subject is better understood, I suggest, through reconsidering the *Künstlerroman* and literature as a modern institution in general.

In comparison to the *Bildungsroman*'s focus on the youthful protagonist's gradual adjustment to mature and worldly life,[26] the *Künstlerroman*, commonly regarded as a subcategory of the former, tends to highlight the irreconcilable tension between artistic potential and the mundane environment and often ends on a note of rejection of commonplace life.[27] Inflecting the Romantic ideal of the self, the *Künstlerroman* thus fittingly lends itself to the modernist pursuit of artistic freedom from the prisonhouse of linguistic referentiality. In this light, the scene in the study hall that Akutagawa excerpted for translation already foreshadows some of the defining motifs of the novel as a *Künstlerroman*. Indeed, the trajectory neatly charted in the geography textbook would turn out to be what Stephen eventually rejects and sets out to disrupt, as he later declares his nonconformity to Cranly in the manner of the rebellious Lucifer ("*non serviam*"):

> I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile, and cunning.[28]

Expression or representation, it follows, amounts for Stephen to a means of resistance against such entities as "home," "fatherland," and "church" that impose themselves as shackles and, in turn, as structures of meaning. It is thus only natural that the idea of flight, as manifested in the trope of Daedalus, serves to organize the coming-of-age narrative. Stephen's undaunted confession to Cranly is foreshadowed by a climactic scene set on Dollymount Strand where Stephen, in an epiphany,

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[26] See Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), esp. 1-27.
[27] See Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce* (New York: New York University Press, 1964).
[28] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 208.

encounters the "bird-girl" and receives from the winged form the famous injunction: "To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life!"[29] However, what precisely is the relationship between life and art, juxtaposed alongside each other and aligned together with the desire for freedom here in the confession, remains obscure. "[S]ome mode of life or art," but what exactly?

While both the *Bildungsroman* and the *Künstlerroman* promise narrative enclosure by enlisting all events as potentially transformative moments that eventually "add up" to the hero/heroine's growth to maturity, this enclosure often begs the question of what happens after the *Bildung* is complete. One recalls here the Chinese writer Lu Xun's re-evaluation of the ending of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in a 1923 lecture, where he grimly speculates that, lacking economic independence, Nora after exiting her loveless marriage faces the option of either prostitution or a humiliating return.[30] What comes after the world of *Bildung*, where everything means something and it all, in the end, "adds up"? In Joyce's case, the question translates into the less-than-lucid tensions between Stephen's rejection of commonplace (Irish) life and Bloom's preoccupation with the trifling, between Stephen's determination to depart and his return (or descent back) to Dublin at the beginning of the *Telemachia* section of *Ulysses*,[31] and, ultimately, between *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. These questions may be addressed, I propose, through an examination of the *Künstlerroman*'s shadowy opposite, namely, narratives of "fallen" artists whose mental and spiritual collapse highlights some of the inherent paradoxes of the very ideal of freedom through art as represented by Dedalus/Icarus—of which Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's "Cogwheels" furnishes an outstanding example.

The narrative of "Cogwheels" consists of a series of incongruous events recorded in chronological order with flashbacks and illusions scattered among them. The reader follows the first-

[29] Ibid., 145.

[30] Lu Xun 魯迅, "Nala zouhou zenmeyang?" 娜拉走後怎樣？ [What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?], in *Lu Xun quan ji* 魯迅全集 [Complete Works of Lu Xun], vol. 1 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006), 165-173.

[31] For an informed investigation of the textual history of Stephen across these two novels, see Luca Crispi, "Stephen Dedalus from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to *Ulysses*," *James Joyce Quarterly* 57, no. 1-2 (2019-2020): 67-79.

person narrator as he attends a wedding ceremony, runs into suspicious apparitions of a specter in raincoat, learns of his brother-in-law's purported rail suicide, resorts in vain to books for escape, frequently experiences the disturbing vision of semi-transparent cogwheels, before eventually begging desperately, haunted by the hallucination of falling Icarus, for someone to end his life. The most prominent feature of the story is its paranoid—and frustrated—attempt to establish meaning, as the "I" fumbles in a world saturated with symbols, tropes, and (pre-)figurations.[32] The protagonist's hypersensitivity is inscribed even in the very language of narration. In a text that proceeds through unfocused trivia that eventually pile up to the point where they wear the narrator down, the peculiarly repetitive use of "*nominarazu*" のみならず and "*chōdo*" 丁度 are particularly noteworthy. The idiosyncratic "*nominarazu*," often translated into "moreover" or "not only… but…," serves frequently as a device of mental montage of descriptive details—the connection among which can only be conjectured. On one occasion, *Boku* observes that not only does he wait in vain for a taxi, but (*nominarazu*) the ones that passed were all yellow, before adding that he has frequently found himself in accidents riding in yellow cabs. (タクシイは容易に通らなかつた。のみならずたまに通つたのは必ず黄いろい車だつた。)[33] *Boku*'s hypersensitivity to ominous signs repeats itself when, on another occasion, flipping through the pages of Strindberg's *Legends*, he realizes that not only does the narrative describe "experiences not unlike [his] own," but the book also (*nominarazu*) has a yellow cover. (それは僕の経験と大差のないことを書いたものだつた。のみならず黄いろい表紙をしてゐた。)[34] In this way, speculating without naming the logical link, "*nominarazu*" produces a sense of impending doom. Similarly, "*chōdo*," translatable as "just" or "it happened that," conveys an unnerving sense of accident, even if in most instances the pattern is opaque to the

[32] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Haguruma" 歯車 [Cogwheels], in *Arz*, vol. 15, 40-85; English translation by Cid Corman and Susumu Kamaike in "Cogwheels," in *The Essential Akutagawa*, 141-175. (Hereafter "Japanese" and "English.")
[33] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Haguruma" [Cogwheels], Japanese, 55; English, 152.
[34] Ibid., Japanese, 57; English, 154.

reader—such as in his discovery, through the mirror, of "a yellow plaster pasted on just below the [the] ear" of a sculptor with whom he engages in a conversation. (彼は丁度耳の下に黄いろい膏薬を貼りつけてゐた。)[35] The world that *Boku* involuntarily inhabits thus reveals itself to be one of shadows, where the materiality of things succumbs to their obscure significations and where events shrink into linguistic fragments.

In place of a coherent plot, "Cogwheels" is thus organized via repetitions of coincidences (暗合), echoing Akutagawa's advocacy for open-ended "poetic fiction" (詩的な小説) as an alternative to Tanizaki's more intuitive espousal of well-structured stories.[36] In what can be seen as a detective story without a secret, the narrator's double inscription as reader/detective and writer/criminal is nevertheless remarkably asymmetrical. As "poetic fiction," that is, "Cogwheels" dramatizes its own inconclusiveness, which in turn manifests through, among others, the protagonist's own experience of writer's block. To be sure, Mr. A's acuteness as a reader of signs seems to come at the expense of his ability to finish the magnum opus he has been intending to write, "a long piece in which common people from the Suiko to the Meiji Era would be used as heroes, in a sequence of more than thirty chronological short stories" (推古から明治に至る各時代の民を主人公にし、大体三十余りの短編を時代順に連ねた長編).[37] In its ambitious retelling of history through or *as* repetitions, this "long piece," which Akutagawa himself never got round to writing in real life,[38] would seem to strike a sweet balance between poetry's rhythmic quality and the novel's task of sensemaking. In foregrounding "common people" (*tami* 民) as heroes, this unwritten novel would also coalesce with late Akutagawa's late-career sympathy with proletarian literature, although he avers that, rather than being overtly propagandistic, proletarian art must embody the "proletarian soul" (プロレタリア的魂)

[35] Ibid., Japanese, 62; English, 158.
[36] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na" 文芸的な、余りに文芸的な [Literary, All Too Literary], in *Arz*, vol. 15, 147-229.
[37] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Haguruma" [Cogwheels], Japanese, 60; English, 156.
[38] Akutagawa famously never wrote any novels. "Kappa," written shortly before his death, is one of Akutagawa's longer novellas.

by capturing the "poetry of life" (生活の詩).[39] This is the moment when "Cogwheels" comes closest to explicitly critiquing its own frustrated obsession with meaning and structure. This critique, nevertheless, is soon cancelled out by what Lippit identifies as an "inversion of the distinction between life and art" in "Cogwheels,"[40] whereby the mimetic process is stymied as art becomes incapable of imitating life due to the latter's semiotic excess.

Rather than the poetic rhythmicality that Akutagawa eloquently theorizes in his debate with Tanizaki, Mr. A experiences repetitions as an uncanny residue that both structures and eludes a totalizing network of signification. It is here that the question of life's representability inherent in "Cogwheels" coalesces with the modernist inquiry into the limits of language. In *Paranoid Modernism*, modifying T. E. Hulme's thesis on modern art's "tendency to abstraction," David Trotter proposes what he calls a "will-to-abstraction" that names modernism's compulsion to distill meaning from accidents by excluding exceptions—a trait shared by the form of psychosis known as paranoia. For Trotter, paranoia works to construct a world devoid of chance, where everything means something. "Once delusion has taken shape," Trotter asserts, "it absorbs accident into itself. For the paranoiac, there is no event which does not already possess a meaning and a value. Paranoia, one might say, is anti-mimetic: it puts meaning and value *in place of* the world."[41] In contrast to the *fin-de-siècle* celebration of chaos and contingency, inherent in modernist paranoia is a dual objection to mess and to mimesis. That is, while mimesis incorporates events, through representation, into meaningful structures in the form of narratives or poetic wholes, the semiotic economy of paranoia goes the other way around—namely, by assimilating life's randomness into a totality of self-referential

[39] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na" [Literary, All Too Literary], 194.
[40] Seiji Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*, 56-57.
[41] David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis, and the Professionalization of English Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.

networks of tropes. The paranoid emphasis on meaning, it follows, puts at stake the authenticity of sensory life.

Boku's sensibility is both excessively rich and utterly impoverished. His hypersensitivity to ominous signs seems to eclipse the more carnal of his sensibilities. Among his symptoms of paranoia is a loss of unmediated sensations throughout the story, not least manifested by the absence of any sexual desire on *Boku*'s part. Indeed, he constantly finds himself at the precarious border between empirical reality and representation. The moment *Boku* discovers a maggot in the dish at the wedding, instead of arousing disgust, "[i]t brought to mind the English word *worm*. This was probably another word like '*kirin*' or '*hōō*' designating a legendary creature." (蛆は僕の頭の中にwormと云ふ英語を呼び起こした。それは又麒麟や鳳凰のやうに或伝説的動物を意味してゐる言葉にも違ひなかつた。)[42] This alienation of physiological senses is sharply contrasted by the disproportionate empathy that arises with almost every instance of his reading. From his subconscious mouthing of foreign words to the fanatic revelation at the Maruzen Bookstore as he flips through books of literature, finding identification in every page, the narrator's crisis translates into a displaced hierarchy between books and life. What Lippit calls the inversion between life and text thus reveals itself at the same time to be that between the sensible and the intelligible.

The subject's fateful severance from the sensory world is further intensified by Mr. A's sister's mention of "airplane disease" (飛行機病) as the two are startled by the noise of a plane overhead with its wings ominously painted yellow:

> "Won't that airplane fall?"
> "Never… Do you know of airplane disease?"
> Lighting a cigar I shoot my head, instead of saying "no."
> "Since people riding those airplanes breathe the air of the upper atmosphere all the time, it is said that they are gradually unable to live on the air down here…"
>
> 「あの飛行機は落ちはしないか？」
> 「大丈夫。……兄さんは飛行機病と云ふ病氣を知つてゐる？」

42 Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Haguruma" [Cogwheels], Japanese, 46; English, 145.

僕は巻煙草に火をつけながら、「いや」と云ふ代わりに頭を振つた。
「ああ云ふ飛行機に乗つてゐる人は高空の空氣ばかり吸つてゐるものだから、だんだんこの地面の上の空氣に堪へられないやうになつてしまふのだつて。……」[43]

While the airfoils invoke the mythical Icarus' "artificial wings" (人工の翼), the notion of "airplane disease" (飛行機病) foregrounds artistic autonomy and its detachment from lived realities as a pathology. If the elevation of Maruzen's second floor allegorizes Mr. A's status as what Karl Mannheim would term a free-floating intellectual,[44] the quasi-nonsensical notion of "airplane disease" further highlights the detriment of such detachment to corporeal sensibility. Indeed, echoing David Peace's remark that Akutagawa's excessive commitment to literature meant that his life was "always already secondhand,"[45] the protagonist's sensory loss evokes Karatani's notion of "inversion" (*tentō* 転倒). In *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, crediting the naturalist writer Kunikida Doppo (国木田独歩, 1871-1908) as a pioneer in what he calls the "discovery of landscape" in late Meiji, Karatani characterizes "landscape" as "an epistemological constellation (認知論的な布置), the origins of which were suppressed as soon as it was produced."[46] For Karatani, this discovery arose from an "inversion of a semiotic constellation" (記号論的な布置の転倒).[47] Drawing a parallel between the depiction of landscape in literature and the emergence of the naked face in theater (in contrast with the conventional use of masks), Karatani contends that, for what Kunikida Doppo perceives as "landscape" to appear "as it is," it must attain its own autonomy through an epistemic shift that allows it to "take on meaning in and of itself."[48] Developing a set of parallel arguments revolving around this epistemological "inversion," Karatani characterizes the founding of Japanese literary

[43] Ibid., Japanese, 82-83; English, 173.
[44] Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (London: Routledge; Henley: Kegan Paul, 1979), 137-138.
[45] Christopher Benfey, "His Short Story Inspired 'Rashomon.' His Life Has Inspired a Novel." *New York Times*, October 12, 2018.
[46] Karatani Kōjin 柄谷行人, *Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen* 日本近代文学の起源 [Origins of Modern Japanese Literature] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980), 23; English translation by Brett de Bary in Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 22.
[47] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Haguruma" [Cogwheels], Japanese, 57; English, 61.
[48] Ibid., Japanese, 56; English, 60.

modernity in terms of the acquisition of a new "vision," insofar as what he calls the "discoveries" (of interiority, of landscape, of the naked face, etc.) unfolded less as fresh encounters than as processes where things that theretofore had remained invisible became visible as a result of a shift in the semiotic economy.

Extending Karatani's "inversion" to the sphere of representation in general, the paranoid transaction that "puts meaning and value *in place of* the world," as a disruption in the mimetic economy of art, constitutes a similar form of impasse. That is, in the same way that Kunikita Doppo had to discover landscape and Ichikawa Danjūrō had to discover the naked face in order to make "*shasei*" (sketch from things) possible,[49] it takes the undoing of such an inversion of semiotic constellation for Akutagawa to discover the world in its stark, sensory form that is lived firsthand—an inversion, that is, between literature and life. Failure to do so, it follows, risks yielding life to representation, a condemnation that reduces experience to silent tropes, which is precisely what the narrator of "Cogwheels" undergoes. Indeed, the kind of automatism advocated by the French Surrealists makes its appearance in the story as less a flow of genius than yet another symptom of the narrator's loss of control over his non-fictional life.[50] For what follows the "inexplicable" (*fushigi* 不思議) flow of words from his pen for three straight hours in the hotel room is a morbid sense of exhaustion disguised as an unrestrained catharsis: "With a sort of savage joy I felt I had neither parents nor wife nor children, that all I had was the life that flowed from my pen" (僕は野蛮な歓びの

[49] See Chapters 1 and 2 of Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 11-75.
[50] A dark irony. Among Akutagawa's contemporaries in the interwar global literary scene, the notion of automatism, at first a symptom of loss of self in the negative sense, only became celebrated as a method in madness by the surrealists for its promise to liberate art from "I" (*moi*). In this sense, Akutagawa, troubled by the diminishing of authenticity, finds himself at cross-purposes with artists such as Breton and Dalí, who would go on to develop the paranoiac-critical method as a technique for creation. See Pierre Janet, *L'automatisme psychologique : Essai de psychologie expérimentale sur les formes inférieures de l'activité humaine* (Paris : Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillière, 1889). André Breton, "Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme ?" in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2 (Paris : Gallimard, 1992), 230.

中に僕には両親もなければ妻子もない、唯僕のペンから流れ出した命だけあると云ふ気になつてゐた。).[51] When life flows (away), writing here collaborates with death.

In contrast to the Joycean *Künstlerroman*, then, art, understood as an overarching order of tropes, is always already superimposed in Akutagawa's anti-*Künstlerroman*. This inversion between remedy and poison bespeaks a precarious liaison between the visceral fact of living and the act of writing burdened with an ancient promise of transcendence. In his 2004 interview with *Le Monde*, a dying Jacques Derrida expounds the presupposition of death in the act of writing as a structural problem:

> At the moment I leave "my" book (to be published)—after all, no one forces me to do it—I become, appearing-disappearing, like that uneducable specter who will have never learned how to live. The trace I leave signifies to me at once my death, either to come or already come upon me, and the hope that this trace survives me. This is not a striving for immortality; it's something *structural*. I leave a piece of paper behind, I go away, I die: it is impossible to escape this structure, it is the unchanging form of my life. Each time I let something go, each time some trace leaves me, "proceeds" from me, unable to be reappropriated, *I live my death in writing*.[52]

What Derrida identifies as the "structure" that is the "unchanging form" of his life echoes Mishima Yukio's lament, in an essay written several years before his suicide, that "writing is a cursed profession. Beneath it lurks a fundamental negation of life—this is because writing takes as its premise nothing less than eternity itself." (ものを書くといふ仕事は呪はれてゐるのである。この仕事には、生の根本的な否定が奥底にひそんでゐる。なぜなら、それは永生を前提としてゐるからである。)[53] Echoing Akutagawa's characterization of artistic creation as not a prolongation of life but its detriment, both authors dilate on the radical heterogeneity of writing to the biological fact of living and, indeed, on an inherent paradox, namely, that fiction (broadly construed), standing as distinct to

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[51] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Haguruma" [Cogwheels], Japanese, 68; English, 162.
[52] Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Hoboken, NJ: Melville House, 2007), 32-33. My emphasis.
[53] Mishima Yukio 三島由紀夫, "Ika ni shite eisei o?" いかにして永生を？ [On How to Live Forever], in *Mishima Yukio zenshū* 三島由紀夫全集 [Complete Works of Mishima Yukio], vol. 33 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1976), 119.

life, inevitably competes with it. By inverting the Romantic notion of eternal life through enduring readership, then, Akutagawa's grim portrait of the artist at work elicits an alternative understanding of the stakes of self-representation in art.

It is in this light that "Cogwheels" can be read as a footnote to the notoriously unfavorable comparison of life with Baudelaire's poetry made by the protagonist of "A Fool's Life" (*Aru ahō no isshō* 或阿呆の一生, 1927) as he looks down at the clerks and customers from the second floor of Maruzen: "Human life is not even worth a single line of Baudelaire." (人生は一行のボオドレエルにも若かない。)[54] The implication is not, as is frequently misunderstood, that the aesthete narrator exalts art as a realm unparalleled by any real event in life; but quite the contrary, that the value of life is emptied by and subsumed under literature-as-structure. In the same way, then, as part of his debate with Tanizaki Jun'ichirō over the "plotless novel," Akutagawa's claim, in "Literary, All Too Literary" (1927), that the novel "has the capacity of subsuming everything, and I can throw anything I want into it" (小説はあらゆる文芸の形式中、最も包容力に富んでゐる為になんでもぶち込んでしまはれるからである。),[55] interpreted by Lippit as a celebration of the novel's inherent hybridity, may carry a grim undertone. Indeed, rather than a medium of preservation, the almost menacing "capacity of subsuming" may well gesture toward the potentially privative nature of fictional representation that seizes life not as its model but as its prey—a process akin to what Paul de Man calls "defacement," understood as the inevitable erasure of subjectivity by the materiality of language.[56]

Between Joyce's self-liberating Dedalus and Akutagawa's doomed Icarus, then, stand no less than two diametrical axes of representation. For Stephen, it is through carnal experience including his precocious sexual adventures—empirical entanglement with the sensory world—that his emancipation from the world of Catholic learning becomes conceivable. Battling the feeling that

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54 Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Aru ahō no isshō" [A Fool's Life], 38.
55 Akutagawa Ryūnosuek, "Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na" [Literary, All Too Literary], 154.
56 Paul de Man, "Autobiography as Defacement," *MLN* 94, no. 5 (1979): 919-930.

"his life had grown to be a tissue of subterfuge and falsehood,"[57] Stephen wanders into the dark quarters of Dublin and, as a young woman dressed in a long pink gown held him in her arms, "all but burst into hysterical weeping. Tears of joy and relief shone in his delighted eyes and his lips parted though they would not speak."[58] If Stephen's "tears of joy and relief" characterizes the sexual experience as an almost religious ecstasy that well transcends carnal pleasure, this intense moment as "he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself" marks a semiotic undoing whereby the world is no longer experienced as secondhand but unfolds in its full gravity. For the first time in *Portrait*, our philosophical teen opens his mouth not to articulate but to kiss.

It is within this context that one must understand the order of action in that famous injunction: "To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life."[59] "To live," that is, not only factually precedes artistic creation but also foregrounds the act of writing in another sense, that is, insofar as it is the redemption of the carnal senses that makes literature as a vocation for Stephen possible at all. It is also in this way that one can begin to reassess the relationship between *Portrait* and *Ulysses* and how the former foregrounds and, indeed, makes possible the latter. In "Cogwheels," by contrast, the artist's impending doom is foreshadowed by the horrifying discovery that the mustache of his late brother-in-law seems to have grown thinner in the portrait while in reality it was the only thing left of his face—yet another instance of the inversion between life and fiction that the protagonist experiences himself. This asymmetry points to the recurrent trope of the doppelgänger, whose threat dwells on the fear that the double might eventually replace the authentic (if it hasn't already) in the same way that Wilde's Dorian Gray encounters his own death in/through art. It is in this unsettling trope of the doppelgänger, a threat to the singularity of oneself which puts at stake the very authenticity of life, I propose, that the roots of the semiotic inversion must be located.

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[57] Jamese Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 83.
[58] Ibid., 85.
[59] Ibid., 145.

(2) Literary, All Too Literary

Construed as a metacommentary on the dilemma of (modernist) artistic creation, "Cogwheels" already partakes in late Akutagawa's inquiry into the stakes of culture and "culturalism" that well transcends the uncritical celebration of "art for art's sake," in light of which he has indeed been too often misunderstood. To be sure, the narrator's distaste at his own image in the mirror forms a stark contrast with his overflowing sympathy for literary works and their authors. The endangered authenticity of life parallels an equally precarious authenticity as writer, most memorably when *Boku* recalls the ironic pen name "*Juryō Yoshi*" (寿陵余子), the man who slavishly aped the stride of others and forgot his own, which mirrors Akutagawa's own struggle as a reputed literary bricoleur.[60] Whereas "*yoshi*" or "*yuzi*" (余子) merely designates a young and inexperienced man in the original context of *Zhuangzi*,[61] the implicit connotation of "*yo/yu*" (余) as surplus or superfluous certainly bespeaks Mr. A's sense of exclusion from society. The narrator's identification with writers throughout history must therefore be read with a tinge of irony. However, it is not so much a genealogy of mad geniuses, as Pitarch-Fernandez suggests,[62] as the precariously exclusive clique of professional writers. Despite his admiration for Shirakaba-ha writers and Shiga Naoya 志賀直哉 (1883-1971) in particular, Akutagawa was notable for his aloofness from any particular schools within the literary establishment (文壇). His stature among Taishō writers and, indeed, his later retrospective induction as the epitome of that era thus amounts to something of an absent-present center that, if anything, serves as a testimony to the precarity of "Taishō literature" as a self-contained category. In his self-designation as "superfluous," then, Akutagawa in effect calls into

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60 Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Haguruma" [Cogwheels], Japanese, 58; English, 154-155.

61 The story of the young boy of Shouling (*Juryō*) appears in the "Autumn Floods" (*Qiushui* 秋水) chapter of *Zhuangzi*. See *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi* 莊子今注今譯 [Zhuangzi Annotated and Translated], translated and annotated by Chen Guying 陳鼓應 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 438-439.

62 Pau Pitarch-Fernandez, "Cultivated Madness: Aesthetics, Psychology and the Value of the Author in Early 20th-Century Japan," esp. 223-238.

question the solidarity of the Japanese literary establishment that frames an enclosure as safely set apart from the public as their works—stacked on the second floor of the Maruzen Bookstore—are symbolically elevated above the street level.

The anti-mimetic unrepresentability of the modernist self thus evinces the crisis of a society that enshrines the autonomy of art only by ostracizing it. For this same reason, as Raymond Williams observes, the novel of evanescent subjectivity and of "social formula," exemplified respectively by *The Waves* and *Brave New World*, "confront each other across a great chasm."[63] Drawing from Harold Perkin, Trotter locates the roots of the anti-mimetic drive of paranoid modernism in the rise of a professional society in England since the late 19th Century. In such a society, where the professional subject's integrity depends solely on one's esoteric knowledge, the precariousness of this symbolic capital inevitably calls for repetitive demonstration of the individual's own authenticity as opposed to mimesis.[64] Not unlike what Erich Auerbach observes in medieval literature as the heroic protagonist's constant obligation to prove and renew his chivalry through adventures,[65] then, the writer as "modern professional" is condemned to a perpetual state of psychosis. This is not without reason, since on both occasions the sense of needing to repeat one's success is foregrounded by the waning of a stable social hierarchy—the decline of chivalry as a class in Europe and the rise of culturalism in Taishō Japan, which inflected the Meiji ideal of "*risshin-shusse*" (立身出世, or rising in the world) with an individualism marked by a retreat from politics.[66] In Japan, this imperative became all the more complex, in the context of the national mimetic project

[63] Tony Pinkney, "Editor's Introduction: Modernism and Cultural Theory," introduction to *Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, by Raymond Williams (London: Verso, 1989), 6.
[64] David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism*, 5-8.
[65] Erich Auerbach, "The Knight Sets Forth," in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 123-142.
[66] For a thorough discussion of the connection between the "*risshin-shusse*" ideology and its instrumental role in the rise of both detective fiction and what later became known as "pure literature" (*junbungaku*) in Japan, see Satoru Saito, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel, 1880–1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), esp. 111-155.

of modernization-cum-Westernization and Japan's often perplexed relationship with its own past. Indeed, commenting on the intertextuality that pervades Akutagawa's works, Karatani characterizes Akutagawa's project as an inquiry into the no-less-hybrid nature of pre-Meiji Japanese culture.[67]

The narrator's haunting sense of non-belonging to the literary establishment thus only attests to this performative notion of authenticity.[68] After a conversation with a purported admirer, he reflects grudgingly: "*Sensei. A-sensei*—the title had recently begun to be most distasteful to me. I had come to feel I had committed every imaginable crime" (先生、A先生、——それは僕にはこの頃では最も不快な言葉だつた。僕はあらゆる罪悪を犯してゐることを信じてゐた。).[69] This mismatch between fame and security is revealing with regards to the writer's vexed relationship to professionalism. In a way, contrary to what is often understood of Benjamin's renowned thesis on "aura," authenticity, understood in terms of the repetitive drive toward self-affirmation, is a product rather than victim of modern mass media.[70]

The fact that Akutagawa's paranoid subject excels in reading signs but fails in accessing sensual data thus frames the modernist experience of the world as always already hypermediated. In an incisive reinterpretation of Walter Benjamin's notion of "aura," Miriam Hansen takes as her point of departure its widely accepted connotation of "an elusive phenomenal substance, ether, or halo that surrounds a person or object of perception, encapsulating their individuality and authenticity."[71] Once it is shown to pertain not to any inherent property of a person or object but rather to the

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[67] Karatani Kōjin 柄谷行人, "Nihon seishin bunseki: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 'Kamigami no bishō'" 日本精神分析—芥川龍之介「神々の微笑」 [Psychoanalysis of Japan: On Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's 'The Faint Smiles of the Gods'"], in *Nihon seishin bunseki* 日本精神分析 [Psychoanalysis of Japan] (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 2002), 55-106.

[68] For a discussion of how the Akutagawa/Tanizaki debate is foregrounded by the social topography of "*bundan,*" see Rebecca Mak, "The Akutagawa/Tanizaki Debate: Actors in *Bundan* Discourse," in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*, eds. Rachel Hutchinson and Leith Morton (London: Routledge, 2016), 272-284.

[69] Akutagawa, "Haguruma" [Cogwheels], Japanese, 52; English, 150.

[70] See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 3, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, et al., eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 101-133.

[71] Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Benjamin's Aura," *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. 2 (2008): 340.

medium of perception, Hansen advances, aura participates in "the logic of trace, the indexical dimension, or existential bond," in the dynamic of signification exemplified by but not limited to photography.[72] Indeed, the anxiety of Akutagawa's protagonist, who impulsively questions his own originality, exemplifies in this indexical logic of modern art. Following Hansen's line of thinking, Benjamin's thesis participates in the plethora of critical discourses surrounding "authenticity" including Theodor Adorno's *Jargon of Authenticity* (1964), a critique of the existentialist tendency within German thought at the time under the influence of Heidegger. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger famously drew the distinction between authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) and inauthenticity (*Uneigentlichkeit*), designating the latter as a mode of being that cannot be fully owned by the subject.[73] Calling into question not only the philosophy of Heidegger himself but also some of his followers' advocacy for the notion of an unmediated truth, Adorno contends that the articulative efforts of the existentialists have become so autonomous that they find themselves estranged from the claim to "praxis"—that their discourses on "authenticity," insofar as they are enmeshed in tropes and figures, risk being inauthentic themselves.

Along these lines, the paranoid narrative of "Cogwheels," where words and facts, fictions and sensibilities are both entwined and constantly at odds with each other, mirrors 20th-century philosophy's struggle to articulate the elusive idea of authenticity without yielding it to the universalizing regime of language. In this light, Benjamin's ambivalence toward aura, frequently reduced to a commendation of its decline as a signature of the bourgeois art rendered anachronistic in the age of mass technological reproducibility, rather bespeaks a difficulty in finding *le mot juste* for one's own era than it registers a rupture with the past. That is, instead of a nostalgic sign of a bygone era, "aura," construed as a precarious presence, is all too modern—a problem that only rose into

[72] Ibid., 340-341.
[73] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 177-179.

prominence as a symptom of a crisis surrounding authenticity. Understood in this way, rather than standing for a quality either of the work or of its creator, "aura" effectively names a precarious sphere of indistinction between the authenticity of the artwork and the authenticity of the artist. Precisely because of this precariousness, "aura" necessitates an indefinite repetition that bears an isomorphic structure to the Freudian death drive, which translates into the writer's compulsion to ceaselessly reinvent himself. As the quintessential modern author defined by this drive, then, Akutagawa's Mr. A embodies both the modernist directive to "Make It New" and the anti-mimetic anxiety of modern professional society.[74]

There is therefore method in Akutagawa's "madness." Rather than arising purely out of personal struggles with mental issues, the late-period Akutagawa's autobiographical turn radically questions the I-novel's principle of sincerity by staging a tension between embodied realities and language. As Kirsten Cather demonstrates in her study of Akutagawa's posthumous note, his suicide, reified in critical discourses as a "literary death," has come to overdetermine the reading of his final works to such an extent that it takes critical self-reflection on one's ethical responsibility as a reader to ward off the temptation of reductive readings.[75] To be sure, in light of Akutagawa's thorough inquiry into the nature of literary language and subjectivity, diagnostic readings of such late autobiographical pieces as "Cogwheels" and "A Fool's Life" not only fail to do justice to their inherent irony but also circumvent Akutagawa's critical endeavor to re-imagine an open-ended mode of literary writing not bound by overdetermined structures. In contrast to Lippit's characterization of Akutagawa's final turn to I-novel writing as a "loss of faith in narrative,"[76] I propose that Akutagawa's late writings seek instead to reinvent the I-novel, a literary form that inhabits the liminal

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[74] For a discussion of the modernist ideal of the "eternally new," see Michael North, *Novelty: A History of the New* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), esp. 144-171.
[75] Kirsten Cather, "Noting Suicide with a Vague Sense of Anxiety," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 46, no. 1 (2020): 1-29.
[76] Seiji Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*, 44.

space of indistinction between life and fiction, as a vehicle of critique, thus calling into question modernism's self-serving program of autonomy that in turn alienates embodied sensibility. In this sense, Akutagawa's anti-*Künstlerroman* transcends not only the personal but also the local Japanese context, constituting instead a response to this crisis of authenticity and of embodiment intently experienced by his contemporaries in Europe from Benjamin to Heidegger.

In "Literary, All Too Literary," his most extensive response to Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's advocacy for plot (*suji* 筋) and the "architectural beauty" (建築的な美しさ) of literature, Akutagawa envisions a novel without proper story (話らしい話のない小説) that pursues instead the "poetic spirit" (詩的精神),[77] an elusive claim that has puzzled many, leading some, including Karatani Kōjin, to suspect that what Akutagawa means by "story" (*hanashi* 話) differs from Tanizaki's "plot."[78] Indeed, compared to Tanizaki's much more pragmatic concern with literary techniques, Akutagawa's thesis puts at stake the autonomy of literature in general. An homage to (if not a parody of) Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human*, Akutagawa's essay implicitly designates "literariness" as something to be overcome or, at least, a surplus to be reckoned with. Indeed, the term "*amari*" 余り both implies a state of superfluousness beyond what is needed and indicates a troubling sense of the unbearable. Distancing himself from both Tanizaki's advocacy for "structure" and the Naturalists' claim to write as "war correspondents of life" (人生の従軍記者),[79] Akutagawa proposes instead that literature should return to "life" (生活) so that the "poetry of life" (生活の詩) can be redeemed through novelistic writing.[80] Whereas Akutagawa never explicitly explains what he means by the "poetry of life," it tilts toward a mode of sensibility that privileges quotidian encounters over overarching structures of tropes and metonyms.

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77 Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na" [Literary, All Too Literary], 147-153.
78 Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 155.
79 Akutagawa, "Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na" [Literary, All Too Literary], 218.
80 Ibid., 192-194; 218-222.

If, as Susan Buck-Morss points out, Richard Wagner's vision for music drama as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total art work) aims to "hide the alienation and fragmentation, the loneliness and the sensual impoverishment" of the modern era,[81] Akutagawa in effect unravels the deceitfulness of such a totalizing attempt of concealment. In privileging the open-endedness of the "poetic spirit" over well-wrought plots, Akutagawa seeks to undo modern literature's preoccupation with enclosure and to force it open unto the disorder and chaos of modern existence. Paradoxically, then, in claiming that "poetic fiction" is in fact the closest to "pure fiction" (純粋な小説) insofar as it is rid of "popular intrigue" (通俗的興味), Akutagawa in fact endeavors to redefine the "purity" of "pure literature." Indeed, rather than the clichéd debate over the high and low, Akutagawa's inquiry into the stakes of purity gestures instead toward the very nature of literature and its ends. As he further elaborates, this purported lack of "popular intrigue" upholds only to the extent that "popular intrigue" indicates an interest fixated on the event itself (事件そのもの). Calling into question the literary establishment's self-alienation from mass culture, Akutagawa then contends that what he calls "plotless fiction" should and indeed must entail "popular intrigue":

> A work of fiction without a proper "story" is of little popular intrigue. However, in the best sense of the word, it is by no means lacking in popular intrigue at all. (It is simply a question of how to interpret "popular.")
>
> 「話」らしい話のない小説は通俗的興味の乏しいものである。が、最も善い意味では決して通俗的興味に乏しくない。(それは唯「通俗的」と云ふ言葉をどう解釈するかと云ふ問題である。)[82]

Akutagawa would go on to inflect this question of the "popular" into the relationship between literature and embodied life. In response to Tanizaki's appraisal of the intellectual-technical "power to construct" (構成する力), Akutagawa avers that, in comparison to Chinese authors who produced such well-wrought novels as *Water Margin* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, what Japanese writers lack is

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[81] Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (1992): 26.

[82] Akutagawa, "Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na" [Literary, All Too Literary], 150.

rather their "physical strength" (肉体的力量).[83] Quizzical as this claim sounds, this association of writing with corporeality coalesces with Akutagawa's commendation of Mushanokōji Saneatsu 武者小路実篤 (1885-1976) as a "moral genius" (道徳的天才) and of Shiga Naoya's writings as, above all, the product of a writer who "lives this life to the fullest" (この人生を立派に生きてゐる作家).[84] Against Tanizaki's decadent "diabolism" (悪魔主義) which designates art as amoral (if not immoral),[85] Akutagawa thus reimagines literature as an ethical category—that is, as inseparable from the realm of action.

In this light, the alienating and sense-depriving effect of artistic autonomy in "Cogwheels" can be construed as a meta-commentary on modern literature's self-estrangement from the real world, a separation that must be undone in order for the act of writing to be ethical—and, indeed, political—again. It is in this way that one can begin to reread both Akutagawa's formal experiments and his inquiry into "pure" literature as a response to the question of aesthetics and its political valence. If "Cogwheels" grimly problematizes modernism's paranoid privileging of signifiers over lived realities, Akutagawa's response to Tanizaki constitutes an attempt at its repair. It is thus no coincidence that Akutagawa turned toward the I-novel, a form that highlights everydayness and embodied sensibility, so as to repurpose literary writing for a mode of aesthetics that does not restrict itself to "culture." Indeed, contrary to claims about the author's total loss of faith in literature, it is precisely in this preoccupation with embodied sensibility afforded by the I-novel that Akutagawa sees a hope of overcoming modern literature as an institution that produces semiotic excess by threatening to empty life and subsuming it under its totalizing structure of meaning.

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83 Ibid., 152.
84 Ibid., 155-156.
85 Ibid., 156.

Interlude: Taishō Modernism and the Culture of Unpoliticality

If Akutagawa is rightly deemed the quintessential product of Taishō "culturalism,"[86] his consistent probing into the anti-*Bildung* only attests to the convoluted nature of his relationship with the era's purported individualistic ideal. To be sure, aptly called a "fleeting episode of Indian summer between the harsh times of Meiji and Shōwa" in a 2019 NHK drama based on Akutagawa's 1921 trip to China,[87] the fourteen years of Emperor Taishō's reign (1912-1926) witnessed an easing of governmental control and the rise of party and parliamentary politics. While "antipathic to violent and revolutionary modes of political action,"[88] the Taishō era nevertheless afforded an unprecedented ideological freedom that undergirded the new ideal of self-cultivation (教養). If Japan's decisive victory over Russia in 1905 catapulted the nation into the rank of the great powers and marked the accomplishment of the Meiji ideal of *fukoku kyōhei* (富国強兵, "rich country, strong army"), this national success also contributed to a shifting focus from "civilization" (*bunmei* 文明) to "culture" (*bunka* 文化).[89] With Japan's "coming of age" as a modern nation, as it were, the Meiji moral code of careerism (*risshin shusse*), which bound the individual with the prosperity of the nation, was in turn replaced by the more individualistic pursuit of esoteric knowledge.

The cliquish world of the writerly profession that the protagonist of "Cogwheels" inhabits thus partakes in a larger intellectual culture premised on a freedom from political concern. However, this apparent freedom never exempted literature from the political. As Atsuko Ueda observes in her study of Tsubouchi Shōyō's *Shōsetsu shinzui* 小説神髄 (*The Essence of the Novel*, 1885-1886), often regarded as a foundational text of modern Japanese literature, the rise of "*bungaku* = literature" as an

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[86] See for example Seiji Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*, 39.
[87] *Sutorenjā: Shanghai no Akutagawa Ryūnosuke* ストレンジャー——上海の芥川龍之介 [A Stranger in Shanghai], directed by Kita Nobuyasu 北信康, written by Watanabe Aya 渡辺あや, featuring Matsuda Ryūhei 松田龍平, aired December 30, 2019, on *NHK*.
[88] See for example Tetsuo Najita, "Some Reflections on Idealism in the Political Thought of Yoshino Sakuzō," in *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō Democracy*, 29.
[89] Harry Harootunian, "Introduction: A Sense of an Ending and the Problem of Taishō," in *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō Democracy*, 15.

ontologically independent category must be understood within the political landscape of 1880s Japan. Designated as the proper domain for "emotions, customs, and manners" in opposition to political discourses amidst the clash between the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (自由民権運動) and the oppressive government, Ueda contends, "the production of 'bungaku = literature' occurred with the production and the repression of the political."[90] With the proclamation of the Meiji Constitution (1889) and the oppression of political liberalism, the Japanese discursive space took an "inward" turn that further solidified literature as an apolitical realm of "modern knowledge."[91] It is within this lineage that the Akutagawa-Tanizaki debate over "pure literature" (*junbungaku*), occurring some four decades after *Shōsetsu shinzui*, must be understood. Since its (retrospectively designated) moment of origin, Japanese literature is always already "pure," as it were. Nevertheless, in its guise of "apoliticality," *bungaku* is at once always already political.

Following the collapse of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement in the late 1880s, top-down governmental oppression intensified throughout a series of political persecutions, notably including the High Treason Incident (大逆事件) that culminated in the execution of anarchist Kōtoku Shūsui 幸徳秋水 (1871-1911) in 1911 and the sensational Amakasu Incident (甘粕事件), namely the murder of anarchist Ōsugi Sakae 大杉栄 (1885-1923) and his lover and fellow activist Itō Noe 伊藤野枝 (1895-1923) amidst the chaos that followed the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake.[92] By the time of the passing of the Peace Preservation Law (治安維持法) which would pave the ground for massive political conversions (*tenkō* 転向) of leftist intellectuals and the virtually unchecked rise of fascism,[93] Japanese intellectuals have already lived through what Harootunian calls the

[90] Atsuko Ueda, *Concealment of Politics, Politics of Concealment: The Production of "Literature" in Meiji Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 6.
[91] Ibid., 13-15.
[92] For detailed accounts of these events, see Tanaka Nobumasa 田中伸尚, *Taigyaku Jiken: shi to sei no gunzō* 大逆事件 : 死と生の群像 [The High Treason Incident: Images of Life and Death] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2010); Thomas A. Stanley, *Ōsugi Sakae, Anarchist in Taishō Japan: The Creativity of the Ego* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).
[93] See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

"progressive shrinkage of the realm of private activity" with the expansion of public/political control.[94] Throughout the late Meiji and Taishō eras, the elitist pursuit of the "autonomy of knowledge" that began with the partition between literature and politics in Meiji Japan thus morphed into an increasingly cynical evasion of public affairs. "What started as a celebration of the political importance of individualism," Harootunian avers, "ended as the argument that 'unpoliticality,' the rejection of politics, was a necessary requirement to the preservation of individualism."[95]

Echoing Susan Buck-Morss's thesis on the rise of an asensual "an-aesthetics" in place of aesthetics in line with the Enlightenment ideal of autogenesis,[96] the Taishō ideal of apolitical self-cultivation thus produced a mode of subjectivity that secures its freedom only at the expense of being indifferent to the political landscape it inhabits. Harking back to Akutagawa's translation of the classroom scene in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, one finds the juvenile subject situated amidst a host of disembodied and possibly uninhabited entities ("Class of Elements, […] Europe […]"), embodying a radical individuality positioned in relation not to other individuals but directly to the world. In Akutagawa's world, this indifference was further sustained by the elitist educational system, epitomized by the institutions of the higher schools (*kyūsei kōtō gakkō* 旧制高等学校, sometimes translated as "government high schools"). As preparatory institutions for imperial universities modelled after pre-university colleges of Britain and the United States, the fiercely competitive higher schools exercised the ideal of liberal arts education under the national project of reproducing future leaders of Japan.[97] In the same way that the 1880s political turbulences gave rise at once to modern Japanese politics and the apolitical institution of literature as the former's

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[94] Harry Harootunian, "Between Politics and Culture: Authority and the Ambiguities of Intellectual Choice in Imperial Japan," 112.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics," 8.
[97] See for example Takeuchi Yō 竹内洋, *Kyōyō shugi no botsuraku* 教養主義の没落 [The Decline of Culturalism] (Tokyo: Chūō kōron shinsha, 2003), 27-59.

antipode, the elite education of the Taishō era yielded both cultural elites and future politicians and leftwing activists—the latter notably through the Association of the New Men (*Shinjinkai* 新人会), founded at Tokyo Imperial University in December 1918 following the success of the October Revolution in Russia.[98] As Tsurumi Shunsuke observes, the *Shinjinkai* members, many of whom would go on to constitute the leadership of the Japanese Communist Party, arose out of their antipathy toward Taishō's bourgeois culturalism yet remained psychologically rooted in its elite student culture, contributing in part to the Japanese Left's problematic detachment from the common people.[99] Having followed the classic elite trajectory from the First Higher School (第一高等学校 or 一高) to Tokyo Imperial University, Akutagawa was squarely a product of the elitist Japanese *Bildung*, which was paradoxically both "apolitical" in its educational ideal and intimately entwined with state power's self-reproduction.

Whereas the rise of student radicalism with the founding of *Shinjinkai* (1918) narrowly postdates Akutagawa's time at Tokyo Imperial University (1913-1916), Akutagawa was by no means cut off from the world of radical politics. During his four-month trip to China in 1921, Akutagawa notably conversed with the Chinese thinker and Xinhai revolutionary Zhang Taiyan, whose re-interpretation of the folklore hero Momotaro as an imperialist Akutagawa would later adapt into a short story of his own.[100] In addition, despite having been lost in a fire during the Great Kantō earthquake, Akutagawa's graduation thesis on the English poet and socialist activist William Morris (1834-1896), along with testimonies from close friends like Kume Masao 久米正雄 (1891-1952),

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[98] Tsurumi Shunsuke 鶴見俊輔, *Senjiki Nihon no seishinshi: 1931-1945-nen* 戦時期日本の精神史 : 1931-1945 年 [An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan, 1931-1945] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1982), 12-18. See also Henry DeWitt Smith, "The Origins of Student Radicalism in Japan," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 1 (1979): 87-103.

[99] Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Senjiki Nihon no seishinshi: 1931-1945-nen* [An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan, 1931-1945], 18-25. I will discuss the crisis of popular basis confronted by the JCP as part of the origins of the *tenkō* phenomenon in Chapter 2.

