

Discursive Provocateurs: Countering Alienation Through Fiction

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Abstract

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By setting hermeneutical analysis within contemporary discourse, this dissertation reveals that in the period from the end of World War II to the early 1980s globalization in Japan occurring under the auspices of the same ideals that had sustained modernization produces alienation, even within their centers of production. Through practice these contradictions become naturalized and thus invisible. However, by representing the various intellectual positions connected to an ideal as constellations within specific settings, fiction offers a medium for sustained consideration or reconsideration of inherent paradoxes. These texts highlight and question aspects of globalizing ideals within specific contexts. Thus, the dissertation points to the importance of fiction in closing the distance between the global and local and adapting globalizing ideals to local environments, a function overlooked by institutional practices that favor science and technology over the humanities.

This dissertation centers on four authors who employ a similar literary form to counter alienation. Through this methodology, Ishikawa Jun, Inoue Mitsuharu, Nakagami Kenji, and Abe Kōbō represent vying positions in the production of globalizing ideals set within contexts that, while fictional, are reflective of contemporary situations. This mode of representation combined with a lack of denouement produces a medium that simultaneously delegitimizes certain globalizing ideals and encourages local adaptations or alternatives. In other words, these authors attempt to redress the distance between the global and local and resituate narrative production within specific historical and cultural contexts. The project delineates how these authors yoke a particular form to contemporary context to question dominant discourses and their underlying assumptions and reveals how fiction functions beyond representation to support localization of the global.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

As long as motivations remain tied to norms requiring justification, the introduction of legitimate power into the reproduction process means that the “fundamental contradiction” can break out in a questioning, rich in practical consequences, of the norms that still underlie administrative action.

— Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimization Crisis*¹

Globalization and the concomitant precedence conceded to science and technology presents one of the greatest challenges to the study of literature today. The significance attributed to science and technology over literature is logical, perhaps even natural. After all, scientific and technological advances are materially implicated in global developments that appear to diminish the distances between people. The march