[100] See Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to sono jidai* [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and His Time], 403-449.

attests to an early interest in utopian socialism.[101] In "One Socialist" 或社会主義者 (1927), a short tale that thematically stands out among his late writings, Akutagawa sketches the life trajectory of a former socialist enthusiast who becomes estranged from his comrades and their circle throughout the years as he gradually finds himself bound to family duties and his job at a company, before concluding with his nostalgic remembrance of youthful days: "To this day he would still sit in his rattan chair, enjoying a cigar, reminiscing about his youth—humanly, perhaps all too humanly." (彼は今でも籐とう椅子により、一本の葉巻を楽しみながら、彼の青年時代を思ひ出してゐる、人間的に、恐らくは余りに人間的に。)[102] While no record indicates that Akutagawa was ever involved with a socialist group like his protagonist, it is nevertheless telling that the retrospective narration designates the ex-socialist's gradual alienation from his cohort as a temporal schism between the self and the other: "He definitely fell behind. Still, his essay 'Remembering Liebknecht' inspired a certain young man." (彼は確に落伍者だつた。が、彼の「リイプクネヒトを憶ふ」は或青年を動かしてゐた。)[103] Parallel to such works as "Cogwheels" and "A Fool's Life" which thematize a crisis of the sensorium, then, is late Akutagawa's attempt at reconfiguring the modern subject's relationship with politics—albeit designated always already as "other" and inaccessible. Indeed, if it takes the undoing of *Bildung* to revert the artistic autonomy that renders reality insensible, Akutagawa's paranoid subject may well become political in a new light. Along these lines, I will proceed to examine the modalities of politics in Akutagawa's late writings as inextricably linked to his critique of Taishō culturalism.

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[101] For a detailed account of Akutagawa's interest in Morris and *News From Nowhere* in particular, see Fujii Takashi 藤井貴志, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke: "Fuan" no shoos to bigaku ideorogī* 芥川龍之介——「不安」の諸相と美学イデオロギー [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke: The Phases of "Anxiety" and Aesthetic Ideology] (Tokyo: Kasama shoin, 2010), 43-67.
[102] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Aru shakai-shugisha" 或社会主義者 [One Socialist], in *Arz*, vol. 14, 53.
[103] Ibid.

II. Invitation to a Beheading: The Politics of the Body in Late Akutagawa

Much ink has been spilled on Akutagawa's widely publicized journey in China as a special reporter for the *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* from late March through early July 1921 and the writings that subsequently sprang from it.[104] The trip notably wore down his health, produced a poorly received volume of travelogues *Shina yūki* 支那游記 (1925),[105] and featured interviews with prominent cultural figures including Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (or Zhang Binglin 章炳麟, 1896-1936) and Gu Hongming 辜鴻銘 (1857-1928).[106] The young writer's impression of China at the time was mixed at best: While enthralled by the beauty of Beijing, Akutagawa found the filth-ridden urban sprawl of a Westernized Shanghai grotesque.[107] The encounter with a real China—one that Takeuchi Yoshimi, traveling there over a decade later, would remember as vibrant with life[108]—brought both disillusionment and fascination to Akutagawa, who was well-versed in classical Chinese culture and had already written a number of celebrated stories set in the country before his trip, including "Tu Tze-Chun" 杜子春 (1920), "Christ in Nanking" 南京の基督 (1920), and "The Story of a Head That Fell Off" 首が落ちた話 (1917). Rather than delving into the transcultural implications of Akutagawa's writings on China as many have done, nevertheless, I aim to probe the significance of his sustained but morphing interest in China—during his final years in particular—within his own oeuvre. To be

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104 See for example, Joshua A. Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China: 1862-1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 257-261; Zhang Lei 張蕾, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to Chūgoku: juyō to hen'yō no kiseki* 芥川龍之介と中国――受容と変容の軌跡 [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and China: A Trajectory of Receptance and Transformation] (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 2007).

105 The miscellaneous essays and commentaries included in the volume were published in newspapers from 1921 to 1925.

106 Due to its negative impact on Akutagawa's health and the poor reception of the travelogues until recently, scholarship on this trip has been claimed to be insufficient. See Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi, *Tokuhain Akutagawa Ryūnosuke : Chūgoku de nani o mita no ka* 特派員芥川龍之介――中国でなにを視たのか [Correspondent Akutagawa Ryūnosuke: What Did He See in China?] (Tokyo: Mainichi shinbunsha, 1997), 3-4.

107 Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Shin geijutsuka no me ni eijita Shina no inshō" 新芸術家の眼に映じた支那の印象 [Impressions of China Through the Eyes of a Budding Artist], in *Arz*, vol. 8, 3-5; Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Shanhai yūki" 上海游記 [Shanghai Travelogue], in *Arz*, vol. 8, esp. 9-11.

108 See Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

sure, occurring in the middle of his short literary career (1915-1927), the 1921 trip furnished one of the occassions where Akutagawa became entangled most closely with the realm of politics.

Despite the initial impression of shock—both culturally and corporeally, as the sickness during the trip would eventually contribute to the collapse of his mental and physical health before his death—Akutagawa's evaluation of his journey would grow to be more favorable as the perception of his surroundings in Japan became increasingly grim. In a short memoir, "Yangtze Travelogue" 長江游記 (September 1924), Akutagawa expressed a nostalgic yearning for China:

> Back when I was traveling along the Yangtze, I was constantly missing Japan. But now, in Japan—in the scorching heat of Tokyo—I miss the vast Yangtze. The Yangtze? No, not just the Yangtze. I miss Wuhu, Hankou, the pines of Lushan, and the waves of Dongting too.
>
> 私は長江を溯つた時、絶えず日本を懐しがつてゐた。しかし今は日本に、――炎暑の甚しい東京に汪洋たる長江を懐しがつてゐる。長江を？――いや、長江ばかりではない、蕪湖を、漢口を、廬山の松を、洞庭の波を懐しがつてゐる。[109]

While the memoir's focus was on the beauty of Chinese landscape, Akutagawa's appraisal of the Yangtze's "vastness" in "the scorching heat of Tokyo" nevertheless bespeaks a more telling sense of claustrophobia that coalesces with the suffocating gloom permeating his other late works. If such autobiographical short stories as "Daidōji Shunsuke" and "A Fool's Life" loaded with emotional weight register a shift away from the often sarcastic and detached tone that colors early tales like "Rashōmon" and "In the Grove," then Akutagawa's final writings based on the China trip also distinguish themselves from travelogues published immediately after the trip at the behest of *Ōsaka Mainichi Shimbun* in their distinct subjective orientations. To further parse the intricate structure of Akutagawa's sense of "nostalgia" at the crisscross between Taishō Japan and Republican China, nevertheless, demands a greater attentiveness to the dynamics of aesthetics and politics in the late writings, to which "The Folding Fan of Hunan" furnishes the finest example.

[109] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Chōko yūki" 長江游記 [Yangtze Travelogue], in *Arz*, vol. 11, 251.

(1) The Passion According to Akutagawa Ryūnosuke

Published in January 1926, around a year and a half before his suicide, the short story "The Folding Fan of Hunan" 湖南の扇 (1926) stands out from other works of this period on two accounts: its belatedness relative to Akutagawa's other China travel writings, most of which were written shortly after the trip, on the one hand; and its direct engagement with the theme of political violence (unlike the fantasized imperialist expansion in "Momotarō"), a rarity not only among the late writings but across Akutagawa's entire oeuvre, on the other hand. Furthermore, Akutagawa was apparently fond enough of the piece to select it as the title of the last volume of story collection published during his lifetime, *The Folding Fan of Hunan* (June 1927).[110] Besides the eponymous story, the volume included such "realist" works as "Asakusa Park" 浅草公園 (1927), "One Socialist," and "A Mirage" 蜃気楼 (1927) while notably excluding darker-toned autobiographical pieces like "The Death Register" and "Genkaku-Sanbō" 玄鶴山房 (1927)—a peculiar choice that has led some to speculate that Akutagawa, already determined to end his life at this point, had carefully curated the selection to exclude "works that hint at the shadow of his own death" (自己の死の影をほのめかすような作品).[111] Coupled with the "nostalgic" sentiment expressed in "The Yangtze," the spectacle of decapitation in "The Folding Fan of Hunan" thus represents a rare venture in search of the radically other that, I contend, must be understood alongside his inversion of the culturalist scheme of *Bildung*.

A pseudo-memoir of an encounter in Changsha, the capital of Hunan province, the story notably sets its stage with an overview of the region's prominence in the genealogy of the modern Chinese revolution, attributing it to the "passion" (*jōnetsu* 情熱) of its people:

> Aside from Sun Yat-sen who was born in Guangdong, the outstanding revolutionaries—Huang Xing, Cai E, and Song Jiaoren—were all born in Hunan. This

[110] Sekiguchi Yasuyoshi, *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to sono jidai* [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and His Time], 617.
[111] Watabe Yoshinori 渡部芳紀, "Dai hachi tanpenshū 'Konan no ōgi'" 第八短編集『湖南の扇』 [The Eighth Short Story Collection, *The Folding Fan of Hunan*], *Kokubungaku* 国文学 [Japanese Literature] 22, no. 6 (1977): 149.

> was of course due to the inspiration of Zeng Guofan and Zhang Zhidong. To explain this inspiration, we must consider the indefatigably strong will of the Hunanese people themselves. When I visited Hunan [several years ago], I had an almost fictional encounter which may illustrate the dignity and deep passion of the Hunanese.
>
> 広東に生れた孫逸仙等を除けば、目ぼしい支那の革命家は、——黄興、蔡鍔、宋教仁等はいずれも湖南に生れている。これは勿論曾国藩や張之洞の感化にもよったのであろう。しかしその感化を説明する為にはやはり湖南の民自身の負けぬ気の強いことも考えなければならぬ。僕は湖南へ旅行した時、偶然ちょっと小説じみた下の小事件に遭遇した。この小事件もことによると、情熱に富んだ湖南の民の面目を示すことになるのかも知れない。[112]

Indeed, to this list one may add the yet obscure Mao Zedong, who until the very summer of Akutagawa's visit would reside in Changsha and whose influential *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* 湖南農民運動考察報告 (1927) would be published merely a year after Akutagawa's tale. Guided by his former classmate, now a doctor, Tan Yongnian 譚永年—a name that Joshua Fogel conjectures to be a potential reference to another Hunanese martyr, Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865-1898)[113]—Akutagawa's narrator meets Yulan 玉蘭, a "China beauty" (支那美人) and lover of a local bandit who was executed a week earlier. One night at the brothel where Yulan is one of the entertainers, Tan offers everyone biscuits that have been soaked in the blood spilled from the bandit's severed head, mockingly explaining that the superstitious locals believe that doing so will cure diseases. While the narrator, despite feeling oddly tempted, eventually turns it down, Yulan boldly accepts Tan's macabre invitation to this borderline cannibalism. As she eats the biscuit, Yulan proclaims her love for the decapitated Huang Liuyi, arousing both shock and admiration in the narrator, to whom Tan has translated Yulan's speech.

Other than speaking "directly to Akutagawa's enduring admiration for the Chinese who were intent on changing their dismal state and for such courageous Chinese women," as Fogel avers,[114] this "small incident" (小事件) gestures toward the author's convoluted relationship with political

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[112] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Konan no ōgi" 湖南の扇 [The Folding Fan of Hunan], in *Arz*, vol. 13, 136; English translation by Joshua A. Fogel in *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China: 1862-1945*, 261.
[113] Joshua A. Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China: 1862*-1945, 261.
[114] Ibid.

violence characterized at once by fascination and repulsion. Whereas undeniably tinged with Orientalist romanticism, to read Akutagawa's portrayal of Hunanese "passion" as little more than an exoticized China's barbarous chaos would risk short-circuiting both the complex structure of the narrator's feelings and the implicit presence of "Japan" in the story. To be sure, the incident is consistently presented as particularly worth relating on account of the impossibility to witness such things in (civilized/modernized) Japan. Upon meeting Tan at the dock, the narrator displays an anthropological interest in the apparently common spectacle of public beheadings: "Well, it would be nice to see a bandit being executed or something…" (さあ、土匪の斬罪か何か見物でも出来りゃ格別だが、……)[115] Dismaying the narrator with the regrettable news that he had narrowly missed the beheadings of five people a few days earlier, Tan laughed: "That's the only thing you don't get to see in Japan, the beheadings." (斬罪だけは日本ぢや見る訣に行かない。)[116] Later in the brothel, as if to make up for the narrator's absence from the spectating crowd, Tan presents him a handful of "chocolate-colored, dried" biscuits as the truly authentic experience—even better than the witnessing itself:

> These are just biscuits… You know, I told you about the bandit leader Huang Liuyi earlier, right? These are soaked in the blood of Huang's neck. Now this is truly something you won't get to see in Japan.
>
> これは唯のビスケットだがね。……そら、さつき黄六一と云ふ土匪の頭目の話をしたらう？あの黄の首の血をしみこませてあるんだ。これこそ日本ぢや見ることは出来ない。[117]

Implying that this tradition of borderline cannibalism—more so (*korekoso* これこそ) than the decapitating itself—represents the ultimate "local experience," Tan's words inflect the flux of the libidinal economy from the executed to the left behind. In so doing, Tan's grotesque offer triangulates the narrator's desire from the unbearable primal scene of violence to the sexualized and

115 Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Konan no ōgi" [The Folding Fan of Hunan], 139.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid., 150.

exoticized figure of Yulan, the "China beauty" who would (quite literally) re-incarnate Huang's insubordination by devouring his flesh.

If the opening foregrounds the Hunanese people's "deep passion" as the fundamental drive toward revolution, it is here that this "passion" reveals itself in its full force as both a questionably feudal residue and an uncontainable surplus to rational thinking. Immediately after introducing the curio, Tan resumes his posture as an elite modernist with medical training, explaining the superstitious local beliefs only to denounce them as backward and shameful:

> "What other use is there [for the biscuits]? They're just for eating. Around here, people still believe that if they eat these, they will be healthy and free from illness. Such superstitions are a national disgrace. As a professional doctor, I've been quite vocal about it, but still…"
>
> 「何にするもんか？食ふだけだよ。この辺ぢや未だにこれを食へば、無病息災になると思つてゐるんだ。……こんな迷信こそ国辱だね。僕などは医者と言ふ職業上、ずゐぶんやかましくも言つてゐるんだが……」[118]

Speaking as a "professional doctor," Tan's dismissal of the custom as a "national disgrace" (*kokujoku* 国辱) seems to partake in the plethora of "national character" discourses in the air during this period.[119] The contrast between the doctor's scientific mind and the locals' fatuity resonates with Lu Xun's cold-eyed portrayal, in his renowned short story "Medicine" 藥 (1919), of the onlookers watching a revolutionary's decapitation and ghoulishly waiting to retrieve a piece of steamed bun dipped in the blood (人血饅頭). Despite Akutagawa's deepening interest in Lu Xun since reading the latter's Chinese translations of "Rashōmon" and "The Nose" in 1922, no definitive evidence indicates that he ever came in direct contact with "Medicine."[120] However, both the stories' striking

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[118] Ibid., 150-151.

[119] For an account of "national character" discourses and their discontent, see Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 45-76.

[120] Peng Chunyang 彭春陽, "Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to Ro Jin: 'Konan no ōgi' to 'Kusuri' o chūshin toshite" 芥川龍之介と魯迅——「湖南の扇」と「薬」を中心として—— [Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Lu Xun: Focusing on "The Folding Fan of Hunan" and "Medicine"], in *Kindai Nihon bungaku no shosō* 近代日本文学の諸相 [Aspects of Modern Japanese Literature], ed. Yasukawa Sadao sensei koki kinenronbunshū henshū iinkai 安川定男先生古稀記念論文集編集委員会 [Editorial Committee for the Collection of Papers in Honor of Yasukawa Sadao's Seventieth Birthday] (Tokyo: Meiji shoin, 1990), 235-247.

thematic similarity and their diagonal approaches to decapitation and cannibalism reveal the two authors' crisscrossed conceptions of modernity. Whereas "Medicine" denounces people's superstitious belief in the healing power of blood-soaked steamed bun as a hallmark of feudal fatuity and the mass's complicity in China's anti-revolutionary inertia, "The Folding Fan of Hunan" ultimately subverts Tan's modernist diagnosis, perversely re-imagining Yulan's act of cannibalism as a token of China's undying revolutionary passion and a bold defiance against the Enlightenment logic of progress.

Indeed, "The Folding Fan of Hunan" in effect blurs the boundary between "civilized Japan" and "backward China." Tan's haughty judgment is immediately relativized by the narrator's comment that such superstitions are not uncommon in Japan: "It's unique only because of the decapitation. Even in Japan, people eat things like blackened roasted brains." (それは斬罪があるからだけさ。脳味噌の黒焼きなどは日本でも嘸んでゐる。)[121] Further admitting that he himself has eaten such things as a child, the narrator implicitly declares his sympathy with such "barbarism." Moreover, when offered the biscuits, the narrator "feels the temptation to smell the biscuits." (僕はちょつとそのビスケットの匂だけ嗅いで見たい誘惑を感じた。)[122] Having carefully picked it up with chopsticks, nevertheless, the elusive "temptation" suddenly disappears, and the narrator eventually gives up the idea. It is at this point that the heretofore silent Yulan boldly accepts Tan's malicious challenge:

> Then Yulan looked at Tan's face and asked a few questions. After receiving the biscuits, she began to speak quickly to the onlooking group.
> "What do you say? Shall I translate for you?"
> Resting his elbow on the table with his chin on his hands, Tan spoke to me with a slightly slurred voice.
> "Yes, do translate."
> "Listen carefully. I'll translate word for word. 'I shall gladly savor the blood of my beloved… Master Huang…"

[121] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Konan no ōgi" [The Folding Fan of Hunan], 151.
[122] Ibid., 152.

I felt my body tremble. It was Hanfang's hand shivering as she grabbed my knee.

"'I hope that you too will follow my example… To the ones you love…'"

As Tan was translating, Yulan had already begun to bite a piece of biscuit with her beautiful teeth…

すると玉蘭は譚の顔を見つめ、二ことこと三こと問答をした。それからビスケットを受け取つた後、彼女を見守つた一座を相手に早口に何かしやべり出した。

「どうだ、通訳しようか？」

譚はテエブルに頬杖をつき、そろそろ呂律の怪しい舌にかう僕へ話しかけた。

「うん、通訳してくれ。」

「好いか？逐語訳だよ。わたしは喜んでわたしの愛する………黄老爺の血を味わひます。……」

僕は体の震へるのを感じた。それは僕の膝を抑へた含芳の手の震へるのだつた。

「あなたがたもどうかわたしのやうに、……あなたがたの愛する人を、……」

玉蘭は譚の言葉の中にいつかもう美しい歯にビスケットの一片を噛みはじめていた。……[123]

The intricate dynamics inherent in this climactic scene at once demonstrates and contests the power of revolutionary "passion." To be sure, the powerful image of Yulan biting the biscuit transfigures the narrator's half-hearted interest in Chinese cruelty as an Orientalist trope into a visceral sensation of marvel at the beauty of both the woman and the devouring.[124] Disrupting the order of the barbarous and the civilized, Yulan's passion seems to walk the line between pre-modernity and ultra-modernity. Inadvertently evoking the tradition of the Eucharist, her symbolic sharing of the biscuits—which in turn reworks Tan's ill-intentioned invitation—all but re-appropriates the ghoulish superstition into a gesture of transubstantiation, hence sublating the animalistic "passion" into the revolutionary sublime. Indeed, the translingual double-entendre of "*jōnetsu*" (情熱, passion or zeal) and "*junan*" (受難, the Passion, from Latin *patior*, "to suffer") would have been all too familiar to Akutagawa. The writer's persistent interest in Christianity—as already manifested in early works like "Christ in Nanking" 南京の基督 (1920)—notably intensified toward the end of his life, culminating

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[123] Ibid., 152-153.

[124] For historical accounts of Chinese cruelty and/as Orientalism, see Timothy Brook's discussion of *lingchi* (凌遲) and transcultural legal imagination, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); See also Li Chen on Chinese legal punishments as visual spectacles in *Chinese Law in Imperial Eyes: Sovereignty, Justice, and Transcultural Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), Chapter 4 "Sentimental Imperialism and the Global Spectacle of Chinese Punishments," 156-200.

in his last major piece, "The Man from the West" (西方の人) and its sequel, an extensive study of the life of Jesus. An open Bible near his body found after the suicide has also long invited religious interpretations of Akutagawa's demise.[125] Shattering the modern/backward binary that sustains Tan's diagnosis, the scene reveals the fragility of the modernist temporality of progress as it is threatened by both an inscrutable past (cannibalism and unbearable state cruelty) and an unmastered future (the revolution and the second coming).

Yet to assert that the "deep passion" finds its catharsis in the scene and, in the process, definitively becomes a revolutionary force would risk completely losing sight of the other, more ambivalent side of the story, namely, that of the Japanese narrator's. Contrary to the promise at the beginning of "The Folding Fan of Hunan" that the tale will reveal the Hunanese people's "indefatigably strong will" (負けぬ気の強い),[126] the execution of bandits, which he had regrettably missed, held little interest to him other than as an exotic spectacle. Paradoxically, political violence assumes an absent presence in the narrative as both excessive in its cruel nature and radically mediated and inaccessible. With the unrepresented/unrepresentable scene of the public beheading transposed into the intimate privacy of a brothel, state cruelty on the victim's body comes to be felt in its aftermath, both mediated and gendered. The narrator's status as a traveler further complicates the affective intensity, not least since he could only speculate, even in hindsight, the source of the Chinese characters' animosities (敵意) against each other as Tan all but forced Yulan to relive her loved one's gruesome demise: "I still didn't know exactly why he [Tan Yongnian] had to torment Yulan." (彼の玉蘭を苦しめた理由ははつきりとは僕にもわからなかつた。)[127] Adding to the confusion is his lack of linguistic knowledge. Indeed, despite Tan's promise of a word-for-word translation (逐

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[125] See for example Kevin Doak, "The Last Word? Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's 'The Man from the West,'" *Monumenta Nipponica* 66, no. 2 (2011): 247-255.
[126] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Konan no ōgi" [The Folding Fan of Hunan], 136.
[127] Ibid., 154.

語訳), the prospect of communication is undercut by the ambivalence of Yulan's own message: "'I hope that you too will follow my example… To the ones you love…'" (「あなたがたもどうかわたしのやうに、……あなたがたの愛する人を、……」)[128] Yulan's unfinished words could either indicate a call upon her fellow ladies to stay faithful to their love interests or, in a gesture to translate romantic love into camaraderie, be interpreted as a battle cry for China. However, the narrator feels the impact of Yulan's speech only in his loins, through the sensuous touch another woman, Hanfang's shivering hand which were intimately grasping his knee: "I felt my body tremble. It was Hanfang's hand shivering as she grabbed my knee." (僕は体の震へるのを感じた。それは僕の膝を抑へた含芳の手の震へるのだつた。)[129] In the same way that capital punishment throttles social unrest by severing the thinking head from the feeling body, that is, the formation of the political subject is thwarted by a radical schism between the sensible and the intelligible. If the protagonist of "Cogwheels" involuntarily inhabits a world of schizophrenic ideas where realities are emptied out by their shadows, the narrator of "The Folding Fan of Hunan," by contrast, finds himself incapable of fully making sense of the visceral shock of a latently revolutionary China.

The convoluted modality of the revolutionary "passion" also hinges on the ambivalence of the figure of Huang Liuyi as a bandit (*dohi*/*tufei* 土匪) leader. Whereas Lu Xun models Xia Yu's execution 夏瑜 after the martyrdom of the late-Qing revolutionary Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875-1907) in "Medicine," the ideological underpinnings of Akutagawa's Huang seem much more befuddled. Master Huang, as Tan has informed the narrator earlier, wielded immense power and "owned a magnificent Western-style mansion outside Shanghai's concession" (上海の租界の外に堂々たる洋館を構へてゐた).[130] While Huang's wealth sets him apart from both the average populace and regular rebels, the status of banditry speaks to a more complex problem of Chinese politics. Appropriating

128 Ibid., 153.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid., 144.

Eric Hobsbawm's notion of "social banditry"—defined as "those who are not regarded as simple criminals by public opinion… [but] as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice"—Phil Billingsley highlights the endemic banditry in Republican China as a symptom of the general lawlessness under a weakened centralized government.[131]

Thus, both the unchecked disruptive forces of banditry and the "passion" (情熱) that Akutagawa seeks to capture inhabit the ambivalent sphere of indistinction between the political and the non-political—or rather, politics as pure potentiality. Appropriating the Aristotelian antagonism, in *De Anima*, between potentiality (*dynamis*) and actuality (*energeia*), Giorgio Agamben contends that, rather than simply non-Being, potentiality registers instead the existence of non-Being as a state of privation, as the presence of an absence which he links to the notion of "faculty" or "power." ""To have a faculty,"' Agamben writes, "means *to have* a privation. And potentiality is not a logical hypostasis but the mode of existence of this privation."[132] Literalized by Huang's brutal beheading, the state of privation embodied by Chinese banditry both undergirds and undermines revolution as a political possibility. Indeed, as Lu Xun would point out in a 1926 essay, "*fei*" (匪, or banditry) usually stands opposite to "*guan*" (官, or official) in the Chinese socio-historical vocabulary.[133] Insofar as "revolutionaries" are more often than not retrospectively ratified and hence become distinguishable from mere rebels only *ex post facto*, the apparent schism between Akutagawa's opening appraisal of Hunan as a cradle of revolution and his peculiar choice of a bandit leader as its subject may not be out of keeping after all. In contrast to what Tie Xiao observes as Lu Xun and his contemporaries' tireless portrayal of the onlooking crowd as the non-subject against whom the revolutionary

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131 Phil Billingsley, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 1-14.
132 Giorgio Agamben, "On Potentiality," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 179. Agamben's emphasis.
133 Lu Xun, "Jianbi qingye zhuyi" 堅壁清野主義 [Scorched-Earth-ism], in *Lu Xun quan ji* [Complete Works of Lu Xun], vol. 1, 275.

individual must define him- or herself,[134] Akutagawa in effect designates bandits and prostitutes as already potential revolutionary subjects in and of themselves rather than as part of the "crowd" (*qunzhong*) awaiting transformation into the "people" (*renmin*) as a modern political category.[135] In so doing, nevertheless, "The Folding Fan of Hunan" both underlines the potential of radical corporeality and foregrounds its inherent limits as a dynamic hypostasis.

Harking back to the narrator's experience of Yulan's passion as both viscerally shocking and beyond total comprehension, one can now better understand the significance of "The Folding Fan of Hunan" as both thematically antipodal to "Cogwheels" and parallel to it in spirit. Indeed, to the extent that both stories powerfully thematize a radical rupture between the intellectual and the physical world they inhabit, between thinking and action, "Cogwheels" and "The Folding Fan of Hunan" partake in a holistic endeavor on late Akutagawa's part to undo a mode of aesthetics that alienates itself from the sensuous world as its proper subject and that enshrines the autonomy of art at the expense of its political—that is, corporeal—valence. If Walter Benjamin's artwork essay similarly underlines the dire consequences of a disembodied aesthetics by summoning the proletariat to "politicize art," the foresight of Akutagawa lies precisely in his critique of art and literature under the Taishō modernist regime of unpoliticality for their powerlessness against the rise of such ideologies as fascism and Japanism. In this light, the hasty affirmation—from both the Left and the conservative literary establishment—of Akutagawa's death as that of an aesthete thus amounts to a discursive "beheading" of the writer's complex legacies by preserving the "aesthetic" and purging the "political" of his late writings. It is this decapitation, I argue, that furnishes the "primal scene" of violence for Shōwa literary discourses, a scene that elicits repeated returns to Akutagawa's "literary suicide" as part of the critical apparatus that continues to partition literature and politics.

134 See Tie Xiao's discussion of Gustave Le Bon's theory of crowds and its impact on Chinese discourses in Tie Xiao, *Revolutionary Waves: The Crowd in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 28-34.
135 Ibid., 16-18.

(2) The Beheading of Akutagawa and the Origin of Shōwa Literature

Akutagawa already displayed a macabre interest in the trope of decapitation in "The Story of a Head That Fell Off" 首が落ちた話 (1917), one of his few stories set in modern China prior to his visit. An enigmatic parable of violence set in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the tale mainly follows the figure of the Chinese soldier He Xiao-er as he suffers a fatal wound in the neck during combat, experiences flash-backs of his life, and undergoes intense feelings of loneliness and repentance before losing consciousness. The narrative subsequently switches to a conversation a year later between one Major Kimura, who had known Xiao-er in a hospital after the latter's purportedly fatal wound, and his colleague. While Xiao-er miraculously escaped death and vowed to be a good, honest man, the two presently learn from the newspaper that he instead ended up turning into a troublemaker as soon as the war ended and met his demise when his head suddenly fell off during a drunk fight. Attempting to extract a moral out of the bizarre incident, Kimura concludes quizzically that one should never trust onself lest "our own characters (*jinkaku* 人格) could fall off like Xiao-er's head."[136]

Foreshadowing the narrator's interest in beheadings in "Hunan," the story of He Xiao-er as well as Kimura's (decidedly Orientalist) interpretation of it—"This is the way you have to read all Chinese newspapers." (すべて支那の新聞と云うものは、こんな風に読まなくてはいけないのだ。)[137]—foregrounds the fragility of the modern subject and its purported integrity. This preoccupation with the unknowability of interiority echoes Akutagawa's keen interest in the unreliable narrative voice—most notably in "In a Grove" 藪の中 (1922) but also in "Returning a Favor" 報恩記 (1922) and later works like "A Fool's Life"—and his avoidance of the I-novel form for most of his career. In this light, decapitation allegorizes an anxiety over the falling apart of subjectivity that would eventually

136 Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Kubi ga ochita hanashi" [The Story of a Head That Fell Off], 62.
137 Ibid.

culminate in the absolute disjuncture between the sensible and the intelligible, between the (all too) literary and the political in "Cogwheels" and "The Folding Fan of Hunan." If He Xiao-er's liminal experience brings to the fore an evanescent subjectivity that fleetingly unites a self-reflexive mind and an ethical/active body only for it to be cancelled out by his own callousness during peaceful times, "The Story of a Head That Fell Off" both foregrounds the violent beheading as having always already (or potentially) occurred and seeks hope for undoing such a violence. In the same way, then, late Akutagawa's thematizations of the sense-dead paranoid subject and of the anti-intellectual and unintelligible political passion complement each other in their critiques of Culturalism (or the liberal ideal of *Bildung*) and its dissolution, as it were, of "culture" itself—taking "culture" as Raymond Williams understood it, as "a whole way of life."[138] It is in this way that one can begin to see in a different light what Seiji Lippit identifies as "disintegration" and "fragmentation" in Akutagawa's late works—namely, as less a formalistic response to the excess of the modern world than as tropes of a disassociation of sensibility.

It is thus only ironic that, over the decades after his suicide, the name of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke has become a byword for pure literature—"pure," that is, in the very sense that Akutagawa warned against insofar as this purity premises itself on a radical split from both the mass and the political. As many have noted, Akutagawa's death was immediately recognized as a literary event, with his death note, addressed to his personal friend Kume Masao, turned into a public text that "invites publication, reading, interpretation, and criticism."[139] In September 1927, *Bungei Shunjū* published a special issue in Akutagawa's memory edited by Kikuchi Kan 菊池寛 (1988-1948). The issue included four posthumous manuscripts including "A Note to a Certain Old Friend" 或旧友へ送る手記 (1927), where Akutagawa expressed "a vague sense of anxiety toward [his] future" (僕の将来

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[138] Raymond Williams, introduction to *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), xvii.
[139] Kirsten Cather, "Noting Suicide with a Vague Sense of Anxiety," 2.

に対する唯ぼんやりした不安),[140] along with thirteen contributions from friends and several other substantive critical essays.[141] The posthumous reification of Akutagawa as the ultimate aesthete culminated in the further institutionalization of "pure literature" through the prize named after him. In 1935, the same year that Akutagawa's friend Kikuchi Kan established the Akutagawa Prize for high literature alongside the Naoki Prize for popular literature, a series of debates over pure fiction (純粋小説) unfolded among such leading writers and critics as Yokomitsu Riichi 横光利一 (1898-1947), Kawabata Yasunari 川端康成 (1899-1972), and Nakamura Mitsuo 中村光夫 (1911-1988). Driven by an intently felt need to consolidate the ontological status of art in an era of commercial publishing, these debates gradually reified a boundary between art and non-art as a mechanism that reproduces literary value.[142]

If the literary establishment—already a product of a retreat from politics in and of itself—succeeded in depoliticizing Akutagawa through collectively claiming and preserving his legacies, this bifurcation of literature and politics was further reinforced by the Marxist writers' simultaneous denouncing and "reclaiming" of Akutagawa as the archetype of a bourgeois literature that must be overcome. In "Literature of Defeat" 敗北の文学 (1927), the most famous contemporary critique, Miyamoto Kenji incisively points out an inherent tension between Akutagawa's intellectualism and "passion," between art and lived realities:

> Paradoxes are things that can never be resolved unless they are reclaimed through a resolution at a higher plane. The temperamental romantic was in conflict with the realist in terms of a view of life. Like grinding cogwheels, the philosophical skeptic was, of course, eternally working against the political communist. And that is not all. The combination of these various units could not but bestow anxiety and suffering on the position held by Akutagawa, a position in which a balance between the two poles was artificially maintained through the buttressing of the intellect.

[140] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Aru kyūyū e okuru shuki" [A Note to a Certain Old Friend], 3.
[141] Kikuchi Kan 菊池寛, ed., *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke tsuitōgō* 芥川龍之介追悼号 [Special Issue in Memory of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke], *Bungei shunjū* 文藝春秋 5, no. 9 (1927).
[142] See Edward Mack, *Manufacturing Modern Japanese Literature: Publishing, Prizes, and the Ascription of Literary Value* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 166-179.

> 矛盾はより高次的な統一によって救われない限り、いつ迄も解決され得るものではない。気質上のロマンチストは人生観上のリアリストと嚙み合った。哲学上のスケプチストは、むろん、政治上のコムニストと狂った歯車のように永遠に叛逆し合った。それのみではない。この夫々を単位とした組合せは理智の支柱によって人工的に保たれていた氏の姿勢に、不安と苦痛を与えずにはおかなかった。[143]

Indeed, what Miyamoto characterizes as the tension between Akutagawa's "temperamental romanticism" and "realism in terms of a view of life" speaks to the latter's belabored endeavor to thematize the schism between a self-alienating aesthetics and embodied political engagement. However, Miyamoto proceeds to circumvent the complexity of Akutagawa's oeuvre by relying on a teleological scheme through the dialectical process, calling for "a resolution at a higher plane" (より高次的な統一). The dialectic negation of art by politics that Miyamoto advocates, that is, already premises itself on not a reconciliation but a schism between the two, thus failing to truly politicize aesthetics.

To be sure, if Miyamoto's critique that Akutagawa's (purported) ideal of pure art remains ultimately untenable already underlies the latter's own struggles toward the end of his life,[144] the Marxist critic's not unsympathetic glossing of Akutagawa's legacies falls short of seeing the profound implicatedness of politics in Akutagawa's more "aesthetic" writings such as "Cogwheels" and "A Fool's Life." Diagnosing Akutagawa's death as a deep-rooted pathology of the Taishō bourgeois self, Miyamoto Kenji ends his essay with a passionate call to overcome the bourgeois class consciousness that Akutagawa embodied:

> However, we must always maintain a savage passion to criticize Mr. Akutagawa's literature. In order to make us stronger, haven't we investigated the process of the "defeat" of his literature? We must transcend this literature of "defeat," along with its class-based soil, and march forward.
>
> だが、我々は如何なる時も、芥川氏の文学を批判し切る野蛮な情熱を持たねばならない。我々は我々を逞しくするために、氏の文学の「敗北」的行程を究明して来たのではなかった

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[143] Miyamoto Kenji, "'Haiboku' no bungaku: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke-shi no bungaku ni tsuite" [The Literature of "Defeat": On Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's Literature], 23; English translation in James Dorsey, *Critical Aesthetics: Kobayashi Hideo, Modernity, and Wartime Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 104.
[144] See James Dorsey's discussion of Miyamoto in *Critical Aesthetics: Kobayashi Hideo, Modernity, and Wartime Japan*, 104-105.

か。「敗北」の文学を──そしてその階級的土壌を我々は踏み越えて往かなければならない。[145]

The revolutionary futurity implicit in this imperative to "march forward," as it were, neatly contains Akutagawa within a discourse of progress marked by its linear temporality. In announcing Akutagawa's "defeat," Miyamoto calls into being an anticipated "victory" that sustains itself precisely through a bifurcation between the aesthetic (narrowly construed as that which is related to art only) and the political. Even though Miyamoto's characterization of the proletarian intellectuals' critical stance as one marked by a "savage passion" (野蛮な情熱) parallels Akutagawa's own reflection on corporeality as the potentiality of politics, his notion of class struggle following a Hegelian teleology merely substitutes one political ideology (Marxism) for another (bourgeois liberal democracy) while leaving intact the very unpolitical modality of aesthetic culture that Akutagawa sought to undo.

Thus, both the conservative literary establishment and the Marxists at once enthusiastically commemorated Akutagawa's suicide as the end of an era, on the one hand, and used it to further reify the politics/literature binary, on the other hand. It is in this sense that Akutagawa's death and its discursive severance from the political became discursively contained as the "primal scene" of Shōwa literature. To the same extent that such a primal scene of violence serves to structure and sustain Shōwa literature as an institution distinguishable from its Taishō counterpart, its continual forgetting—discursively manifested as a partial remembrance that privileges the aesthetic over the political—also consistently haunts and calls into question its legitimacy. Drawing on Lu Xun and Shen Congwen's use of decapitation as a trope for national tragedy and personal trauma, David Wang contends that "modernity has left its imprint on Chinese experience in the form of a bodily rupture."[146] If Lu Xun's dread of decapitation as an excessive form of political violence bespeaks an

[145] Miyamoto Kenji, "'Haiboku' no bungaku: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke-shi no bungaku ni tsuite" [The Literature of "Defeat": On Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's Literature], 32.
[146] David Der-wei Wang, *The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China*, 39.

anxiety over the modern Chinese nation as excluded from Enlightenment rationalism and hence as a headless behemoth, Akutagawa's portrayal of the Taishō intellectual as sense-dead and paranoid points to a diagonally opposite horror at an unpolitical intelligentsia rendered bodiless by an aesthetics alienated from its proper subject, namely, corporeal sensibility. Inasmuch as the discursive space that quickly formed around Akutagawa's death further consolidated his purported unpoliticality, the highly institutionalized remembrance/forgetting of the event functioned as an ideological state apparatus that at once preserves "literature" and suppresses "politics." Thus, the contraction of Japanese literary consciousness following first the High Treason Incident of late Meiji and then the brutal murder of Ōsugi Sakae after the Great Kanto Earthquake culminated in a writer's personal demise that conveniently coalesced with the beginning of Shōwa as a distinct historical period.[147] Herein lies Akutagawa's grim "foresight" that many would recognize as true only as the turbulent first two decades of Shōwa unfolded, as the ramifications of this radical rupture between culture and politics became revealed through the defeat of Marxism—which itself had vowed to overcome Akutagawa—and the subsequent rise of full-fledged fascism.

Epilogue: A Sense of a Beginning

What does it mean to assign an origin or a "degree zero" (*genten* 原点) to a heterogeneous literary category? What does such an origin afford epistemically? As Harootunian writes of the Taishō period, an epoch that Akutagawa Ryūnosuke has come to epitomize: "Participants in historical eras always seem to have a sharper sense of an ending than of a beginning. But hindsight is more secure than foresight; reflection more acceptable than the expression of new impulses. Perhaps

[147] For a discussion of the impact of the sensational Amakasu Incident and the death of Ōsugi, see Mark Driscoll, "Terrorism against Modernity: The Amakasu Incident and Japan's 'Age of Terror,'" in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Terrorism*, eds. Carola Dietze and Claudia Verhoeven (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 329-347.

to see a break in the line, an epochal disjunction, or to conceive of epochs as unities, is to do violence to the experiences left to us from more distant times."[148] Indeed, the figure of Akutagawa embodies such an epistemic dilemma in modern Japanese literary history. The powerful hindsight—both immediate and long after the event—that ascribed a sense of an ending to his death would subsequently, over time, further incorporate an appreciation of Akutagawa's own "foresight" as one of the few prophets of the fragility of Taishō liberal democracy and the impending doom of the Japanese empire.[149] Yet insofar as to announce the end of an era always implies the beginning of another, this chapter has attempted to revisit Akutagawa's late writings leading up to his suicide and its affordance not as the terminus of Taishō but as the beginning of Shōwa.

As Karatani Kōjin observes, Japanese era names (*gengō* 元号) play a peculiar role in the conception of history, not least because their "randomness"—that is, their being contingent on the lifespan of a singular person[150]—inevitably runs at odds with inherent continuities and ruptures in the course of historical events and tends to "give rise to certain illusions."[151] However, to the extent that terms like "Meijiesque" and "Taishōesque" have come to symbolize historical structures, one would ignore their currency only at the cost of the richness of the discursive spaces that form around them.[152] In this light, if Akutagawa's suicide points to a rupture—at once literary/political and temporal—that must be constantly remembered, reconfirmed, and, indeed, re-enacted (in the case of Dazai Osamu),[153] its status as the primal scene of Shōwa literature furnishes an invaluable entrypoint to the vexed relationship between literature and lived realities as well as the institution of

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148 Harry Harootunian, "Introduction: A Sense of an Ending and the Problem of Taishō," 3.
149 See for example Hamazaki Yōsuke 浜崎洋介, *Bonyari to shita fuan to kindai Nihon: Dai Tōa Sensō no hontō no riyū* ぼんやりとした不安の近代日本 [Modern Japan with a Vague Sense of Anxiety] (Tokyo: Business-sha, 2022).
150 Note, however, that the tradition of one emperor ruling under one era name was only introduced during the Meiji period and hence a relatively recent construct.
151 Karatani Kōjin, "The Discursive Space of Modern Japan," trans. Seiji Lippit, in *History and Repetition*, ed. Seiji Lippit (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 47.
152 See ibid., 47-51.
153 For a comparison between the two and suicide as national allegory, see Alan Wolfe, *Suicidal Narrative in Modern Japan: The Case of Dazai Osamu* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 21-47.

"culture" (*bunka* as distinct from *bunmei*/civilization) itself. In his study of the German Trauerspiel, Walter Benjamin distinguishes "origin" (*Ursprung*) from "genesis" (*Entstehung*): "By 'origin' is meant not the coming-to-be of what has originated but rather what originates in the becoming and passing away."[154] In this sense, Akutagawa's powerful thematization of a crisis of sensibility and his subsequent death can thus be construed as an inherently untenable origin that nevertheless comes to structure the course of literary history of the Shōwa period. As will be demonstrated in Chapters II and III, this crisis of sensibility would continue to have ramifications throughout Japan's gradual slide into total war and the rebuilding after its surrender.

[154] Walter Benjamin, *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*, trans. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 24.

Chapter 2 Fleshed History: Everydayness in Kobayashi Takiji and Nakano Shigeharu's Proletarian I-Novels

> Yet, to be sure, without the flesh, complaints alone would not resolve issues. The task of literature is to seek this flesh, at least for me. And the flesh, in this case, means history, whether it takes the form of fiction or not. Perhaps, I wouldn't be over-exaggerating it, were I to say history itself, its flesh itself.
>
> しかしやはり、そこに肉体がなければ、文句では事は片づかない。この肉体をもとめるのが文学の仕事である。すくなくとも私にとつての文学の仕事である。そして肉体は、この場合、フィクションの形を取るにしろ取らぬにしろ、歴史のことである。歴史そのもの、その肉体そのものと言つても大きな言い過ぎではなかろうと思う。
>
> Nakano Shigeharu 中野重治, "The Problem of Fiction and the Problem of Reality" 小説の上の問題と事実の上の問題 (1976)[1]

> In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.
>
> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (1846)[2]

> History does nothing, it "possesses no immense wealth," it "wages no battles." It is man, real, living man who does all that, who possesses and fights; "history" is not, as it were, a person apart, using man as a means to achieve its own aims; history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims.
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> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family* (1844)[3]

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[1] Nakano Shigeharu 中野重治, "Shōsetsu no ue no mondai to jijitsu no ue no mondai" 小説の上の問題と事実の上の問題 [The Problem of Fiction and the Problem of Reality], in *Nakano Shigeharu zenshū* 中野重治全集 [Complete Works of Nakano Shigeharu] (Hereafter *NSz*), vol. 8 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1977), 490. English translation by Shigeto Yukiko in "In Search of 'History's Flesh Itself': Nakano Shigeharu and Literary Imagination," *Japan Forum* 28, no. 2 (2016): 198.
[2] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 154.
[3] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism: Against Bruno and Company*, trans. Richard Dixon and Clemens Dutt (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 110.

In an afterword to his novel, *Kō otsu hei tei* (甲乙丙丁, 1969), Nakano Shigeharu 中野重治 (1902-1979) idiosyncratically designates the task of literature as one of retrieving the flesh of history.[4] The question of the body and corporeal sensibility would recur throughout Nakano's postwar writings in what Rin Shūmei regards as the proletarian writer's project of "uniting politics and literature" or "the theoretical and the corporeal."[5] Far from a generic conception of literature's propagandistic role shared by many socialist realist writers, as Yukiko Shigeto points out, Nakano's literary praxis has its roots in Japan's turbulent 1930s, a decade marked by massive political conversions of leftist intellectuals under duress known as the phenomenon of *tenkō* (転向 or political conversion, lit. "turning"), and must be understood as stemming from his visceral confrontation with the failure of the prewar proletarian movement.[6]

What, then, does it mean for literature to retrieve the flesh of history? What does an attentiveness to the body and to corporeal sensibility bring to the revolutionary undertaking? How does Nakano's conception of literary action distinguish itself from the kind of socialist realism propagated by the Japanese Left from its inception throughout the 1920s and early 1930s? How might it shed light on the boundaries between the political and its alleged antipode, variously conceived of as the a-/pre-/non-political? With these questions in mind, this chapter probes Japanese proletarian literature's vexed relationship with the I-novel, understood as a semi-autobiographical literary form that privileges the representation of everyday life and private feelings. Widely regarded as the mainstream genre of high culture during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, the I-novel (私小説) came under attack from writers of leftist persuasion for its supposed indulgence

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[4] Nakano Shigeharu, "Shōsetsu no ue no mondai to jijitsu no ue no mondai" [The Problem of Fiction and the Problem of Reality], in *NSz*, vol. 8, 490.

[5] Rin Shūmei 林淑美, *Hihyō no ningensei: Nakano Shigeharu* 批評の人間性：中野重治 [The Humanity of Criticism: Nakano Shigeharu] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2010). See also Nakano Shigeharu, "Nikkan toshite no hihyō: Domon Ken ten o miru" 肉感としての批評：土門拳展を見る [Criticism as Corporeal Sensibility: Upon Visiting the Domon Ken Exhibition], in *NSz*, vol. 25, 222-224; Nakano Shigeharu, "Nikkansei no fuzoku: Moriyama Kei 'Shūkaku izen'" 肉感性の不足：森山啓「収穫以前」 [The Lack of Corporeal Sensibility: On Moriyama Kei's "Before Harvest"], in *NSz*, vol. 11, 21-22.

[6] Yukiko Shigeto, "In Search of 'History's Flesh Itself': Nakano Shigeharu and Literary Imagination," 198.

in human interiority and for lacking in social concerns.[7] Despite Marxist critiques levelled at the I-novel, nevertheless, proletarian writers variously engaged the literary form at the beginning of the 1930s, a critical moment when the Japanese Left saw was collapsing under the pressure of governmental crackdown. Taking *tenkō* and the crisis of the Marxist political creed as through lines, I examine Nakano's thinking in comparison with another prominent leftist writer, Kobayashi Takiji 小林多喜二 (1903-1933). Significantly, both of them appropriated the I-novel form, albeit under very different circumstances. An uncompromising activist till the end, Kobayashi's death by torture at the hands of the Tokkō (特高, short for Special Higher Police 特別高等警察) became the symbol of non-conformity (非転向).[8] By contrast, Nakano was released from prison after renouncing the Japanese Communist Party and went on to write confessional stories marked by in-depth self-examination, rendering him the key figure of what would come to be known as "*tenkō* literature" (転向文学).

Zooming in on the portrayal of quotidian life and the mode of embodied subjectivity underlying it, the chapter reads Takiji's unfinished novella *Tōseikatsusha* 党生活者 (*Life of a Party Member*, 1933) and Nakano's short story "Mura no ie" 村の家 ("The House in the Village," 1935).[9] While the former seeks to invert the I-novel by staging a total renunciation of private life for the sake of a purely political life (*tōseikatsu* 党生活), the latter calls into question the alleged pre-political nature of everyday life and reconceptualizes it as a site of political struggle, echoing the philosopher Tosaka Jun's 戸坂潤 designation of everydayness as philosophy's proper subject. In so doing, I interrogate how the proletarian I-novels in effect renegotiate the horizon of political representation

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[7] See for example Yokomitsu Riichi 横光利一, "Junsui shōsetsu ron" 純粋小説論 [On Pure Fiction], in *Teihon Yokomitsu Riichi zenshū* 定本横光利一全集 [Complete Works of Yokomitsu Riichi (The Definitive Edition)], vol. 13 (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1982), 233-245; Kobayashi Hideo, "Discourse on Fiction of the Self," in *Literature of the Lost Home: Kobayashi Hideo—Literary Criticism 1924-1939,* trans. Paul Anderer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 67-93. For a detailed account of the debates, see Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), esp. 135-136.

[8] Since Kobayashi is a common surname and since this chapter will discuss multiple figures with the name (including his contemporary, the literary critic Kobayashi Hideo), I will refer to the writer as Takiji in the remainder of this chapter.

[9] Given the difficulty of accurately translating the title of Takiji's novella (which I will discuss later), I shall refer to it in transliteration, while referring to Nakano's story in its English title throughout.

as construed in a double sense. On the one hand, such a horizon designates the limit of what can be perceived as political. In Japan, I contend, this horizon of the political is reified by the critical apparatus that constantly reproduces the politics/literature binary. On the other hand, it names the extent to which sovereign power can subsume the allegedly pre-political/non-political dimensions of life under totalizing ideological state apparatuses, with the metonymical "*kokutai*" 国体 (national body politic) being the most prominent example. Along these lines, I aim to chart the way the Japanese Left's attitude toward embodied quotidian life shifted over the course of political crackdown and demonstrate how, rather than the "yonder" of politics, everydayness became a contested site which both the fascist regime and its resistance sought to claim.

The question concerning "the political" is in turn inextricably tied with literature's contested relationship to what Ernst Bloch calls "darkness of the lived moment" that concealed the "unmastered Now and its unopened future,"[10] which I seek to parse through a rethinking of the politics/literature divide. Proletarian writers' appropriations of the I-novel form were not all consciously parodic. Having pledged to withdraw from politics, *tenkō* writers had little choice but to resort to autobiographical/confessional subjects. Nevertheless, even this very act of "withdrawal" served to destabilize the line between the political and the non-political that the fascist state actively sought to draw and contain. For the same reason that the I-novel was later denounced as privileging "immediate sensibility" and hence as "pre-political,"[11] premises of the Japanese Left's "political" project that progressive intellectuals had upheld until the crackdown became no longer self-evident at the moment of crisis. Thus, tracing the Japanese Left's morphing conception of everydayness and embodiment, this chapter contends that, rather than marking the Left's ideological bankruptcy, *tenkō*

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[10] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 295.
[11] Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男, "Nikutai bungaku kara nikutai seiji made" 肉体文学から肉体政治まで [From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics], in *Maruyama Masao shū* 丸山眞男集 [Collected Works of Maruyama Masao], vol. 4 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), 207-227. See Chapter 3 for a detailed examination of Maruyama's argument and its ramifications.

names a transformative moment that gave rise to a new form of historical subjectivity grounded on its immediate everyday confrontation with Japan's political realities.

I. Everydayness and Politics: From the I-Novel to Tosaka Jun

In a 1936 manual that contains detailed instructions on how to entice confessions from leftwing political activists who were being arrested on a large scale for committing "thought crime" as the Shōwa period's turbulent first decade unfolded,[12] the prosecutor Ikeda Katsu 池田克 highlights the effectiveness of persuasion over torture. In an exemplary scene, the police stationmaster sits down with the prisoner, pays for a bowl of *oyakodon* (literally "parent-child bowl") from his own pocket, and tells the inmate: "Your mother worries about you." The popular domestic dish which derives its name from the main ingredients, chicken and eggs, serves as a reminder of the traditional moral code of filial piety that the prisoner would supposedly trample should they persist in risking their life for the Marxist cause.[13] The manual comprises a host of other techniques with such sections as "the re-awakening of familial love" and "responsibilities in daily life" and even includes an eventful narrative ending with a converted girl's reunion with her family as she is redeemed by motherly love, re-enters quotidian life, and lives happily ever after.[14]

The Japanese thought police's rhetorical appropriation of quotidian (and usually domestic) life as the "yonder," if not opposite, of politics is hardly startling, insofar as any revolution demands

[12] For a detailed account of the juridical regime of thought policing, see Max M. Ward, *Thought Crime: Ideology and State Power in Interwar Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).
[13] The example is cited in Tsurumi Shunsuke's towering study of the phenomenon of "tenkō" in wartime Japanese intellectual history. See Tsurumi Shunsuke 鶴見俊輔, *Senjiki Nihon no seishinshi, 1931-1945 nen* 戦時期日本の精神史—1931~1945 年 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1982), 25-26; English version in Tsurumi Shunsuke, *An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan, 1931-1945* (London: Routledge, 1986), 11-12.
[14] Ikeda Katsu 池田克 and Mōri Motoi 毛利基, *Bōhan kagaku zenshū, dai rokkan, Shisōhan pen* 防犯科学全集 第 6 巻 思想犯篇 [Crime Prevention Science Collection, vol. 6: Thought Crimes] (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1936), 400.

turning away from biological family and toward communalism and comradeship.[15] A return to everydayness, it follows, would signal the revolution's death. Nevertheless, I am interested less in the ideological structure of Japanese fascism and its mechanism of interpellation than in the horizon of representation brought to light by the escalating tension between political action and everyday life during the rise of totalitarianism. I seek instead to probe how political conversion names a process where the leftwing intellectual renounces not only their past political stance (different shades of communism) but also virtually acquiesces to a heretofore unimaginable commitment, namely to being no longer political at all. In this light, the I-novel furnishes a privileged site of inquiry as the literary form that, on the one hand, was the target of proletarian writers' unsparing critiques and, on the other hand, provided an outlet for *tenkō* writers who had to eschew overtly political writings.

The Japanese coinage "*shishōsetsu*" (I-novel), also read "*watakushi shōsetsu*," consists of "*shi*" (私, "I" or "private") and "*shōsetsu*" (小説, "novel" or "fiction" in general). Most generally, the I-novel designates fiction based, to greater or lesser extent, on the author's real-life experience that takes as its central motif the private life of the main character. Usually seen as springing from the influence of the 19th-century European naturalist novel which aims to accurately portray human beings and the world they inhabit, the I-novel, literary historians contend, reached its peak during the Taishō era (1912-1926), with Shiga Naoya (志賀直哉, 1883-1971) and his fellow *Shirakabaha* (白樺派, lit. White Birch Society) writers as its finest representatives.[16] However, regardless of schools and ideological leanings, almost all major Japanese writers of the 20th-Century, from Tanizaki Jun'ichirō to Ōe Kenzaburō, have at one point or another during their literary careers produced works of *shishōsetsu*. In this regard, then, the I-novel, being a somewhat "universal" form of expression of

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[15] Persuasive interrogation tactics like this formed part of the Tokkō police's professional knowledge and often distinguished them from regular police who tended to rely more on physical violence. See Elise K. Tipton, *The Japanese Police State: The Tokkō in Interwar Japan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 89-90.

[16] James A. Fujii notes that "the autobiographical *shishōsetsu* (I-novel) form […] saw only a brief flowering in the Taisho era (1912–26) but […] continues to occupy a central place in Japanese letters." James A. Fujii, *Complicit Fictions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 1.

modern Japanese literature, can be said to transcend epochs and schools. It is this elasticity as a form that renders the I-novel a multivalent venue where divergent and even opposing conceptions of literary and political subjectivity contest each other.

Conventionally, "everydayness" in the I-novel is understood along the lines of a retreat from the more public façades of life. Insofar as it privileges psychological interiority over sociopolitical exteriority, the I-novel invited critiques from factions with more radical literary ideals. Indeed, almost as soon as the I-novel became widely recognized as the main form of modern literature during the Taishō period—a retrospective discursive construction, as Tomi Suzuki demonstrates[17]—it faced serious attacks from both within and outside the literary establishment (*bundan* 文壇). In his influential 1935 essay on the I-novel, "Discourse on Fiction of the Self" (私小説論, or "On the I-Novel"),[18] literary critic Kobayashi Hideo (小林秀雄, 1902-1983) remarks that, in contrast to European Naturalism which often portrays the individual as in conflict with their social milieu, the representation of the individual in the Japanese I-novel is essentially unsocialized and hence impoverished.[19] After Japan's unconditional surrender in 1945, critics building on Kobayashi's line of critique conceived of the I-novel as part of Japan's literary tradition that, with its excessive focus

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[17] Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self.*

[18] A note on terminology is due here. It remains debated whether the "I-novel" qualifies as an appropriate translation of "*shishōsetsu*." This is mainly due to the discrepancy between the loaded notion of the "novel" in the European tradition and the broader semantic range of the Japanese "*shōsetsu*" which includes fictional writings of all lengths. In this light, some scholars have insisted on keeping *shishōsetsu* untranslated, not least because most of the works conceived of as belonging to the category are in fact short stories. For discussions of the semantic difference between "novel" and "*shōsetsu*" and their choice instead to render *shishōsetsu* untranslated, see Edward Fowler, preface to *The Rhetoric of Confession* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 3-6, and Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit, preface to *Rituals of Self-Revelation: Shishōsetsu as Literary Genre and Socio-Cultural Phenomenon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), xv-xvi. However, I shall continue using the already well-established translation "I-novel" throughout for two major reasons. The first has to do with my approach to the I-novel as form rather than genre, which will be discussed in detail later. That is, instead of foreclosing the I-novel with a precision that literary historiography often demands, the project dwells precisely on its openness and even precarity in order to explore its intersections with neighboring and even "opposite" discourses and practices such as modernism and proletarian literature. The second reason originates from my attempt to break away from a model of area studies that reiterates a "Japanese difference" and insists upon the "impossibility of translation." Instead, I see in the perverse employment of "novel" outside its indigenous European context a potential to corrupt the loaded notion in a positive way. I will therefore cling to "I-novel" in most places while using the transliteration *shishōsetsu* as an occasional alternative.

[19] Kobayashi Hideo, "Discourse on Fiction of the Self," 69-71.

on the personal and supposed lack of concern for the social, remains "premodern" and must be overcome.[20] Writing along these lines, political scientist Maruyama Masao (丸山眞男, 1914-1996) further critiqued the I-novel as part of what he calls "carnal literature" (肉体文学). The I-novel's navel-gazing emphasis on immediate sensibility, Maruyama contends, contributed to a lack of political reflexivity that gave rise to fascism.[21] Thus, to the extent that the plethora of liberalist I-novel discourses succeeded in destabilizing the literary form's status as dominant/mainstream, they also served to reify a binary critical framework that repeatedly casts the quotidian subject as inherently conservative and everyday life as pre-political.

It is on the other side of such a binary scheme that one often finds Marxism or proletarian literature. Toward the end of his treatise on the form, Kobayashi Hideo ponders the consequences of the I-novel's transcontinental journey from Europe to Japan. According to him, whereas the Naturalist novels of Zola and Maupassant were born out of politico-economic tensions and well-delineated social milieux, the Japanese inflections of the movement became detached from the contours of social life. As a result,

> Owing to their situation, wherein they had inherited a *watakushi shosetsu* totally innocent of ideological strife, they lacked the power to conceptualize the impasse between the individual and society or the issue of the self in flight from the instability of life. Moreover, they had no conviction that literature could be generated by the sheer power of ideas.
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> 彼等は、生活の不安は感じたが、描写と告白を信じ、思想上の戦ひには全く不馴れであつた私小説の伝統が身内に生きてゐたところから、生活の不安から自我の問題、個人と社会の問題を抽象する力を缺いてゐた。又、かういふ思想上の力によつても、文學の實現は可能だといふ事さへ明らかに覺らなかつたのである。[22]

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[20] See for example Nakamura Mitsuo 中村光夫, *Fūzoku shōsetsu ron* 風俗小説論 [On Fiction of Manners] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2011); Kuwahara Takeo 桑原武夫, *Dentō to kindaika* 伝統と近代化 [Tradition and Modernization] (Tokyo: Asahi shimbunsha, 1972).

[21] Maruyama Masao, "Nikutai bungaku kara nikutai seiji made" [From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics], 207-227. See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion.

[22] Kobayashi Hideo 小林秀雄, "Watakushishōsetsu ron" 私小説論 [On the I-Novel], in *Kobayashi Hideo zenshū* 小林秀雄全集 [Complete Works of Kobayashi Hideo], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1968), 144; English translation in Kobayashi Hideo, "Discourse on Fiction of the Self," 92. (Hereafter "Japanese" and "English.")

At stake here for Kobayashi Hideo seems to be a schism between form and content. In *Figures of the World*, Christopher Hill identifies a series of topoi—construed as formalistic and rhetorical features—that furnished "points of departure," enabling Naturalism to travel across vast geographic landscapes as an elastic "transnational form."[23] In a way, then, Kobayashi Hideo's thesis foregrounds such the elasticity of the literary form as the underlying cause of the I-novel's political "naïveté." It is only ironic, then, that what emerged as a corrective to the I-novel's paucity of political ambition should be another foreign import, namely Marxism.[24]

According to Kobayashi, nevertheless, Marxism's rectification of the I-novel came at a high cost. Almost symmetrical to the I-novelists' sacrifice of social concern for sensuous form, Japanese Marxist thinking rediscovered the political potential of literature but the result of doing so was an "impoverishment of literary style." Kobayashi Hideo writes:

> It is well known that Marxist writing first appeared on the Japanese literary scene at the turn of this century, or simultaneously with the arrival of a literature of individualism. Marxist thinking gave an indissolubly absolute color to the styles of individual writers, making it impossible for proletarian writing to exhibit any frivolous, merely decorative traits. Its prohibition against frivolity led to a certain impoverishment of literary style. […] Consequently, attention to style diminished, and the *watakushi shōsetsu* died. But what the ideologues vanquished was our *watakushi shōsetsu*, not a real literature of individualism of a kind that had entered Japan along with Marxist writing.
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> 周知の如く、マルクス主義文学が渡来したのは、二十世紀初頭の新しい個人主義文学の到来とほぼ同じ時であつた。マルクス主義の思想が作家各自の技法に解消し難い絶対性を帯びてゐた事は、プロレタリヤ文学に於いて無用な技巧の遊戯を不可能にしたが、この遊戯の禁止は作家の技法を貧しくした。… だが、又この技法の貧しさのうちに私小説の伝統は決定的に死んだのである。彼等が実際に征服したのはわが国の所謂私小説であつて、彼等の文学とともに這入つて来た真の個人主義文学ではない。[25]

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[23] Christopher Hill, *Figures of the World: The Naturalist Novel and Transnational Form* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 3-49.

[24] For a detailed account of the complicated relationship between proletarian literature—*tenkō* literature in particular—and *shishōsetsu*, see George T. Sipos, "Common Tropes and Themes in Japan's *Tenkō* Literature," in *Tenkō: Cultures of Political Conversion in Transwar Japan*, eds. Irena Hayter, George T. Sipos, and Mark Williams (London: Routledge, 2021), esp. 109-116.

[25] Kobayashi Hideo, Japanese, 145; English, 93, translation modified. In the English translation, the last sentence (彼等の文学とともに這入つて来た真の個人主義文学) is mistranslated as "a real literature of individualism of a kind that *could have* entered Japan along with Marxist writing," whereas Kobayashi's original text indicates that such a literature has *already* entered Japan. Kobayashi is here referring to the "new" Western literature represented by Gide, Joyce, and Proust. While no such school of "new" literature of individualism had yet consolidated in Japan, earlier in the text, Kobayashi sees in Yokomitsu Riichi's 横光利一 (1898-1947) turn as an example of the beginning of such a literature.

In its prohibition of "frivolity," Marxism announced the death of the I-novel. This triumph was nevertheless incomplete at best, insofar as proletarian writers substituted literature for ideology. If the ousting of "frivolity" impoverished the I-novel's sensuous confessionalism, that is, it equally impoverished Marxist literature itself. Toward the end of the essay, Kobayashi avers that, given the great number of Marxist writers who gave in to pressure and performed public *tenkō*, "it is too soon to tell what type of literature our writers will produce."[26] At any rate, in staging the I-novel's asocial individualism against (Japanese) Marxism's critique of "trivia," Kobayashi anticipates the postwar "Politics and Literature" debate's (政治と文学論争) preoccupation with the schism between form and ideas.

Kobayashi outlines an antagonism between the sensuous, the pre-political, and the quotidian, on the one hand, and the ideological, the political, and the revolutionary, on the other hand. Such a binaristic view would consistently enjoy a dominant status among the Japanese intelligentsia throughout the war, but it was not the sole approach to Japan's intellectual history at the time. The Kyoto School Marxist philosopher Tosaka Jun 戸坂潤 (1900-1945), by contrast, foregrounds everydayness as the venue where the proletariat's struggle must take place. In his 1930 essay "The Principle of Everydayness and Historical Time" (日常性の原理と歴史的時間), Tosaka underlines the notion of "everydayness" (日常性) as the fundamental principle of a properly historical materialist conception of time and political subjectivity.[27] Dismissing both the Bergsonian phenomenological understanding of lived time as duration and natural science's approach to time as a series of divisible entities, Tosaka contends that both these approaches end up denying "historical time" by resorting

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[26] Kobayashi Hideo, "Discourse on Fiction of the Self," 93.

[27] Tosaka Jun 戸坂潤, "Nichijōsei no genri to rekishiteki jikan" 日常性の原理と歴史的時間 [The Principle of Everydayness and Historical Time], in *Tosaka Jun zenshū* 戸坂潤全集 [Complete Works of Tosaka Jun], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1966), 95-104. English translation by Robert Stolz, "The Principle of Everydayness and Historical Time," in *Tosaka Jun: A Critical Reader*, eds. Ken C. Kawashima, Fabian Schäfer, and Robert Stolz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 3-16. (Hereafter "Japanese" and "English.")

to ahistorical categories (consciousness in the former case and space/spatialization in the latter's). He argues instead that time must be parsed (刻む) from within in order for it to be historical. Tosaka then postulates character (性格) as the proper means to compartmentalize historical time into periods (時代 or, in Tosaka's invocation of the German idealist tradition, *Zeit*) and, further, politics (政治) as that which determines the character of an *époque*. The modality of politics, for Tosaka, in turn arises from the material relations and forces of production (物質的生産関係乃至生産力) as a result of praxis. Crucially, insofar as "[t]here is no escaping the fact that people *live* [*seikatsu suru* 生活する] within historical time" and that historical time is always the "times of our lives (吾々の生活の時間)," historical time must be governed by the principle of everydayness.[28]

In contradistinction to the generic Japanese Marxist critique of "everydayness" as trivia, Tosaka Jun reconceives of the quotidian as the critical site where praxis crystallizes the lived present into historical time pregnant with tensions:

> In this way, historical time comes to be governed by the "principle of everydayness." In the principle of the day-to-day—the principle of the quotidian—in the constant repetition of the same act though it is a different day, in the common activity of drinking tea, in the absolute inevitability of the principle of everyday life—in these things dwells the crystallized core of historical time; here lies the secret of history. The concept of character that we said has equal value with historical time in reality now appears as the principle of everydayness.
>
> こうして歴史的時間は「日常性の原理」に支配されることになる。蓋し日々の持つ原理、その日その日が持つ原理、毎日同じことを繰り返しながら併し毎日が別々の日である原理、平凡茶飯事でありながら絶対に不可避な毎日の生活の原理、そういうものに歴史的時間の結晶の核が、歴史の秘密が、宿っているのである。──歴史的時間と同値だと云ったかの性格は、実はこの日常性の原理となって現れるのであった。[29]

In this elaboration of the "principle of everydayness," Tosaka underlines as one of its connotations the dialectical unity of difference and repetition, by expounding it as the "principle of every day repeating itself yet differing from one another" (毎日同じことを繰り返しながら併し毎日が別々の日で

[28] Tosaka Jun, Japanese, 100; English, 11.
[29] Ibid., Japanese, 101; English, 12. Tosaka's emphasis in the original. As I will note, the English translation does not sufficiently capture the nuances of the author's elaboration.

ある原理). Furthermore, this "everydayness" is experienced as inevitable, insofar as it is the principle where, "mundane as it is, the living of this quotidian life is inevitable" (平凡茶飯事でありながら絶対に不可避な毎日の生活の原理). For Tosaka, "everydayness" is as ineluctable as the possession of a body: "Our *consciousness* may indeed live in the phenomenological concept of time—but it is equally obvious that our *bodies* cannot." (現象学的時間に於て、確かに吾々の意識は生活しているかも知れない、併し少なくとも吾々の身体はそのような時間の内では生活出来ない。)[30] It is this ineluctability that makes everyday life the proper locus of the historical subject, construed as the agent of praxis (実践). Significantly, Tosaka distinguishes his "principle of the day-to-day" (日々の持つ原理) from the notion of the "eternal now" (永遠の今) that characterizes Kyoto School phenomenology (that of Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 and Tanabe Hajime 田辺元 in particular). For Tosaka, Nishida's phenomenological reification of presentness into the "eternal now" in effect renders time ahistorical. Against this reification, Tosaka foregrounds the embodied nature of everyday life as it is governed by necessity—specifically, "the necessity of the life of practice" (実践的生活の必要).[31] To the extent that the body is mortal, the labor of work cannot be indefinitely postponed but must be carried out in quotidian repetition. Invoking Heidegger's notion of "being toward death" (*Sein zum Tode*), Tosaka avers: "But if I do have work to do, because my time is limited, I can no longer waste even a single day." (併しもし一旦仕事を持つならば時間の有限性は一日も忘れることの出来ない労いとなる。)[32] Thus, Tosaka Jun re-envisions historical time as a political category, displacing the Marxist notion of praxis from consciousness and culture to historical time crystallized in the present as an "everydayness" infused with actions necessitated by mortality. As Harry Harootunian suggests, it is in Tosaka's rethinking of Marxism as a philosophy of the everyday that lies the power of his critique

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[30] Ibid., Japanese, 101; English, 12. Tosaka's emphasis.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., Japanese, 102; English, 13.

of the complicity of liberalism and fascism which colluded to assimilate quotidian life into the nation in a fashion that Max Weber describes as the "bureaucratic dominion of everyday life."[33]

Tosaka Jun's reclaiming of the everyday as not only a proper object of Marxist inquiry but also the primal ground of historical subjectivity and of resistance has profound implications not least as it challenges the binary framework that Kobayashi Hideo labors under. Importantly, the antagonism between the I-novel's preoccupation with the quotidian and Marxism's revolutionary project charted by Kobayashi Hideo forms part of a larger critical apparatus that constantly (re-)produces the politics/literature divide in Japan. As Atsuko Ueda demonstrates in her study of Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遥 and the birth of "literature" as a modern category of knowledge in the Meiji period, creating modern literature, on Shōyō's part, amounted to liberating literature from the political discourses that shaped and were shaped by the Freedom and People's Right Movement in the 1880s (自由民権運動) and to endowing it with the proper modern status of an independent discipline (hence a "concealment of politics"). This "liberation," Ueda argues, was in turn supplemented by a reverse process, namely the 20th-century rewriting of Meiji literary history and the retrospective recognition of "modernity" in Japanese literature which decontextualized Shōyō's deeply political project in *The Essence of the Novel* (小説神髄) (hence "politics of concealment").[34] Despite later critical attempts, the resurgence of the binary framework in the form of the postwar "Politics and Literature" debate only confirms its perseverance.[35] As Karatani Kōjin observes, "[i]n explaining literary developments from as early as 1890 on, for example, Japanese critics have relied on an opposition between 'politics and literature' (*seiji to bungaku*), but since the historicity of this

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33 Harry Harootunian, "The Execution of Tosaka Jun and Other Tales: Historical Amnesia, Memory, and the Question of Japan's 'Postwar,'" in *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post–Cold War in Asia*, eds. Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Rana Mitter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 150-171.

34 Atsuko Ueda, *Concealment of Politics, Politics of Concealment: The Production of "Literature" in Meiji Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

35 See Atsuko Ueda, Michael Bourdaghs, et al., eds., *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017).

opposition is never questioned, it is a sterile paradigm."[36] In this light, Tosaka's insights demonstrate that such a paradigm is not only intellectually sterile but also politically dangerous, insofar as its narrow-mindedness led, in modern Japan's darkest hour, to a stifling of resistance. Indeed, as indicated by the police manual, the quotidian is by no means immune to ideological maneuver and state appropriation. As Tosaka's reasoning makes clear elsewhere, in order to purge the streets of revolutionary danger, fascism seeks to tame resistance by assimilating the everyday—understood, as Harootunian posits, as "the site of the subaltern who had made the modern everyday in the first place."[37] Conversely, in denouncing the everyday as pre-political, Japanese Marxists in effect ceded its most significant territory to the state.

Along these lines, this chapter aims to recuperate a lineage of resistance—a line of flight, as it were—where proletarian intellectuals sought to overcome such a paradigm that repeatedly reifies the politics/literature divide, in a way that Nakano Shigeharu would call "retrieving the flesh of history."[38] Central to this lineage is the notion of "*seikatsu*" 生活 ([everyday] life) and the figure of *seikatsusha* 生活者 (agent of living). Whereas Tosaka Jun distinguishes *seikatsusha* ("postulated individuals" rich in leisure time) from *rōdōsha* 労働者 (worker),[39] the latter representing the real subject of everyday historical time due to the necessity of work, the notion of *seikatsu* (living) recurs throughout his writings as a stand-in for the irreducibly embodied quotidian aspect of human dwelling.[40] A more generous definition of *seikatsusha* as the agent of everyday life which repeats itself and differs from day to day, then, would serve to connect Tosaka's conception of everydayness as a

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[36] Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 61.
[37] Harry Harootunian, "Time, Everydayness, and the Specter of Fascism: Tosaka Jun and Philosophy's New Vocation," in *Uneven Moments: Reflections on Japan's Modern History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 111.
[38] Nakano Shigeharu, "Shōsetsu no ue no mondai to jijitsu no ue no mondai" [The Problem of Fiction and the Problem of Reality], in *NSz*, vol. 8, 490.
[39] Tosaka Jun, "The Principle of Everydayness and Historical Time," Japanese, 102; English, 13.
[40] In this he echoes fellow Kyoto School philosopher Miki Kiyoshi's attempt to solve the fragmentations and divisions marking modernity by uniting culture and life (*seikatsu*). See Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 32-33.

historico-political category and a genealogy of thinking on the fact of living in Japan. A coinage that combines *seikatsu* (life, particularly everyday life) and *sha* (person), the seemingly tautological term *seikatsusha* translates variously into "living person," "one who lives," or "participant."[41] In its contemporary circulation, particularly in sociology and economics, *seikatsusha* is frequently gendered and often associated with the Women's Cooperative Movement (女性たちの生活者運動), whose participants reject the passive notion of "consumer" (*shōhisha* 消費者) and, adopting instead an integral view of themselves, seek to actively engage in political and economic life.[42] The term's emergence in public discourses, it has been noted, dates back at least to 1917. As Wolfgang Seifert observes, "'*seikatsu*' is most frequently used in the meanings of 'livelihood' or 'everyday life,' in contrast to biological and physical aspects of life or its philosophical interpretations."[43] The coinage of *seikatsusha*, then, coincided with the rise of the I-novel and the discourses surrounding it. As critic Hirano Ken 平野謙 (1910-1978) observes, the question of "*real* life" (実生活, an equally tautological and somewhat redundant coinage) was raised for the first time in modern Japanese literary history around the year 1909, when a series of intense discussions concerning the relationship of art to real

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[41] Richard Calichman renders the Japanese Sinologist Takeuchi Yoshimi's use of the term as "participant," namely, one who actively participates in quotidian life, in contrast with the passive "*bōkansha*" (傍観者) or spectator. Takeuchi's characterization of the Chinese writer Lu Xun as a tenacious *seikatsusha* will be discussed in Chapter III of this dissertation. See Richard Calichman, Introduction to *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, by Takeuchi Yoshimi, ed. and trans. Richard Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 20.

[42] Amano Masako 天野正子, *Seikatsusha toha dare ka: jiritsuteki shiminzō no keifu* 「生活者」とはだれか──自律的市民像の系譜 [Who Is the "Seikatsusha"? A Genealogy of an Image of the Autonomous Citizen] (Tokyo: Chūō kōron shinsha, 1996); translated into English as Masako Amano, *In Pursuit of the Seikatsusha: A Genealogy of the Autonomous Citizen in Japan*, trans. Leonie Strickland (Tokyo: Trans Pacific Press, 2011).

[43] Seifert rightly underlines the word's slippery nature: "The word *seikatsusha*, coined for the first time in 1917, is today an omnipresent 'verbal talisman' in Japan, used by political parties, associations, and companies in their respective advertising strategies." The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, "Seikatsu/Seikatsusha," accessed April 12, 2024, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeoss066.pub2. An instance of the word's asociation with "livelihood" or "survival" is the wage workers' unionization movement (*hōkyū seikatsusha undō* 俸給生活者運動) during the 1920s, where *hōkyū seikatsusha*, a dictum that has since been replaced by the more widely recognized "salary-man" (サラリーマン), refers to those who make a living by wage labor. For an account of the formation of the "salaryman" class, see Takahashi Masaki 高橋正樹, "'Shakaiteki hyōshō toshite no sararīman' no tōjō: senzen hōkyū seikatsusha no kumiai undō o dō miru ka" 「社会的表象としてのサラリーマン」の登場—戦前俸給生活者の組合運動をどう見るか [The Emergence of the "Salaryman as a Social Representation": How to View the Union Movement of Salaried Workers Prewar], *Ōhara shakai mondai kenkyūjo zasshi* 大原社会問題研究所雑誌 [The Journal of Ōhara Institute for Social Research] 511 (2001): 16-30.

life that began with a commentary by Tayama Katai 田山花袋 (1872-1930), the leading naturalist author who is often credited with having established the "I-novel" with his semi-autobiographical novella "Futon" 布団 (1907), took place across multiple literary journals. Katai's commentary in turn was a response to an earlier lawsuit in which the naturalist author Ikuta Kizan 生田葵山 (1876-1945) was accused of profanity for the "improper content" of a short story published in the previous year.[44]

Emerging first as a term relative to *bungakusha* 文学者 (writer or literary professional), *seikatsusha* would go on to take up subtly different connotations, although few have bothered to provide an explicit definition. Kobayashi Takiji's choice of the term for the title of his proletarian novel *Tōseikatsusha* 党生活者 (*Life of a Party Member*) underlines the conflict between one's private life and revolutionary politics. Yoshimoto Takaaki uses the word to indicate a way of grasping reality from a radically local perspective, which he contrasts with the highly theoretical social scientific approach.[45] Opposing *seikatsusha* to Shimazaki Tōson's self-proclaimed role as a "war correspondent of life" (人生の従軍記者), Akutagawa Ryūnosuke denies the possibility of such an external vantage point as idealized by the Japanese Naturalists.[46] Despite its varying nuances, however, *seikatsusha* seems to consistently underscore a radically embodied quotidian mode of being that eludes specified professional, ideological, or economic underpinnings. In this light, I define *seikatsusha* in terms of a status of surplus—that is, as a subject that resists ready containment within social and cultural institutions which, in their autonomy, often threaten to eclipse quotidian life. Inhabiting instead a liminal space where the normative inside/outside division becomes indistinct, the figure of

[44] Hirano Ken 平野謙, *Geijutsu to jisseikatsu* 芸術と実生活 [Art and Real Life], in *Hirano Ken zenshū* 平野謙全集 [Complete Works of Hirano Ken], vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1975), 138-143.
[45] Yoshimoto Takaaki 吉本隆明, "Tenkō ron" 転向論 [On *Tenkō*], in *Yoshimoto Takaki zenchosakushū* 吉本隆明全著作集 [Complete Works of Yoshimoto Takaaki], vol. 13 (Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 1969), 5-27.
[46] Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介, "Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na" 文芸的な、余りに文芸的な [Literary, All Too Literary], in *Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū* 芥川龍之介全集 [Complete Works of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke], vol. 15 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1997), 218-222.

seikatsusha thus calls into question the very stability of these institutions and opens up dialogic spaces for alternative ways of living, knowing, and acting. Critically appropriating Hirano Ken's observation that "a sense of crisis of life" (生の危機感) underlies all works of *shishōsetsu*, this chapter will approach the I-novel as primarily a site of tension where *seikatsusha*'s subjectivity surfaces precisely at moments of its imminent repression—in this case, the rise of the fascist police state.

II. Kobayashi Takiji's *Tōseikatsusha* and the Anti-I-Novel

Published posthumously under the modified title of *Tenkan jidai* 転換時代 (*Times of Change*) shortly after Kobayashi Takiji's death at the hands of the police in 1933, *Tōseikatsusha* (*Life of a Party Member*) is an unfinished novel based on the author's own experience as a member of the then-illegal Japanese Communist Party amidst intensifying persecutions from the regime. In contrast to the conventional I-novel's emphasis on human interiority, however, Takiji's narrative revolves around the first-person protagonist's aspiration to the absolute sacrifice of private life for the revolutionary cause. While often rendered as *Life of a Party Member*, the title of the novel, *Tōseikatsusha*—as distinct from *tōin (no) seikatsu* (党員[の]生活)—resists smooth translation.[47] The somewhat quaint coinage can be read either as a combination of *tō* 党 (party) and *seikatsusha* 生活者 (one who lives) or, alternatively, as an agent of "Party-life" (*tōseikatsu* 党生活) with the two notions intricately joined.[48] As Amano Masako suggests, despite the term's slipperiness, *seikatsusha* often points to a "pre-political" subjectivity.[49] In this light, the idea of a *tōseikatsusha*, translatable as "one who lives by/for the party," already implies an inherent paradox.

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[47] Takiji notified editor Nakamura Megumi of the title of his work in progress in August 1932. However, due to editors' concerns over censorship, the story was first published in *Chūō kōron* under the title of *Tenkan jidai* 転換時代 [Transitional Period] in the April and May issues of 1933. See *Kobayashi Takiji zenshū*, vol. 4, 523-525.

[48] Jonathan Abel renders the title as *Lifetime Party Member*, which retains the ambivalence while avoiding sounding unidiomatic. See Jonathan E. Abel, *Redacted: The Archives of Censorship in Transwar Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 101.

[49] See Amano Masako, *Seikatsusha toha dare ka: jiritsuteki shiminzō no keifu*, 3-9.

Indeed, despite the semi-autobiographical nature and a narrative sequence that adheres to the unfolding of daily life, the protagonist always laments the increasing impossibility of "private life," which he both struggles with and aspires to. In this sense, *Tōseikatsusha* swings between the I-novel and the political novel, both familiar to Kobayashi, who, though better known for his portrayal of class struggle in such works as *Kani kōsen* 蟹工船 (*The Crab Cannery Ship*, 1929), was also an admirer of Shiga Naoya and had been involved in the life narrative movement (*seikatsu tsuzurikata undō* 生活綴方運動) promoted by progressive educators to cultivate children's sensibilities and free expression.[50]

The story follows the first person narrator-protagonist Sasaki as he navigates the challenges and sacrifices involved in his political activism. Forced to work under cover in order to avoid persectution from the authorities, Sasaki collaborates with comrades Itō and Suyama in a campaign to spread revolutionary ideology amongst workers of a factory that has recently begun to manufacture gas masks following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931. The cohort's primary goal is to instigate workers' fury against Japan's imperialist war in China as well as capitalist exploitation and the precarious working conditions on the home front. As Sasaki's underground activism intensifies, he has to sever contact with his mother with great pain and comes to rely on a woman named Kasahara who provides him with both a shelter and a source of income. The first half of the story ends with the activist trio, Sasaki, Itō, and Suyama, carrying out an escalated propaganda campaign in the factory with initial success, whereas the second half would remain unwritten till Takiji's own death.

In sharp contrast to the conventional I-novel's emphasis on everyday life and sensibility, *Tōseikatsusha* in effect stages the protagonist's renunciation of private life and explores its

[50] Norma Field, "Narration and Revolution: An Invitation to the Writings of Kobayashi Takiji," in *The Linguistic Turn in Contemporary Japanese Literary Studies: Politics, Language, Textuality*, ed. Michael Bourdaghs (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2010), 200.

implications. Despite having gone into hiding out of necessity, throughout the story, Sasaki strives to come to terms with the emotional and psychological toll, all the while reflecting on how this privation of a "normal quotidian life" ends up bringing him closer to an idealized pure political life. Upon learning of the betrayal of a former comrade, Sasaki broods over the nature of his affective response:

> We have no path of retreat. Our entire lives are immersed in nothing but work. That sets us apart from people who lead their lives legally. A treasonous act causes us to feel anger and hatred with our entire being. Because at present we have no private life, our emotions dominate our entire existence.
>
> 私達は退路というものを持っていない。私たちの全生涯はただ仕事にのみうずめられているのだ。それは合法的な生活をしているものとはちがう。そこへもってきて、このような裏切的な行為だ。私たちはそれに対しては全身の憤怒と憎悪を感じる。今では我々は私的生活というべきものを持っていないのだから、全生涯的感情を持って（若しもそんな言葉が許されるとしたら）、憤怒し、憎悪するのだ。[51]

If the I-novel can be conceived of as the interiorizing of external world into individual sentimentality, Takiji's narrator turns the flow around by translating interior affects into socialized forces of change. The disowning of private life here goes hand in hand with the diminishing of the singular first person pronoun, with the subject of these socialized affects becoming an unidentified "we." Nevertheless, throughout the narrative, Sasaki constantly distinguishes himself from both Itō and Suyama, who maintain their capacity of living "legally" insofar as they have not yet become the Tokkō's suspects and do not need to live in disguise. It thus remains ambiguous to whom Sasaki's "we" refers to other than himself.

As the narrative progresses, the revolutionary project becomes even more all-encompassing. It becomes increasingly clear (to both Sasaki and to the reader) that his renunciation of "private life"

[51] Kobayashi Takiji 小林多喜二, *Tōseikatsusha* 党生活者 [Life of a Party Member], in *Kobayashi Takiji zenshū* 小林多喜二全集 [Complete Works of Kobayashi Takiji], vol. 4 (Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha, 1992), 380; English translation by Željko Cipriš in Kobayashi Takiji, *Life of a Party Member*, in *The Crab Cannery Ship and Other Novels of Struggle*, trans. Željko Cipriš (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2013), 246. (Hereafter "Japanese" and "English.")

amounts to a reshaping of sensibility. At one point, Sasaki reflects, even the natural world loses its independent existence and becomes subsumed under his political life:

> All traces of my private life had vanished. Even the seasons became no more than components of life in the party [*tōseikatsu* 党生活]. Seasonal flowers, blue skies, and rain did not strike me as having an independent existence of their own. I was delighted when it rained. It meant I had to carry an open umbrella when going out, which made it harder for my face to be seen. I wanted summer to end quickly. It wasn't that I disliked summer, but summer clothes were thin making the distinctive features of my body (devil take them!) recognizable. If winter arrived quickly, I thought, "Well, I can live on and stay active for another year!" But Tokyo winters were too bright, which made them inconvenient. ——Far from growing indifferent to the seasons since entering this life, I had become extremely sensitive in an entirely unexpected way. And this was clearly different from the exceptional keenness to the seasons I had developed during my imprisonment the year before last.
>
> 私にはちょんびりもの個人生活も残らなくなった。今では季節々々さえ、党生活のなかの一部でしかなくなった。四季の草花の眺めや青空や雨も、それは独立したものとして映らない。私は雨が降れば喜ぶ。然しそれは連絡に出掛けるのに傘をさして行くので、顔を他人ひとに見られることが少ないからである。私は早く夏が行ってくれゝばいゝと考える。夏が嫌だからではない、夏が来れば着物が薄くなり、私の特徴のある身体つき（こんなものは犬にでも喰われろ！）がそのまま分るからである。早く冬がくれば、私は「さ、もう一年寿命が延びて、活動が出来るぞ！」と考えた。たゞ東京の冬は、明る過ぎるので都合が悪かったが。——然しこういう生活に入ってから、私は季節に対して無関心になったのではなくて、むしろ今迄少しも思いがけなかったような仕方で非常に鋭敏になっていた。それは一昨年刑務所にいたとき季節々々の移りかわりに殊の外鋭敏に感じたその仕方とハッキリちがっている。[52]

At this point, Sasaki's Tokyo becomes a curious world where things are governed by political rather than physical logic. Here one encounters common objects frequently found in an I-novel's landscape only for them to be emptied of their immediate sensory qualities so as to make room for politics. "[The sight of] seasonal flowers, blue skies, and rain" (四季の草花の眺めや青空や雨) come to be appreciated only insofar as they aid or hinder political activities (活動). The heat of summer becomes abominable only to the extent that the silhouette of Sasaki's body (身体つき)—by now an inconvenience in and of itself ("devil take them!" こんなものは犬にでも喰われろ！)—risks exposure to the enemies and hence political failure. Sasaki's newly acquired sensibility is thus both extremely

[52] Kobayashi Takiji, *Tōseikatsusha* [Life of a Party Member], Japanese, 430-431; English, 282-283.

acute and utterly impoverished. To invoke Karatani Kōjin's notion of "inversion" (*tentō* 転倒) as a reconfiguration of the semiotic constellation,[53] politics is rediscovered as (that is, in place of) Nature itself through such a radical realignment. In displacing the sensorium from a private/corporeal category into a political one, *Tōseikatsusha* stages the elimination of the quotidian subject or *seikatsusha* (生活者) altogether as it becomes subsumed under an ideal *tōseikatsu* (党生活)—a seamless amalgam that, apart from "life *in* the party," further implies a living *for* or even *by* the party—in the sense that the party lives *through* him (hence Sasaki's uneasy relationship with the first person singular). It is in this sense that *Tōseikatsusha* is better understood as an anti-I-novel that aims to overcome the literary form itself, echoing Kobayashi Hideo's proclamation in 1935 that "the I-novel is dead."[54]

Nevertheless, if Kobayashi Hideo's casting of the I-novel and Marxist literature as an antagonistic duo partakes in the larger critical apparatus that constantly reproduces the politics/literature binary, Takiji's *Tōseikatsusha* also reveals the precarity of such a paradigm by pushing it to the extreme. That is, despite Sasaki's pronouncement that the political has totalized the personal—his body turned "inside out"—the narrative constantly undermines such a claim through Sasaki's intricate relationships with others that often resist fully disentangling. Sasaki's tie with his illiterate mother (modeled after Takiji's own mother Seki) furnishes the most prominent example. Due to his illegal status, Sasaki decides to refrain from seeing her and sends Suyama to inform her of this difficult decision, since he has had to depart in a rush with no time to explain himself. While fully aware of his cruelty towards his mother, Sasaki reasons with himself that his struggle will simultaneously serve to cultivate forces of resistance within her: "I also thought it was necessary to tell her all this in order to awaken within her heart a lifelong hatred of the ruling class—her entire

[53] Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 25-34.
[54] Kobayashi Hideo, *Tōseikatsusha* [Life of a Party Member], Japanese, 145; English, 93.

life truly called for it." (それらすべての事によって、母の心に支配階級に対する全生涯的憎悪を（母の一生は事実全くそうであった）抱かせるためにも必要だと考えた。)[55]

However, Sasaki's wish to translate domestic kinship into public camaraderie is attenuated by the figure of his mother who clearly inhabits a different world from his. Indeed, this mother-son relationship contributes some of the most human moments in *Tōseikatsusha*, often in detriment to its apparent revolutionary project proclaimed by Sasaki:

> I may have been too heartless toward my mother up to that time, but I hope that ultimately the nature of my unbreakable commitment will have made things clear to her. Nonetheless, as I see my sixty-year-old mother draw near to understanding my own feelings, I think I can discern a struggle within her heart that is a hundred times more painful than the hardships we suffer in carrying out our movement. My mother is a poor peasant who never even went to elementary school. Yet while I was still at home she was starting to learn how to read and write. Putting on her glasses, she would slide her legs under the quilt-covered heater, place a small board on top of it, hunch her shoulders and begin to practice using a pencil and the reverse sides of my scribbled manuscript pages that she had collected. "What are you starting up now?" I asked with a laugh. When I was in prison the year before last, mother had been unable to send me a single letter because she could not write at all. "That was my only regret," she told me. Mother understood that after coming out I had become even more deeply involved in the movement. No doubt I would be arrested again. Even if I remained free for a time, I was out on bail and would be imprisoned again once a penalty was decided on. Mother was learning to write in order to be ready when the time came. Just before I vanished, her handwriting was large and uneven but I noticed with surprise that it was quite legible. Yet when she asked Suyama "Can't I meet him?" and he replied that it would be better not to, she responded, "I probably can't write to him either, can I?" When I heard this from Suyama my mother's emotions struck me with a painful directness.
>
> 私は今迄母親にはつら過ぎたかも知れなかったが、結局は私の退ッぴきならぬ行動で示してきた。然し六十の母親が私の気持にまで近付いていることに、私は自分たちがこの運動をしてゆく困難さの百倍もの苦しい心の闘いを見ることが出来る気がする。私の母親は水呑百姓で、小学校にさえ行っていない。ところが私が家にいた頃から、「いろは」を習らい始めた。眼鏡をかけて炬燵の中に背中を円るくして入り、その上に小さい板を置いて、私の原稿用紙の書き散らしを集め、その裏に鉛筆で稽古をし出した。何を始めるんだ、と私は笑っていた。母は一昨年私が刑務所にいるときに、自分が一字も字が書けないために、私に手紙を一本も出せなかったことを「そればかりが残念だ」と云っていたことがあった。それに私が出てからも、ます／＼運動のなかに深入りしているのが、母の眼にも分った、そうすれば今度もキット引ッ張られるだろう、又仮りにそんなことが無いとしても、今は保釈になっているのだから、どうせ刑が決まれば入るのだから、その時の用意に母は字を覚え出しているのだった。私が沈む少し前には、不揃な大きな字だったが、それでもちアんと読める字を書いているのに私は吃驚した。――ところが、母親は須山に「会えないだろうか？」と訊いて、

[55] Ibid., Japanese, 386; English, 251.

> さア会わない方がいゝでしょう、と云われると、「手紙も出せないでしょうねえ」と云ったそうである。私はそれを須山から聞いたとき、そう云ったときの母親の気持ちがジカに胸に来て弱った。[56]

Parallel to Sasaki's activism is his mother's endeavor to learn to read and write. Her struggle, "a hundred times more painful than the hardships [they] suffer in carrying out [their] movement," both furnishes the precondition of Sasaki's own renunciation of private life and challenges it. It reveals the cost of Sasaki's attempt to invert the order of things by way of a conflict of moral and political duties. To Suyama's message, his mother further inquires whether, in the case of her dying, Sasaki would visit her one last time—a request that Sasaki eventually denies.

It is in this sense that the narrative of *Tōseikatsusha* oscillates between political fiction and a tragedy of impossible ethical choices. Sasaki eventually agrees to meet his mother for one last time at a café. After anxiously looking around to make sure they are not seen throughout the meeting, Sasaki's mother urges him to fix his posture lest he should be recognized before waving goodbye. This farewell, Sasaki proceeds to reflect, marks his last step toward a purely political life:

> This was how I severed the ties of flesh and blood—the last remaining path of retreat to private life. Unless a new world were to come into being one of these years (and this is what we were struggling for), I would not live with Mother again.
>
> 私はこれで今迄に残されていた最後の個人的生活の退路——肉親との関係を断ち切ってしまった。これから何年目かに来る新しい世の中にならない限り（私たちはそのために闘っているのだが）、私は母と一緒に暮すことがないだろう。[57]

The resolution between family life and politics proper, it seems, can be achieved only as an indefinitely deferred endpoint, that which their struggle aims to materialize. Part of what this impending "new world" promises, then, is a seamless union where such binaries as the interior/exterior and the private/political no longer hold. To reach this endpoint, however, politics must sublate family and everydayness must first be annulled.

[56] Ibid., Japanese, 384-385; English, 249-250.
[57] Ibid., Japanese, 389; English, 253.

This political teleology premised on the radical sacrifice of private quotidian life for the proletarian cause, nevertheless, would become the target of intense attack in postwar literary criticism. Writing over a decade later, in the wake of Japan's surrender, Hirano Ken calls into question Sasaki's reduction of other characters to political means, most notably Kasahara, the woman with whom Sasaki begins to live together and from whom he demands unconditional support on the ground that her dedication to him would mean a contribution to the revolutionary enterprise as he himself has forsaken all "private life."[58] Identifying Sasaki's instrumentalization of individual human beings as not an anomaly but a typical trait of pre-war Japanese proletarian literature, Hirano Ken's critique made Takiji and the question of humanity a focal point of the "Politics and Literature" debate. Dwelling on Takiji's "mistake," Hirano goes on to make a provocative analogy between the protetarian writer's martyrdom and Hino Ashihei 火野葦平, a popular writer caught up in Japan's expansionism, to the extent that both were victims of flawed ideologies: "At the risk of being misunderstood, let me say that what the chaotic current literary world needs is a literary eye mature enough to see Kobayashi Takiji and Hino Ashihei as two sides of the same coin."[59] Outraged by Hirano Ken and Ara Masahito's inflammatory remarks on Takiji, Nakano Shigeharu, Takiji's friend and comrade to whom the manuscripts of *Tōseikatsusha* were entrusted after the author's death,[60] in turn questions Hirano's capability of "thinking humanly" and condemns the two's thesis as a shallow bourgeois humanism.[61] Scholars and critics have hence

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[58] Hirano Ken, "Seiji to bungaku II" 政治と文学 II [Politics and Literature II], in *Hirano Ken zenshū*, vol. 1, 208-215; English translation by Nicholas Lambrecht, "Politics and Literature II," in *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52*, 127-136.

[59] Hirano Ken, "An Antithesis," trans. Junko Yamazaki, et al., in *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52*, 90. For a thorough analysis of the Politics and Literature debate and its role in postwar Japanese intellectual history, see J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 41-87.

[60] For the publication history of the novella, see *Kobayashi Takiji zenshū*, vol. 4, 523-524.

[61] Nakano Shigeharu, "Hihyō no ningensei I" 批評の人間性 I [The Humanity of Criticism I], in *NSz*, vol. 12, 84-94; English translation by Joshua Solomon and Kaori Shiono, "The Humanity of Criticism I: Concerning Hirano Ken and Ara Masahito," in *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52*, 105-114.

argued for redeeming readings of the controversial novel. Komori Yōichi, for example, calls attention to the fact that "the first-person protagonist's narration is subjected to the criticism of other characters and relativized by their words."[62] Leaving the imprint of Takiji's writings on postwar criticism for further discussion later in the chapter, suffice it to note here that, as early as in 1936, Nakano has already offered an almost deconstructive reading of *Tōseikatsusha* that anticipated much of the postwar discourses on the humanity (and, in the case of Maruyama Masao, carnality/corporeality) of literature and criticism.[63]

Written three years after Takiji's death and two years after his own release on the condition of performing "tenkō," Nakano's short commentary, "From Within *Tōseikatsusha*" (「党生活者」のなかから), details his affective response to the novella, which moved him to tears at multiple points. Acknowledging that he is not aware of the piece's initial reception since he was imprisoned at the time, Nakano characterizes the visceral empathy that he found in the story as "strictly personal."[64] Toward the end of the novel, Sasaki, Itō, and Suyama's activities eventually arrive at a critical moment of the movement when they decide to publicly scatter fliers in order incite a general strike among workers. However, rather than Sasaki's heroic will to self-sacrifice, Nakano zooms in on the minor figure Suyama instead. In contrast with Sasaki's illegal existence, Nakano writes, "Suyama is a

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[62] Komori Yōichi, Introduction to Kobayashi Takiji, *The Crab Cannery Ship and Other Novels of Struggle*, trans. Željko Cipriš (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 14.

[63] Nakano Shigeharu, "*Tōseikatsusha* no naka kara" 「党生活者」のなかから [From Within *Tōseikatsusha*], in *NSz*, vol. 18, 64-67. Nakano further elaborates and expands on the interpretation in an essay published in 1948 ("*Tōseikatsusha* ni tsuite" 「党生活者」について [On *Tōseikatsusha*], in *NSz*, vol. 18, 69-78) as an indirect response to Hirano and Ara. See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of Maruyama Masao's critique of "carnal literature."

[64] Notably, Nakano goes to great length to describe the experience of being moved to tears and carefully distinguishes it from the fact of being simply "affected/moved" (感動):

> Not only did I cry, but there was one point that really moved me. There were other things, but this was something that I felt especially strongly about. I should make it clear that I cried because I was moved. So, it may sound strange to say that I cried and was also moved, but that's the truth, and there's no way around it. I'll explain.
> 僕が泣いただけでなく非常に感動した点が一つある。ほかにもあるが特に強く感じた点だ。断つておくが泣くのは感動したからだ。だから、泣いた上まだ感動したというとへんかも知れないが、事実だから仕方がない。それを説明する。

Nakano Shigeharu, "*Tōseikatsusha* no naka kara" [From Within *Tōseikatsusha*], 65.

man of high moral character, but he is also a someone leading a legal life who is trusted by everyone in the factory." (須山はなかなか善良ないい男だが、この工場でみんなに信用されてる合法的な人間だ。)[65] All three know that, while the task of distributing fliers would mean three to five years of prison or worse, Suyama is the only person to whom it can be entrusted because of his legal standing and access to the "normal life" that Sasaki has both been forcefully evicted from and actively renounced. Just as Sasaki hesitates to make the suggestion, Suyama surprises everyone by taking the initiative to volunteer for the mission. "Naturally, I'm the one who must do it," Suyama says with a taut voice, wearing all the anxiety, fear, and determination that he must be feeling.[66] With Suyama's proposal approved of by all, they proceed as planned. While both Suyama and Itō succeeded in escaping the scene amidst chaos, they were faced with a massive layoff the next day. As the dejected trio awaits their next struggle, the first of the two parts of the novel comes to an end. With Takiji's brutal death before managing to write the second half, the reader will never find out the fate of these characters.

In naming Suyama's act of self-sacrifice rather than Sasaki's self-alienation from everyday life as the novella's climactic moment, Nakano in effect renegotiates the narrator's religious pursuit of radical politics as devoid of corporeal feeling and instead seeks to locate revolution within quotidian (dubbed "legal") life as such. Dissecting the structure of his own affective response, Nakano then lists two aspects that he finds significant in the ending passage, the first of which being what he terms the human incarnation of the historical dialectic:

> First of all, here we see the human incarnation of the historical dialectic. It might be inappropriate to use such an irksome term, but I'll explain. This great obstacle [i.e., the danger of publicly distributing fliers] must be overcome. The three are right in the middle of this obstacle, and it fills up their entire existence. Thus, the thought of the one and only method of overcoming it swells up from within them like a pang. As they themselves become one with this great obstacle, it swells up and cracks naturally. This is perhaps a bad example, but let's suppose there's an infant here. Since it can't say if it

[65] Nakano Shigeharu, "*Tōseikatsusha* no naka kara" [From Within *Tōseikatsusha*], 65.
[66] Kobayashi Takiji, *Tōseikatsusha* [Life of a Party Member], Japanese, 438; English, 288.

> hurts or itches, when the infant gets sick, it only cries. Now there is a good mother here. "Oh, is it here? Here? Does it hurt here? It's alright. It's alright." As she speaks, the mother finds the exact right spot. The infant knows only to cry. But the mother knows where it hurts and what to do by pure instinct. Following this instinct, her hand naturally begins to move. No doctor can imitate her. That's precisely it.
>
> 第一のことは、歴史の弁証法の人間的現れということだ。面倒くさい言葉で不適当かも知れぬが説明する。この大難関は絶対に突破されねばならぬ。この三人はその大難関のまつただなかにいる。大難関は彼らを充たしている。したがつて、その大難関が突破される方法——それは一つあつてただ一つある。——が彼らのなかでおのずと疼きのようにふくれあがつてくる。彼ら自身が大難関そのものになつちまつて、それがふくれあがつて自然にパチンと割れるようなものだ。まずいかも知らぬが例を引くと、ここに赤ん坊がある。まだほんの赤ん坊で痛いも痒いもいえぬ。それが病気になつた。わあわあ泣くばかしだ。そこにいい母親がいる。あ、ここか、ここか、ここが痛いんだね。あ、よちよち、ほら、ほら——そしてほんとにそれがぴたりと当る。赤ん坊は泣くばかり。しかし母親には、赤ん坊がどこが痛いか、そしてどうすればいいかが本能的にわかる。そしてそのとおりに自然手が動いてしまう。どんな医者もまねられぬ。ちようどそれなのだ。[67]

Nakano's somewhat bizarre metaphor requires unpacking here. In line with his later critique of Hirano Ken's incapacity to "think humanly," Nakano outlines here an alternative "humanism" grounded on the dialectics of history. Contrasting the mother's intuitive grasp of the infant's pain with the doctor's theoretical medical knowledge, Nakano underlines the corporeal nature of the individual's political existence. This mode of political existence where the historical dialectic assumes the form of a visceral pang (疼き) accessible only intuitively and corporeally is best embodied by the unsophisticated *seikatsusha* Suyama. "History manifests itself from within his [Suyama's] heart," writes Nakano, "He himself becomes History. And History in turn becomes Suyama the laborer and marches forward on its own." (歴史はおのずから彼の心に映つている。彼そのものが歴史になる。歴史が労働者須山となつて自分で進むのだ。)[68]

Echoing his later characterization of literature's role as "retrieving the flesh of history," Nakano's historical materialism reconfigures History as not disembodied progress—at the deferred endpoint of which Takiji's Sasaki envisions a sublated reality where the boundary between the

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[67] Nakano Shigeharu, "*Tōseikatsusha* no naka kara" [From Within *Tōseikatsusha*], 66.
[68] Ibid., 66-67.

political and the personal is cancelled—but time incarnated in the embodied struggles of individuals confronted with "great obstacles" (大難関). This historical dialectic, which invites comparison with Walter Benjamin's redemptive angel of history that seizes the past at a moment of crisis, in turn finds its most human expression in the figure of Takiji himself. Nakano writes:

> Secondly, through the way he (Takiji) portrays it, we know that if Kobayashi finds himself in the same situation as Suyama, he will take the same action as him. There is no doubt about it. Kobayashi the author becomes one with all three characters at this moment.
>
> 第二は、彼の描き方をとおして、もし小林が須山の位置にいたとしたら、彼は須山と同じように行動しただろうということだ。そうに違いない。作者小林は、ここでこの三人といつしょになつている。[69]

Rather than an I-novel reading where the author Takiji is identified with the narrator-protagonist Sasaki, Nakano acknowledges the conflicting points of view in *Tōseikatsusha* as part of Takiji's own struggle with the moral and political dilemma. Thus, turning Sasaki's (if not Takiji's) ideal of the political absolute inside out (or rather, outside in), Nakano's reading of *Tōseikatsusha* recasts the I-novel form's much contested attention to interiority as a locus of political and historical awakening and gestures toward the revolutionary potential in the quotidian *seikatsusha* (or agent of living). In order to further understand Nakano's notion of the historical dialectic, I now turn to "Mura no ie" 村の家 ("The House in the Village," 1935), one his best-known pieces of tenkō fiction where he appropriates the I-novel form in a radically different way from Takiji.

III. Nakano Shigeharu's "House in the Village" and *Tenkō*

One of the most prolific writers and Marxists of the transwar era, Nakano Shigeharu 中野重治 (1902-1979) was a leading figure of the proletarian movement during the 1920s as a member of the Japanese Communist Party in a period marked by the rise of militarism and intensified thought

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[69] Ibid., 67.

policing, especially after Japan's 1925 Peace Preservation Law (治安維持法). Following several shorter incarcerations, Nakano was arrested in 1932 and, after two gruesome years in Toyotama Prison, released in 1934 on the condition of *tenkō*, including admitting to his participation in "an illegal organization" (JCP) and agreeing to refrain from any future political activities.[70] After his release, Nakano continued writing despite heavy censorship and the increasing decline of the freedom of expression. Published in 1935 and widely acknowledged as the consummate *tenkō shōsetsu* (conversion fiction),[71] the autobiographical "House in the Village" (村の家) tells the story of Benji 勉次, a leftist writer who returned to his rural home after performing *tenkō* with his health worn out by the poor conditions of prison. In particular, the story foregrounds Benji's reunion and confrontation with his father Magozō 孫蔵, a farmer and local civil servant who implores him to give up writing for "there's nothing you can write now without killing what you wrote before" (今まで書いたものを殺すだけ).[72]

At a rudimentary level, "The House in the Village" seems to proceed along a diagonally opposite trajectory to that of *Tōseikatsusha*. Whereas the latter traces Sasaki's departure from the quotidian as he approaches the purely political, idealized in the notion of "*tōseikatsu*" (Party-life), the former records Benji's humiliating descent from the realm of politics—to which he is now denied access—into domestic life in a village that he had previously left behind. A slightly more careful reader—but not yet careful enough—will in turn realize how, despite such a contrast, the two texts in effect mirror each other. If Sasaki's painstaking struggle to sever ties with his mother presupposes a radical incompatibility (or so the fictional character Sasaki believes) between everydayness/kinship/domesticity and revolution/politics/public, Benji's reunion with his father

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[70] See Miriam Silverberg, *Changing Song: The Marxist Manifestos of Nakano Shigeharu* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 195-199.
[71] Brett de Bary, Introduction to *Three Works by Nakano Shigeharu*, trans. Brett de Bary (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 1979), 7.
[72] Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" 村の家 [The House in the Village], in *NSz*, vol. 2, 88; English translation by Brett de Bary in ibid., 69. (Hereafter "Japanese" and "English.")

feels uneasy for that same reason or set of reasons—that assuming the role of a son in the household seems to mean the death of politics. One is thus tempted to read the two texts as a pair of I-novels that capture, respectively, the ambitious endeavor and subsequent failure of prewar Japan's proletarian movement—that is, as two sides of the same coin, or two phases of the same movement, from the pre-political to the political and back. However, if this is the case, it is less because such a critical lens is productive than because the aforementioned self-reifying binary paradigm poses as great a challenge to the reader as it does to the two writers striving to overcome it—hence their unlikely embrace of the I-novel form.

Indeed, Benji's homecoming in "The House in the Village" reveals itself to be more than a retreat from politics. Rather, estranged from the undertaking prescribed by the Japanese Communist Party, Benji gradually feels his way toward new modes of political existence that eschew the paradigm that designates Tokyo as the center and what Takiji terms "Party-life" (党生活) as its ideal. In his influential 1958 essay "On *Tenkō*" (転向論), Yoshimoto Takaaki 吉本隆明 (1924-2012) interprets the father-son tension as the progressive intellectual's confrontation, for the first time, with the "dominant factor of Japanese feudalism" (日本封建制の優性因子) embodied by Magozō. Yoshimoto underlines Benji's resolution in the final scene to reject, despite resonating with, his father's imploration as a sign of determination to take Japan's feudal institution up in the face while sympathetically acknowledging its inner logic and even superiorities in certain respects. Yoshimoto further contrasts Benji's resolution to confront Magozō with those who rejected tenkō till the end such as Takiji, whose political principle, Yoshimoto argues, dwelled too comfortably upon its own logico-theoretical coherence and, instead of confronting the *ancien régime* deliberately, merely avoided it entirely. It is in this sense, Yoshimoto posits, that the binary of conversion (転向) and non-comformity (非転向) must be recalibrated.[73]

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[73] Yoshimoto Takaaki, "Tenkō ron" [On *Tenkō*], 5-7.

"The House in the Village" opens with a dejected Benji trying in vain to work on a translation. "Stripped down to a single loin cloth" (褌一つで), Benji's physical nakedness literalizes his social and intellectual isolation.[74] Stripped of his political ties, he struggles not only to feel relevant but also to make sense of the world all over again as a *tenkōsha* deprived of his moral and intellectual compass. According to Yoshimoto, attempts to grasp Japan's social reality can be roughly divided into two categories: the "self-alienating" (自己疎外) social scientific approach that aims at a totalizing panoramic comprehension, on the one hand, and the "self-committed" (自己投入) approach as a *seikatsusha* or *jissensha* 実践者 (agent of praxis), on the other hand:

> Although it is possible to analyze Japanese society using the self-alienating methods of the social sciences, it is extremely difficult for a person situated in daily life (*seikatsusha*), or a person who throws him or herself into action, to grasp the totalized whole of Japanese society. Analytically, this society appears to be a combination of modern and feudalistic elements, but to the minds of those who are simply living their lives or throwing themselves into action it appears as a concurrence of complex elements that has no beginning or end.
>
> このことは、日本の社会が、自己を疎外した社会科学的な方法では、分析できるにもかかわらず、生活者または、自己投入的な実践者の観点からは、統一された総体を把むことがきわめて難しいことを意味しているとかんがえられる。分析的には近代的な因子と封建的な因子の結合のようにおもわれる社会が、生活者や実行者の観念には、はじめもおわりもない錯綜した因子の併存となってあらわれる。[75]

He then maps such a distinction onto the father-son dynamics in "The House in the Village." Yoshimoto's classification has since been modified by scholars such as Kamei Hideo, who points out that the opposition between Benji the intellectual and his *seikatsusha* father comes at the expense of neglecting the fact that Magozō seems to have attained a level of learning much higher than an average farmer.[76] It remains nevertheless true that, upon his humiliating return, Benji finds himself

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[74] See George T. Sipos, "The Literature of Political Conversion (*Tenkō*) of Japan" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2013), 134-135.
[75] Yoshimoto Takaaki, "Tenkō ron" [On *Tenkō*], 7; English translation by Hisaaki Wake, "On Tenkō, or Ideological Conversion," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 20 (2008): 101. (Hereafter "Japanese" and "English.")
[76] Kamei Hideo 亀井秀雄, *Nakano Shigeharu ron* 中野重治論 [On Nakano Shigeharu] (Tokyo: San-ichi shobō, 1970), 78-95. Cited in Brett de Bary, Introduction to *Three Works by Nakano Shigeharu*, 8.

thrown into the midst of the ordinary people (百姓) and undergoes a process of unlearning and relearning through interactions with his father.

In classifying most *tenkō* fiction as I-novels, postwar critics like Honda Shūgo direct critical attention to the realm of psychology, foregrounding the literary representation of emotional turmoil often entailed in the *tenkō* process.[77] Such psychologization short-circuits the convoluted experience of disorientation as evidenced in "The House in the Village." Rather than the sense of guilt and loss, the narrative centers around Benji's struggle to reorient himself toward the world. In addition to Benji's understandable emotional distress, the abstract mode of analytical thinking Benji has heretofore been accustomed to also becomes a source of shame. Following his failed attempt to get some translation done, Benji finds himself reading a book containing records of men and women's names from the past, likely as part of his attempt to make sense of rural Japan—the world he now inhabits:

> "The social phenomenon reflected in the change in farm women's names…" A problem began to formulate itself in his mind, but in the next instant Benji was filled with shame. That the problem had occurred to him in this form, that he had even attempted to make a generalization about society from the material in front of him seemed to him somehow irreverent.
>
> 「百姓の女名の変化に現われた何とか……」、そんな問題がちらつとする。何か顔の上がらぬ気がした。問題がそんな形で頭に浮かんだこと、現象から社会的なテーマを引き出そうとすることが、恥知らずな行為に思えたのだつた。[78]

Labelling the rural populace "*hyakushō*" (百姓 or common people), Benji immediately adopts a distanced point of view and intuitively begins to abstract. This drive to bypass the personal and to grasp the socio-political, a tendency shared by Takiji's Sasaki, now feels ethically questionable to Benji. As the story progresses and conversations with the locals unfold, it becomes gradually clear that Benji's embarassing ignorance about country life is only part of his crippled ability to connect

[77] George T. Sipos, "Common Tropes and Themes in Japan's *Tenkō* Literature," 110.
[78] Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 64; English, 22.

Marxist theory with reality overall. In another short story published in the same period, "The Novelist Who Could Not Write Novels" (小説の書けぬ小説家, 1936), Nakano's alter ego faces a similar challenge. As the titular novelist sets out to sketch a story about factory life only to realize that he knows too little about the subject to know where to begin.[79] Consciously refraining from theoretical thinking thus partakes in Benji's self-imposed exercise to lay himself bare toward the raw textures of the world. It is also in this sense that everydayness—the problematic residue of private life for Takiji's Sasaki—presents itself as something to be reckoned with.

Benji's confrontation with everydayness takes the form, first and foremost, of a reconciliation with his father. In contrast to his son's intellectual resourcefulness, Magozō's is a world of trivial local affairs and *ninjō* ("human emotion or compassion"). During Benji's conversation with Taguchi, a fellow villager who has dropped by to seek his father, Magozō's image as a good Samaritan begins to be reconstructed in his absence:

> "The kind of man your father is…" Magozo was renowned in the village for his honesty. What was more, he lacked that streak of obstinacy so typical of farmers. Long years working here and there as a petty official had earned him neither wealth nor status, but he had been able to send his two sons to the university. Unlike his father, Tahei, who for all his good sense had been notoriously stubborn, Magozo, a big man, one hundred and fifty pounds in weight, had not once been known, even verbally, to get into a fight. When mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law in the neighborhood used to come to him with their quarrels Tahei had scolded them unsparingly. Magozo, when his turn came, simply sat and made small talk until the women dropped the issue themselves. Even when his oldest son, Kota, died less than six months after graduating from the university, Magozo uttered not a word of complaint. When there was a fire in the area, Magozo thought nothing of walking four or five miles in his straw sandals in the middle of the night to see what he could do to help.
>
> こんなお父つあん──孫蔵は正直もので通つている。それも百姓風な頑固ものではない。永くあちこち小役人生活をして、地位も金も出来なかつた代りには二人の息子を大学へ入れた。先代の太兵衛はわけもわかる代り名うての頑固ものだつたが、孫蔵の方は十七八貫もあるからだで口喧嘩一つしたことがない。喧嘩話を持ち込む近所合壁の嫁姑は、太兵衛には頭ごなし叱りつけられたものだつたが、孫蔵になつてからは世間話をしているうちに自分から取り下げるような具合である。長男の耕太が、大学を出て一年たたずに死んだ時も孫蔵は愚

79 Nakano Shigeharu, "Shōsetsu no kakenu shōsetsuka" 小説の書けぬ小説家 [The Novelist Who Can't Write Novels], in *NSz*, vol. 2, 133-152.

痴一つこぼさなかつた。どこかに火事でもあれば、一里半や二里のところは真夜中でも草鞋ばきで見舞いに出かける。[80]

As a "petty official," that is, Magozō would in a way fall on the side of the establishment. Nevertheless, rather than any overt political commitment, Magozō is above all else an "honest man" (正直もの) with an austere moral sensibility. While adhering to his own ethical principles—as will become evident in his reproach of Benji's *tenkō* later in the story—Magozō also displays a pragmatic flexibility in handling local affairs. Rather than "stubbornness" (頑固), his actions are marked by compromises, compassion, and an endeavor to foster the community's well-being. In his lack of higher education, Magozō's radical situatedness contrasts Benji's aptness for theory.

In a world that Benji finds himself no longer capable of making sense of, Magozō thus furnishes an alternative epistemic model that does not premise itself on access to a detached vantage point. Throughout the narrative, excerpts of his father's letters that Benji received in prison are interspersed between dialogues and events of village life. These letters contain mostly no more than trivial village news, from the neighbor's selling of a paddy-field to an acquaintance's waning health. They nevertheless register Benji's sense of both being excluded from a world of "trivia" and being overwhelmed by it. Having renounced the Japanese Communist Party, this world is what he is left with. In one of the letters, Magozō describes a different mode of inhabiting the world from what Benji has been accustomed to, one marked by a humility that he eventually recognizes as lacking in himself:

> With the slump in produce prices added to our family misfortunes, I'm at a loss to balance our accounts. Everything is at an impasse right now and I, like a man sailing the ocean without a compass, can only let things follow their course. I want you, too, to be fully aware of this.
>
> 殊に農産物の下落と家庭内の不幸とにより、収支計算合致せず大いに閉口しております。今のところ万事行詰り、羅針盤なき航海の如く成行き放題という始末です。此辺は御身も十分了解して置いて貰いたい。[81]

[80] Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 65-66; English, 24.
[81] Ibid., Japanese, 73; English, 39.

The contrast between Magozō's honest endeavor to make ends meet and Benji's tendency to abstract evokes Michel de Certeau's distinction between "tactic" and "strategy." Interrogating ways in which quotidian subjects reappropriate rituals, language, and traditions that evade social scientific totalization, de Certeau foregrounds "tactic" as the mode of knowing on the ground level without panoramic access, which he opposes to "strategy" which, premised on the all-encompassing bird-eye view, often lends itself as institutional bodies' techne of control. Critiquing the institutional flattening of "facts" into "concepts," de Certeau avers that the real and the everyday by nature defies totalization. Turning away from the privileged birds'-eye view, de Certeau, in a study of ordinary people's ways of being in the city, frames his investigation around the act of setting footsteps on the ground. Thus, de Certeau in effect substitutes one somatic synecdoche for another—making the "foot" rather than the "eye" as the featured instrument of space-making. A departure from the bird's-eye paradigm of totalization, footsteps, reconceived as "pedestrian speech acts" by de Certeau, serve to actualize the possibilities of the everyday.[82] In line with Nakano's idiosynchratic interpretation of *Tōseikatsusha* from the minor character Suyama's point of view, then, "The House in the Village" further inflects Takiji's grandiose inquiry, causing it to not so much affirm as problematize politics' demarcation from the everyday. If, as Nakano's reading of Suyama implies, Takiji's utopian ideal of "*tōseikatsu*," understood as a purified mode of political existence, ultimately cannot sublate the residual everyday and, indeed, hinges on the latter, "The House in the Village" turns around the inquiry to redeem political subjectivity through the quotidian and the embodied.

In this light, then, Benji's *tenkō* must be understood not (or not only) as a political submission to the fascist regime—not least because, as Yukiko Shigeto has argued, unlike others who turn toward the ideology of the national polity (*kokutai*), Nakano, in accepting *tenkō*, shows less

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[82] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Pres, 1984).

a conversion than a transition to a groundless position[83]—but as a crisis and, subsequently, reconfiguration of sensibility. Through this crisis, politics takes an inward turn toward a mode of embodied engagement on the ground level. If the defeat of Japanese Marxism is accounted for not by a lack of willpower but by its loss of touch with reality, Benji's reflection on his visceral suffering in prison registers a moment of reckoning with this fact. In a celebrated passage, Benji revisits an intense moment of awakening. After days of desperate fear that he might lose his sanity due to syphilis, Benji is finally admitted to the infirmary for tuberculosis. Then the moment of reckoning arrives during what would become the last days of his imprisonment:

> One day, as he was picking up his vegetables with thin fingers, he called out in his heart to three or four friends, to his wife, to his father, to his sister; his chin trembled, and he burst into tears. "*I haven't lost it! I haven't lost it!*" he cried in a throttled voice and devoured his vegetables. He felt fingers like strips of raw chicken touch his heart. The thought which had floated into his mind an hour ago, a thought which until then he had believed himself constitutionally incapable of—"Shall I recant? Shall I…?"—had disappeared. The instant that thought had crossed his mind, he felt his throat parch up. When lunch was brought around, he accepted it, but he could not eat a mouthful of the food which, until that morning, he had gobbled down hoping to make himself recover. He had no desire for food at all, and the very thought that desire for food existed made him feel like vomiting. With cheeks like ice, Benji sat up in bed and gazed wildly around the room. Why had the thought disappeared? Saliva suddenly poured back into his mouth, tears tumbled out of his eyes, and his teeth chattered. "Let those whose life is secure… wear leaves in their hair, oh my lads!" The line ran through his mind. "I, too, will die as a nightingale of Hellas." Tears of joy welled up in his eyes.
>
> ある日彼は細い手でお菜を摘み上げ、心で三四の友達、妻、父、妹の名を呼びながら顎をふるわせて泣き出した。「失わなかつたぞ、失わなかつたぞ！」と咽喉声でいつてお菜をむしやむしやと喰つた。彼は自分の心を焼鳥の切みたいな手でさわられるものに感じた。一時間ほど前に浮かんだ、それまで物理的に不可能に思われていた「転向しようか？しよう……？」という考えがいま消えたのだつた。ひよいとそう思つた途端に彼は口が乾上がるのを感じた。昼飯がきて受け取つたが、病気は食い気からと思つて今朝までどしどし食つていたのがひと口も食えなかつた。全く食慾がなく、食慾の存在を考えるだけで吐きそうになつた。両頬が冷たくなつて床の上に起き上がり、きよろきよろ見廻した。どうしてそれが消えたか彼は知らなかつた。突然唾が出てきて、ぽたぽた泪を落としながらがつがつ噛んだ。「命のまたけむ人は——うずにさせその子」——おれもヘラスの鶯として死ねる——彼はうれし泪が出て来た。[84]

[83] Yukiko Shigeto, "Tenkō and Writing: The Case of Nakano Shigeharu," *positions: asia critique* 22, no. 2 (2014): 517-540.
[84] Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 75; English, 43-44. The translation of the line in italics has been modified. I will elaborate on this later.

The narrative then cuts to letters from Magozō immediately after this episode. A few days later, Benji meets with his lawyer, who informs him that "enough evidence of his participation in an illegal organization [i.e., the Japanese Communist Party] had been gathered from the testimony of others for the court to consider it a proven fact" and that, should Benji admit to this fact himself, he would be eligible for release on bail.[85] Benji in turn reflects on whether it remains necessary to carry on as he realizes a "new battle" has presently begun:

> Today, however, hearing his lawyer for the first time draw a contrast between himself and those others [who had already complied and been released], he felt as if his mind was coming unhinged. Unhinged because he was aware that *a new battle was taking place in his heart*, yet at the same time he was aware that he was *shielding himself from knowing what that battle was*, shielding himself even from the awareness that he was shielding himself—when he thought of what lay at the end of the effort he was waging, almost unconsciously, on two, three, different levels, everything before his eyes went dark.
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> 初めてそれを引合いに出した弁護士の言葉は彼に錯乱を与えた。勉次は錯乱——新しい心の戦いを感じ、同時にこの戦いの性質の分析を避けている自分を感じ、さらにそう感じること自身を避けていることを感じ、その二重三重の無意識な努力の行く先に目眩むように感じた。[86]

Seeing that it no longer makes sense to carry on his resistance—his *old battle*, as it were—Benji decides to perform *tenkō* the next morning. In contrast to the reader's anticipation, the actual decision of *tenkō* occurs rather calmly after learning that "enough evidence has been gathered" so that his refusal to confess no longer carries as much weight. Indeed, we are simply told that "[t]he next day the lawyer arrived early in the morning," when "Benji informed him that he had decided to admit to the point in question."[87] No ink is spilled there on Benji's psychological process the night before, which presumably is no longer important at this point. Thus, the real struggle—which at the same time registers the beginning of a "new battle […] in his heart" (新しい心の戦い)—can only be

[85] Ibid., Japanese, 77; English, 48.
[86] Ibid., Japanese, 77; English, 49. My emphasis.
[87] Ibid., Japanese, 78; English, 49.

pinpointed to the passage quoted earlier, where he cries "I haven't lost it! I haven't lost it!" (失わなかつた、失わなかつたぞ！)

This pivotal scene has nevertheless long perplexed and divided critics.[88] Indeed, Benji's transformation—at once physical and psychological—is enigmatic on three accounts. First, the political significance of what Benji is clinging onto at this point is by no means self-evident. As both Karatani Kōjin and Matsuhara Shin'ichi observe, by this point, Benji has already agreed to no longer engaging in political activities ("He wrote another appeal for bail and signed a statement saying he would not participate in political activities." 彼は再び保釈願を書き、政治的活動をせぬという上申書を書き…).[89] His resistance now boils down to a perverse refusal to admit to being a member of the Communist Party.[90] For most other *tenkōsha*, by contrast, the renunciation of Marxism ultimately completes their conversion, rather than the other way around.[91] Benji's (and Nakano's) priorities

[88] Scholars of *tenkō* and of prewar Japanese political history have consistently highlighted the importance of the passage without agreeing to its implications. See for example Karatani Kōjin 柄谷行人, "Nakano Shigeharu to tenkō" 中野重治と転向 [Nakano Shigeharu and *Tenkō*], in *Yūmoa toshite no yubutsuron* ヒューモアとしての唯物論 [Materialism as Humor] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1993), 163-200; Yoshimoto Takaaki, "Tenkō ron" [On *Tenkō*], 11; Suga Hidemi 絓秀実, *1968* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2006), 224-259.

[89] Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 75; English, 42.

[90] Karatani summarizes the bewildering nature of Benji's motivations by highlighting its peculiar approach to "meaning":

> Benji's insistence is puzzling. It seems outright nonsensical. In fact, Benji is confronted with nonsense (non-meaning) here. He is not wavering over whether to abandon Marxism or not. What Marxism designates as the loss of "meaning" leads to "meaninglessness" (nihilism or Shestovian anxiety), which in turn points towards the restoration of meaning. Nakano Shigeharu deviates from this circuit. If non-conversion (*hi-tenkō*) amounts to the retention of meaning, and conversion to its renunciation, then he is rather fixated on something nonsensical.
> 勉次のこだわりは不可解である。それはただノンセンスにみえる。実際勉次はここでノンセンス（非意味）に直面している。彼はマルクス主義を放棄するか否かで迷ったのではない。マルクス主義という「意味」の喪失は、「無意味」（ニヒリズムあるいはシェストフ的不安）にいたる。それは再び意味の回復を指向させる。中野重治はそのような回路からずれている。非転向が意味を保持し、転向が意味を放棄することだとしたら、彼はむしろノンセンス（非意味）なものにこだわっている。

Karatani Kōjin, "Nakano Shigeharu to tenkō" [Nakano Shigeharu and *Tenkō*], 166.
On this point, see also Matsuhara Shin'ichi 松原新一, "'Dai'ichigiteki' naru mono e no kikyū" 「第一義的」なるものへの希求 [The Desire for Things of "the First Order"], in *Tenkō no ronri* 転向の論理 [The Logic of Tenkō] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1970), 137.

[91] As Karatani points out, fellow Marxist writer and JCP member Kurahara Korehito 蔵原惟人 (1902-1991) agreed to renounce the party and to refraining from illegal activities but refused to abandon Marxism. He was then imprisoned and held onto Marxist beliefs without recanting. In this regard, Benji's (and Nakano's) standard for *tenkō* is a peculiar one. Karatani Kōjin, "Nakano Shigeharu to tenkō" [Nakano Shigeharu and *Tenkō*], 163. See also Matsuhara Shin'ichi, *Tenkō no ronri* [The Logic of *Tenkō*], 137-139.

thus constitute a political enigma. Why does disavowing party affiliation matter (more than, say, Marxism itself)?

Second, Benji triumphs against the temptation to convert after overcoming profound psycho-somatic sufferings only for this victory to be soon offset by his almost anticlimactic decision to perform *tenkō*, a few pages later, after meeting with the lawyer. Indeed, from the passage alone, one almost receives the impression that it is from a narrative that extols the protagonist's non-conformity (or 非転向), as exemplified by Kobayashi Takiji's martyrdom.[92] The contrast between this (apparently) triumphant moment and Benji's prompt decision to yield—presumably on the grounds that he has already found a "new battle" to fight—can thus be considered a narratological enigma.[93] Why must the story be told in this way? Why, instead of the night after meeting with his lawyer, must the weight of Benji's struggle with the idea of *tenkō* be felt in the infirmary scene? What significance does the act of eating hold?

Third, the passage's intertextuality also contributes to its hermeneutic opacity. Seeking solace, Benji conjures mythic imageries from both ancient Japanese and ancient Greek traditions. He first recalls fragments of a poem attributed to the semi-legendary hero Yamato Takeru ヤマトタケル from the 8th-century chronicle *Kojiki* 古事記: "Let those whose life is secure/ [Take from the Heguri Mountains/ (Of the rush matting)/ Leaves of the great oak/ And] wear them in their hair/ —O my lads!—" (命のまたけむ人は（たたみこも 平群(へぐり)の山の 熊白檮(くまかし)が葉を） 髻華(うず)に挿(さ)せ その子)[94] A renowned song of nostalgic yearning (望郷の歌), the line registers a dying hero's bittersweet imagination that those reaching their native land of Yamato (大和) without him would celebrate their homecoming

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[92] Suga Hidemi, *1968*, 234.
[93] An enigma, that is, if one rejects the simplistic conclusion that Nakano employs storytelling as a means of whitewashing so as to exempt himself from moral and political blames—an interpretation that both Nakano's consistent stance of self-critique and the narrative of "The House in the Village" itself would refute.
[94] See Brett de Bary's translator's notes in *Three Works by Nakano Shigeharu*, 155. For the Japanese original, see *Kojiki* 古事記, annotations by Nishimiya Kazutami 西宮一民 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1979), 169.

with joy.[95] Benji's ecstasy is further intensified by the thought that he will die as "a nightingale of Hellas"—most likely a reference to the Greek mythological figure of Philomela, an Athenian princess transformed into a nightingale after being raped and mutilated by her sister's husband. Her rapist cut out her tongue to silence her. Yet Philomela wove her tale into a tapestry, eventually exposing the culprit and his crime.[96] Nakano's rhetorical juxtaposition has invited comparison with the Japan Romantic School poet Yasuda Yojūrō 保田與重郎 (1910-1981) and the fascist regime's cult of a mythical Japan. Yoshimoto Takaaki, who seeks to establish the superiority of Nakano's *tenkō* over so-called non-conformity—exemplified by both Takiji and Miyamoto Kenji 宮本顕治 (1908-2007), who survived imprisonment without recanting—is criticized for his silence on the strikingly "nationalistic" rhetoric here.[97] At any rate, herein lies the centrality of the "homecoming" motif—already evident in the story's title, "The House [Home] in the Village" (村の家). This intertextuality then amounts to a thematic (and rhetorical) enigma. Why is homecoming important? *Which* home?

To parse these three enigmas, I propose going backwards and exploring the theme of "homecoming" first.

(1) Politics' Homecoming

Benji's invocation of Yamato Takeru and the "nightingale of Hellas" has been likened to Hölderlin and the loaded German notion of *Heimat* (homeland).[98] Both his self-identification with the mythic hero-conqueror and the nightingale's prominence in Romanticism seem to justify this analogy. In addition, having graduated from Tokyo Imperial University with a degree in German

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[95] Other critics have interpreted the song as an aged person's plea for people to enjoy themselves while young. See *Kojiki*, trans. Donald Philippi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 248.
[96] Brett de Bary suggests that "Benji uses this allusion to suggest he will die, figuratively, surrounded by his comiades, beloved and admired for maintaining the faith." However, this need not be the case, given the dense symbolism that clouds the figure of the nightingale in both Greek and modern literature. See Brett de Bary's notes in *Three Works by Nakano Shigeharu*, 155.
[97] Suga Hidemi, *1968*, 234-235.
[98] Ibid.

literature, Nakano was an enthusiastic reader of Heinrich Heine and would go on to produce a monograph on the German poet (*A Guide to the Life of Heine* ハイネ人生読本, 1936) a year after "The House in the Village."[99] Admittedly, the German "*Heimat*," often construed as an idyllic rural homeland and an object of nostalgic attachment, notoriously lended itself to Nazi's "blood and soil" ideology and the racially defined *Volkskörper* ("national body").[100] However, to hastily identify the intertextual moment as a symptom of ideological submission would risk reproducing the very fascist logic that enlists the domestic as unquestionably and naturally the basic unit of *kokutai* 国体, a logic exemplified by the Tokkō manual that includes the *oyakodon* rice bowl as a techne of prosecution. Instead, to the extent that the idea of "home" first and foremost registers Benji's isolation, both literal and ideological, these references may well gesture toward a more fundamental state of rootlessness on the part of the Japanese Left.

In a 1933 essay, Kobayashi Hideo famously proclaims that modern Japanese literature is one of the lost home (故郷を失った文学).[101] Citing Tokyo's urban sprawl and the dazzling modern cinematic experience as symptoms of homelessness, Kobayashi Hideo laments that modernization/Westernization has rendered Japan's cultural life estranged from its past. Following Kobayashi's characterization of modern Japanese culture as one of disorientation and loss, Seiji Lippit contends that literary modernism unfolded in Japan as a process of disintegration that opened up "heterogeneous topographies at the margins of the nation-state."[102] However, in the same way that Kobayashi's thesis postulates, as Paul Anderer suggests, "an actuality to be experienced and not

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[99] Ibid., 236-237. Notably, in the story, Benji also translates from the German. However, instead of a Romantic poet, he selects a German translation of a letter from Lenin to Gorky. For a discussion of Benji's translational endeavor, see George T. Sipos, "The Literature of Political Conversion (*Tenkō*) of Japan," 142-172.
[100] See Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), esp. 212-218. See also Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat – A German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture, 1890-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
[101] See Kobayashi Hideo, "Literature of the Lost Home," in *Literature of the Lost Home: Kobayashi Hideo—Literary Criticism, 1924-1939*, 46-54.
[102] Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 32.

obscured in romantic pursuit of the true Japan or the dubious revival of an imagined Japanese purity,"[103] Benji's mythical rhetoric does not inexorably warrant diagnosis as a turn toward the national body politic. In fact, in its revolutionary pursuit, proletarian literature, which Kobayashi claims is no exception to the order of the literary establishment (*bundan* 文壇),[104] always already reaffirms this homelessness. It is nevertheless only in the early 1930s that this homelessness—literalized by Sasaki's severing of familial ties in *Tōseikatsusha*—became a problem for Marxist intellectuals.

Indeed, proletarian literature's estrangement from the populace contributed to the many *tenkōs* of the early 1930s. As Yoshimoto Takaaki asserts, the phenomenon of *tenkō* must be understood in the larger context of shifting popular opinions and morphing political sensibilities of the time. Whereas most, if not all, cases of *tenkō* involved duress, Yoshimoto underlines the spontaneity of the process, defining it as "a change in thinking that took place among intellectuals because they had failed to grasp the structure of modern Japanese society as a totalized vision" (日本の近代社会の構造を、総体のヴィジョンとしてつかまえそこなったために、インテリゲンチャの間におこった思考変換).[105] The fact that most *tenkōshas* did not recant their conversions even after the war serves as a reminder that, aside from the result of coercive state violence, *tenkō* must also be understood internally as a subjective reorientation. In this light, the JCP's increasing detachment from the Japanese people's lived realities, together with proletarian literature's self-isolating vanguardism, brought about its most disastrous ideological defeat. In Communist Party leaders Sano Manabu 佐野学 and Nabeyama Sadachika's 鍋山貞親 statement of conversion ("A Statement for Our Fellow Defendants" 共同被告同志に告ぐる書, June 10, 1933), the hallmark of *tenkō*, they vow to

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[103] Paul Anderer, Introduction to *Literature of the Lost Home: Kobayashi Hideo—Literary Criticism 1924-1939*, 3.
[104] "Although a proletarian writer might be expected to have an interest in political institutions or in social conditions, once he becomes a member of the literary world, and is absorbed in writing monthly review columns, his readership narrows to that limited sphere which is the focus of pure literature itself." Kobayashi Hideo, "Literature of the Lost Home," 46.
[105] Yoshimoto Takaaki, "Tenkō ron" [On *Tenkō*], Japanese, 6; English, 100.

grasp the "real sentiment" in the "hearts of working people" (勤労者大衆の胸底) that enshrines the Japanese imperial line as the ultimate token of national unity.[106] To the extent that Sano and Nabeyama's *tenkō* not only was a capitulation to the fascist state but desperately complied with the larger popular trend in favor of the Emperor System, their submission can be seen as a (misguided) attempt at a belated "homecoming" that would help regain the JCP's long-lost popular basis—even if at the detriment of the entire political undertaking. In this regard, the statement marks a concession to both fascism and populism. While Sano and Nabeyama's "pandering to the mass trends" (in Yoshimoto's words) certainly marks a dark turn of the Left, it only confirms the necessity to "return to the people." This would mean confronting, as Yoshimoto puts it, the "dominant inheritance" (優性遺伝) of Japan's feudalism, which he sees incarnated in the figure of Magozō.[107]

It is in this context that Nakano's "home" and "village" must be understood. Needless to say, Benji's homecoming is an uneasy and awkward one. In fact, the reader finds him sitting alone half naked at the opening scene, translating in the store-house, unwittingly reproducing his state of isolation in prison. But this *nostos* is also by his own choice. (Benji's wife, we learn, still resides in Tokyo.)[108] In the infirmary scene, it is the thought of "three or four friends, his wife, his father, his sister" (三四の友達、妻、父、妹) that makes his chin tremble.[109] Fleeting as Benji's homesickness is in the text—undermined by the fact that by now he is already home—this longing nevertheless constitutes a significant undercurrent. In Magozō's letters, one learns that Benji has made queries about things back home, regarding such things as the pawlonia trees his father had planted. The imperative to "return to the people," in this case, takes the form of a literal homecoming. If Benji's

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106 Cited in Ibid., Japanese, 18; English, 109.
107 Ibid., Japanese, 7; English, 101.
108 In real life, Nakano Shigeharu was married to actress Hara Izumi 原泉 (1905-1989). A prominent member of the Tokyo Leftist Theater Group (東京左翼劇団), Hara actively participated in the retrieval of Kobayashi Takiji's body and his subsequent funeral (which became a political event in itself) while her husband was imprisoned. See Kurata Minoru 倉田稔, "Takiji no shigo" 多喜二の死後 [After the Death of Kobayashi Takiji], *Shōgaku tankyū* 商学討究 [The Economic Review] 53 (2002): 21-45.
109 Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 75; English, 43.

invocation of *Kojiki* and the nightingale—be it a reference to Philomela's captivity by the Black Sea (as in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*) or to Hölderlin's "An die Nachtigall" where it epitomizes the sublime lure of natural landscape—does in fact register a nostalgic yearning, its object is nothing mythical, let alone fascist. Rather, the homeland that Benji imagines himself returning to is a radically concrete one—one described to him by Magozō in painstaking detail.

In "The House in the Village," Benji's train of actions and thoughts is constantly interrupted by his father's letters that he recalls receiving in prison. In this way, the story stages a contention of two narratives—and in turn of two "homes," the home that Magozō describes and that which Benji presently inhabits. While Benji's is a tale of a defeated political activist, Magozō's apparently features a world of petty logistics and everyday chores. Yet the letter that immediately follows the infirmary scene reads:

> People spoke of 1933 as a year of famine following a bumper harvest, but I'm afraid this year it will be the opposite—a true famine. Everyone is making such a clamor about it being an emergency that I wonder if a real disaster won't befall us as a punishment from the gods. This year we took all the necessary precautions during the snowy season, so fortunately there was very little damage to our trees…
>
> 昭和八年度は豊年飢饉といわれたが、本年は其の裏の本当の飢饉でなかろうかと心配しているのです。あまり仰山に非常時、非常時といつて騒ぎ廻るから、神仏の御咎めで本当の非常時が到来するのではないかと思われます。本年は降雪中十分注意したので、樹木の被害は少なかつたのは幸いでした……[110]

By now, Magozō's accounts of quotidian "trivia" have gradually revealed themselves to be nothing less than reportage of the grim realities of rural Japan. The father's restrained lament bespeaks a dire world of the early 1930s, experienced by the massive farming populace (*hyakushō* 百姓) quite literally on the ground. The "famine following a bumper harvest" (豊年飢饉) here refers to the overproduction in 1933 that, coupled with "the slump in produce prices" (農産物の下落) that

[110] Ibid., Japanese, 76; English, 44-45. Translation modified.

Magozō has mentioned in another letter,[111] devastated Japanese farmers nationwide who had already been suffering from continued recession.[112] Thus, only halfway through the narrative does the "home" that Magozō reports from unfold to us in its full precarity.

Nakano wrote in the immediate aftermath of the Great Depression, manifested in Japan as the Shōwa Panic (昭和恐慌). The impact of the 1929 Wall Street crash was magnified by Japan's inopportune return to the Gold Standard at the old parity in January 1930, as part of the governmental response to the chronic financial crises during the 1920s. As a result, already debilitated by the 1927 banking crisis (昭和金融恐慌),[113] Japan's financial system suffered an acute blow from both the deepening worldwide depression and the sharply appreciating yen, resulting in abrupt imported deflation and a severe economic contraction in the following years.[114] By the time Finance Minister Takahashi Korekiyo 高橋是清 ordered Japan's re-departure from the Gold Standard in December 1931, the Great Depression had already taken its toll. Internationally, the economic downturn pushed Japan into expansionism, culminating in the invasion of Manchuria in September 1931.[115] Domestically, the drop of farmers' income from overproduction in 1930 was aggravated by the bad harvest of 1931 and the decline in absolute produce prices, constituting what became known as the "agricultural crisis" (農業恐慌).[116] Following the Manchurian Incident and Takahashi's gold

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[111] "With the slump in produce prices added to our family misfortunes, I'm at a loss to balance our accounts." (殊に農産物の下落と家庭内の不幸とにより、収支計算合致せず大いに閉口しております。) Ibid., Japanese, 73; English, 39.

[112] See Tomohiro Okada, "The Great Depression and Rural Development in Japan: On the Public Works Program for Relief to Farmers in 1930s," *Kyoto University Economic Review* 61, no. 2 (1991): 29-48.

[113] The bank run that eventually led to the bankruptcy of the Tokyo Watanabe Bank in March 1927 arose in part from the Wakatsuki cabinet's effort to facilitate the financial disposition of bad debts incurred by the Great Kantō Earthquake four years earlier. See Takahashi Kamekichi 高橋亀吉 and Morigaki Sunao 森垣淑, *Shōwa kinyū kyōkōshi* 昭和金融恐慌史 [The History of the Shōwa Financial Crisis] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1993).

[114] See Masato Shizume, "The Japanese Economy During the Interwar Period: Instability in the Financial System and the Impact of the World Depression," in *The Gold Standard Peripheries: Monetary Policy, Adjustment and Flexibility in a Global Setting*, eds. Anders Ögren and Lars Fredrik Øksendal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), esp. 218-220.

[115] For the relationship between the Great Depression and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, see Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 83–93.

[116] Mori Takemaro 森武麿, Asai Yoshio 浅井良夫, et al., *Gendai Nihon keizaishi* 現代日本経済史 [Contemporary Japanese Economic History] (Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 2002), 26.

embargo, industrial restructuring under monopoly capitalism and escalating militarization continued to intensify the "scissors gap," namely, a widening gap between the prices of agricultural and industrial goods that impoverished Japanese farmers.[117] Furthermore, the slow recovery of Japan's economy was undercut first by natural disasters in 1933 (including the Sanriku Earthquake in the Tōhoku region) and then by the record-breaking crop failure of 1934.[118] The agricultural crisis would last well into the mid-1930s, the time of the publication of Nakano's story. It is no coincidence that the early 1930s witnessed the peak of Japanese immigration to Brazil, with most emigrants being poor farmers.[119] Like Manchuria, the internal farming populace were sacrificed for the empire's economic well-being.[120] Throughout the years of crisis, the dwindling livelihood of the rural population persisted regardless of crop performance.[121] Hence Magozō's sense of disorientation: "Everything is at an impasse right now and I, like a man sailing the ocean without a compass, can only let things follow their course." (今のところ万事行詰り、羅針盤なき航海の如く成行き放題という始末です)[122] Amidst diminishing hopes and a collective sense of dislocation, "Emperor-System

117 As Germaine A. Hoston notes: "The 'scissors price gap' refers to a structural crisis in which either agricultural prices are so high that industrial workers cannot buy food or, as Inomata stresses, the agricultural sector suffers disproportionately because low agricultural prices paired with high industrial prices prevent agricultural workers from buying industrial goods because of loss of income." Germaine A. Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 341.

118 See Yamashita Fumio 山下文男, *Shōwa Tōhoku daikyōsaku* 昭和東北大凶作 [The Great Tōhoku Famine of Shōwa] (Akita: Mumyōsha, 2001).

119 Despite the fact that the Brazilian economy was also affected by a decline in coffee export during the Great Depression, Japanese immigration peaked in 1933, with a record number of 23,299 entries that year. Following their predecessors who arrived as early as the 1900s to work on coffee plantations, they would contribute to the formation of the largest Japanese overseas diaspora today. Yamada Michio 山田廸生, *Fune ni miru Nihonjin iminshi: Kasato Maru kara kurūzu kyakusen e* 船にみる日本人移民史：笠戸丸からクルーズ客船へ [The History of Japanese Immigration Seen Through Ships: From Kasato Maru to Cruise Ships] (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1998), 69. See also James L. Tigner, "Japanese Immigration into Latin America: A Survey," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 23, no. 4 (1981): 457-482.

120 It is often held that, compared to European powers, the impact of the Great Depression on Japan was limited. However, this point of view problematically hinges on a Eurocentric focus on Pearl Harbor (rather than the Manchurian Incident) as the opening gambit of Japanese agression (largely in conformity with postwar Japan's heavily Cold War-inflected viewpoint), on the one hand, and a privileging of urban over rural economy, on the other.

121 Located on the Sea of Japan coast, Nakano's home region, Fukui Prefecture, is chronically vulnerable to winter storms. In addition, as a center of sericulture, Fukui was hit particularly hard due to the sharp decline in silk exports to the United States following the Great Depression. See Kanemaki Kunio 印牧邦雄, *Fukui-ken no rekishi* 福井県の歴史 [The History of Fukui Prefecture] (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 1978), 239-241.

122 Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 73; English, 39.

fascism" (天皇制ファシズム),[123] with its seductive promise of solidarity and prosperity, emerged triumphant as a unifying popular ideology.[124]

It is for this reason that politics, it was felt, must "come home"—not to a mythical Japan but to the everyday lived realities of the Japanese people. And the Left was already late. If Sano and Nabeyama's populist-fascist conversion relegated the Communist Party from the self-appointed vanguard to a "rear guard" of mass sentiments,[125] surely a different reckoning was due for the remainder of the Japanese Left to come face to face with the sufferings on the ground. Without it, the popular basis, presently at its most vulnerable, would be ceded to the fascist machine and Japan would slide into the abyss of total war. The crucial question of how such a "homecoming" to everydayness could be achieved in turn leads us from the thematic enigma to the narratological one, namely, the contrast between Benji's visceral struggle in the infirmary and his anticlimactic decision to confess after meeting with the lawyer. Why does Benji's "moment of truth" have to arrive in the way it does, and how does the story reconcile *tenkō* and homecoming?

(2) Body Politic and the Political Body

To address this question, the reader must first acknowledge a cognitive belatedness on his or her own part, in the same way that the Japanese Left must own their belated arrival at the Japanese people's everyday life. By now, it is clear that the quotidian events in Magozō's letters—from one neighbor's desperate selling of paddy fields to another's waning health with little recourse to

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123 The term was first coined by leading postwar thinker Maruyama Masao in his 1946 essay "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism" (「超国家主義の論理と心理」), see Ivan Morris's English translation in Maruyama Masao, *Thoughts and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. Ivan Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1-24. See also Chapter 3 of this dissertation on Maruyama's thesis on fascism and corporeality.

124 Herbert P. Bix, "Rethinking 'Emperor-System Fascism': Ruptures and Continuities in Modern Japanese History," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 14, no. 2 (1982): 2-19.

125 Here I draw on Martin Puchner's notion of "rear-guardism," which he employs to characterize fascist sympathizers such as Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis who adopted a defensive posture against the progressive avant-gardism of their time. See Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 107-131.

medication—register a trend that well transcends village gossips. Nevertheless, if such a realization on the reader's part is delayed by Magozō's narrative constraint and taciturn resilience (Magozō, we have been told, hardly ever complains),[126] this deferral only mirrors Benji's own belated recognition of the gravity of his father's struggle—hence the belated catharsis of his homesickness in the infirmary. Furthermore, of the two versions of "home," Benji's and Magozō's, literary critics who have thus far unanimously privileged the former in their hermeneutic effort to contain the story within the history of the Japanese Left inadvertently end up reproducing Benji's very blindness.[127] The challenge of "homecoming" thus reveals itself to be first of all an epistemic one. Just as the Freudian "uncanny" hinges on the semantic ambivalence of *heimlich* (homey, familiar; secret, unknown) and *unheimlich* (unhomey, unfamiliar; revealed, unsecret),[128] Benji's epistemic labor—not least his unflagging avoidance of hasty generalizations, which he now deems a "shameless act" (恥知らずな行為)—only confirms the difficulty of recognizing one's own home. An inversion of the semiotic constellation (記号論的な布置の転倒), to borrow Karatani's term, must therefore take place.[129] In other words, if the village that Benji returns to is inevitably a place of hardships, this homecoming must be experienced as *first* radically concrete and *then* intellectually legible.

To experience it as such—that is, to recognize "home" as at once a locus of everydayness and a site of sufferings and struggles—demands a renewed sensibility for the real. Herein, too, lies the significance of the sensational intensity of Benji's reactions in the infirmary scene. Calling out to his loved ones, his chin trembling, Benji cries out: "I haven't lost [it]! I haven't lost [it]!" (「失わなか

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126 "Even when his oldest son, Kota, died less than six months after graduating from the university, Magozo uttered not a word of complaint." (長男の耕太が、大学を出て一年たたずに死んだ時も孫蔵は愚痴一つこぼさなかつた。) Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 66; English, 24.

127 Whereas critics like Yoshimoto Takaaki have emphasized Magozō's challenging of Benji as a lesson bestowed upon the leftist intellectual by the resilient elements of Japan's "feudal" society, they invariously fail to highlight the significance of Magozō's narrative in its own right.

128 Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny' (1919)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), vol. 17, 217-252.

129 Karatani Kōjin, *Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen* 近代日本文学の起源 [Origins of Modern Japanese Literature] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980), 26; English, 22.

つたぞ、失わなかつたぞ！」) But exactly what is not lost? Benji's exclamation, enthusiastically repeated twice, does not name the source of his joy. While Brett de Bary's rendering, "I haven't lost the *faith*," seems only natural, this need not be the case, insofar as the Japanese sentence conveniently omits the object—almost as if the "unlost" defies articulation.[130] Following de Bary's translation-interpretation, Benji's joyful tears at the end would have stemmed from a determination to embrace heroic death, when the nightingale bespeaks a fantasy in which he dies "surrounded by comrades, loved ones for maintaining the faith."[131] Again, this need not be the case, not least because those whom he calls out to are all from private rather than political relationships, "[…] to three or four friends, to his wife, to his father, to his sister," many, if not all, of whom do not even share "the faith." Instead, the "unlost," I suggest, may well be something much more basic. Considering Benji's earlier fear that he might go mad from his syphilis—a fear worse than death ("He was more afraid of madness than of death" 彼は死よりも発狂を恐れた)[132]—a more plausible reading would be that he "hasn't lost his sanity" (正気を失わなかった).[133] In fact, the fear was so intense that Benji once thought of suicide,[134] recalling Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's 芥川龍之介 suicide amidst worsening schizophrenia in 1927, an event widely regarded by proletarian writers (with the notable exception of Nakano himself) as the quintessential "defeat of literature."[135] For Benji as for

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130 Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 75; English, 43.
131 Brett de Bary's endnote, 155.
132 Ibid., Japanese, 74; English, 42.
133 The Japanese phrase "*shōki o ushinau*" (正気を失う) translates variously into "to lose one's mind," "to lose common sense," and, occasionally, "to lose one's consciousness."
134 "One time he had also struggled with the fear of suicide." (一度は自殺の恐怖とも戦つた。) Ibid., Japanese, 74; English, 42.
135 Benji, like Nakano, would have been well aware of the circumstances surrounding Akutagawa's death. In June 1927, just a month before Akutagawa's suicide, Nakano met Akutagawa for the first time at the latter's behest. The two discussed a wide range of topics over several hours. In the aftermath of Akutagawa's death, Nakano published an invited commentary in *Bungei kōron* 文芸公論 titled "On Mr. Akutagawa and Other Issues" (芥川氏のことなど). Admitting that he and Akutagawa were almost "antipodal" to each other, Nakano nevertheless expresses dissent with the popular opinion seeking to map the writer's suicide onto a purported pathology of Japanese literature and of his time:

> I am almost antipodal to Mr. Akutagawa. However, I am even more opposed to the popular opinion that has spread regarding Mr. Akutagawa's death. In fact, I feel the urge to defend the deceased Mr. Akutagawa from Kume Masao's words to a newspaper reporter, "I don't want people to think of it as just a suicide."

Akutagawa, madness would mean the collapse of both sense and sensiblity, bereaving him of the chance to confront reality for what it is. Simplistic as this reading seems—underwhelming too, perhaps, compared to one that puts at stake something of a higher order like "faith"—it is nonetheless key to understanding the weight of such a quotidian biological act as eating in this scene.

Benji's struggle with the possibility of *tenkō* is astonishingly visceral. At the beginning, the thought of *tenkō* has been "physically impossible" (物理的に不可能). Displaying the same will to self-sacrifice as Takiji's Sasaki, Benji battles the threat of conversion with his willpower—that is, in a dimension beyond the corporeal. As he approaches his own physical limit, however, the possibility of conversion for the first time assumes an embodied form, making his "throat parch up." When food arrives, Benji finds himself incapable of eating. Then, for reasons that evade even himself, the idea of *tenkō* vanishes as his saliva returns along with "tears of joy." The narration then returns to the opening moment when Benji devours vegetables, reassured that "all is not lost." To untangle Benji's highly rhythmic reactions and the intersecting temporalities in the infirmary scene, the chart below breaks down Benji's transformation in chronological order:

Benji's Transformation		Chronological Breakdown
One day, (4a) as he was picking up his vegetables with thin fingers, he called out in his heart to three or four friends, to his wife, to his father, to his sister; his chin trembled, and he burst into tears. "I haven't lost it! I haven't lost it!" he cried in a throttled voice and devoured his vegetables. He felt fingers like strips of raw chicken touch his heart. The thought which had floated into his mind an hour	ある日 (4a) 彼は細い手でお菜を摘み上げ、心で三四の友達、妻、父、妹の名を呼びながら顎をふるわせて泣き出した。「失わなかつたぞ、失わなかつたぞ！」と咽喉声でいつてお菜をむしやむしやと喰つた。彼は自分の心を焼鳥の切みたいな手でさわられるものに感じた。一時間ほど前に浮かんだ、(1a) それまで物理的に不可能に思われていた	(1) *Until an hour ago/Until that morning:* *Tenkō* is believed to be "constitutionally [physically] impossible" (物理的に不可能). Benji has managed to eat only in order to survive the trial. (2) *An hour ago:* The idea of performing *tenkō* suddenly emerges,

僕は芥川氏にたいしてほとんど対蹠する。しかしながら芥川氏の死に関して流れた世評のあるものにたいしてはさらに対蹠する。新聞記者に語つて「単なる自殺と考へて貰ひたくない。」と言つた久米正雄の言葉のごときものからは、僕は自殺した芥川龍之介をむしろ防衛しようとするものである。

Thus, Nakano also distanced himself from the typical critical stance taken by fellow proletarian writers such as Miyamoto Kenji. Nakano Shigeharu, "Akutagawa-shi no koto nado" 芥川氏のことなど [On Mr. Akutagawa and Other Issues], in *NSz*, vol. 9, 103. See also Chapter 1 of this dissertation for a discussion of Akutagawa's late writings, which thematize a crisis of sensibility that in many ways echoes Benji's liminal situation.

<table>
<tr>
<td>ago, (1a) a thought which until then he had believed himself constitutionally incapable of— (2a) “Shall I recant? Shall I…?”—had disappeared. (2b) The instant that thought had crossed his mind, he felt his throat parch up. (3b) When lunch was brought around, he accepted it, but he could not eat a mouthful of the food which, (1b) until that morning, he had gobbled down hoping to make himself recover. (3b) He had no desire for food at all, and (3a/b) the very thought that desire for food existed made him feel like vomiting. (4b) With cheeks like ice, Benji sat up in bed and gazed wildly around the room. (4a) Why had the thought disappeared? (4b) Saliva suddenly poured back into his mouth, tears tumbled out of his eyes, and his teeth chattered. (4a) “Let those whose life is secure… wear leaves in their hair, oh my lads!” The line ran through his mind. “I, too, will die as a nightingale of Hellas.” Tears of joy welled up in his eyes.</td>
<td>(2a) 「転向しようか？しよう……？」という考えがいま消えたのだつた。(2b) ひよいとそう思つた途端に彼は口が乾上がるのを感じた。昼飯がきて受け取つたが、(1b) 病気は食い気からと思つて今朝までどしどし食つていたのが (3b) ひと口も食えなかつた。全く食慾がなく、(3a/b) 食慾の存在を考えるだけで吐きそうになつた。(4b) 両頬が冷たくなつて床の上に起き上がり、きよろきよろ見廻した。(4a) どうしてそれが消えたか彼は知らなかつた。(4b) 突然唾が出てきて、ぽたぽた泪を落としながらがつがつ噛んだ。(4a) 「命のまたけむ人は——うずにさせその子」——おれもヘラスの鶯として死ねる——彼はうれし泪が出て来た。</td>
<td>which makes Benji’s mouth dry.[136]

(3) When lunch arrived (between now and an hour ago): Immediately after the idea of tenkō hits him, Benji finds himself incapable of eating to the point that the “very thought of that desire for food” disgusts him.

(4) Now: The thought of tenkō somehow disappears. At the same time, Benji regains bodily sensibility, including a desire for food. Overwhelmed by joy, he calls out to his loved ones, reassured that what is the most important “has not been lost.”</td>
</tr>
</table>

Notably, the distinction between what can be accessed conceptually and intuitively/sensually—highlighted respectively by (a) and (b) in the chart above—comes to the verge of collapse as Benji’s reasoning entwines with visceral gut reactions.[137] The fleeting idea of *tenkō* emerges (2a), accompanied by loss of saliva and appetite (2b to 3b), only to magically disappear an hour later (4a), when “[s]aliva suddenly poured back into his mouth” (4b). In the end, Benji both remains the same (in terms of his non-conformity) and is different. Citing the passage as a hallmark of the author’s

[136] It is worth noting that, in Japanese, “dry mouth” (*kuchi ga kawaku* 口が乾く) is distinct from “dry throat” (or simply thirst, *nodo ga kawaku* 喉が渇く), with the same verb (*kawaku*) written with different kanjis. Benji’s case (2b: 口が乾上がるのを感じた) would be known medically as xerostomia (“dry mouth” colloquially), a symptom that often contributes to difficulty eating. This may or may not have been caused in part by Benji’s illnesses (syphilis and tuberculosis). See “Dry Mouth,” National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), accessed April 25, 2024, https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/health-info/dry-mouth.

[137] Karatani Kōjin similarly calls attention to the intermingling of psychological and physical descriptions. See Karatani Kōjin, “Nakano Shigeharu to tenkō” [Nakano Shigeharu and *Tenkō*], 184.

iconic "elusiveness" (わかりにくさ), Karatani Kōjin calls attention to Nakano's acute sensibility for difference (差異) as that which resists reduction to antagonism (対立)—hence Nakano's persistent rejection of the binary logic that insists on dividing subjectivity along such lines as *tenkō* versus *hi-tenkō* (non-conformity) as well as politics versus literature—dualisms that inevitably fold back onto identity.[138] If the *tenkō*/*hi-tenkō* binary reveals the obvious problem of ideological integrity, it also conceals the less obvious—a difference that cannot be reduced to a choice of either/or. To the extent that *tenkō* has heretofore been dismissed as "physically impossible" (物理的に不可能) and hence falls solely into the domain of thought, Benji's struggle between *tenkō* and non-*tenkō* has thus far been sustained by a more fundamental binary partition between the political/ideological and the pre-political/corporeal. Thus construed, what happens within the span of an hour (2 to 4) amounts to a tranfiguration not of political allegiance but of politics understood as such, as Benji's battle descends from the abstract level of faith to the suffering flesh itself. In other words, for the thought of *tenkō* to be properly reckoned with, it must first become "physically possible." What ultimately redeems politics, he realizes, is not the overcoming of the body (as Takiji's Sasaki would believe) but the having of one—that is, corporeality itself.

Benji's subjective reorientation must therefore emphatically not be reduced to *tenkō*/*hi-tenkō*. This reorientation in turn makes possible the necessary epistemic inversion whereby "home" becomes legible to Benji as a concretely empirical place, embedded in the larger crisis of Depression-hit rural Japan. Along these lines, Benji's hunger takes on a political weight as at once an irreducibly physiological sensation and a socioeconomic condition. One can thus recalibrate the nightingale imagery as not a yearning for a particular way of dying (romantically, "as a nightingale of Hellas") but a reckoning with the sheer fact of mortality—hence the verb "die" in its potential form (*shineru* 死ねる, "to be able to die," "to be mortal"). Benji's romantic rhetoric thus bespeaks nothing more

[138] Ibid., 175-176.

than the difficulty of this inversion. In the same way that, according to Karatani, landscape must be discovered in literary representation against the odds of clichéd kanji-idioms that take on a semantic autonomy of their own,[139] Benji's idealized *Heimat*/*Yamato* clouded with thick classical rhetoric represents nothing more than a free-floating non-concrete vision that must, in due course, be substituted by a corporeally inhabited home. Yet such a vision is what he only has access to presently, being the rootless intellectual that he is and way too long gone from the village—*his* village, nonetheless. To accomplish this homecoming, the body must further become attuned to everydayness, experienced as always already part of politics, albeit precariously so.

(3) The Party, the Emperor, and the Everyday

With the shifting conception of the political as such, we have already begun to address the last remaining enigma—the political question concerning Benji's (and Nakano's) peculiar standard for *tenkō*. Why cling to the Communist Party, having already renounced political activities? What makes the institution of the Party itself more crucial to defend or, alternatively, an impossible object of renunciation?[140] To be sure, "faith" occupies a disembodied ideological dimension, whereas the renunciation of "political activities" premises itself on an inherently untenable either/or logic, potentially rendering both secondary concerns. However, even if this answers the question of why the center of gravity of Benji's (and Nakano's) struggle, as pragmatic materialists, necessarily diverges from that of others (notably Kurahata Korehito 蔵原惟人, who was imprisoned for refusing

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[139] In an influential section on the *Genbun itchi* movement in *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, Karatani critiques Futabatei Shimei's reliance on fixed kambun expressions to depict landscape in *The Drifting Cloud* (浮雲, 1886-1889), frequently referred to as the first modern Japanese novel. He contends that at stake in the creation of a new literary language through an overcoming of Chinese characters as ready-mades. This amounts to a turn away from the classical *kambun* (conventionally deemed the appropriate elegant literary language) that is always already speaking itself. This in turn necessitates an "inversion" of the semiotic constellation for both landscape and interiority to be "discovered." See Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Literature*, 45-51.

[140] On a pragmatic level, as Matsuhara Shin'ichi notes, whether Benji/Nakano is a JCP member falls into the domain of facts and should not raise too critical an issue from the perspective of his prosecutor, whose main target would instead be to entice ideological confessions. See Matsuhara Shin'ichi, *Tenkō no ronri* [The Logic of *Tenkō*], 137-139.

to give up Marxism),[141] it does not positively locate the significance of the Japanese Communist Party. While Karatani Kōjin goes so far as to call Benji's motive outright "incomprehensible" (不可解),[142] I suggest that his attachment to the Party must be weighed against both what the JCP affords and what he would have to confront (alone) once it is renounced. Indeed, rather than the renunciation of the Communist Party, the object of Benji's fear may well be the abandoning of "Party-life" (党生活)—to adopt Kobayashi Takiji's coinage—understood as the opposite pole from "everyday life" (日常生活).

It is commonly held that, beside state persecution, the JCP's collapse in the 1930s was largely attributable to its estrangement from the mass. Nevertheless, the other side of this failure, it must be noted, lies in the Party's successful enlisting of leftist intellectuals in the collective pursuit of a renewed subjectivity through Fukumotoism (福本主義 or 福本イズム). A Germany-trained Marxist theoretician heavily influenced by György Lukács' theory of class consciousness, Fukumoto Kazuo's 福本和夫 (1894-1983) radical theses on "theoretical struggle" (理論闘争) and on "separation (of true Marxists from false ones) and unification" (分離・結合) exerted a considerable impact on leftist intellectuals in the mid to late 1920s.[143] By introducing the (arguably) pre-Marxist concept of subjectivity into the Party's ideology,[144] Fukumotoism's conversion of the JCP's revolutionary project into the modern subject's dialectical self-negation proved extremely appealing to young

[141] See footnote 91. Karatani Kōjin, "Nakano Shigeharu to tenkō" [Nakano Shigeharu and *Tenkō*], 166-167.
[142] Ibid., 166.
[143] Karatani Kōjin, "Kindai Nihon no hihyō: Shōwa zenki (1)" 近代日本の批評——昭和前期[I] [Modern Japanese Criticism: Early Shōwa Period (1)], in *Kindai Nihon no hihyō Shōwa hen (jō)* 近代日本の批評　昭和編（上）[Modern Japanese Criticism, Shōwa (Part One)], ed. Karatani Kōjin (Tokyo: Fukutake shoten, 1990), 26-30.
[144] Fukumotoism's "Hegelianization" of Marxism, as it were, is not unlike the impact of the resurging interest in Hegel in 1980s China. Best exemplified by Li Zehou's practical philosophy of subjectivity, the rise of Hegelian Marxism intersected with Chinese intellectuals' intent pursuit of the question of modernity immediately following the nation's opening up and an intense influx of Western ideas. See Gu Xin, "Subjectivity, Modernity, and Chinese Hegelian Marxism: A Study of Li Zehou's Philosophical Ideas from a Comparative Perspective," *Philosophy East and West* 46, no. 2 (1996): 205-245. For an overview of the ramifications of Lukács' Hegelian Marxism in the history of Western Marxism, see Anders Burman, "Back to Hegel! Georg Lukács, Dialectics, and Hegelian Marxism," in *Hegelian Marxism: The Uses of Hegel's Philosophy in Marxist Theory from Georg Lukács to Slavoj Žižek*, eds. Anders Burman and Anders Baronek (Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2018), 17-34.

intellectuals including Nakano Shigeharu.[145] Rallied under a intently felt eagerness to overcome what Karatani terms "all things Taishō" (大正的なもの),[146] proletarian writers thus inflected the modernist imperative to "make it new" into a Hegelian Marxist drive to "make it radical."[147] What Kobayashi Hideo proclaims as proletarian literature's "vanquishing" of the I-novel, the literary form widely regarded as the hallmark of Taishō literature, only attests to the currency of this drive. At the cost of internal schisms and intensifying cliquism,[148] Fukumotoism thus turned the JCP into the ultimate emblem of progress by aligning its ideology with proletarian writers' urge to settle accounts with the old era, an urge that culminated in Miyamoto Kenji's incendiary proclamation of Akutagawa's death as the "defeat of (Taishō bourgeois) literature" that must be sublated.[149] In this way, the Party at once rallied intellectuals under the banner of radical rupture (revolutionary time) and, with its emphasis on theoretical struggle, further isolated them from the Japanese people's everyday life.[150]

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145 The profound imprint of Fukumotoism on Nakano Shigeharu is well established. See ibid. See also Ayame Hiroharu 綾目広治, "Nakano Shigeharu ni okeru Marukusu shugi: shoki no ronsō o chūshin ni shite" 中野重治におけるマルクス主義−—初期の論争を中心にして [Nakano Shigeharu's Marxism: Focusing on the Early Debates], *Bunkyō kokubungaku* 文教国文学 [Educational Japanese Literature] 71 (1985): 33-49.

146 Karatani Kōjin, "Kindai Nihon no hihyō: Shōwa zenki (1)" [Modern Japanese Criticism: Early Shōwa Period (1)], 26-30.

147 For a historical account of "Make It New" as a modernist ideology, see Michael North, *Novelty: A History of the New* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013), esp. 144-171.

148 For the JCP's internal split into the pro-Fukumoto faction (福本派) and the worker-farmer faction (労農派), led by Marxist economist Yamakawa Hitoshi 山川均 (1880-1958), see Chisaka Kyōji 千坂恭二, *Shisō toshite no fashizumu: "Dai Tōa sensō" to 1968* 思想としてのファシズム：「大東亜戦争」と 1968 [Fascism as Thought: "The Greater East Asian War" and 1968] (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 2015). Both factions were severely reprehended in the Comintern's 1927 thesis (27 年テーゼ), but the influence of Fukumotoism continued to be felt among lefist writers.

149 Diagnosing Akutagawa's death as a deep-rooted pathology of the Taishō bourgeois self, Miyamoto Kenji passionately calls for an overcoming of the bourgeois class consciousness that Akutagawa (purportedly) embodied:

> However, we must always maintain a savage passion to criticize Mr. Akutagawa's literature. In order to make us stronger, haven't we investigated the process of the "defeat" of his literature? We must transcend this literature of "defeat," along with its class-based soil, and march forward.
> だが、我々は如何なる時も、芥川氏の文学を批判し切る野蛮な情熱を持たねばならない。我々は我々を逞しくするために、氏の文学の「敗北」的行程を究明して来たのではなかったか。「敗北」の文学を──そしてその階級的土壌を我々は踏み越えて往かなければならない。

Miyamoto Kenji 宮本顕治, "'Haiboku' no bungaku: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke-shi no bungaku ni tsuite" 「敗北」の文学──芥川龍之介氏の文学について [The Literature of "Defeat": On Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's Literature], in *Miyamoto Kenji bungei hyōron shū* 宮本賢治文芸評論集 [Collected Essays of Literary Criticism by Miyamoto Kenji], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha, 1980), 32. See also Chapter 1.

150 As Karatani notes: "What influenced literary scholars during this period was not Marxism in general, but Fukumotoism. This is because it managed to regard class conflict not as an issue outside of intellectuals, but as an issue within their circle." (この時期の文学者に影響を与えたのは、マルクス主義一般ではなく、福本主義である。それは階級闘争を、知識人の外にある問題としてではなく、知識人の内部の問題としてとらえたからだ。) Karatani Kōjin, "Kindai Nihon no hihyō: Shōwa zenki (1)" [Modern Japanese Criticism: Early Shōwa Period (1)], 27.

Thus, in its promise of a "home away from home," as it were, the JCP both remedied and reaffirmed Kobayashi Hideo's modernist diagnosis of Japanese culture's "homelessness."[151] Renouncing the JCP, it follows, would mean being thrown back into a state of homelessness and barred from the temporality of radical progress.

Despite internal critiques levelled at Fukumotoism and its official denunciation in the Comintern's 1927 Thesis, its consolidation of the JCP's ideological status in relation to the proletariat continued to inform leftist intellectuals' self-positioning.[152] As Asada Akira 浅田彰 suggests, Fukumoto's Hegelian theory of subjectivity gave rise to what he calls a "romantic radical leftism" (浪漫的極左主義) that designated the proletariat as the "absolute other" irreducibly external to the intellectuals and for whom the intellectuals, precisely on account of this radical exteriority, must prepare to give their lives—a version of "Hebraic" leftism that Asada contrasts with the "Greek" (i.e., rational empirical) Marxism represented by the Kyoto School Marxist Miki Kiyoshi 三木清 (1897-1945).[153] Herein lies the paradox of Takiji's Sasaki's idealized "Party-life" (党生活), envisioned as living absolutely for (and even *by*, in the sense of utterly abdicating individual subjectivity) the Party—a paradoxical project because it is both impending and impossible. Despite Takiji's vocal dismissal of Fukumotoism,[154] Sasaki's struggle in *Tōseikatsusha* nevertheless bespeaks a radical conception of revolutionary time that coalesces with the Party's (by now) Hegelian notion of history. It is for this reason that Sasaki's reunion with his mother must be indefinitely deferred to a

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[151] It is not a coincidence that Karl Mannheim, writing in 1920s Germany, approrpiated Alfred Weber's coinage of the "socially unattached intelligentsia" (*freischwebende Intelligenz*) to characterize intellectuals as a "relatively classless stratum" minimally attached to traditions. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (London: Routledge; Henley: Kegan Paul, 1979), 137-138.

[152] See Karatani Kōjin, "Kindai Nihon no hihyō: Shōwa zenki (1)" [Modern Japanese Criticism: Early Shōwa Period (1)], 26-27.

[153] See Asada Akira in conversation with Karatani Kōjin, Hasumi Shigehiko 蓮實重彦, and Miura Masashi 三浦雅士, "Shōwa hihyō no shomondai: 1925-1935" 昭和批評の諸問題：1925-1935 [Issues in Shōwa Criticism], in *Kindai Nihon no hihyō Shōwa hen (jō)* [Modern Japanese Criticism, Shōwa (Part One)], 44.

[154] The danger of Fukumotoism is thematized in Takiji's novel, *Individuals of the Transitional Period* (転形期の人々, 1931-1932).

utopian future: "Unless a new world were to come into being one of these years (and this is what we were struggling for), I would not live with Mother again." (これから何年目かに来る新しい世の中にならない限り（私たちはそのために闘っているのだが）、私は母と一緒に暮すことがないだろう。)[155] Thus construed, the tension between "home" and the Party dwells on two contending temporalities. For Benji, then, the turn away from *tōseikatsu* (Party-life 党生活), which would make possible politics' homecoming, simultaneously means a turn away from a promised futurity toward a cyclical temporality of the everyday—*time out of joint*, as it were.[156]

In fact, Benji's sense of uneasiness in the village's everyday setting only confirms this unspoken fear. Here, in contrast to the JCP's revolutionary temporality, everydayness is experienced by Benji first and foremost as a disorienting stasis. In the opening scene, frustrated by his slow progress with the translation, Benji skims across the interior of the titular house and notices how "the ancient clock with the motionless pendulum hung on the ochre-colored pillar at the center of the house" (紅殻塗の中柱に分銅のとまつた古ぼけた柱時計が掛かつている), when the narration abruptly halts, as if the sight is unbearable, before Benji's attention swiftly turns outdoors.[157] The broken clock would appear again when, "[b]eneath the clock with the motionless pendulum that hung on the pillar, Magozo, Kuma, and Benji—father, mother, and son—ate their evening meal." (分銅のとまつた柱時計の下で、孫蔵、クマ、勉次、親子三人が晩飯を食つている。)[158] Time is no longer linear, just like the overwhelmingly tangled state of affairs described in Magozō's letters. Modifying Harootunian's privileging of the urban in his characterization (following Tosaka Jun) of

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155 Kobayashi Takiji, *Tōseikatsusha*, Japanese, 389; English, 253.
156 Admittedly, when Hamlet utters the line ("The time is out of joint. O cursed spite/ That ever I was born to set it right!" Act I, Scene 5)—to Horatio, after being visited by his father's ghost—he refers to the unjust state of affairs of his time. It may nevertheless be worth pointing out that, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, Magozō, Benji's father who appears both as a voice (in his letters) and in the flesh, also threatens to disrupt linear temporality (or the general status quo).
157 Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 64; English, 21.
158 Ibid., Japanese, 69; English, 31.

the everyday as the "social space occupied by mass industrial workers,"[159] here the everydayness of the village, even more than that of factories, defies Hegel's autonomous historical time with its recalcitrance not only as a site of seasonal (cyclical) agricultural activities but also as the uncontained residue of modernity itself.[160] To complete his homecoming—that is, to be properly "home"—Benji cannot but confront and "parse" (刻む), to adopt Tosaka's term, the stubborn temporality of rural everydayness.

If, as Tosaka posits, the ineluctability of everydayness dwells on the ineluctability of the body itself, it follows that the everyday, as inhabited by Benji's fellow villagers, is a space of embodied sensibilities. Indeed, Benji would realize the difficulty of parsing such convoluted sensibilities that defy his habitual aptness for theorization, as conversations unfold between him and his father:

> That evening, drinking a small bottle of sake, he [Magozō] was in high spirits and talked to Benji of this and that. He told Benji their prefecture had spent heavily on staging *special maneuvers*. He described how the people in a neighboring village had been thrilled that troops would be passing through on their way to Manchuria—but were now *hard pressed to produce the outlays of food* they were expected to serve to the *soldiers, especially to the commanding officers*. […] The next day […] [h]e said he could see nothing wrong with forming a *Communist Party* in Japan. But even if, for example, you brought a man like Lenin here, he wouldn't have the same appeal for the Japanese people as *their own Emperor*.

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159 Harry Harootunian, "Time, Everydayness, and the Specter of Fascism: Tosaka Jun and Philosophy's New Vocation," 96.

160 Here one recalls the prominence of clocks as trope in Terayama Shūji's 寺山修司 (1935-1983) cinematic art. In *Pastoral: To Die in the Country* (田園に死す, 1974), an semi-autobiographical avant garde film that explores Terayama's coming of age during and after WWII, the teenage protagonist's desire to abandon his rural hometown for the metropolis of Tokyo is staged as a tension between different modes of experiencing time. The protagonist's ("Shin-chan") house notably features a giant broken pendulum clock, signifying his psychological experience of the unbearable stasis of country life. During a visit to a traveling circus troupe where he encounters a woman, Shin-chan becomes fascinated with her watch and the idea that each member of the troupe is allowed to possess their own watch (and hence time) while traveling together. His juvenile sexual attraction to the circus woman thus coalesces with the allegorized desire to open up the flow of time by escaping the village. Terayama's *Farewell to the Ark* さらば箱舟, a cinematic adaptation of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* released posthumously in 1984, similarly explores the theme of cyclical time in rural Japan, again through the trope of a broken clock, among others. At any rate, the thematization of rural Japanese temporal experience as cyclical or stagnant has a long history. In particular, the motif's prominence in postwar Japanese culture—ranging from avant garde cinema to retellings of folklores such as *The Ballad of Narayama* 楢山節考 (Fukazawa Shinchirō 深沢七郎, 1956; Kinoshita Keisuke 木下恵介, 1958; Imamura Shōhei 今村昌平, 1983), during a time when the conception of kinship is radically transformed by the flow of rural population into metropolitan centers like Tokyo and Osaka—deserves attention insofar as it often represents the "other side" of the radical politics of the cities. The present study naturally cannot afford such attention.

> 夜は一合半ほどの酒でいい機嫌になつてしやべつた。大演習では県でだいぶ金を使つたこと、満州へ行く軍隊が近所の町を通過するようになつて町のものが喜んだが、兵隊、特に将校連中に御馳走せねばならぬので、えらい物いりで困ること（……）あくる日（……）共産党が出来るのは当り前なこと、しかしたとえレーニンを持つてきても日本の天皇のような魅力を人民に与えることはできぬこと。[161]

Unsurprisingly, the village is not exterior to politics. Politics was already here—but experienced not, it must be noted, in the form of full-fledged ideology but rather as part of the villagers' quotidian sensibilities amidst the famine. To be sure, Magozō is no fascist. While Yoshimoto casts him as a symbol of feudal Japan's "dominant inheritance," Magozō's point of view rather furnishes a glimpse into the oscillating, crisscrossed, and frequently conflicting affective commitments of the average farmers. They at once exult in the spectacular sight of marching troops and bemoan their consequently increased expenditures—to which Magozō, being more educated and initiated to the sphere of officialdom, would probably add that the prefecture's spending on maneuvers could have gone to farmer relief. Similar to Takeuchi Yoshimi's characterization of prewar Japan's Pan-Asianism as a "sentiment" (*shinjō* 心情),[162] what Benji grapples with here is his father's support for the Emperor System as a sentiment (心情としての天皇制). To recognize it as such, nonetheless, emphatically does not translate into apologetic vindication.[163] Just as the Pan-Asianist "sentiment," precisely on account of its preconceptual nature that eludes total rationalization, notoriously lent itself to imperialist assimilation, Magozō's loyalty to the Emperor attests to the gravity of everyday sensibility as a contested site that must be recognized, parsed, and defended.

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161 Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 80; English, 55. Nakano's emphasis in the original.

162 See Liu Jinpeng 劉金鵬, *Takeuchi Yoshimi no Ajia ron: shinjō to shisaku* 竹内好のアジア論──心情と思索 [Takeuchi Yoshimi's Discourse on Asia: Feelings and Thoughts] (Tokyo: Hakuteisha, 2022). See also Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

163 In fact, in a 1955 conversation with Hirano Ken, Nakano would go so far as to remark: "Magozō, the father character in 'The House in the Village,' may not be the worst, but there is something malicious (悪質な) about him." Matsushita Yutaka 松下裕, *Hyōden Nakano Shigeharu* 評伝中野重治 [A Biography of Nakano Shigeharu] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1998), 153.

Inflecting Walter Benjamin's remark on fascism's "aestheticizing of politics,"[164] here the Emperor's "glamor" (魅力) is an aesthetic one not because it entails artistic beauty (aesthetics narrowly construed) but because it inhabits the realm of embodied sensibility (aesthetics understood as that which belongs to the senses; *aisthētikón*), just as the marching troops exhilarated the villagers as a visual spectacle.[165] If, however, politicizing art was no longer obviously possible after *tenkō*,[166] Benjamin's proposed line of flight can only take the form of a politicizing of sensibility—or rather doing so self-consciously, weaving together the political with the apparently pre-political. "All is not lost," as Benji exclaims, if history can be retrieved in the people's quotidian sensibilities. Indeed, after the Manchurian Incident, while popular support for Japan's imperial expansion surged in what Louise Young calls a "war fever,"[167] quotidian sensibilities on the ground remained multifarious and pregnant with tensions. As Yoshimi Yoshiaki contends, the interval between 1931 and Japan's full-scale invasion of China in 1937 witnessed at once a rise of popular imperialism and the resilience of popular democratic sentiment in the form of ongoing support for parliamentary rule against military attempts to undermine it.[168] Thus, if the many *tenkōs* of the 1930s were to be remedied, it could only be through reclaiming the tenacity of the living quotidian individual as history's proper subject.

It is here that Nakano Shigeharu's reckoning echoes the historical materialism of Tosaka Jun, in whose short-lived but productive Materialism Study Society (唯物論研究会, 1932-1938) Nakano

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[164] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 3: 1935-1938*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, et al., eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 122.

[165] In the 1968, Mishima Yukio, writing well outside of the Marxist tradition, would seek to appropriate this "aesthetic" quality of the Emperor System in order to re-establish Japan's independence as a sovereign state from its military alliance with the US in "On the Defense of Culture." See Mishima Yukio 三島由紀夫, "Bunka bōei ron" 文化防衛論 [On the Defense of Culture], in *Mishima Yukio zenshū* 三島由紀夫全集 [Complete Works of Mishima Yukio], vol. 33 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1976), 366-402.

[166] This claim, of course, needs to be qualified by acknowledging the intricate mechanism of censorship and the writers' agency of resistance. See Jonathan Abel on "redactionary literature" in, *Redacted: The Archives of Censorship in Transwar Japan*, 154-193.

[167] Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 55-114.

[168] Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Grassroots Fascism: The War Experience of the Japanese People*, trans. Ethan Mark (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), esp. 41-54.

would take an active part.[169] If Benji's homecoming to embodied village life must be distinguished from the nationalistic cult of a mythical Japan, this distinction also maps onto a critical divergence in Kyoto School's spatial turn, namely, between Nishida Kitarō's 西田幾多郎 and Watsuji Tetsuro's 和辻哲郎 turn toward cultural notions of space—*basho* (場所) for Nishida and *fūdo* (風土) for Watsuji, some of which would later be coopted in the ideological fabrication of an essentialized Japan[170]—and Tosaka Jun's emphasis on everydayness as an embodied site of surplus and resistance.[171] Notably, Tosaka's turn from his philosophical inquiry into the question of space toward the study of materialism similarly occurred after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, amidst the rise of fascist ideology that masqueraded as "custom" (*fūzoku* 風俗).[172] For Tosaka, insofar as ideology is able to acquire the visage of bodily reality in society by grasping the form of timeless "custom," fascism manages to conceal its own historicity, which in turn colludes with the inattentiveness of philosophical idealism toward lived realities.[173] Nevertheless, if Tosaka Jun designated everydayness as "philosophy's new vocation,"[174] Nakano Shigeharu's endeavor in literature was further complicated by the I-novel's longstanding commitment to everydayness as a mere means to psychological interiority.

In contrast to Takiji's "anti-I-novel" that sets out to vanquish both the literary form itself and the kind of (bourgeois) human interiority that it valorizes, "The House in the Village" vies to arrive at its own moment of truth through an act of preserving. Indeed, acknowledging that this

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[169] See Nakano's conversation with Tosaka and others on the popular appeal (大衆性) of literature in Tosaka Jun, et al., "Bungei zadankai" 文芸座談会 [A Roundtable on Literature and Art], *Yuibutsuron kenkyū* 唯物論研究 [Research on Materialism] 34 (1935): 42-52.

[170] See for example Bernard Bernier, "Transcendence of the State in Watsuji's Ethics," in *Neglected Themes and Hidden Variations*, eds. Victor Sōgen Hori and Melissa Anne-Marie Curley (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 2008), 94–100; Graham Mayeda, *Time, Space and Ethics in the Philosophy of Watsuji Tetsurō, Kuki Shuzo, and Martin Heidegger* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[171] For a discussion of Tosaka's thesis on everydayness as surplus, see Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, 99.

[172] Harry Harootunian, "Time, Everydayness, and the Specter of Fascism: Tosaka Jun and Philosophy's New Vocation," 100.

[173] Ibid., 103-104.

[174] Ibid., esp. 103-106.

truth, as unnamable as the "unlost" that Benji eagerly reclaims, necessarily evades theoretical abstraction (in contrast to Tosaka's staunch belief in materialist philosophy's scientific rigor), Nakano appropriates the I-novel and its attentiveness to quotidian sensibility to delve into feelings that are convoluted, contested, and confused—in other words, all too human. Only in this way, too, can we understand Benji's complicated response to the ultimate challenge from his father at the end of the story, when Magozō pleads him to give up writing: "You won't be the first person who's had to learn farming after thirty." (三十すぎて百姓習うた人アいくらもないこたない。)[175] In his father's plea, spoken from the place of a farmer's basic sense of justice, Benji detects a "trap" (罠) but finds himself incapable of logically defending his position, other than replying: "I understand everything you've said. But I want to keep on writing." (よくわかりますが、やはり書いて行きたいと思います。)[176] What Karatani calls Nakano's attentiveness to "subtle difference" (微細な差異) here assumes the form of an intuitive—hence literary rather than philosophical—drive to preserve the irreducible against all odds.[177]

A series of dilemmas masquerading as binary either/or choices intuitively register for Benji as a "trap." Nevertheless they must receive an answer. That answer can be a neither/nor, no matter how impossible such a response may seem. Between the revolutionary rupture of "Party-life" and the cyclical stasis of the village; between JCP leaders' pandering of mass sentiments in favor of the Emperor (*tenkō*) and clinging to the Marxist "faith" (purportedly "*hi-tenkō*") which, content with its ideological autonomy, has nevertheless already estranged the Left's from lived realities; between writing (which, Magozō warns, would only risk "killing what you wrote before" 今まで書いたものを殺すだけ)[178] and giving up writing to become a farmer, thus completely submitting to the chaotic

175 Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 88; English, 69.
176 Ibid., Japanese, 89; English, 72.
177 Karatani Kōjin, "Nakano Shigeharu to tenkō" [Nakano Shigeharu and Tenkō], 163-165.
178 Nakano Shigeharu, "Mura no ie" [The House in the Village], Japanese, 88; English, 69.

everydayness (experienced by his father as "sailing without a compass" 羅針盤なき航海),[179] Benji can only choose not choosing. Perhaps the most menacing of all—in line with the old Japanese critical paradigm that produces antagonism only at the expense of or, rather, for the purpose of obliterating difference—is the tension between *politics and literature*. Nakano's perverse and laborious defiance of such alternatives amounts to an act of preserving achievable only through literature, which, unlike philosophy, inhabits the embodied realm of aesthetics. In this way the I-novel is rediscovered as a vehicle of history—that realm understood by Marx as the struggle of "real, active men in the flesh."[180]

Epilogue: The Hermeneutics of the Unlost

A mere six days after Tosaka Jun's death in prison and twelve tumultuous years after that of Kobayashi Takiji's, Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945. On the most basic factual level, neither Takiji and Nakano's literary endeavor to grasp the proletarian life-process nor Tosaka's philosophical attentiveness to the everyday yielded resistance powerful enough to stall the course of a ruinous war. Tsurumi Shunsuke's effort to recuperate average Japanese people's wartime resistance—from the Watchtower Society's unbending adherence to faith to a kamikaze pilot's dismayed realization that his death would be meaningless—paradoxically betrays a more immense silence.[181] Commending Tsurumi for disavowing the "distance between discourse and the 'silent body' it presumes to speak for," Harootunian characterizes this endeavor as what Michel de Certeau calls a "labor against death" which "must rely on a writing that can never quite capture the making

179 Ibid., Japanese, 73; English, 39.
180 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 154.
181 Tsurumi Shunsuke, *An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan, 1931-1945*.

of a people's history."[182] In a similar way, if Benji's exclamation that he "hasn't lost [it]" (失わなかった) staunchly refuses to name its object, then perhaps a critical attempt at retrieving values from a contested archive must also venture into the unsayable, where the unlost is at home.

Revisiting the troubled legacies of prewar Japanese literature amidst the nation's rebuilding, the "Politics and Literature" debate sought to re-establish a "humane" literature. Whereas Koschmann contextualizes Nakano's response to Ara and Hirano as part of the JCP's "bid to establish hegemony over postwar literary production,"[183] it appears in the light of the foregoing that Nakano's critique of his opponents' "petty bourgeois humanism" stemmed precisely from his *tenkō* experience. Whereas Hirano cites Sasaki's instrumentalization of Kasahara in Takiji's *Tōseikatsusha* as evidence of proletarian literature's inhumane political dictates, Nakano reveals Hirano's "humanism" to be one conveniently devoid of real living humans, as it were—a hypocrisy further reinforced by Hirano's own misogynistic characterization of the I-novel as "wifely literature" (女房的文学).[184] As Nakano fiercely avers:

> It [Hirano's humanism] confuses abstract humans for real humans, words for living flesh. Its enemies include the explication of the true nature of war, real recovery from the damage of war, and the concrete and historical human reestablishment of the Japanese ethnic nation. It asserts an antisocial, antihistorical freedom and humanity. It criticizes the confirmation of the individual through democratic accomplishments of the ethnic nation and the rebuilding of the ethnic nation through the confirmation of individuality by comparing them to aggressive militarism as totalitarianism. It hails an individualism that shuns the reconstruction of the ethnic nation as the true humanism. However, a pragmatic criticism of totalitarianism or fascism could not be borne out of the opposition from this sort of individualism.
>
> 抽象的人間を現実的人間に、言葉を肉体におきかえている。戦争の性格闡明、戦争の被害からの現実的恢復、日本民族の具体的・歴史的人間樹立がその敵である。それは反社会的・半歴史的な自由、人間を主張する。それは民族の民主主義的建設をとおしての個の確立、個の確立をとおしての民族の再建を全体主義として侵略軍国主義になぞらえて非難し、民族の再

[182] Harry Harootunian, review of *An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan* and *A Cultural History of Postwar Japan*, by Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 15, no. 1 (1989): 249.
[183] J. Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 7; 69-82.
[184] See Hirano Ken, "On Wifely Literature," trans. Michael Bourdaghs, in *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52*, 201-214.

建に背をむけた個人主義を真の人間主義として立てている。しかし全体主義、ファシズムの実践的批判はこれに個人主義を対置することからは生まれない。[185]

Suffice it to say that, while Nakano's defense of Takiji by no means ratifies Sasaki's appalling misogyny in *Tōseikatsusha*, Hirano's advocacy for a humane literature, set against a "politics" narrowly construed, represents nothing more than a nostalgic regression to Taishō bourgeois individualism. To be sure, the fact that the General Election Law (普通選挙法) and the Peace Preservation Law (治安維持法) were passed in the same year (1925) attests to what historians have consistently identified as liberal democracy's implication in the rise of fascism.[186] Reverting back to a Taishō-styled humanism profoundly detached from lived realities (as powerfully thematized in Akutagawa's late writings),[187] it follows, would only reproduce the kind of cultural soil that unwittingly nurtured fascism in the first place.

What, then, remains unlost? If Nakano's call for literature to retrieve the flesh of history must be achieved through a perverse preserving of lived moments pregnant with tensions, then a critical endeavor to parse it cannot but take the form of an embodied hermeneutics. One is thus compelled to reconsider both Fredric Jameson's (in-)famous injunction to "always historicize" and Eve Sedgwick's retort: "*Always* historicize? What could have less to do with historicizing than the commanding, atemporal adverb 'always'?"[188] Insofar as Tosaka Jun ingeniously uncovers fascism's erasure of temporality by adopting the form of custom, a historicism inattentive to embodied sensibility only risks inadvertently colluding with ideology's concealment of its own historicity. Indeed, it is for this very reason that both Tosaka and Nakano sought to redeem everydayness from

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[185] Nakano Shigeharu, "Hihyō no ningensei II" 批評の人間性 II [The Humanity of Criticism II], in *NSz*, vol. 12, 97-98; English translation by Joshua Solomon and Kaori Shiono in Nakano Shigeharu, "The Humanity of Criticism II: On the Literary Reaction, et Cetera," in *The Politics and Literature Debate in Postwar Japanese Criticism, 1945-52*, 140.
[186] See for example Harry Harootunian, "The Execution of Tosaka Jun and Other Tales: Historical Amnesia, Memory, and the Question of Japan's 'Postwar.'"
[187] See Chapter 1 of this dissertation.
[188] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 125.

assimilation into a totality that, in its guise of timelessness, threatens to obliterate history itself—so much so that, as Walter Benjamin ominously warns, "*even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious."[189]

[189] Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 391. Benjamin's emphasis.

CHAPTER 3 Criticism's Body: Literature and Carnality in Maruyama Masao and Takeuchi Yoshimi

> Today, "thought" constantly tries to intimidate and pressure us through our heads. Among the Japanese people, "thought" has long perpetuated a heavy-handed tyranny, but now the flesh is clearly trying to rebel against it. Our distrust of "thought" is absolute. We no longer believe in anything other than our own flesh. Only the flesh is real. The pains of the flesh, the desires of the flesh, the rage of the flesh, the intoxication of the flesh, the bewilderment of the flesh, the slumber of the flesh—they are the only truth. It is through these things that we realize for the first time that we are alive.
>
> 今日、「思想」は頭から私たちを、ただ威嚇して押へようとしてゐるだけである。日本民族のなかでは、「思想」は強権的色彩を帯んだ専制政治を、長いあひだつづけてきたが、いまや肉体はそれに対してあきらかに叛逆しようとしてゐる。「思想」への不信は徹底的である。私たちは、いまやみづからの肉体以外のなにものも信じない。肉体だけが真実である。肉体の苦痛、肉体の欲望、肉体の怒り、肉体の陶酔、肉体の惑乱、肉体の眠り——これらのことだけが真実である。これらのことがあることによつて、私たちははじめて自分が生きてゐることを自覚するのだ。[1]

Tamura Taijirō 田村泰次郎, "The Flesh Is the Human" 肉体が人間である (1949)

Tamura Taijirō's 1947 short story, "Devil of Flesh" (肉体の悪魔), contrasts the frailty of reason with the tenacity of the flesh through Japanese soldier Sada's star-crossed romance with a captive Chinese woman who infiltrated Japanese-occupied Shanxi as a Communist spy from Yan'an at the height of the Sino-Japanese War. Gradually awakening to the deceitfulness of Japan's war ideology, Sada struggles simultaneously with the fruitlessness of reasoning and the overwhelming reality of his erotic desire toward the woman. After her escape and his subsequent repatriation, Sada walks the ruins of Tokyo while lines from the revolutionary *Yellow River Cantata* (黄河大合唱) resound

[1] Tamura Taijirō 田村泰次郎, "Nikutai ga ningen dearu" 肉体が人間である [The Flesh Is the Human], in *Tamura Taijirō senshū* 田村泰次郎選集 [Selected Works of Tamura Taijirō], vol. 5 (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentā, 2005), 188.

in his head: “Where is your home? Whither do you go?” (儞家在那裡？儞上那兒去？)[2] Like “Gate of Flesh” (肉体の門), a story published in the same year that portrays a group of prostitutes eking out a living in the bombed-out slums of postwar Tokyo,[3] “Devil of Flesh” with its bold depiction of sexuality won its author the title of the flag-bearer of what became known as postwar Japan’s “carnal literature” (肉体文学).

In its rejection of lofty ideas in favor of the body’s non-transcendental factuality, Tamura’s “carnal literature” struck a common chord with other decadent writings that foreground the nihilistic chaos of postwar Japan, such as Sakaguchi Ango’s 坂口安吾 renowned “Discourse on Decadence” (堕落論, 1946). Accused of obscenity and lack of thought, Tamura defiantly claimed, in a response essay titled “The Flesh is the Human” (1949), that the total moral bankruptcy of the Japanese intelligentsia during the war legitimizes a total disdain of so-called “thought,” especially thought hypocritically masquerading as retrospective justice. This theme of an uneasy relationship between ideas and the body, or rather a radical schism between the two, would persist in a number of postwar debates that sought to make sense of Japan’s belligerent *ancien régime* and its collapse, including the politics and literature debate (政治と文学論争), the debate over writers’ war responsibilities (文学者の戦争責任論争), and the debate over critiques of modernism (近代主義批判論争).[4] “Carnal literature,” in its recalcitrance, at once underscores an intricate set of shared sensibilities in the wake of Japan’s surrender that awaits untangling yet resists rationalization. “Thinking,” at any rate, does not appear as a viable solution to the problems it evokes.

Taking as a point of departure the perverse demand that culture “return to the flesh,” this chapter interrogates the roles of corporeal sensibility and of literature—a medium that inhabits both

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[2] Tamura Taijirō, “Nikutai no akuma” 肉体の悪魔 [The Devil of Flesh], in *Tamura Taijirō senshū* 田村泰次郎選集 [Selected Works of Tamura Taijirō], vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentā, 2005), 189-190.
[3] Tamura Taijirō, “Nikutai no mon” 肉体の門 [The Gate of Flesh], in *Tamura Taijirō senshū* 田村泰次郎選集 [Selected Works of Tamura Taijirō], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentā, 2005), 28-54.
[4] See Satō Shizuo 佐藤静夫, *Sengo bungaku ronsō shiron* 戦後文学論争史論 [History of Postwar Literary Debates] (Tokyo: Shin Nihon shuppansha, 1985).

the realm of the senses and that of ideas—in Japan's postwar democratization. My inquiry focuses on two figures who would come to define postwar Japanese intellectual history, Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男 (1914-1996) and Takeuchi Yoshimi 竹内好 (1910-1977). The prominent role the body plays in the writings of both, I contend, reveals an important thread in postwar Japanese intellectual history, namely the tension between the overwhelming embodied experience of the fact of war and the intellectual attempt, both on behalf of the nation and on a radically individual level, to make sense of that fact. Carnality plays radically different roles in Maruyama and Takeuchi's thinking. In Maruyama's ambitious attempt at a comprehensive intellectual history of Japan in the wake of the nation's surrender,[5] he faults tendency of the Japanese to trust immediate bodily feeling over abstract ideas as resulting in the people's lack of critical reflexivity and hence giving rise to fascism. Takeuchi, by contrast, consistently emphasizes the corporeal aspect of both literature and politics—from his commending of Lu Xun as, above all else, an embodied "agent of living" (生活者) to his foregrounding of "feeling" as a central faculty for political action during the Anpō protests. Despite these differences of approach, I contend, the two thinkers make the problem of the body central in the Japanese intelligentsia's quest for an ethical mode of living after the war. Furthermore, a comparison of Maruyama and Takeuchi's theses on corporeal sensibility sheds light on certain premises that condition our thinking on the act of theorizing—or thinking itself—and on modalities of processing reality such as feeling and intuiting that are often excluded from the history of ideas.

In this chapter, I first examine Maruyama's 1949 critique of "carnal literature," a category in which he includes not only sensational fiction but also such allegedly "pure literature" (純文学) as the I-novel, and his analysis of "carnal politics," a mode of political participation defined by an obsession with immediate political realities which culminates in fascism. I then trace the implications

[5] A daunting attempt that Maruyama himself acknowledges not having full confidence in. See Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男, preface to *Nihon no shisō* 日本の思想 [Japanese Thought] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1969), 2-11.

of this so-called "carnality" and contextualize Maruyama's critique by exploring its connection with his broader thesis on the contrasting "faiths in theory and in natural feeling" (理論信仰 and 実感信仰), which he ascribes to social scientists and literati respectively. In contrast to Maruyama's wariness toward carnal sensibility, I then investigate how Takeuchi Yoshimi, Maruyama's friend and lifelong interlocutor, envisions the feeling body as not an obstacle to political rationalism but rather a site of radical subjectivity and of revolutionary agency—a theme that recurs throughout his career, from his early work on Yu Dafu and Lu Xun to postwar writings on the Japanese Constitution. In particular, I will explore two ways that Takeuchi's insistence on a non-transcendental, embodied mode of political action contributes to the project he dubbed "Asia as Method." I mean that, first, Takeuchi's characterization of the individual agent as conditioned by its encounter with the other—best exemplified by his thesis on Lu Xun as a radically situated *seikatsusha* (agent of living) as opposed to a pioneer—in effect renders "Asia as Method" an ethical undertaking that radically departs from the Hegelian master-slave dialectic that marked Japan's imperial pan-Asianist ideology. Second, culminating in his defense of Japan's postwar Constitution during the Anpō protests, Takeuchi's conception of embodied political engagement as the only resistance to appropriate a superimposed political order as one's own, hence reversing the power dynamic between the Law and the individual, underlies his attempt to rethink the East-West relationship and the question of universality in "Asia as Method." After diving into the implications of "Asia as Method" as a unique ethico-political project, I briefly return to Maruyama and Takeuchi's war experiences and friendship between the two in order to reconsider the role of "feeling," understood as that which both precedes and defines the production of logically coherent and systematic thoughts, and what it means, after all, for thoughts to be retrieved from history as part of lived experience.

I. Maruyama Masao: From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics

Decadence was in the air. On June 19, 1948, Dazai Osamu 太宰治 and his lover Yamazaki Tomie's 山崎富栄 bodies were retrieved from Tamagawa Aqueduct in West Tokyo. The suicide of Dazai (1909-1948), whose *No Longer Human* (1948) is considered by Hirano Ken to be the archetypical "self-destructive type" of I-novel, sent shockwaves across Japan.[6] In a way, Dazai's death epitomized a "new negative paradigm" that addressed the pervasive nihilism in postwar Japan by laying bare individuals' true desires and stripping literature of what his fellow Buraiha (無頼派, decadent) writer Sakaguchi Ango termed the "fake morality of 'healthy' reality."[7] The intently felt impulse to re-examine the flesh in response to the powerlessness of "ideas," then, characterized both pure literature and so-called "carnal literature."

Maruyama Masao's essay "From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics," published a few months after Tamura Taijirō's daring manifesto, makes an offhand allusion to Dazai's death a year earlier. The essay takes the form of a dialogue between A and B, who convene far from the hustles of Tokyo at a quiet resort reputedly popular among writers. Maruyama's B remarks that, not long ago, one Mr. T—presumably Tamura Taijirō—made a scene here under the influence of drugs, conversing with hallucinatory figures like the recently deceased Dazai. Mr. T ended up causing so much trouble that his companion Mr. S—Sakaguchi Ango—had to take him back to Tokyo.[8] A responds that he does not understand why writers cannot produce works without tampering with

[6] Hirano Ken 平野謙, *Geijutsu to jisseikatsu* 芸術と実生活 [Art and Real Life], in *Hirano Ken zenshū* 平野謙全集 [Complete Works of Hirano Ken], vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1975), 143-163.
[7] Sakaguchi Ango 坂口安吾, "Dekadan bungaku ron" デカダン文学論 [On Decadent Literature], in *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū* 坂口安吾全集 [Complete Works of Sakaguchi Ango], vol. 14 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1990), 550-564. For a discussion of Buraiha, see Alan Wolfe, *Suicidal Narrative in Modern Japan: The Case of Dazai Osamu* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 83-84.
[8] I follow Chen Liwei in his identification of Maruyama's allusions to Tamura and Sakaguchi, both of whom contributed to "carnal literature." See Chen's translation of the essay in Maruyama Masao 丸山真男, "Cong routi wenxue dao routi zhengzhi" 从肉体文学到肉体政治 [From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics], in *Xiandai zhengzhi de sixiang yu xingdong* 現代政治的思想與行動 [Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics], trans. Chen Liwei (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu chubanshe, 2018), 422.

their physiological mechanism. In his jest about Tamura's delusional conversation with Dazai, Maruyama already establishes a counterintuitive liaison between what are commonly conceived of as "low" and "high" authors in Japan's world of letters. A dialogue then unfolds between A and B over the role of bodily sensibility in literature and in politics. For the sake of concision, I will present both characters' arguments—since for the most part the duo do not disagree with but complement each other's claims—as reflecting Maruyama's. It is, however, worth bearing in mind that the dialogue form, seldom employed by Maruyama elsewhere, likely indicates the author's uneasiness over discoursing on such grand topics.[9] Dialogue allowed him to explore ideas without endorsing them.

"From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics" presents a strong case against "carnality," understood as a national quality that predisposes the Japanese people to trust immediate bodily sensibility over mediated abstract institutions. Throughout the dialogue, Maruyama moves swiftly from this quality's supposedly less grave consequences—such as writers' indulgence in depicting sensual aspects of life rather than producing works of ideas—to its more dire outcomes, culminating in the rise of fascism, which Maruyama attributes to people's lack of critical distance from their daily experience and hence an absence of political resistance. Taking Tamura and Dazai as points of departure, Maruyama observes a parallel between the I-novel and sensational pulp fiction by highlighting the two genres' shared obsession with the sensuous domain of "facts." Attachment to the senses, he argues, inevitably limits imagination:

> But the minds of our writers cling like leeches to natural, sensual phenomena, and lack a really free flight of the imagination, so in one sense all of our literature is "carnal."
>
> 感性的=自然的所与に作家の精神がかきのようにへばりついてイ マジネーションの 真に自由な飛翔が欠けている点で、ある意味じゃみんな「肉体」文学だよ。[10]

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[9] Maruyama Masao, preface to *Nihon no shisō* [Japanese Thought], 2-3.

[10] Maruyama Masao, "Nikutai bungaku kara nikutai seiji made" 肉体文学から肉体政治まで [From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics], in *Maruyama Masao shū* 丸山眞男集 [Collected Works of Maruyama Masao] (Hereafter *MMs*), vol. 4 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995), 212; English translation by Barbara Ruch in Maruyama Masao, "From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics," trans. Barbara Ruch, in *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. Ivan Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 251. (Hereafter "Japanese"and "English.")

That is, for Maruyama, carnality goes beyond its sexual connotations and takes on a sense that describes an approach to the world where the subject's thinking is wholly determined by the physically sensible. Along these lines, Maruyama goes on to call into question the I-novel's form of "realism":

> I should have mentioned this before, but even realism is a method of creativity. It's not the faithful copying of a perceptible subject. It is precisely because the reality does not appear directly but as a 'mediated reality' depending on the positive participation of the human spirit, that we can call it fiction.
>
> リアリズムといったって一つの創作方法なんで、感性的対象をそのまま模写するのがリアリズムというわけじゃあるまい。人間精神の積極的な参与によって、現実が直接的にでなく媒介された現実として現れてこそそれは「作品」(フィクション)と言えるわけだ。[11]

In a way, then, the "independence of the spiritual" that Maruyama advocates in no way implies an abandonment of physical sensibility. On the contrary, it calls upon us to recognize the inherently fictional character of institutions—literature being one such institution, like political organizations.

Politics and literature thus coincide in their shared "fictional" nature. That is, for Maruyama, no less than literature, all political institutions—from the hypothetical "social contract" to concrete organizations such as the National Diet—are fictional constructs. Historically, in premodern societies, interpersonal relationships were more often than not direct and unmediated by institutions. Hence, according to Maruyama, Eastern philosophies such as Confucianism emphasize the cultivation of individual personality. As a result, fiction, construed broadly as that which does not exist physically, was regarded as "lies" and bore a negative ethical connotation. However, Maruyama points out, following the birth of modern institutions, interpersonal relationships went from direct to indirect, from immediate to institutionally mediated, in a process that Maruyama terms the "de-personalization of personal relationships" (人格関係の非人格化).[12] In this sense, "the modem spirit

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., Japanese, 220; English, 258. It bears noting, however, that Maruyama's binary glossing of premodern "personal" politics and modern "de-personalized" politics risks simplifying the often-layered nature of modern political engagement in Japan. See the discussion of Nakano Shigeharu's depiction of the highly interpersonal local politics embodied by the character of Benji's father in "The House in a Village" in Chapter 2.

sets greater store by falsehood (うそ, or lies) than by fact."[13] "Carnal politics," in this sense, must be dismissed as premodern and anachronistic.

While the modern and premodern political cultures are respectively designated as a culture of "fiction" and one of "facts," Maruyama's dialogue goes on to reveal a more complicated dialectical picture of the relationship between the body/fact and institutions/fiction. Indeed, for Maruyama, the respect for fictionality, dubbed the "fictional spirit" (虚構精神), is by no means unconditional. On the contrary, it always entails a constant challenging of institutions or "fictions" themselves:

> Essentially a fiction isn't some kind of absolute with its own inherent values. It's always set up for the sake of some convenience or to carry out some kind of function. This is the reason why we have to keep on re-examining institutions and organizations in the light of their objectives and functions. If we don't keep re-examining them they solidify, so to speak, and end up simply as conventions. So the man who believes in fictions is just the opposite of the one who takes a "ready-made" fiction and renders it absolute. Instead he's always trying to prevent a fiction from turning into an end in itself. He tries to keep a fiction relative, not absolute. A "falsehood" has meaning when we recognize it as a falsehood, but once we mistake it for "fact" it can't serve the function of falsehood any more. If we don't wake up to this simple phenomenon, then sooner or later falsehood turns into fact.
>
> フィクションの本質はそれが自ら先天的価値を内在した絶対的存在ではなく、どこまでもある便宜のために なんらかの機能を果たさせるために設けた相対的存在だということにある。だからもし制度なり機構なりがその仕えるべき目的に照らして 絶えず再吟味されることがなかったならば、それはいわば凝固し、習俗化してしまうわけだ。フィクションの意味を信ずる精神というのは、一旦作られたフィクションを絶対化する精神とは まさに逆で、むしろ本来フィクションの自己 目的化を絶えず防止し、これを相対化することだ。「うそ」は「うそ」たるところに意 味があるので、これを「事実」ととりちがえたら、もはや「うそ」としての機能は果たせない。よほど不断に目覚めていないといつか「うそ」は「事実」に成りすましちゃうんだ。[14]

Thus, "fictional spirit"—the opposite of "carnal politics"—designates not a hierarchy between facts and fiction but rather a dynamic relationship between the two. In other words, the "fictional spirit" necessitates a constant reflection, while recognizing fictional institutions, of their very fictionality. By

[13] Maruyama Masao, "From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics," Japanese, 216; English, 254.
[14] Ibid., Japanese, 220; English, 259.

contrast, "carnal literature" and "carnal politics," taking for granted fictional institutions and the society that contain them, conceive of them as part of "nature" and hence in turn threatens the very "fictional spirit" that Maruyama has articulated.

"From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics" levels a critique against Japan's fascist history. In line with the I-novel which, foregrounding sincerity and factuality, seeks to contain literature/fiction within the domain of the "real," the Japanese people, Maruyama contends, tend to privilege immediate connections over abstract institutions as their standard of action. The most prominent examples of this immediacy were the frequent and shocking political assassinations during the turbulent 1930s—a pattern of carnal intervention in politics that blocked institutional efforts of reform. Maruyama writes:

> A: Well then, are you saying that fascism was born when modem society had come to a dead end, and when people no longer believed in the significance of a fiction? In other words, that it's a child of the times?
> B: Yes, but it's a deformed child. It was an outgrowth of the structural specialization of modern society, to be sure. Yet it tried to overcome the difficulties by a return to "immediate nature"—by a revival of the so-called principle of blood and soil.
>
> A：そうするとファシズムという奴は近代社会が行き詰まって、人々が近代的なフィクションの意味を信じられなくなったような時代の子というわけか。
> B：そうだ。しかも鬼子だよ。つまり近代社会の組織的分化から生じた病理現象を、いわば文化以前の直接的自然性への復帰——血と土——によって克服しようとしたんだ。[15]

For Maruyama, in the same way that Nazism fabricates a sense of immediate connection between the German people and the state as a precultural symbol, Japan's Emperor System, insofar as it staged its presuppositions as a carnal sensibility of immediacy, ultimately brought catastrophic results to the land that nurtured it. Toward the end of his essay, Maruyama calls for a cleaning up (始末) of carnal literature and carnal politics. Only then will democracy and a "nation of culture" (文化国家) be possible.

[15] Ibid., Japanese, 223; English, 263.

By now it should become clear that Maruyama's conception of "carnality" well exceeds the specific phenomenon of postwar literary decadence and comes to name a political culture that fails to foster a healthy relationship between individual citizens and the body politic. To Tamura Taijirō's claim that the Japanese can now only "trust their own flesh" after the total bankruptcy of "thought" under fascism, Maruyama responds by postulating that the Japanese never trusted anything else but the flesh. Indeed, for Maruyama, this "carnal" approach to the catastrophic reality of postwar society only reproduces an ideology that always already governed the Japanese political sensibility. Nevertheless, both Tamura's decadent manifesto and Maruyama's critique of "carnality" confirm the pivotal status of the body in postwar literature and politics. In both cases, immediate corporeal sensibility is construed as something that evades yet conditions political consciousness: For Tamura, sensibility amounts to the only resort to "truth" because of its supposedly pre-ideological nature; For Maruyama, by contrast, it forms the basis of a "carnal politics" that modern democracy must overcome. Understood as such, one can begin to appreciate why seemingly mundane, quotidian, and "pre-political" notions associated with the flesh such as feeling and sensing came to take on a significance of their own in postwar Japan.

Maruyama was not alone among postwar intellectuals in problematizing corporeal sensibility and the intellectuals' complicity in the war. In the aftermath of Japan's surrender, in line with the ethos of "general penitence" (一億総懺悔, or "repentance by all one hundred million"), intellectuals and writers immediately began reflecting on their own responsibilities during the war. The general consensus was that, apart from the few martyrs including Kobayashi Takiji,[16] there had been no significant unified force of resistance among the Japanese intellectuals during the war.[17] How to grapple with this moral bankruptcy was a central theme of postwar discourses and was seen as a

[16] See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
[17] See Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Overcoming Modernity," in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, ed. and trans. Richard Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 103-148.

prerequisite for a new Japan. In 1956, Yoshimoto Takaaki published *Literati's War Responsibilities* (文学者の戦争責任), effectively questioning the government's claim from that same year that, in light of the booming Japanese economy, "the postwar era is over" (もはや戦後ではない).[18] Many reflections appeared, following the lines of wartime private experience and seeking to retrieve historical lessons from personal failures. In 1957, philosopher and sociologist Gotō Hiroyuki published *The Collapsed Generation: A Statement of the Postwar Cohort* (『陥没の世代：戦後派の自己主張』). For Gotō, in the absence of any "feeling of resistance during the war" (戦中の抵抗感覚), the postwar generation had access only to their "own carnal sensibilities" (自己の肉体感覚).[19] In a similar way to Tamura's pronouncement of nihilism, then, the attention to "natural feeling" (or perhaps "existential feeling") among postwar intellectuals arose from an attempt to overcome the nihilism brought about by the war.[20] In light of this turn toward "natural feeling," Maruyama expanded on his notion of "carnality" in *Japanese Thought* (日本の思想), a volume published in 1957 as part of the Iwanami Lecture Series that aimed to provide a holistic and accessible account of Japanese intellectual history.[21] A pioneer in an untrodden field, Maruyama delved into such loaded issues as the poverty of research on Japanese intellectual history, what he saw as the "structureless" nature of Japanese thought, the fascist "*kokutai*" ideology, and the Emperor System's implications for the moral subject, before concluding the book by tracing an antagonism between two modes of thinking, one characterized by a "faith in natural feeling" (実感信仰) and the other by a "faith in theory" (理論信仰). The antagonism between "theory" and "natural feeling" arose from a schism between radical Marxists and the more conventional sect of the literati in the Japanese Proletarian Writers Federation (日本プロレタリア作家

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[18] See Yoshimoto Takaaki 吉本隆明, *Bungakusha no sensō sekinin* 文学者の戦争責任 [Literati's War Responsibilities] (Tokyo: Awaji shobō, 1956).
[19] See Gotō Hiroyuki 後藤宏行, *Kanbotsu no sedai: sengoha no jiko shuchō* 陥没の世代：戦後派の自己主張 [The Fallen Generation: The Postwar Generation's Self-Assertion] (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1957).
[20] See Yokoo Natsuori 横尾夏織, "'Jikkan' ronsō to *Shisō no kagaku*" 「実感」論争と『思想の科学』 [The "Natural Feeling" Debate and *The Science of Thought*], *Shagakuken ronshū* 社学研論集 [The Waseda Journal of Social Sciences] 16 (2010): 148-163.
[21] For the nature of his assignment, see Maruyama, preface to *Nihon no shisō*, 2-3.

同盟) during the 1930s. Whereas the former sought to solidify the dialectical-materialist method of artistic creation (i.e., socialist realism) as the sole legitimate theory of cultural production, several writers refused to base art on abstract theories and instead contended that literature must be grounded in writers' natural feeling.[22]

Extending the tension between these two tendencies beyond their original context of the 1930s, Maruyama attributes the so-called "faith in natural feeling" to the conventional literati in general. In line with his characterization of "carnal literature," Maruyama postulates that the Japanese literary tradition is significantly conditioned by the nature of the Japanese language, which boasts a rich vocabulary for nuanced feelings but is deficient in expressions for logical and "universal" concepts. Thus, insofar as Japanese literature excels in capturing sensual subtleties of "*shinjō*" (心情 or sentiments), it falls short in producing ideas. Furthermore, because this ideology of "natural feeling" is accompanied by the moral imperative of sincerity and honesty (as in the case of the I-novel), Japanese literature sees any form of sociopolitical thinking as "impure." In contrast to this literary emphasis on "natural feeling," Japanese social sciences, best exemplified by Marxism,[23] are grounded on a faith in theory. Nevertheless, since Japan has traditionally imported institutions (i.e., social abstractions, or "fictions") as finished products rather than creating them by itself, this "faith in theory" is isomorphic to the fetishization of institutions, which Maruyama has previously described as a hallmark of Japan's "carnal politics."

Indeed, for Maruyama, the literary circle's "faith in natural feeling" and social scientists' "faith in theory," while seemingly contradicting each other, ended up becoming two sides of the

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[22] Kamei Hideo, "Theories of Language in the Academic Field of Philosophy: Japan in the 1970s," trans. Jennifer Cullen, in *The Linguistic Turn in Contemporary Japanese Literary Studies: Politics, Language, Textuality*, ed. Michael Bourdaghs (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 147.

[23] According to Maruyama, the import of Marxism played a definitive role in the shaping of modern Japanese social sciences, not only because it introduced for the first time a systematic framework of social analysis that breaks down the totality of social realities into rigorous disciplines like politics, law, and economics, but also because the radicality of Marxism revealed for the first time that all sciences were premised on certain sets of value-laden assumptions. See Maruyama, *Nihon no shisō*, 55-57.

same coin. Maruyama argues in "From Carnal Literature to Carnal Politics" that "fictional spirit" denotes not an enshrining of "fictions" (such as political institutions) but precisely a dynamic process where the subject acknowledges them as constructs rather than part of the given (or "nature"). In the same way, then, both the literary circle's "faith in natural feeling" and social scientists' "faith in theory" eventually translate into a reification of political institutions as absolutes: In the former's case, "natural feeling," like what Maruyama terms "carnal sensibility" in his earlier work, are incapable of creating a critical distance between the subject and her environment and hence would only lead one to accept the political realities as part of "nature"; In the latter's case, once the universality of "theory" is taken for granted, "theory" as a self-sufficient autonomous end product would only deprive the subject of her agency of critique and change. As Sun Ge points out, in claiming that these two modes of thinking in effect complement each other (as the "inside-outside" 表裏 to one another), Maruyama transcends a widely accepted set of binaries, namely, those between literature and science, between the world of letters and radical Marxists, and between sentimentalism and rationalism.[24] Harking back to Maruyama's thesis on carnality, then, one can now understand that it does not stand opposite to "thought" but rather reveals a more intricate paradox regarding Japanese political subjectivity. For Maruyama, carnality stifles the subject's agency of political resistance insofar as it cancels the distance with reality and leaves no room for critical reflexivity. However, Maruyama remains unable to provide a solution to the paradox he raises, since the autonomy of theory—the purported antipode of carnal sensibility—upheld by Japanese Marxists only reproduces the same stalemate by absolutizing abstract institutions. It is here that one must turn to Maruyama's friend Takeuchi Yoshimi, another leading thinker for whom carnality or embodied political subjectivity occupies an equally, if not more, significant place.

[24] Sun Ge 孙歌, *Wenxue de weizhi* 文学的位置 [The Position of Literature] (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2009), 85-92.

II. Takeuchi Yoshimi: Embodied Subjectivity and the Question of "Method"

Back in the days when manuscripts had to be picked up in person, an editor might take the train from central Tokyo, get off at Nishi-Ogikubo Station near Kichijōji, and walk to visit three scholars in a row, as all of them conveniently lived along the same street. They were Ishimoda Shō, a historian of ancient Japan; Maruyama Masao, a scholar of modern Japanese intellectual history; and Takeuchi Yoshimi, known for his work on the Overcoming Modernity Symposium. The editor would joke to Maruyama: "I'd visit Mr. Ishimoda first, followed by Mr. Maruyama, then Mr. Takeuchi. This way, I'd pass from the premodern to the modern and eventually the ultra-modern!"[25]

Born four years apart and having both served in the military during the war, Maruyama Masao (1914-1996) and Takeuchi Yoshimi (1910-1977) belonged to the same generation of Japanese intellectuals who came of age during Shōwa's turbulent first two decades. In the early 1950s, the two were part of a group of scholars who moved to Kichijōji, a Western suburb of Tokyo, where they became intimate friends and lifelong interlocutors. Maruyama consistently commends Takeuchi both as an intellectual and as an individual human being. In an interview on Takeuchi in 1966, Maruyama specifically emphasizes Takeuchi's tendency to "individualize" (個性化) and "carnalize" (肉体化) ideas.[26] While the significance of Takeuchi's influence on Maruyama's work is widely documented,[27] I will focus specifically on Maruyama's commendation of Takeuchi as an embodied thinker as well

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[25] Maruyama Masao, "Kichijōji de no tsukiai" 吉祥寺での付き合い [Friendships in Kichijōji], in *MMs*, vol. 15, 6.

[26] Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男, "Hao-san nitsuite no danwa" 好さんについての談話 [Conversation on Mr. Hao (Takeuchi Yoshimi)], in *MMs*, vol. 9, 339.

[27] For a discussion of the relationship between Maruyama Masao and Takeuchi Yoshimi, see Tsurumi Shunsuke 鶴見俊輔, "Shinpo o utagau hōhō: Ichii Saburō e no Takeuchi Yoshimi no eikyō o chūshin ni" 進歩を疑う方法：市井三郎への竹内好の影響を中心に [How to Doubt Progress: Focusing on the Influence of Takeuchi Yoshimi on Ichii Saburō], in *Mukon no nashonnarizumu o koete: Takeuchi Yoshimi o saikō suru* 無根のナショナリズムを超えて：竹内好を再考する [Beyond Rootless Nationalism: Reconsidering Takeuchi Yoshimi], eds. Tsurumi Shunsuke 鶴見俊輔 and Kagami Mitsuyuki 加々美光行 (Tokyo: Nihon hyōronsha, 2007), 48-50. Tsurumi notes that despite Maruyama (arguably) being a much more prominent figure in the postwar Japanese intelligentsia, the two's relationship was somewhat reverse: While Maruyama constantly refers to Takeuchi in his writings, Takeuchi seldom mentions Maruyama.

as what the former calls the latter's rich "sensibility for the other" (他者感覚).[28] In so doing, I aim to reveal how Takeuchi adopts a radically different approach to the question of political resistance and how this approach, in contrast to Maruyama's critique of "carnal politics," is precisely premised on corporeal sensibility. Whereas Maruyama and Takeuchi never explicitly engaged in a debate over the issue of "carnality," setting the two in dialogue not only allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the role of the body in postwar discourses on political subjectivity, democracy, and war responsibilities, but also invites a rethinking of the relationship between politics and literature—a theme pivotal to both thinkers.

Most famous for his studies of the Chinese writer Lu Xun, Takeuchi Yoshimi also spent his entire life engaging with the contemporary political conditions of his native Japan especially during the postwar era. A prolific writer, Takeuchi was active for some five decades and covered a vast range of topics, from his prewar writings on Chinese literature and early endeavor to establish a field of Chinese literary studies independent from both the highly Japanified Sinology (漢学) and the purportedly scientific China/Shina studies (支那学) to postwar reflections on Japanese fascism and the question of national independence during the Anpō protests. While the sheer range of writings have long garnered attention in their own right, recent scholarship has highlighted some of the recurring themes throughout Takeuchi's writings.[29] In a similar vein, this chapter aims to foreground the significance of the body and embodied subjectivity as a critical thread that connects different moments in Takeuchi's life, all the way from his earliest interest in Yu Dafu's "I-novels" as an undergraduate at Tokyo Imperial University to his appraisal of Lu Xun during the war and then to his activism against the rightwing attempt to revise the Peace Constitution.

[28] Maruyama Masao, "Hao-san to no tsukiai" 好さんとのつきあい [My Friendship with Mr. Hao (Takeuchi Yoshimi)], in *MMs*, vol. 10, 358.
[29] See for example Chapters 4 and 5 of Viren Murthy, *Pan-Asianism and the Legacy of the Chinese Revolution* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2023), 110-191. See also Sun Ge, *Zhunei Hao de beilun* 竹内好的悖论 [The Paradox of Takeuchi Yoshimi] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2005).

It bears noting, however, that these "concepts" operate on a different level in Takeuchi's writing than in Maruyama's. The difficulty of studying Takeuchi arises in part from his tendency—often writing more as an essayist than as a scholar—to employ quotidian words in conceptually rich ways without elaborating on them (in a manner reminiscent of Heidegger and Benjamin): This in turn has to do with Takeuchi's convoluted relationship with the academic framework of knowledge production. As evident from his critique of Japanese "Shinagaku" (China Studies) scholars for producing "dead scholarship" by prioritizing so-called scientific rigor,[30] Takeuchi consistently refuses the conventional positivitst mode of scholarship that casts as a duo the knowing subject and the object of knowledge.[31] (Hence Takeuchi's peculiar use of "method" as not an intellectual instrument but as the "process of the subject's self-formation."[32]) As a result, the task is more daunting here than tracing a similar "motif" in Maruyama's writing, since much of Takeuchi's conception of so-called "carnality" is in the vocabulary itself. Unlike Maruyama who handles the problematic of corporeal sensibility from a studied distance, Takeuchi often freely employs such body-related phrases as the "agent of living" (生活者), "feeling" (感覚), and "sentiments" (心情) without bothering to provide meticulous definitions.[33] In a way, it amounts to a style of thinking on Takeuchi's part and, as such, these notions have a quality of being pre-conceptual or only quasi-conceptual. That said, they play a definitive role in shaping Takeuchi's thinking.

Along these lines, the chapter locates Takeuchi's thinking on the body and embodied subjectivity in three key moments: 1932-33, when a young Takeuchi completed his undergraduate

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[30] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Asia as Method," in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 151. See also Calichman's discussion of Takeuchi's debate with Shinagaku scholars in Chapter 1 of Richard Calichman, *Takeuchi Yoshimi: Displacing the West* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2004), 9-85.
[31] See Calichman, *Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 2-9.
[32] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Asia as Method," in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 165.
[33] A characteristic widely recognized among scholars of Takeuchi. See Sun Ge 孙歌, "Zai ling he yibai zhijian" 在零和一百之間 [Between Zero and One Hundred], in *Jindai de chaoke* 近代的超克 [Overcoming Modernity], by Takeuchi Yoshimi, trans. Sun Ge (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2005), 28.

thesis on the Chinese writer Yu Dafu at Tokyo Imperial University after a formative year in Beijing as an international student; 1944, when Takeuchi published his seminal work *Lu Xun* (*Ro Jin*), intended as a posthumous piece before he was drafted to fight on the Chinese frontlines; and 1960, the year when he delivered a lecture series on "Asia as Method" and a speech titled "Our Constitutional Feeling" at the height of the Anpō protest. Through tracing the recurrent theme of embodied political action as the subject's constant self-renewal, I argue that carnality/corporeality, for Takeuchi, is directly linked to the larger project of "Asia as Method" and the question of the particular/universal divide underlying it. To take Asia as method, for Takeuchi, is to reconceptualize criticism as an ethical undertaking or a mode of relational thinking as elsewhere proposed by Édouard Glissant in *Poetics of Relation*.[34]

"Asia as Method" was a series of two lectures that Takeuchi delivered at the behest of International Christian University's Committee on Asian Studies in January 1960, right in the middle of the Anpō protests that sought to free Japan from its military alliance with the United States and to secure its *de facto* independence after the end of the U.S. occupation.[35] A vocal critic of postwar Japan's lack of self-determination, Takeuchi had previously characterized Japan's historical efforts to Westernize/modernize itself while turning its back on Asia as part of its "honor student culture" (優等生文化) and Japan's impressive modernization project as a passive acceptance of a dualist power structure that constantly reproduces dominance and subordination.[36] Takeuchi further contrasts it with China's modernization. Often seen as a backward and belated counterpart to that of Japan, for him it represents an alternative mode of struggle that transcends the master-slave binary through constant resistance. Along these lines, "Asia as Method" further calls into question Japan's position

[34] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997).
[35] For a history of the Anpō protests, see George R. Packard, *Protest in Tokyo: The Security Treaty Crisis of 1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), and Nick Kapur, *Japan at the Crossroads: Conflict and Compromise after Anpo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
[36] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "What Is Modernity?" in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 67-70.

in the Cold War geopolitical structure: its complicity in the Korean war as well as its failure to comprehensively settle war crimes by signing peace treaties with Taiwan only and not the People's Republic of China, whereby it was allowed to escape a comprehensive settlement of its war crimes. However, instead of a systematic set of methodological propositions, Takeuchi's advocacy for "Asia as Method" toward the end of the essay foregrounds method as "the subject's self-formation" while admitting that a clear definition is impossible at the point.[37]

Over the past decade or so, "Asia as Method" has become a hot topic in Asian studies and beyond, largely thanks to Chen Kuan-Hsing's 2011 monograph, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*. Borrowing the term from Takeuchi Yoshimi, Chen advocates an epistemic shift from the East/West binary to an "Asian Studies in Asia" approach that takes Asia as an imaginary anchoring point and a frame of mutual referentiality.[38] Along these lines, scholars have tried to disturb the hegemonic hierarchy that assigns the West as the origin of "theory" and Asia as the site of experience. For example, the journal *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese Literature* published a special issue edited by Carlos Rojas titled "Method as Method" in 2019. "This attention to method," Rojas writes in the introduction, "treats analysis as a type of praxis that produces knowledge through a dialectical engagement with its object rather than assuming that knowledge is either intrinsic to the object itself or is generated solely by the corresponding theoretical framework."[39] However, most of these inquiries tend to equate method with methodology—namely, a system of procedures whereby the subject describes and analyzes its object. Takeuchi's idiosyncratic definition of method as "the process of the subject's self-formation" nevertheless suggests something more complicated and implicitly distinguishes method from methodology which designates both the subject and the object as givens. In fact, it is precisely this version of academic knowledge made possible through

[37] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Asia as Method," in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 165.
[38] Chen Kuan-Hsing, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
[39] Carlos Rojas, "Method as Method," *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese Literature* 16, no. 2 (2019): 212.

objectification that Takeuchi often associates with death and violence. So other than what is Asia, arguably more important is the question: what is method, exactly?

Rather than taking for granted the notion of method understood in scholarly terms as analytical frameworks, one must first examine what precisely Takeuchi refers to by "the subject's self-formation." The fact that "Asia as Method" is not (only) an academic inquiry but also a deeply personal document often goes unnoticed. Indeed, Takeuchi emphatically distances himself from academia and its way of thinking at the very beginning:

> I initially declined the invitation to speak here today on the grounds that I was unsuitable, for I am not someone who can discuss things systematically.
>
> 私は体系的なお話ができないたちなので、適任でないからといってお断りしたのですが…[40]

Indeed, much of the essay consists of Takeuchi's account of his own journey and how he came to Asia as a problematic in its own right. This part, often disregarded by scholars with an eye after "methodology" as tangential or irrelevant, I contend, contains the key to Takeuchi's approach.

Takeuchi recalls how he entered Tokyo Imperial University, randomly choosing to study Chinese since he hadn't scored high enough for French or German, and did not discover his passion for Chinese literature until he traveled to Beijing as an international student in 1932. Significantly, the revelations Takeuchi experienced in Beijing came not from intellectual exchanges with Chinese scholars but from encounters with vibrant quotidian life. The experience was emotional before it was intellectual:

> Upon arriving there, however, I suddenly felt as if I had discovered the dream or vision that had all this time been lying dormant inside me, a longing within my heart.
>
> 北京にいったとたんに、何といいますか、自分の心の中にあった憧れといいますか、潜在していた自分の夢にぶつかった気がしたのであります。[41]

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[40] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Hōhō toshite no Ajia" 方法としてのアジア [Asia as Method], in *Takeuchi Yoshimi zenshū* 竹内好全集 [Complete Works of Takeuchi Yoshimi] (Hereafter *TYz*), vol. 5 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1981), 90. English translation in "Asia as Method," in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 165. (Hereafter "Japanese" and "English.")
[41] Ibid., Japanese, 92; English, 150.

A reflection ensues on the systematic mode of knowledge acquisition that he had previously been accustomed to in Japan. Reflecting on how different the experience would have been if it had been in Europe, where a Japanese traveler would supposedly "feel inferior," Takeuchi asks:

> Why then didn't we know that there are people in China like ourselves? When we study Asian history or geography at school, no one teaches that there are actually people there—or at least that is how I remember it.
>
> ところが中国には、同じような人間がいるということがどうしてわからないか。これは学校で歴史を習う、あるいはアジアの地理を習う時に、そこに人間がいるということを教えない。私の記憶ではたしかにそうだったのです。[42]

For Takeuchi, the pursuit of this "knowledge" is precisely what the institutionalized Japanese sinology (*kangaku* 漢学) or China studies (*Shinagaku* 支那学) could not afford. Indeed, he proceeds to contrast this living knowledge with the kind of "dead scholarship" that he is distancing himself from. Insofar as such scholarship only reifies "gaps and errors in knowledge of China on the part of the Japanese," writes Takeuchi, it was necessary to change "the very way we studied China by exploring the hearts of those actually living people who were our neighbors" (そういう死んだ学問をやるのでなく、現に生きている隣りの人の心を探ることを通して、自分たちの学問そのものを変えてゆく).[43] Rather than assuming an exterior, academically rigorous point of view, it is in the gap between the other and a self that is present and embodied that Takeuchi positions his mode of learning or un-learning.

A year later, upon his return to Tokyo, Takeuchi would obtain his undergraduate degree in Chinese literature with a thesis on Yu Dafu 郁達夫 (1896-1945), submitted in December 1933. In retrospect, this was an intriguing and somewhat counterintuitive choice, considering Takeuchi's later, more widely known interest in Lu Xun. Whereas both Lu Xun and Yu Dafu are writers of leftist persuasion (although neither dwelled comfortably within that group), their difference could

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., Japanese, 94; English, 151.

not be more extreme: In contrast to Lu Xun's public image as a combatant thoroughly devoted to China's political awakening, Yu Dafu's writings are much more introspective, psychological, and sensuous, his relationship with leftwing politics more questioned due to his decadent style.[44] Takeuchi's thesis provides a broad overview of Yu Dafu's literary career up to that point, with a focus on his fine-tuned depiction of such private experiences as sexual frustration, sympathy with the poor, and the sense of loss at the crossroads of China's uncertain political futures.

Characterizing Yu Dafu as a "troubled poet" (苦悶の詩人), a juvenile Takeuchi analyzes the writer's struggles with three sources of anguish, namely being human, his society, and his time (人間苦・社会苦・時代苦), alongside his unique sentimentalist style influenced by Japanese writers of I-novels such as Tayama Katai and Satō Haruo.[45] In a revised version published in 1937, Takeuchi further commends Yu Dafu for his acute literary sensibility and the non-transcendental aspect of his writings:

> All of his works are confessions of his own life and feelings. He is the only true I-novelist (or rather the only Japanese-style writer) in [Chinese] New Literature. What motivated him was the belief that literature is the realization of the self, and that literature cannot transcend experience. He has a kind of genius thought that descends from Rousseau and [Max] Stirner.
>
> 彼の作品はすべて自己の生活、感情の告白を出でない。新文学中ただ一人の正しい私小説(むしろ日本的な)作家である。彼を動かしたものは、文学は自我の実現であるという信念、また、文学は経験を超え得ぬという信念である。ルソオ及びスチルネルに流をくむ一種の天才思想をもつ。[46]

Critics have regarded Takeuchi's early interest in the I-novel before his encounter with Lu Xun as an "old-fashioned" (古風) taste that must be distinguished from his later, more revolutionary turn

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[44] For a discussion of Yu Dafu and his complex legacies across the Sinophone world and beyond, see Clara Iwasaki, *Rethinking the Modern Chinese Canon: Refractions across the Pacific* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2020), 67-110.
[45] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Iku Tatsufu kenkyū (Tokyō Teikoku Daigaku Shina bungakuka sotsugyō ronbun)" 郁達夫研究（東京帝国大学支那文学科卒業論文） [A Study of Yu Dafu (Graduation Thesis, Department of Chinese Literature, Tokyo Imperial University)], in *TYz*, vol. 17, 74-162.
[46] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Iku Tatsufu oboegaki" 郁達夫覚書 [Memorandum on Yu Dafu], in *TYz*, vol. 14, 59.

toward a literature of social concerns such as Lu Xun embodies.[47] While Takeuchi was clearly influenced by the increasing solidification of the I-novel's mainstream status in the *bundan* (literary establishment), it would nevertheless be premature to conclude that Takeuchi merely unreflexively embraced the thriving mainstream I-novel discourses of the time.[48] Indeed, Takeuchi's enthusiastic endorsement of the I-novel distinguishes him from Kobayashi Hideo's critique of that literary form as self-indulgent and portraying the individual as unsocialized and pre-political—a claim that Maruyama would go on to develop and complicate in his thesis on "carnal literature."[49] However, Takeuchi's appraisal of Yu Dafu's acute capturing of individual sensibility aligns well with his vow to explore "the hearts of those actually living people" of China. Unlike Kobayashi who condemns the I-novel for its purported apoliticality, then, Takeuchi in effect inverses the hierarchy between politics and literature by foregrounding the embodied experience of concrete individuals which defies reduction to the form of academic, "dead" knowledge.

This contrast between the irreducible, corporeal fact of living and the death that is epistemological abstraction would become a definitive theme recurring throughout Takeuchi's later writings—most notably in his characterization in his first monograph, *Ro Jin* (*Lu Xun*, 1944) of Lu Xun as, more than anything else, a "tenacious *seikatsusha* (agent of living)" (一個の強靭な生活者).[50] Takeuchi's interest in Lu Xun, it has been widely acknowledged, grew out of his sense of unease regarding the direction that the Japanese intelligentsia had taken at the time.[51] In collusion with the

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47 Takahashi Kazumi 高橋和巳, "Jiritsu no seishin: Takeuchi Yoshimi ni okeru Rojin seishin" 自立の精神—竹内好における魯迅精神 [The Spirit of Independence: The Spirit of Lu Xun in Takeuchi Yoshimi], in *Takahashi Kazumi sakuhinshū* 高橋和巳作品集 [Collected Works of Takahashi Kazumi], vol. 8 (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1970), 190.
48 For a detailed history of how the Japanese literary establishment retrospectively constructed and solidified the I-novel as a genre during the 1920s and 1930s, see Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).
49 See Kobayashi Hideo, "Discourse on Fiction of the Self," in *Literature of the Lost Home: Kobayashi Hideo—Literary Criticism 1924-1939,* trans. Paul Anderer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 67-93.
50 Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Ro Jin* 魯迅 [Lu Xun], in *TYz*, vol. 1, 10.
51 Sun Ge, for example, argues convincingly that Takeuchi's debate with the Shinagaku scholars prepared him for his fateful encounter with Lu Xun. See Sun Ge, *Zhunei Hao de beilun* [The Paradox of Takeuchi Yoshimi], 16-32.

rise of Japan's militarism, nationalist intellectuals gradually gathered around a Hegelian notion of history that justified Japan's expansion in Asia as part of a civilizational enterprise to overturn the East-West power dynamic—an ideology that culminated in the "Overcoming Modernity" (近代の超克) symposium in 1942. Sympathizing with Lu Xun's uncompromising stance towards Western hegemony, Takeuchi identified Japan's effort to overturn the Hegelian master-slave dialectic by joining the ranks of great powers as nothing more than the slave's desire to assume the identity of the master, a response based on a passive acceptance of the superimposed unequal terms.[52] It is in this context that Takeuchi's reading of Lu Xun must be understood.

Refusing to reduce Lu Xun to either a nationalist writer or a pioneer of enlightenment, he chooses to approach the Chinese writer as a *seikatsusha*, which in turn makes him an ultimate "man of literature" (文学者), a term that he carefully distinguishes from the more ordinary "writer" (作家).[53] This characterization is part and parcel of Takeuchi's pursuit of an alternative form of subjectivity that establishes and renews itself through daily struggles with the world that surrounds it and that resists integration into subjective positions readily determined by abstract principles. Hence Takeuchi's insistence that "he (Lu Xun) is no prophet":

> It would be unthinkable for a person to survive this entire episode of history as a detached literary figure. […] If Lu Xun were a prophet, such a feat would have been impossible. He is no prophet. He never once indicated a direction for a new era. […] This is Lu Xun's method: He neither retreats nor follows. First, he puts himself in front of the new era, bathes himself through "struggle" (*zhengzha*), and then once again retrieves the bathed self from within. This attitude gives the impression of a tenacious agent of living. Such a tenacious agent of living as Lu Xun is probably nowhere to be found in Japan.
>
> 一個の独立した文学者としてその全史を生き抜くことは、普通には考えられぬことである。…魯迅がもし先覚者であったとしたら、それは不可能のはずである。彼は先覚者ではない。彼は一度も、新時代に対して方向を示さなかった。…魯迅のやり方は、こうである。彼は、

[52] Takeuchi writes: "The slave refuses to recognize the fact that he is a slave. He is a true slave when he thinks that he is not a slave. And he reveals the full extent of his slavishness when he becomes a master, for at that time he subjectively views himself as no longer a slave." Takeuchi Yoshimi, "What Is Modernity?" in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 72.

[53] For a discussion on the tension between *bungakusha* and *seikatsusha*, see Chapter 1 of this dissertation on Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's debate with Tanizaki Jun'ichirō.

退きもしないし、追従もしない。まず自己を新時代に対決せしめ、「掙扎」によって自己を洗い、洗われた自己を再びその中から引出すのである。この態度は、一個の強靭な生活者の印象を与える。魯迅ほど強靭な生活者は、恐らく日本では求められぬかもしれぬ。[54]

For it is precisely the *seikatsusha*'s radical situatedness, as one without access to a panoramic view of his time, that renders possible a line of escape from the Hegelian logic. Instead of a teleological historical scheme where the subject overcomes the other and culminates in the transcendental absolute, Takeuchi repeatedly stresses a thoroughly embodied form of struggle (*zhengzha* 掙扎) as Lu Xun's mode of being. As Takeuchi notes, the Chinese word "*zhengzha*" has no equivalent in Japanese and can only be rendered as "resistance" (*teikō* 抵抗).[55] As Sun Ge points out, by introducing the Chinese word "*zhengzha*" into Japanese, Takeuchi in effect redefines the very notion of "resistance" (*teikō*): Whereas the *teikō* usually denotes an outward engagement with the other where the subject itself remains intact—remaining "intact" being rather precisely the purpose—Takeuchi in effect re-envisions "resistance" as an inward movement where the subject reshapes itself through negation.[56] While the Hegelian language is still recognizable, Takeuchi's conception of subjectivity circumvents the teleological logic and foregrounds instead the subject's constant self-renewal through quotidian practice. This is also in line with his diagnosis of the difference between "*kaishin*" (回心, lit.: "turn of heart")—a term that he uses to characterize Lu Xun's literary awakening—and "*tenkō*" (転向, political conversion, lit.: "turn of direction"),[57] both translatable as "conversion."[58] For Takeuchi, "*tenkō*" results from an absence of subjectivity, whereas "*kaishin*" characterizes the dynamic process

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[54] Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Ro Jin*, in *TYz*, vol. 1, 10-11.

[55] Takeuchi writes: "The Chinese word 'chêng-cha' [zhengzha] means to endure, to bear, to struggle, etc. I think it is important as a clue to understanding the spirit of Lu Xun, so I often quote it in the original. If I were forced to translate it into Japanese, the closest word would be 'resistance' in today's usage." Ibid., 155.

[56] Sun Ge, *Zhunei Hao de beilun* [The Paradox of Takeuchi Yoshimi], 58-59.

[57] See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for an in-depth discussion of *tenkō*, or political conversions often under coercion of leftist intellectuals during the 1930s.

[58] The translation of "*kaishin*" 回心 is further complicated by the fact that, in Japanese, the kanji compound can have both Buddhist and Christian connotations, with nuanced but significant differences: While the Buddhist notion, usually read "*eshin*," means rectifying one's mind to follow the Buddha's correct way, the Christian notion denotes the recognition of one's sins and return to the faith of God. For a discussion on the difficulty of translating "*kaishin*," see Jon Eugene von Kowallis, "Thoughts after Translating Takeuchi Yoshimi's *Ro Jin* 魯迅 (*Lu Xun*)," *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies* 10, no. 3 (2023): 198-199.

of the subject's self-formation—a crucial distinction that he meticulously outlines in "What Is Modernity" (1948).[59]

The body is thus pivotal because it is both the locus of this struggle-resistance and a testament to the irreducibility of the biological fact of living. In his preface to *Lu Xun*, Takeuchi enthusiastically endorses Li Changzhi's view in his 1936 study of the writer that Lu Xun's thinking is fundamentally underpinned by the idea that "man must live":

> In a part of his long review *Critique of Lu Xun*, Li Changzhi points out that many of Lu Xun's works deal with death. Li uses this fact as evidence to argue that Lu Xun was not a [professionalized] thinker and that his thought ultimately stems from the single biological idea that "man must live." I find Li Changzhi's theory brilliant. I agree with his opinion that the basis of Lu Xun as a thinker was the rudimentary sentiment that "people must live."
>
> 李長之は、その長編の評論『魯迅批判』の一部で、魯迅の作品に死を扱ったものの多いことを指摘し、それを、魯迅の思想家でなかったこと、魯迅の思想は根本において「人は生きねばならぬ」という生物学的な一個の観念を出でなかったことの傍証に利用している。私は、李長之の説を卓見であると思う。思想家としての魯迅の根底を「人は生きねばならぬ」という素樸な心情の上に置いた李長之の意見に、私は賛成である。[60]

Nevertheless, Takeuchi soon goes on to disagree with Li's Darwinist interpretation of this "rudimentary sentiment":

> Li Changzhi hastens to equate it with evolutionary thought, but I think that underlying Lu Xun's biological Naturalistic philosophy is something even more rudimentary, unsophisticated, and instinctive. Man must live. Lu Xun did not come up with it as a concept. He lived it as a man of literature and as a martyr.
>
> それを李長之は直ちに進化論的思想と同一視しているが、私は、魯迅の生物学的自然主義哲学の底に、さらに素樸な荒々しい本能的なものを考える。人は生きねばならぬ。魯迅はそれを概念として考えたのではない。文学者として、殉教者的に生きたのである。[61]

Here Takeuchi draws a line between the notion that "man must live" as a biological concept and as a "rudimentary sentiment." This in turn sheds light on Li and Takeuchi's ultimately different approaches to Lu Xun. Whereas Li attributes Lu Xun's leitmotif to a scientific attempt at theorizing

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[59] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "What Is Modernity? (The Case of Japan and China)," in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 74-76.
[60] Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Ro Jin*, in *TYz,* vol. 1, 6.
[61] Ibid., 7.

the world, Takeuchi treats it as pre-conceptual and as an embodied feeling on the writer's part. In contrast to Maruyama's warning against immediate, "carnal" sensibility, for Takeuchi, the fundamental struggle of the subject cannot but be lived with the body and experienced as a "rudimentary sentiment." In a similar vein, in an essay on the end of the coterie journal *Chinese Literature* (discontinued as the distinction became blurred between their increasingly professionalized intellectual community and the group of *Shinagaku* scholars whom he vehemently attacked), he asserts:

> The antagonism between self and other is an undeniable truth. However, it only becomes a truth if this antagonism is a carnal pain for me.
>
> 自他が対立することは疑いえぬ真実であるが、その対立が私にとって肉体的な苦痛である場合にのみそれは真実なのである。[62]

Here "carnality" triumphs over thinking in their respective claims to truth. In contrast to Maruyama's dismissal of carnal literature and carnal politics for paralyzing resistance, Takeuchi foregrounds embodied encounter with one's immediate political surroundings as the means of resistance. Nevertheless, unlike Tamura's decadent celebration of the flesh as the only reality, for Takeuchi, the suffering body—a theme already present in his appraisal of Yu Dafu as a "troubled poet" (苦悶な詩人)—amounts to the subject's opening to the (sometimes violent) inscription of the other. This in turn demarcates Takeuchi's notion of embodied subjectivity from the Hegelian master-slave dialectic that he is frequently accused of recycling, a topic that I shall return to in Section IV.

One can now begin to understand why Takeuchi designates "method" as "the process of the subject's self-formation."[63] Before revisiting "Asia as Method" and examining its implications, however, I shall proceed to interrogate how Takeuchi's thesis on embodied political resistance,

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[62] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "*Chūgoku bungaku* no haikan to watakushi" 『中国文学』の廃刊と私 [The Discontinuation of *Chinese Literature* and Me], in *TYz*, vol. 14, 455.
[63] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Asia as Method," in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 165.

which derives itself from his engagement with literature from Yu Dafu to Lu Xun, extends beyond Chinese literature to inform and shape his own political activism during what would become known as Japan's "season of politics" (政治の季節) during the 1960s.[64] In particular, I will zoom in on Takeuchi's emphasis on "feeling" and the body as not (only) a site of passive political inscription but also one of possibility where individual citizens' corporeal agency translates into forces of political change. In light of Maruyama's critique of "carnal politics," does an extreme attentiveness to immediate bodily sensibility necessarily translate into a blindness to state-level ("fictional") injustices? Does Takeuchi's emphasis on the individual's radical situatedness short-circuit possibilities of collective action? Does the body's singularity foreclose any pursuit of universality? I will address these questions by reading Takeuchi's defense of Japan's democratic constitution, "Our Constitutional Feeling" (May 1960), delivered as a public speech a few months after "Asia as Method" (January 1960) at the height of the Anpō protest.

III. Feeling the Law: Carnality and the Constitution

The clueless prisoner numbly awaits his punishment as the officer enthusiastically lectures the foreign explorer on the judicial process. The prisoner's crime was not explained to him. Indeed, he does not even understand the language the other two speak (French). This, nevertheless, is no cause for concern, the officer reassures his esteemed guest, as the condemned will come to *feel* the Law through the marvelous Apparatus. As the prisoner lies face-down on the lower part of the Apparatus (the Bed), explains the officer, a set of needles (the Harrow) will inscribe the legal sentence that was fed into the upper deck (the Designer) on the criminal's back, gradually

[64] William Marotti's book provides an informative overview of the 1960s in Japan, a decade characterized by student protests and other leftist movements. See William Marotti, *Money, Trains, and Guillotines: Art and Revolution in 1960s Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

perforating his body until he bleeds to death. In the sixth hour, we are told, an expression of enlightenment will miraculously appear on the criminal's face, as he finally begins to decipher the inscription. He will spend the next six hours or so—the last of his life—repenting in agony. In the case of the prisoner at hand, a soldier charged with insubordination, the words "Honor Thy Superiors" will be written, an injunction that he is expected not to read but to carnally comprehend. Thus, the Law both chastises and educates in Kafka's short story "In the Penal Colony."

And yet this ghastly law-inscribing machine is on the verge of crumpling, as is the entire old legal institution. In fact, the Law itself is put on trial. According to the officer, who is the sole supporter of the old institution left on the island, the traditional legal practice has fallen into disrepair after the passing of the former Commandant, a Renaissance man who was both the legislator of the colony and the inventor of the machine. A new, more civilized Law is to be imposed by the new Commandant, whose authority is not to be meddled with. Out of formality, the new Commandant invites an external juror to assess the execution. The explorer, who, for this purpose, travels all the way to the barbarous island country isolated from the civilized world, also gets to narrate the whole story. In the end, as if accepting the fact that there is no way the explorer can be impressed, the officer steps onto the Apparatus himself, after programming his own sentence: "Be Just!" However, the machine disintegrates and, instead of receiving an imprint like the others, he dies violently. No sign of revelation can be found on the dead officer's face, as if the old Law fails to inscribe its own legitimacy.[65]

Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" may read like a dystopian tale of a torturous regime's last days, but it furnishes a befitting metaphor for Japan's postwar reckoning with its fascist past. Like the penal colony's conversion from the Old to the New Law (whose effect we never get to see),

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[65] Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," in *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 75-99.

Japan's postwar transition from a military dictatorship to a Western-style liberal democracy under U.S. occupation (1945-1952) was a lengthy process rife with tensions. On July 26, 1945, the United States, the United Kingdom, and China released the Potsdam Declaration. "The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people," the Declaration proclaims. "Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established."[66] After Japan's surrender, the project of Japan's democratization proceeded along these lines. On the one hand, under the leadership of General MacArthur (the penal colony's new Commandant), the first draft of the Japanese Constitution (日本国憲法, the merciful "New Law") was drafted and came into effect on May 3, 1947, substituting the old Constitution of the Empire of Japan (大日本帝国憲法, also known as the Meiji Constitution, the ruthless "Old Law"). Modeled on Western democratic ideals and with its Article 9 famously renouncing war as a sovereign right, the new Constitution is also dubbed the "Peace Constitution" (平和憲法).[67] On the other hand, during the Tokyo Trial (officially the International Military Tribunal for the Far East) established via a special proclamation issued by MacArthur, international judges and prosecutors (like the foreign traveler-juror in Kafka's story) convened between April 1946 and November 1948 to try Japanese leaders under the old regime for their war crimes, crimes against peace, and crimes against humanity—although this was not without controversy: The main objection was that the law on crimes against peace was applied *ex post facto* (i.e., coming into effect after the deed); Others decry it as the victor's justice or a "judgment of civilization" (文明の裁き).[68] The temporal awkwardness of the Tokyo Trials— the defendants being judged for crimes that were not recognized as crimes when they were committed—came to

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[66] "Proclamation Defining Terms for Japanese Surrender (Potsdam Declaration)," National Diet Library, accessed June 25, 2024, https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c06.html.
[67] For a detailed history of the passing of the Japanese Constitution, see Koseki Shōichi, *The Birth of Japan's Postwar Constitution*, trans. Ray A. Moore (New York: Routledge, 1998).
[68] See Ushimura Kei, *Beyond the Judgment of Civilization: The Intellectual Legacy of the Japanese War Crimes Trials, 1946-1949*, trans. Steven J. Ericson (Tokyo: The International House of Japan, 2003).

symbolize a sense that the postwar democratic constitution and regime were imposed rather than an expression of the spontaneous will of the people. The nature of postwar Japan's democratic regime as imposed would go on to have ramifications to this day.[69]

The question of the postwar constitution's legitimacy, implying an opposition of the imposed versus the spontaneous, was also in play during the protests that preceded the signing of the mutual defense agreement with the United States. Takeuchi Yoshimi immediately resigned from his teaching position at Tokyo Metropolitan University after the Liberal Democratic Party forced through the much-protested new U.S.-Japan Security Treaty on May 19, 1960, putting the Constitution's pacifist principle in jeopardy. A few weeks later, on June 12, he gave an enthusiastic public speech as part of the "Lecture Series on Defending Democratic Politics," a forum organized by the Study Group on Constitutional Issues (憲法問題研究会).[70] His speech was titled "Our Constitutional Feeling" (私たちの憲法感覚). The title itself already poses something of a challenge for translation: Rather than designating his subject matter as a feeling "about" (に関する) or "toward" (に対する) the Constitution, Takeuchi's coinage "constitutional feeling" seems to underline an impossible immediacy and an absence of an independent feeling subject already separated from their object. Can the Law, premised on generality if not universality, which stands by definition at odds with the radically particular and situated, be felt? What would it mean to feel the Law anyway?

Takeuchi's nuanced stance in the speech makes it stand out from a plethora of liberal voices including Maruyama Masao's, most of which either affirm the new Constitution's universal values or

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[69] After the landslide victory of the Liberal Democratic Party following Abe Shinzō's assassination in June 2022, the Kishida administration took upon itself to continue Abe's political legacy and to push the revision of Japan's pacifist Constitution. As geopolitical risks further grow around the globe amidst Russia's invasion of Ukraine and an increasing concern over Taiwan, the constitutional issue has increasingly become a focal point of political debates and civil demonstrations. See, for example, Ayako Nakada and Ryutaro Abe, "Kishida Vows to Push Abe's Dream of Revising the Constitution," *Asahi Shimbun*, July 12, 2022, accessed October 27, 2023, https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14667745.

[70] The Study Group on Constitutional Issues 憲法問題研究会 (1958-1976) was a group of intellectuals, in both Tokyo and Kyoto, who convened to discuss and held public lectures on pressing issues regarding the Constitution. Both Takeuchi and Maruyama were major participants in the group.

seek to defend it from the theoretical angle of jurisprudence.[71] As a somewhat reductive overview for the sake of clarity, the constitutional debate, which continues to divide Japan to this day, has consistently featured two sides, the Left and the Right. The Right seeks to revise the Constitution—especially Article 9—and frequently resorts to the argument that the new Constitution was superimposed by the GHQ (General Headquarters, a common reference to the MacArthur-led U.S. occupation forces) and hence, as an imported scheme, is detached from Japan's political realities and traditions. The Left, by contrast, defends the Constitution as the cornerstone of Japan's postwar democracy and conventionally justifies their position by stressing the universality of the values and ideals expressed in it, such as freedom of speech and respect for the fundamental human rights. While Takeuchi ultimately defends the new Constitution like most fellow liberal intellectuals, he does not take for granted the universality of its values as a means of justification. Indeed, the speech affirms from the outset a shared feeling of displacement and brazenly acknowledges the Constitution's superimposed nature. By foregrounding the singularity of embodied experience, however, Takeuchi sets out to challenge the conservative logic by renegotiating the very hierarchy between the universal and the particular.

Takeuchi opens his speech by denouncing the Kishi Nobusuke administration's coercive passing of the law as a "coup d'état" and a wanton threat to postwar Japanese democracy. Rather than highlighting the democratic values in the postwar Constitution, however, he acknowledges that the Constitution was imposed on Japan in the aftermath of its defeat during the war and that, as it stood, it failed to appeal to the Japanese people's everyday political sensibilities:

> Toward the new postwar Constitution, I, and many like me, actually didn't feel a sense of closeness or intimacy. For some reason, it felt a bit distant. The Constitution we have today is splendid because it underlines the universal principles of humanity. Splendid as it is, I somehow felt like it was dazzling, and I felt embarrassed to claim it as my own. In other words, it's too dazzling to have been born from the accumulation of our own past

[71] See for example, Maruyama Masao, "Kono jitai no seijigakuteki mondaiten" この事態の政治学的問題点 [The Political Issues with the Current Situation], in *MMs*, vol. 8, 283-300.

history. I'm not sure if we're such a great people… This may sound like an insult to you [the audience], but at least that's how I feel. It's really embarrassing. Even as I attend the Study Group on Constitutional Issues and learn, I still can't help but feel embarrassed. People of my age were educated under the old Constitution, under which we developed our personalities. By the "old Constitution," I mean not only the written Constitution, but I refer also to the national principles or constitutional spirit of the former Empire of Japan, which were in unison with the *Imperial Rescript on Education*.[72] Under the combined power of the Constitution and the *Imperial Rescript*, people educated that way, with their hands and feet bound, tried with all their might to carry on living within that frame, all the while clinging to their wish to vocalize their desire to live as human beings. Those soldiers, who were driven into war and died shouting "Long Live the Emperor" weren't really loyal to the emperor. Indeed, under the old educational system, our loyalty was devoted to the emperor. But I feel that the emperor was merely a stand-in and that, in reality, we were expressing the desire to live freely as human beings—yet in such a distorted manner because there was no other way to express it. That's why, for people like me who came of age in such a distorted way, the current Constitution somehow feels distant. And although I don't think the old Constitution is good, that effort to vocalize oneself with all one's might [under the old Constitution] has stubbornly stuck with me. That's how I feel.

戦後の新しい憲法は、私などからは実はあまり身近な親身な感じがしなかったのであります。なんとなくよそよそしい感じがしたわけであります。今の私たちの持っている憲法は、人類の普遍の原理が強調されておりまして大へんけっこうなんであります。けっこうなんでありますが、なんとなくまぶしい、自分のものであることが恥ずかしいような気がしたんであります。言いかえますと、自分たちの持っている過去の歴史の積み重ねの中から生まれてくるにしては、あまりにまぶしい。そんなにわれわれがりっぱな人間であるかどうか——そういうと皆さんを侮辱しているように思われるかもしれないが、私はそうなんです。どうもあれは恥ずかしい。憲法問題研究会に出て勉強しながらも、どうも恥ずかしくてならない。私の年配の者は旧憲法のもとで教育を受け人間形成を行なっております。旧憲法と申しましても、成文憲法だけをいうわけでなくて、教育勅語と一体になっている旧大日本帝国の国家原則あるいは憲法精神というものを、この場合いうわけでありますが、こういうもので教育されました人間は、あの憲法ないし教育勅語という一体になっている力のもとで、何とかして自分の人間としていきたいという願いを、がんじがらめではあるけれども、あのわくの中で精一ぱい心から叫びをあげたいという念願を持って生き続けてきたわけであります。あの戦争に狩り立てられて、天皇陛下万歳と言って死んだ兵隊たちも、何も天皇陛下への忠誠ということではなく、たしかに古い教育では天皇にわれわれの忠誠が集中化されておりますけれども、実はそういう形をかりて、やはり自分たちの人間として自由に生きたいという念願を、ほかに表現する手段がないので、そういうゆがんだ形で表現せざるを得なかったという気がするんであります。ですから、そういうゆがんだ人間形成を行なっている私たち、少なくとも私は、今の憲法が何かよそよそしい。そして昔の旧憲法はいいと思いませんけれど

[72] Takeuchi is here referring to the *Imperial Rescript on Education* (教育ニ関スル勅語 or 教育勅語 for short) signed by Emperor Meiji in 1890 to concisely articulate the state's guiding principles in education. A 315-word document, it was studied and memorized at school and read aloud at important events. Considered an important means of instilling Imperial Japan's *kokutai* ideology, the rescript was banned by the GHQ after the war. See Alistair Swale, "History and the Construction of Collective Memory: Positivist Historiography in the Age of *The Imperial Rescript on Education*," in *The Power of Memory in Modern Japan*, eds. Sven Saaler and Wolfgang Schwentker (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 360-373.

も、その中で精一ぱい自分としての叫びをあげていたその姿勢が、かたくなにそのまま身についてしまっている。そういう感じがいたします。[73]

Juxtaposing both "closeness" (身近な, or literally "close to the body") and "intimacy" (親身な, or "attached to the body") against characterizations of the Constitution as "dazzling" (眩しい) and "distant" (よそよそしい)—so much so that it makes him feel "embarrassed" (恥ずかしい)—Takeuchi's language is remarkably sensual or "carnal," seeming to validate Maruyama's critique of the alleged Japanese tendency to embrace unmediated sensibility. In contrast with the new Constitution's aloofness, the old Constitution, for Takeuchi, had become part of pre-war Japanese daily life through an exquisite network of political and educational techniques such as the more accessible *Imperial Rescript*, thus ceasing to be merely a written legal document. Indeed, the old Law had become such an integral part of Japanese life that the *kokutai* ideology left untouched not even deeply personal desires.[74] The feeling of the old Constitution, as it were, came to be "stubbornly stuck with [the body]" (かたくなにそのまま身についてしまっている). Under such an institution, Takeuchi stipulates, individuals had no other means of self-expression than the enunciation of the nationalist-fascist sublime ("Long Live the Emperor"). It is in this way that Benjamin's concept of the "aestheticization of politics" finds a precise articulation in Takeuchi's portrayal of pre-war Japan.[75] That is, insofar as aesthetics designates the realm of the senses (with its Greek origin in αἰσθητικόν, "of or relating to sense perception, sensitive, perceptive"),[76] the soldiers dying not actually for the emperor but in order to realize their "desire to live freely as a human being" (人間として自由に生きたいという念願) partook in a deeply aesthetic project, which in turn brought about

[73] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Watashi tachi no kenpō kankaku" 私たちの憲法感覚 [Our Constitutional Feeling], in *TYz*, vol. 9, 133-134.
[74] See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the personal and the political in the 1930s.
[75] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 3, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, et al., eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 122.
[76] Oxford English Dictionary, "Aesthetics," accessed October 30, 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/aesthetic_n?tab=etymology#9579530.

the destruction of the sensory body itself. In this regard, Takeuchi's picture of Japanese life under the old Constitution seems to echo Maruyama's judgment that an incapacity to realize the fictional nature of political institutions resulted in "carnal politics," the culmination of which was fascism itself.

Takeuchi's almost nostalgic depiction of the old regime by no means translates into a dismissal of the postwar Constitution, "distant" and "dazzling" as it is—in fact, the speech itself was intended as a call to arms for the latter's defense. Yet neither does Takeuchi follow Maruyama's line of thinking and call for the elimination of "carnal politics" altogether on the ground that it was complicit in the prewar regime's fascist project. Takeuchi seeks instead to redeem positive values from the old way of "feeling the Law" in order to reinvigorate the postwar Constitution. He does so firstly by reimagining the political subjectivity of the Japanese people and secondly by designating action as the only pathway from the particular to the universal. First, in what can be called a redemptive interpretation of Japan's past experience, Takeuchi distinguishes himself from Maruyama through highlighting the people as the subject of the Law. While Maruyama's advocacy for the cultivation of "fictional spirit" is only realistic as an enterprise for the intelligentsia, Takeuchi foregrounds the people as the agent of political resistance: "I use 'our' to mean 'the average citizens.'" (「私たちの」という言葉を使いましたのは、「平均の国民の」という意味でございます…)[77] As Wang Qin observes, the subject of "our constitutional feeling" refers to the people, who are neither intellectually equipped to discuss constitutional history with academic rigor nor exposed to debates over the continuity or its lack thereof between the old and new Constitutions. What the postwar Constitution lacks, for Takeuchi, is precisely a "reckoning on the distortedness of the experience that the Japanese people have accumulated during years of war." Furthermore, Wang contends, "as a straightforward expression of 'the universal principles of humanity,' the new

[77] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Watashi tachi no kenpō kankaku" [Our Constitutional Feeling], in *TYz*, vol. 9, 131.

Constitution perhaps forgoes the opportunity to construct the political subjectivity of postwar society from the people's wartime experience."[78] Like the prisoners in Kafka's penal colony, the generation of Japanese people, who "developed their personalities" under the old Constitution, had a complicated relationship with the Law. On the one hand, they had intuitive access to the Law as it penetrated into various aspects of their quotidian livelihood. On the other hand, they had no choice but to passively receive the inscription of the Law—indeed, the inscriptive process whereby they obtained said access is passivity *par excellence*.

Notably, from the passivity of this non-subject, Takeuchi attempts to retrieve the possibility of an active political subject. As Naoki Sakai points out, the word "*shutai*" (主体), introduced into Japanese as one of the translations for "subject," "*sujet*," or "*Subjekt*," is quintessentially a product of translingual practice. As such, "*shutai* is that which cannot be contained in the economy of equivalence in a transnational translational exchange."[79] *Shutai* is thus constantly haunted by an array of other meanings including "*shinmin*" (臣民 or the subject of the emperor).[80] In this light, Takeuchi's project amounts to no less than a rediscovery of "*shutai*" within "*shinmin*"—not through a semiotic partition of the incommensurable but precisely through an acknowledgement of the impossibility of such a partition. Furthermore, Sakai emphatically distinguishes between two connotations of the "subject," namely, the epistemic subject (*shukan* 主観) and *shutai*, or what he calls the "body of enunciation."[81] Insofar as *shutai*, as the locus of practical agency, is always situated and non-transcendental, its political action can only be less than fully rational. In Takeuchi's elaborate

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[78] Wang Qin 王钦, "Hanwei yizhong xianfa de weilai: Zhunei Hao de 'xianfa ganjue'" 捍卫一种宪法的未来——竹内好的"宪法感觉" [Defending the Future of a Constitution: Takeuchi Yoshimi's "Constitutional Feeling"], *Hangzhou shifan daxue xuebao (shehui kexueban)* 杭州師範大學學報（社會科學版） [Journal of Hangzhou Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)], no. 2 (2022): 2-3.
[79] Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 119.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 119-120.

account of the prewar "constitutional feeling," he openly admits that the action taken by himself in response to the "coup d'état," namely his sudden resignation from the university, could only seem illogical and even "absurd." Whereas Maruyama denounces direct political action—such as assassinations and, one can infer, individual resignation as in this case—as lacking in "fictional spirit" and hence powerless for making systematic political changes, Takeuchi highlights the frequent impossibility of being systematic and consistent; he contends that it is precisely in such extreme states of exception that political action is called for. "Since we can't banish the Prime Minister, the greatest culprit who tramples our Constitution," Takeuchi allows, "what do we do in such an extreme condition? I do not know."[82] That is, in the same way that the Law's writing does not impart but performs its meaning, conversely, political resistance should not be dismissed on the basis that its subject only has merely intuitive access to principles of justice. By emphasizing the significance of the average citizen's intuitive engagement with the Constitution, Takeuchi thus transfigures "feeling" from pure receptivity to a potential cornerstone for political subjectivity under postwar democracy.

Secondly, Takeuchi underlines action as the only pathway from embodied individual experience to abstract universal principles. One of the most prominent objections to the Peace Constitution is that it was imposed on Japan by the GHQ and hence not a product of local history. This tension between a set of allegedly universal (Western) values and a Japanese "difference"—a tension that also all but defines the field of Japan studies as a discipline, a topic that I shall return to in the next section—underlies the whole of postwar Japanese history, as the nation's incapacity to determine its relationship with its prewar past has led to what some call "Japan's long postwar," insofar as the new Law and its intricate workings never seem to have truly settled in.[83] Takeuchi

[82] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Watashi tachi no kenpō kankaku" [Our Constitutional Feeling], in *TYz*, vol. 9, 134.
[83] See for example Harry Harootunian, "Japan's Long Postwar: The Trick of Memory and the Ruse of History," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 99, no. 4 (2000): 715-739.

notably makes significant concessions to claims often held by rightwing politicians to justify revising the Constitution: “[The Constitution is] too dazzling to have been born from the accumulation of our own past history. I’m not sure if we’re such a great people…”[84] Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to interpret Takeuchi’s concessions as a token of defeat. Quite the contrary, he insists that the universal values of the new Constitution must be defended at all costs:

> Great as it (the new Constitution) is, we are constantly troubled by this feeling of alienation resulting from the fact that it is not yet part of ourselves (lit. our bodies). It might be a negative aspect of the old Constitution—a suffocatingly heavy Constitution—that it used to oppress people, imposing duties from the top rather than asserting rights. Yet I wonder if the power of those who had lived through the past can be incorporated as an axis into the current Constitution that we have today, thus transfiguring the negatives of the past into positives. In this way, I often wonder, perhaps we can use history or traditions as an axis and breathe life into the new Constitution. I think all these demands have combined into a single determination during the protests against what happened on May 19.
>
> 非常にいいものではあるが、まだ自分の身についていないということを、絶えずそういう乖離の感覚に悩まされ続けていたなんでありますが、ここで旧憲法の持っていた、いわばマイナスかもしれません、人間を抑圧する、そして権利の主張であるよりも、むしろ上から義務の規定を押しつけるような、非常に重っくるしいあの憲法、しかしその中で生きていた人間の力というものが、そのまま過去のマイナスをプラスに転化する形で、今日の新しいわれわれの持っている今の憲法の中に心棒として取り入れ慣れないものだろうか、それによって歴史あるいは伝統というものを軸にして、今の憲法に活を吹き込むことができないものだろうかということを、かねがね気にかけておりましたので、これが私の、あの五月十九日に対する抗議の行動の中に、そういう要求が溶け込んで、一つの決断になったんだろうと思うのであります。[85]

Rather than translating the shared feeling of “aloofness” into a repudiation of the Constitution, that is, Takeuchi sees in the Japanese people’s frustration a force for democratic mobilization. For Takeuchi, the purpose of political protests lies not solely in bringing forth policy changes—indeed, as a *post facto* demonstration against Kishi Nobusuke’s passing of the Anpō treaty, the 1960 Anpō protest was perhaps doomed to fail from the outset—but also, and more importantly, in a fundamental transformation of the people’s relationship to the Law. Indeed, the shift from the

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[84] Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Watashi tachi no kenpō kankaku” [Our Constitutional Feeling], in *TYz*, vol. 9, 133.
[85] Ibid., 135.

"suffocatingly heavy" old Constitution to the new Constitution that needs "breathing new life into" calls for a reassignment of political agency. In this sense, for Takeuchi, the body not only serves as the locus of feeling but also houses the agent of action. Unlike Kafka's prisoner, who passively receives the inscription of the Law only to become an offering to its totality, the Japanese people, for Takeuchi, must defend the Law not by enshrining it but by enriching it through assemblies, protests, and struggles—by giving it flesh, as it were.

Whereas Maruyama emphasizes a critical distancing between immediate sensibility and "political fictions" through cultivating what he terms "fictional spirit," Takeuchi in effect calls into question the very viability of a disembodied mode of political engagement. Yet both approaches bring attention to the critical question concerning the seemingly unbreachable gap between the radical singularity of the body and the Law's universality. Herein, too, lies the genius of Kafka's law-inscribing Apparatus: In reimagining the liaison between the particular and the universal as a radically corporeal process, the machine at once appalls and bedazzles. Simultaneously acknowledging the pivotal role of the body and seeking to transcend the violent inscriptive model of legal governance, Takeuchi in effect attempts to renegotiate the vexed relationship between particulars and universals.

In an attempt to trace the conceptual history of "rules," or that which bridges particulars and universals, Lorraine Daston distinguishes between three semantic clusters that came to define the development of the Western understanding of rules, namely, rule as measurement, rule as model or paradigm, and rule as laws. While the first and third connotations of "rules" remain familiar to the moderns, Daston observes, rule as model became counterintuitive as a result of our shifting understanding of the particular-universal divide. Tracing its history to the Latin Middle Ages, Daston contends that the Rule of Saint Benedict serves to highlight an alternative approach to obedience, discretion, and emulation. While consisting of a compendium of rigid detailed maxims, the Rule of

Benedict also designates the abbot as the embodiment of its monastic order, a living model to be emulated by the monks. The abbot does not only execute the Rule but also "exemplifies it, just as the *Doryphoros* statue exemplifies the canon of male beauty."[86] In a more democratic way than the Benedictine abbot's living body contextualizes and renews the Rule that perennially faces the danger of becoming outdated and obsolete, then, the political participation of the Japanese people, for Takeuchi, simultaneously transfigures the "Peace Constitution," imposed on Japan by external forces, into the internalized Law of postwar Japan and the people into subjects (*shutai*) of that Law.

Reconfiguring the constitutional problematic as a reformation of Japanese subjectivity from *shinmin* (subjects of the emperor) to *shutai* (subjects of the Law), Takeuchi implicitly calls into question the very autonomy of the universal itself. Vehemently condemning Kishi's decision, Takeuchi calls upon citizens to actively endow the Constitution with new meanings:

> Since May 19th, we have been faced with an unprecedented incident in our history, where a dictator emerges through formally democratic procedures. I think no matter how good the written Constitution is, it may just be the same as a bureaucratic document. (Applause) In order to make the current Constitution our own [lit.: to attach it to our bodies], instead of changing it from the old Constitution like changing clothes, we have to establish a new constitutional feeling through the continuity with the tradition or through reinterpreting that tradition.
>
> 今日この五月十九日を境にしまして、形式的な民主主義の手続きを経て、独裁者が生まれるという、私たちの歴史にとって初めての事件にぶつかったわけでありますが、いかに成文憲法がりっぱであっても、それは単なる官僚の作文と同じことだと思うのであります。（拍手）今の憲法が身についたものになるためには、過去の憲法の間に、あそこで着物を着かえるように、憲法を着なおすのでなくて、伝統の連続の上に、あるいはそれを再解釈する上に、新しく今の憲法が自分の身についたものとして、過去の伝統との連続の上に、憲法感覚が新しく打ち立てられなければならないと思います。[87]

Just as Takeuchi portrays the power of the old Law as transcending the written Constitution, then, in order for the new Constitution not to be reduced to a mere "bureaucratic document," it has to become integrated into the Japanese people's daily life. "Our constitutional feeling," thus, is far from

[86] Lorraine Daston, *Rules: A Short History of What We Live By* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022), 36.
[87] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Watashi tachi no kenpō kankaku" [Our Constitutional Feeling], in *TYz*, vol. 9, 136-137.

a given, but rather something to be constantly recreated, renewed, and re-embodied. For Takeuchi, "politics" always means permanent revolution against reality—an ideal that he finds embodied in the figure of Sun Yat-sen.[88] As Viren Murthy points out, consistent with Takeuchi's recurrent theme of endless revolution in the everyday, he regards the Constitution as a continuous process.[89] Connecting Takeuchi's Anpō stance with his wartime thesis on Lu Xun, Murthy calls attention to Takeuchi's idiosyncratic conception of action and time. In his critique of Japan's refusal to "enter history" by adopting the quantitative measurement of linear progress, Takeuchi characterizes the Japanese view of history as "presuppos[ing] an abstract conception of time as a series of 'now points' separate from the viewer and from the movement or action occurring."[90] In this light, Takeuchi's call to "establish a new constitutional feeling" aims to subvert such a conception of "empty, homogeneous time" (à la Walter Benjamin) and introduce a new form of political temporality.

It is in this way that embodied struggle-resistance (*zhengzha*/*teikō* 挣扎/抵抗), which Takeuchi has developed through his readings of Chinese literature, translates into a form of permanent revolution. Along these lines, one can understand Takeuchi's approach to the Constitution as a reconceptualization of temporality in Article 9, which reads:

> Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.
>
> 日本国民は、正義と秩序を基調とする国際平和を誠実に希求し、国権の発動たる戦争と、武力による威嚇又は武力の行使は、国際紛争を解決する手段としては、永久にこれを放棄する。[91]

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[88] Sun Ge, "Zai ling he yibai zhijian" [Between Zero and One Hundred], 52.
[89] Viren Murthy, *Pan-Asianism and the Legacy of the Chinese Revolution*, 160-161.
[90] Ibid., 144.
[91] The House of Representatives, Japan, *Nihonkoku kenpō* 日本国憲法 [The Constitution of Japan], accessed October 30, 2023, https://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb_annai.nsf/html/statics/shiryo/dl-constitution.htm. English translation in Prime Minister of Japan and His [*sic*] Cabinet, *The Constitution of Japan*, accessed October 30, 2023, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html.

Whereas the Japanese conservatives would criticize the rigid fixation of a peaceful law marked by "forever" (永久), Takeuchi proposes an alternative interpretation of this daunting temporal claim. In his 1952 *Japanese Ideology* (日本イデオロギイ), Takeuchi cites Article 12 as a pivotal supplement to Article 9:

> The freedoms and rights guaranteed to the people by this Constitution shall be maintained by the constant endeavor of the people.
>
> この憲法が国民に保障する自由及び権利は、国民の不断の努力によつて、これを保持しなければならない。[92]

For Takeuchi, that is, insofar as Article 9 characterizes the Japanese people's pursuit of peace as an act of "aspiring" (希求), it is only natural that what Article 12 designates as the people's "constant endeavor" (不断の努力) is what allows "eternal peace" to bear fruit.[93] As Murthy observes, by stressing "the subjective moment in upholding the constitution," Takeuchi presents the constitution as a never-ending project and "not an end in itself but part of the larger pan-Asian struggle for liberation that he saw happening in China."[94] Indeed, this dynamic and perpetual process of upholding the Constitution coalesces with Takeuchi's notion of "method" as the "process of the subject's self-formation" in his "Asia as Method" speech delivered four months earlier. In this sense, Takeuchi defends the Constitution by reconceptualizing it as not an "end" but a "method" of the Japanese people's political subjectivity—a "constant endeavor."

In this way, Takeuchi renders irrelevant the debates over the Constitution's exteriority (that it is superimposed) versus interiority (that it is a natural outgrowth of Japanese history—which Takeuchi openly acknowledges that it is not), for any universal Law, imposed or otherwise, is ultimately vulnerable to manipulation without embodied subjects' continuous endeavor. Just as Kafka's disintegrating Apparatus fails to inscribe "Be Just!"—the fundamental principle of the Law

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92 Ibid.
93 Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Nihon ideorogi* 日本イデオロギイ [Japanese Ideology], in *TYz*, vol. 6, 51.
94 Viren Murthy, *Pan-Asianism and the Legacy of the Chinese Revolution*, 160-161.

itself—universality does not possess inherent power of self-rectification. Importantly, the constitutional debate registers two variations of the universal/particular divide: that between the national juridical institution and the singular political subject; and that between "universal" Western political ideals and concrete Japanese realities. Both are critical to understand Takeuchi's project in "Asia as Method," which ultimately seeks to undo the conventional East/West hierarchy that masquerades as a particular/universal binary and that designates Asia as the site of "experience" and the West as that of "theory." Thus, we can begin to understand "Asia as Method" not as a reversal of power dynamics, as many suggest, but as a re-imagining of the universal/particular divide altogether.

In the next section, I return to "Asia as Method," this time with a focus on how the body's singularity paradoxically affords access to the "universal." To fully appreciate where Takeuchi was coming from, I argue, one must return to the overwhelming experience of war. As both a shared memory and an inarticulable private experience, the war (and Japan's defeat) at once marked an entire generation of Japanese intellectuals including Maruyama and Takeuchi and stubbornly resisted transformation into "thought" through theoretical articulation. I divide my reading into three parts, dealing with the embodied subject's respective relationships to the academic mode of knowledge production (university); to that which is perceived as general rules as opposed to singular experience (universal); and to the other that is anything exterior to the self (universe). I begin by examining Maruyama's struggle, twenty some years later, to make sense of his war experience and the limit of the scholarly mode of knowing (which distinguishes him from Takeuchi). I then proceed to interrogate how Takeuchi's alternative mode of "knowing" (or "experiencing/feeling"), rather than foreclosing access to universality, opens up possibilities of re-imagining the universal. Finally, I argue that Takeuchi in effect re-envisions the "universal" not as overdetermining laws but as a perpetual process of dynamic relationality where the self constantly establishes liaisons with the other. The

chapter then concludes with a brief epilogue on friendship, that of Maruyama and Takeuchi's in particular, as the most basic form of such liaisons.

IV. The Body and the University/Universal/Universe, or Asia as Method

At 8:15AM on August 6, 1945, private first class Maruyama Masao was in the middle of a routine morning rollcall in the southern suburb of Ujina some five kilometers from ground zero when the atomic bomb detonated over Hiroshima. Maruyama and his squad survived the shockwave thanks to the Imperial Army's marine transport headquarter building that stood between them and the hypocenter. In the days that followed, a 31-year-old Maruyama partook in the transport of bodies and other logistical work amidst chaos in the ruined city. On August 15, the same day as Emperor Hirohito's "jewel voice broadcast" (玉音放送) announcing the end of war, Maruyama's mother Sei passed away in Tokyo. He would only learn of this three days later via a telegram while still stationed in Hiroshima. When Maruyama eventually got round to sort her belongings upon his repatriation in September, he discovered tanka poems that she had composed from her deathbed. One of them read: "Recollecting my son summoned to the battlefield/ I weep on my sickbed/ An unseemly, disloyal mother" (召されゆきし吾子をしのびて病床に泣くはうとまし不忠の母ぞ). In her last hours, Maruyama Sei had clearly struggled to hold two thoughts at the same time, her woe as a mother intertwined with self-reproach. A woman raised in the Meiji era, she knew all too well that to die for the emperor would be an honorable feat and that to grieve such a death would be treacherous.[95]

[95] Maruyama Masao, "Nijū seiki saidai no paradokkusu" 二十世紀最大のパラドックス [The Greatest Paradox of the Twentieth Century], in *MMs*, vol. 9, 287-293. A more detailed account of Maruyama's experience in Hiroshima can be found in a 1969 interview, Maruyama Masao, "Nijūyonenme ni kataru hibaku taiken" 二十四年目に語る被爆体験 [A-bomb Experience Recounted 24 Years Later], in *Maruyama Masao wabunshū* 丸山眞男話文集 [Collected Discourses of Maruyama Masao], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Misuzu shobō, 2008), 457-499.

On August 15, 1965, after two decades of silence, Maruyama Masao would relate this episode of his life for the first time in public, in front of a packed audience gathered at Tokyo's Kudan Kaikan to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Japan's surrender. In this speech, titled "The Greatest Paradox of the Twentieth Century" (二十世紀最大のパラドックス), Maruyama dismissed polemic know-it-alls who condemned Japan's Peace Constitution as falsehood and as a "hollow ideology." Their very capacity of voicing such sentiments, he averred, ratified its moral superiority over the old Imperial Constitution. Forgoing for once the critical distance that he had long been careful to maintain as a scholar, Maruyama did not elaborate on jurisprudence but instead concluded by enunciating an aspiration:

> For me, the meaning of August 15 is so that future historians could say: "Through its defeat in the war, Japan, which was once the most backward of imperial powers—in the sense that it was the last to join the ranks of Euro-American imperialists—has become the most advanced of pacifist nations. This is truly the greatest paradox of the twentieth century." We'd want to endeavor so that they can say that.
>
> 私は八・一五というものの意味は、後世の歴史家をして、帝国主義の最後進国であった日本、つまりいちばんおくれて欧米の帝国主義に追随したという意味で、帝国主義の最後進国であった日本が、敗戦を契機として、平和主義の最先進国になった。これこそ二十世紀の最大のパラドックスである──そういわせることにあると思います。そういわせるように私達は努力したいのであります。[96]

While Maruyama's invocation may sound like a clichéd liberalist slogan, it is nevertheless important to note his resort to the notion of "paradox," an entangled state of affairs that defies rational comprehension and that can only be engaged through "endeavor" (努力). As Sun Ge observes, Maruyama had likely become attuned to what Sun terms the "paradoxical spirit" (悖论精神) through Takeuchi, as fellow intellectuals who had lived through "extreme conditions" during the war. Underlying what Maruyama calls the "greatest paradox," Sun postulates, is Maruyama's own personal experience with such an extreme paradox, namely, that the West, whose purportedly

[96] Maruyama Masao, "Nijū seiki saidai no paradokkusu" [The Greatest Paradox of the Twentieth Century], in *MMs*, vol. 9, 293.

universal ideas and values have nurtured him, also brought about absolute nuclear destruction.[97] In this light, then, grappling with the East/West and particular/universal divide (inherent in the constitutional debate) also translates, for Maruyama, into a reckoning with the radically singular embodied experience of violence as a *hibakusha* (被爆者 or "survivor of the bomb"), an experience that had thus far remained unspeakable.[98] This limit of the speakable in turn marks the horizon of thinking conventionally construed as knowledge production.

Paradoxical reasoning is thinking at its own limit. Scholars have long lamented that "almost no written record [by Maruyama] can indicate how war experience influenced his later research."[99] Indeed, as Maruyama himself would admit with regret in a 1969 interview, he somehow remained unable to distill any thought from his visceral experience of extreme violence in Hiroshima, despite having written prolifically about virtually all other aspects of the war.[100] When asked how his experience as a *hibakusha* has shaped his thinking, Maruyama replies:

> Only when it comes to this [Hiroshima], I feel there's no point in trying to forcefully make meanings out of it. I can only let it go on fermenting inside me. The real thing can't come out except by letting what keeps accumulating ferment on its own.

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[97] Sun Ge, "Beilun jingshen he tazhe yishi" 悖论精神和他者意识 [The Paradoxical Spirit and the Sensibility for the Other], *Sanlian xueshu tongxun* 三聯學術 [Sanlian Academic Newsletter], September 26, 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/7_UD4nuAJTLJ95qR9zvlvA.

[98] In *Atomic Light*, Akira Lippit explores the displacing epistemological impact of the bombings. Insofar as the atomic bomb "assailed the bodies it touched, seared and penetrated them, annihilating the limits that established human existence," Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrated the capacity of catastrophic light and lethal radiation as "an excess visuality that threatened the material and conceptual dimensions of human interiority and exteriority." Akita Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 4. Along similar lines, according to survivor accounts, there was a shared sense that a conventional weapon had gone off immediately in their respective vicinity and that it was not until much later that they gradually realized that the entire city had in fact been attacked at the same instant. See John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946). Inherent in the trauma, then, is an irreducible paradox between the particular (experienced as such that survivors initially thought that they were each at the epicenter of a singular explosion) and the universal (the overwhelming sweeping impact of the bomb on the city as a whole). As such, the physical violence of the bomb becomes epistemological, as it eradicates the limits of the body by rendering them meaningless.

[99] Maruyama Masao, *Maruyama Masao senchū bibōroku* 丸山眞男戦中備忘録 [Maruyama Masao's Wartime Memorandum] (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentā, 1997), 168.

[100] Maruyama Masao, "Nijūyonenme ni kataru hibaku taiken" [A-bomb Experience Recounted 24 Years Later], in *Maruyama Masao wabunshū*, vol. 1, 457-499.

これぱっかりは、もう無理に意味をでっちあげてもしようがないことで、やっぱり自分の中にずーっと 、こう…発酵させていく。たまっていくものを発酵させる以外に、本当のものは出てきませんからね。[101]

By the time of Maruyama's death in 1996—by coincidence, on August 15, the same day as Japan's surrender and his mother's passing—over half a century had lapsed since Hiroshima. Yet this process of "fermentation" never yielded any "real thing" till the very end. Headlined "[Died] without Crystallizing Hiroshima into Thought" (ヒロシマを思想に結晶化しないまま), Maruyama's obituary in Hiroshima's local newspaper *Chūgoku Shimbun* read: "He was a leading intellectual of our time and a bomb survivor, but passed away without crystallizing Hiroshima into thought and interrogating the world with it."[102] Be it an unsparing critique or a dejected lament over unfulfilled hopes, *Chūgoku Shimbun* was on point in its reference to Maruyama's own metaphor in his 1967 conversation with Tsurumi Shunsuke, published in *Science of Thought* as "The Ground for Universal Principles: Passing Down Postwar History" (普遍的原理の立場──語り継ぐ戦後史). In this conversation, Maruyama expresses his wish, like some writers have done, to "crystallize" (結晶化) the Hiroshima experience into ideas, thus transforming the particular into the universal.[103] The ultimate stillbirth of such a crystallization, then, reveals a vexed relationship between singularity and universality, one that stubbornly resists being breached via intellection. Like his mother Sei's convoluted layers of feelings in that poem, for Maruyama, Hiroshima, viscerally lived, defies untangling because of its carnality.

Underlying this defiance is the menace of an epistemological violence that reveals itself in such extreme situations as Hiroshima. To shun such a violence, one must think through paradoxes—a lesson that Maruyama likely learned from Takeuchi Yoshimi. As already evident in

101 Ibid., 483.
102 Hayashi Tatsuo 林立雄, ed., *Maruyama Masao to Hiroshima: seiji shisōshika no genbaku taiken* 丸山眞男と広島：政治思想史家の原爆体験 [Maruyama Masao and Hiroshima: The A-bomb Experience of a Historian of Political Ideas] (Hiroshima: Hiroshima daigaku heiwa kenkyū sentā, 1998), 14.
103 Maruyama Masao and Tsurumi Shunsuke, "Fuhenteki genri no tachiba: kataritsugu sengoshi" 普遍的原理の立場──語り継ぐ戦後史 [The Ground for Universal Principles: Passing Down Postwar History], in *Maruyama Masao zadan* 丸山眞男座談 [Conversations with Maruyama Masao], vol. 7 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1998), 101-123.

Takeuchi's attack on Japanese sinology as scientistic "dead scholarship" and his appraisal of Lu Xun as a non-transcendental "agent of living," to "crystallize" Hiroshima would be, for Takeuchi, to make the dead out of the living and the lived. In line with his emphasis on the irreducible singularity of embodied lives—prominent in his readings of Yu Dafu's sentimentalist "I-novels" and of Lu Xun's writings—Takeuchi's rejection of "dead scholarship" as reductive representationalism stems from a respect for the human will to live on the part of the writer: "Man must live" (人は生きねばならぬ).[104] Takeuchi's emphasis on embodied life, on the one hand, underlines the irreducibility of the other to knowledge and, on the other hand, designates the "subject" as forever in the incomplete process of self-making. For the critic, this in turn translates into an ethical imperative to guard the other against objectification. As Richard Calichman notes:

> For [Takeuchi], the coming into presence of the object, or its being as such, is equivalent to death—and in this respect, his remark on the 'dead scholarship' of sinology reveals itself to be far more than just a metaphor. […] Japanese sinology is dead because it contents itself with examining the remains of a China that is otherwise vibrant with life. It forgets that the proper origin of these remains is life itself, as embodied in actually living Chinese people.[105]

In this light, Takeuchi's approach to Chinese literature and Asia in general coalesces with Emmanuel Levinas' thesis on the face of the other as the originary locus of subjectivity and on ethics as first philosophy. Calling into question the self-sufficient Cartesian subject, Levinas posits the encounter with the face of the other, which both "orders and ordains" the self, as the basis of ethics and of philosophy in general.[106] For Levinas as for Takeuchi, the formation of the self as subject becomes possible through the realization that one is responsible for the other, whose face reveals a poverty on the part of the self and forbids the reduction of the other to a passive object of knowledge. It is in this sense that one must reconsider "Asia as Method" as an ethical project.

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104 Takeuchi Yoshimi, *Ro Jin*, in *TYz*, vol. 1, 6.
105 Richard Calichman, *Takeuchi Yoshimi: Displacing the West*, 4.
106 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

Nevertheless, Takeuchi's insistence on preserving the subject's embodied singularity risks misinterpretation as a rejection of any form of universal knowledge at the expense of the living—that is, the ephemeral part of human existence. Indeed, his contemporaries Iida Momo いいだもも and Katō Shūichi 加藤周一 both criticize Takeuchi for forgoing any pathway to universality.[107] Takeuchi's "critical apparatus," Katō argues, is structured in such a way that all his writings stem from a singular "fundamental experience." Through each encounter with a new object, this "experience" renews and deepens itself. However, according to Katō, "in order for it to become the premise of a theory, concrete particular experience must be substituted with abstract universal propositions," which Takeuchi has yet to achieve.[108] Iida, on the other hand, criticizes Takeuchi's Asian nationalism for neglecting class struggle that is inherent in struggles for national independence and hence condemns it as "an insular notion that fails to afford a pathway to international solidarity" (国際的統一への通路をもらえない閉鎖概念).[109] Both would agree, it seems, that Takeuchi indulges himself in singular embodied experience at the expense of "universality."

To understand how Takeuchi's attempt to overcome the embodied subject's tendency to slide into individualistic foreclosure—that is, to (once again) draw a line between Takeuchi's "carnal" thinking and Tamura Taijirō's nihilistic decadence—one must return, for a last time, to the 1960 speech "Asia as Method." Acknowledging that cultural values of the West such as freedom and equality are themselves understanding, Takeuchi proceeds to contend that values are nonetheless never disembodied. Insofar as the permeation of these values were spread and sustained by colonial invasion, they have been tainted and weakened by violence. Construed as such, universality is not an

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[107] Iida Momo いいだもも, "Takeuchi Yoshimi" 竹内好, in *Tenkeiki no shisō* 転形期の思想 [Ideas in a Transitional Period] (Tokyo: Kawade shobō, 1968), 104-121. Katō Shūichi 加藤周一, "Takeuchi Yoshimi no hihyō sōchi" 竹内好の批評装置 [Takeuchi Yoshimi's Critical Apparatus], in *Katō Shūichi chosakushū* 加藤周一著作集 [Collected Works of Katō Shūichi], vol. 7 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1979), 268-287.

[108] Katō Shūichi, "Takeuchi Yoshimi no hihyō sōchi" [Takeuchi Yoshimi's Critical Apparatus], in *Katō Shūichi chosakushū*, vol. 7, 268.

[109] Iida Momo, "Takeuchi Yoshimi," in *Tenkeiki no shisō*, 117.

essence inherent in these values but to be achieved through peaceful endeavor. Indeed, "one glance at the history of Europe's colonial exploitation in Asia and Africa reveals that equality has not been attained by all."[110] At the same time that Europe reveals its own incapability of achieving universality, "Oriental poets […] grasped this point *intuitively*, as can be seen in Tagore and Lu Xun."[111] In foregrounding Asian writers' embodied and intuitive access to this crisis of universality, Takeuchi also calls into question the Cartesian mode of knowing whose possessive logic is not only inadequate but violent.

Takeuchi then dismisses Arnold Toynbee's invasion-resistance model of world history, where the East's resistance leads to the homogenization of the world, as itself a revelation of the West's own limits. As discussed earlier, for Takeuchi, "struggle/resistance" (*zhengzha*/*teikō* 挣扎/抵抗) must come from within and cannot but be an embodied process of the subject's constant self-renewal. Takeuchi Yoshimi then concludes:

> Asians today would disagree with this view. Rather the Orient must re-embrace the West, it must change the West itself in order to realize the latter's outstanding cultural values on a greater scale. Such a rollback of culture or values would create universality. The Orient must change the West in order to further elevate those universal values that the West itself produced.
>
> 現代のアジア人が考えていることはそうでなくて、西欧的な優れた文化価値を、より大規模に実現するために、西洋をもう一度東洋によって包み直す、逆に西洋自身をこちらから変革する、この文化的な巻返し、あるいは価値の上の巻返しによって普遍性を作り出す。東洋の力が西洋の生み出した普遍的な価値をより高めるために西洋を変革する。[112]

While what Takeuchi calls "rollback" (巻返し) aims to overcome these cultural values' self-defeat, it must not be understood as yet another master-slave dialectic. Richard Calichman remarks:

> This is of course the problem of the reversal (*tentō*), which Takeuchi, who is otherwise extraordinarily sensitive to this trap, conceives of in terms of the master-slave relation. Although he fully recognizes that "the slave reveals his perfect slave nature [only] when he becomes the slave's master," nevertheless he insists on conceptualizing Asian resistance against the West as leading necessarily to Asia's own universalization, that is

[110] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Asia as Method," in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 165.
[111] Ibid. My emphasis.
[112] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Hōhō toshite no Ajia" [Asia as Method], in *TYz*, vol. 5, 114-115; English in ibid.

> to say, its own (slavish) mastery of the West. Nowhere is this idea more unambiguously expressed than in the final lines of "Hōhō toshite no Ajia." "The Orient must re-embrace (*tsutsuminaosu*: literally, "rewrap") the West," Takeuchi writes, "it must change the West itself in order to realize this latter's outstanding cultural values on a greater scale. Such a rollback (*makikaeshi*) of culture or values would create universality (*fuhensei*). The Orient must change the West in order to further elevate those universal values that the West itself produced. This is the main problem facing East-West relations today."[113]

Not so. In hastening to impose a Hegelian reading of what Takeuchi calls "re-wrapping," Calichman short-circuits the ethical concerns that underlie Takeuchi's project. Here, carnality is central to understanding Takeuchi's notion of Asia's "rollback." As Takeuchi contends in "Our Constitutional Feeling," great as the new Constitution is, its humanitarian values would remain hollow and aloof without the Japanese people's embodied engagement, through which "a new constitutional feeling" must be cultivated.[114] In the same way, "Western" values like freedom and equality must be "re-wrapped" precisely because they had been emptied by colonial violence and become detached from the lived realities of people outside Europe. In line with Levinas' ethics of the face of the other, for Takeuhi, the sufferings of Asia as other—it is worth noting that elsewhere he expands the notion of "Asia" to cover any oppressed nations including, for example, Cuba[115]—reveal the poverty of the West and thus must "order and ordain" the West in order to reshape it. As with Kafka's apparatus, universality (or the Law) is not self-sufficient and cannot rectify itself; it needs to be constantly re-embodied. Just as Takeuchi is all too aware that any inscription of universality cannot but be violent, the claim that the Orient must "re-embrace" the West instead proposes a dynamic notion of universality premised on a continual endeavor to establish relationality. That is, rather than construing the pursuit of the universal as simply a reversal of the East-West power dynamics,

[113] Richard Calichman, *Takeuchi Yoshimi: Displacing the West*, 63.
[114] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Watashi tachi no kenpō kankaku" [Our Constitutional Feeling], in *TYz*, vol. 9, 136-137.
[115] See Viren Murthy's section on "'Cuba Is Part of Asia': Takeuchi Yoshimi and Umesao Tadao," in *Pan-Asianism and the Legacy of the Chinese Revolution*, 169-179.

Takeuchi approaches it as the self's encounter with the other. What Takeuchi proposes, then, is not an intellectual stance but a subjective positionality.

One can now better understand what Takeuchi means by "method" in "Asia as Method," where he equates it with the "process of the subject's self-formation" and claims that "it is impossible to definitively state what this might mean."[116] "Method" as such stands opposed to telos, for it is precisely not the end product but the indefinite pathway to a deferred endpoint. Rather than the subject's epistemological tool whereby it tames the object/other as its own knowledge (and hence possession), "method" designates the incompleteness and imperfection of the subject in a state of indistinction from and perpetual exchange with its object. In so doing, Takeuchi inverts the Hegelian master-slave dialectic infused with epistemological violence into a Levinasian rapport where the other does not become subdued but partakes in the subject's perpetual struggle/resistance of self-renewal.

Nevertheless, in substituting method for methodology (i.e., analytical frameworks), Takeuchi renders "Asia as Method" vulnerable to critiques of his "romantic" tendency, even though his critics often sympathize with his resistance against objectification. Calichman, for instance, contends that Takeuchi's attempt to overcome binaries and to preserve the other could also risk turning into a passive nostalgia for a lost presence that was corrupted by an external observer. Insofar as "violence is done to the other in the very act of receiving it by the subject," the journey from the self to the other cannot but be achieved despite or rather through this act of violence which is both a destroying and a preserving. After all, isn't knowing (or even living, according to Levinas) already violent? Does "method," raised to such an impossible ethical standard, run out of steam in terms of practicality? It is here that a reckoning with the ethical reading must yield a reconfiguration of

[116] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Asia as Method," in *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, 165.

"knowing" as political action. To salvage Takeuchi's ethics of reading from "romantic nostalgia," Calichman invokes the notion of "translation":

> [I]t [this epistemic violence] is what makes the other properly singular, that is, each time different from itself. Only because the other is fundamentally other to itself can translation take place, not as a fall from one entity into another but instead as an opening up of this entity to its "own" "internal" difference. In this respect, translation reveals itself as nothing other than the movement of decontextualization; it is a radical departure away from a concrete site of origin to a place of abstraction, abstract because it doesn't properly belong there.[117]

Indeed, in this sense, taking Asia as method amounts to an embodied translational effort to retrieve values that transcend the local historical context (rather than historicizing its singularity) all the while remaining aware of the potential violence internal to that process—an act of violence that is both a destroying and a preserving. However, Calichman's "translation," construed as decontextualization, still operates within the framework of knowledge production dictated by a mechanical logic of distillation *qua* abstraction. To supplement this claim, "Asia as Method" calls for an embodied understanding of translation as affective labor, as a form of longing that inhabits the distance between the subject and the object without wanting to close it up definitively.

Harking back to Takeuchi's claim that the "antagonism between self and other […] only becomes a truth if this antagonism is a carnal pain for me,"[118] one can now better appreciate the ethical stakes here. This "carnal pain" designates the encounter with a (suffering) other as an excess that defies epistemic abstraction. To the extent that the other's suffering cannot be experienced and exceeds the realm of knowledge, it must be answered not with ideas but with action. While by no means adequate in and of itself, a subjective response by acknowledging the inherent violence in this encounter constitutes the first step toward a rapport between self and other. Acknowledging, as Stanley Cavell notes, is distinct from knowing. Cavell illustrates this distinction by drawing attention

[117] Richard Calichman, *Takeuchi Yoshimi: Displacing the West*, 8.
[118] Takeuchi Yoshimi, "*Chūgoku bungaku* no haikan to watakushi" [The Discontinuation of *Chinese Literature* and Me], in *TYz*, vol. 14, 455.

to a scenario where one responds to another person's expression of pain by saying "I know you are in pain"—an empirically impossible claim rendered meaningful as a speech act:

> But why is sympathy expressed in this way? Because your suffering makes a *claim* upon me. It is not enough that I *know* (am certain) that you suffer—I must do or reveal something (whatever can be done). In a word, I must *acknowledge* it, otherwise I do not know what "(your or his) being in pain" means.[119]

While Cavell's argument engages ordinary language philosophy and his concern lies well outside of ethics, the notion of acknowledging as a subjective act of "revealing" or exposing can nevertheless aid our understanding of Takeuchi's undertaking. In this light, Takeuchi's notion of "Asian universality" as a dynamic "re-wrapping"—which Sun Ge calls "universality as a medium"[120]—amounts to the subject's constant re-making of relationality through acknowledging the other as impenetrable and opaque. Furthermore, insofar as the other is always singular and embodied and hence can only be encountered each time as *an*-other, this process of universalization does not translate into global dominance but anticipates a coming community of plurality.

Here, Takeuchi's thinking echoes that of the Martinican poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant, who similarly grapples with the question of universality and violence in his *Poetics of Relation* (1990). Like Takeuchi, Glissant underlines the implicit violence in the act of understanding. For him, the French verb *comprendre*—consisting of "*com-*" (with) and "*prendre*" (to take), with its root in the Latin "*comprendere*" ("to seize")—bespeaks an appropriative logic of subjugation. To this, Glissant proposes as an alternative the compound word "*donner-avec*." Formed from "*donner*" (to give; to look out toward) and "*avec*" (and, with) and rendered in English as "giving-on-and-with" (at the behest of Glissant himself), "*donner-avec*" designates an ethical approach to the other that entails at once the

[119] Stanley Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging," in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 263. Cavell's emphasis.
[120] Sun Ge, Xunzhao Yazhou 寻找亚洲 [In Search of Asia] (Beijing: Yiye folio; Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 2019), 259-284.

self's opening-up as a gesture of generosity and a *being-with* as a sign of solidarity. Glissant characterizes identity, or the subject's dynamic self-formation, as a form of life-preserving violence:

> Identity as a system of relation, as an aptitude for "giving-on-and-with" [*donner-avec*], is, in contrast [to the old idea of identity as permanence], a form of violence that challenges the generalizing universal and necessitates even more stringent demands for specificity.
>
> L'identité comme une système de relation, comme aptitude à « donner-avec », est à l'opposé une forme de violence qui conteste l'universel généralisant et requiert d'autant plus la sévère exigence des spécificités.[121]

Construed as a re-orientation of the self toward an-other that calls forth the co-producing of a gift, Glissant's "*donner-avec*" re-imagines the universal as not "generalizing" but premised on specificities, as not relativizing but relational. In the same sense, "method," eluding both the subject's self-sufficiency and Hegelian teleology, names a perverse endeavor to travel the distance between self and other—at once forbidding and inviting—against all odds.

If universality, construed statically as a set of ubiquitous principles, inevitably lends itself to violence, then a more dynamic approach to universality must displace such a stasis—also dubbed "death" by Takeuchi. It proffers instead the self's opening unto other—and, in turn, unto a disorderly "universe" of plurality—as the ground for a politics of solidarity. It is in this sense that writing can be understood as a defiant act against death.

Epilogue: A Note on Friendship

In the Chinese-born American writer Yiyun Li's memoir, *Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life*, she recalls her early encounter with the "before and after" sections of American fashion magazines and her bewilderment at the definitiveness of these narratives of transformation—"*before and after*, with nothing muddling the in-between."[122] Li then reflects on her

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[121] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 142; Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 156.
[122] Yiyun Li, *Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life* (New York: Random House, 2017), 3.

own transition from an immunologist to a writer, her struggle with depression, things that remain unaccounted for in her trans-Pacific journey from China to America—her "before" and "after"—and, ultimately, her decision not to remain silent despite all that stubbornly resists articulation. She writes:

> For a while I read Katherine Mansfield's notebooks to distract myself. "Dear friend, from my life I write to you in your life," she wrote in an entry. I cried when I read the line. It reminds me of the boy from years ago who could not stop sending the designs of his dreams in his letters. [This is a classmate from her school days in China who she would later learn had committed suicide.] It reminds me too why I do not want to stop writing. The books one writes—past and present and future—are they not trying to say the same thing: *Dear friend, from my life I write to you in your life?* What a long way it is from one life to another, yet why write if not for that distance, if things can be let go, every before replaced by an after.[123]

Indeed, why read, too, were it not for that very distance? If, as Yiyun Li has it, one can learn to cherish the distance between self and other while knowing that to try closing it up would be a taxing exercise in futility—if, rather than the death that is (for Takeuchi) reductive representationalism, the encounter with the other can be experienced as a laborious endeavor to inhabit this in-between-ness—then maybe we can begin to appreciate both Takeuchi Yoshimi's "Asia as Method" as an ethical undertaking and Calichman's (and others') not unsympathetic critique of its "romantic" tendency, namely, Takeuchi's attempt to respect the singularity of the other and guard it against appropriation by institutional knowledge. Then and only then, too, can we re-envision "method," or what Takeuchi terms "the subject's self-formation," as an indefinite process of becoming—a *becoming-oneself* that is always simultaneously a *becoming-with*. Herein lies the political potential of Takeuchi's reconfiguration of (Asian) universality as the self's unfolding unto an-other that is irreducibly and properly singular, for which friendship furnishes a befitting metaphor.

[123] Ibid., 20. Li's emphasis.

At the basis of politics is a befuddling arithmetic problem. If, as Hannah Arendt posits in *The Human Condition*, human plurality constitutes the foundation of political action,[124] then the becoming possible of any political community demands a leap from the singular to the multiple. As with universality, then, one would do well to construe as its first step the self's opening unto *an*-other. Friendship, as it were, converts one into two.[125] In this light, while to trace Maruyama Masao and Takeuchi Yoshimi's influence on each other as prolific intellectuals would be a daunting task not only given the sheer volume of writings but also because of the countless conversations that happened off-page, it is only befitting to end this chapter with a brief reflection on their friendship.

Despite their diverging approaches to postwar Japan's political conditions, Maruyama maintains that his and Takeuchi's thinking are interconnected like creeks joined by groundwater.[126] Commending Takeuchi's "rich sensibility for the other" (豊かな他者感覚), Maruyama invokes as example an exchange he once had with Takeuchi before visiting the United States for the first time in the early 1960s. To Maruyama's concern that he could not converse well in English, Takeuchi replied: "Just think that everywhere you go, there're people like you living there" (どこにも同じ人間が住んでいると思えばいいんだよ).[127] To reassure his friend, Takeuchi invites him to entertain an unsophisticated belief in the universal potentiality of friendship, a belief on human grounds that informs much of his own writing. To do so is to be hospitable to the idea of universality—or rather, to re-imagine universality *as* hospitality. This hospitality, understood as an openness to the indefinite possibility of bond, unites the singular and the plural with an act of aspiring.

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124 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018), esp. 7-21.
125 Literature has proliferated since Aristotle's thesis on the significance of friendship (*philia*) for politics (*politia*) in *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is, however, both beyond this chapter's scope and beside the point to dwell too much on its philosophical implications.
126 Maruyama Masao, "Ro Jin no kai: Hao-san e no tsuitō (amari genkō)" 魯迅の会　好さんへの追悼（あまり原稿） [For the Lu Xun Society: In Memoriam of Mr. Hao (remaining manuscript)], in *Maruyama Masao shū besshū* 丸山眞男集別集 [Collected Works of Maruyama Masao (Additions)], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2014), 234.
127 Maruyama Masao, "Hao-san to no tsukiai" [My Friendship with Mr. Hao (Takeuchi Yoshimi)], in *MMs*, vol. 10, 359.

But to measure what Maruyama terms Takeuchi's "sensibility for the other" in intellectual historical terms would perhaps miss the point. For doesn't the indefinite potentiality of friendship—of befriending as part of one's own indefinite becoming—encompass future interlocutions and camaraderie that cannot but lie beyond the bounds of history? Scholars have remarked extensively on the different statures of Maruyama and Takeuchi: Whereas schools of thought and academic circles have formed around the former, the latter remains to this day a somewhat solitary figure in the history of ideas.[128] Nevertheless, if one conceives of writers' legacies as gestures of friendship, an alternative metrics of longevity may apply. As with friendship, which entails recognizing oneself in the eyes of another, Derrida suggests, to commence a conversation already entails preparing for a future beyond death, when one or the other no longer returns the gaze. "*[P]hilía* begins with the possibility of survival."[129] Hence, of the many joys that friendship affords, "none is comparable to this unequalled hope, to this ecstasy towards a future which will go beyond death."[130] In the same way, both Maruyama and Takeuchi wrote tirelessly as participants in and survivors of the war striving to make sense of Japan's defeat—not so much, perhaps, to "crystallize" carnal experience into ideas but so that a collective pacifist undertaking should outlive the living and the dead both in Japan and in the vast territories once ravaged by it.

In 1977, Takeuchi Yoshimi lay dying at Morimoto Hospital in Kichijōji, West Tokyo. Esophageal cancer had deprived him of his eloquence and in-person meetings were carefully eschewed. During these last days, Maruyama Masao would often drop by just to enquire of Takeuchi's wife Teruko how he was feeling. Two weeks before Takeuchi's passing, Teruko handed Maruyama a written note, beginning with "To Maruyama-kun." The scrap of paper would become

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128 Sun Ge, *Zhunei Hao de beilun* [The Paradox of Takeuchi Yoshimi], 15-16. See also Tsurumi Shunsuke, "Shinpo o utagau hōhō: Ichii Saburō e no Takeuchi Yoshimi no eikyō o chūshin ni" [How to Doubt Progress: Focusing on the Influence of Takeuchi Yoshimi on Ichii Saburō], in *Mukon no nashonnarizumu o koete: Takeuchi Yoshimi o saikō suru*, 48-50.
129 Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 2005), 13.
130 Ibid., 3-4.

the last of many exchanges between the two. The invalid had apparently scribbled it with pencil while lying on his back, barely conscious. Despite his last effort, Takeuchi's note remained mostly indecipherable. Only one legible word recurred throughout the lines, as Maruyama would recall. And it went: "Endeavor (努力)! … Endeavor (努力)! … Endeavor (努力)! …"[131]

[131] Maruyama Masao, "Hao-san to no tsukiai" [My Friendship with Mr. Hao (Takeuchi Yoshimi)], in *MMs*, vol. 10, 361.

Coda Language and Darkness

> Let us not place any bets on the homonymy, in French, between *tendre* and *tendre*, on the relations between, on the one hand, the immense semantic network and all the properly intentional senses of the verb *tendre*: in the dominant tradition in French, it connotes rather oriented activities, perhaps even virility (Latin, *tendere*, French, *tendre*: to tend, to hold out, to tender, to extend, to stretch, to lay out, to set up [*dresser*], to hold out one's hand or to set up a trap and attend to it, to give or to ensnare, to orient oneself toward, to intend to, intentionally to seek, and so forth); and on the other hand, the instance of the attribute *tendre*: the latter often connotes fragility, delicacy, a rather passive vulnerability that is nonintentional, exposed, and rather childlike or feminine in the same dominant tradition of its privileged figures. Thus, in extending privileges to the caress, Levinas no doubt put the accent upon the tender of the [feminine] Beloved. But in opening it up onto peace (an impossible peace, at any rate—beyond the possible), he also implied the gift or offering of that which tends or extends, or tends to hold out to the other. With the chance of quasi-homonymy, the haunting of the tender comes back, in an essential, irreducible, and necessary fashion, to visit the other. The other, the tender—extend her, extend him. The proof of the tender is only in tending [*le tendre ne s'éprouve qu'à tendre*].
>
> Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy* (2005)[1]

From late summer 2023 to early spring 2024, I was a member of the Banban Club (バンバンクラブ) in Tokyo. Short for the Club of Running and Walking Companions at Yoyogi Park (代々木公園・伴走伴歩クラブ), Banban is a community where visually impaired people regularly run with sighted companions by holding a tether between the runners' hands, allowing information to be transmitted through touch. Upon joining, like all other *bansōshas* (伴走者)—or "running companions," which Banban takes care to distinguish from "guide runners"—I had to undergo an obligatory eye mask simulation, training blindfolded under the guidance of Ms. S., a seasoned

[1] Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 93-94.

companion, to better understand the world of visually impaired athletes. The experience included a walk followed by a slow-paced run along the footpath; hands-on learning of the basic terminology needed to signal objects such as ramps, curves, and gratings; and, finally, an unalerted scenario where Ms. S. silently let go of the tether. Confused and panicked, I was left standing still on what felt like the brink of an abyss for several minutes before she eventually came to my rescue.

As I would come to understand over the months that followed, during my many runs with different partners on Saturday mornings, the lesson I'd learned while blindfolded consisted not only of what it means to imagine the life of an-other but also of the corporeal limits of such imagination. Indeed, were it not for these limits, language would be superfluous. Running with a blind partner thus revealed itself to be a radically different experience from the solitary, pensive sport that I had long known. Where running solo contents itself with silence, *bansō* (accompanied running) is premised on incessant communication via both touch and language—and, more often than not, touch *as* language and vice versa. To simultaenously orient oneself and to partake in the orientation of an-other demanded a sort of attentiveness that I had been heretofore unattuned to. For once holding the tether, attention to the physical surroundings becomes a responsibility for the person on the other end. I once received an email via the Banban listserv regarding the annual senryū contest for the blind and people with low vision, with a list of award-winning poems attached. One of them read: "Give unto me/ Who can't quite see / A bouquet of words" (見えにくい我に言葉の花束を).

This project is a bouquet of words that aspires to remedy the always already ongoing decay of sensibility, all the while acknowledging that language and the institutions that govern through it—including politics and literature—more often than not collude with rather than resist this decay. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed reconsiders Kant's thesis on orientation. Using the scenario where one walks blindfolded into an unfamiliar space, Kant argues that to become oriented amounts first and foremost to knowing the difference between the left and right sides of one's body. Insofar as,

for Kant as for Ahmed, orientation depends on the bodily inhabitanting of that space, to gradually feel one's way in space means extending one's body toward the "just about"—that is, holding oneself out toward the unmastered other. "Orientations are about how we begin;" Ahmed writes, "how we proceed from 'here,' which affects how what is 'there' appears, how it presents itself."[2] In a similar way, the constellation of modern Japanese writers studied in this project attempted to feel their way, in manners both literal and figurative, against the grain of times in critical moments of disorientation. What Ernst Bloch calls the "darkness of the lived moment" registers nothing more than the sheer inaccessibility of a panoramic vantage point over the temporal being that humans are—in the same sense that Takeuchi insists on characterizing Lu Xun as an agent of living (*seikatsusha*) rather than a prophet.[3]

Taken as a whole, this study thus reconceptualizes disorientation as a liminal experience that contains "the unmastered Now and its unopened futures."[4] Proceeding from Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's struggle with the self-enclosure of the literary establishment to Nakano Shigeharu's bid to undo the sense of rootlessness that haunted the Japanese Left and, eventually, to Takeuchi Yoshimi's effort to re-invent Asian universality as the self's dynamic opening unto the other, the study suggests that one's self-orientation frequently entails the orientations of others. Thus, whereas the authors examined in this study's chapters represent a minor lineage of resistance against sweeping ideological shifts taking place on a scale that defied isolated attempts at redirection, they nevertheless instill into the Japanese literary and intellectual tradition possibilities beyond the form of resilient individualism that frequently indulges in its own ethical integrity.

[2] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 8.
[3] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1, 297.
[4] Ibid.

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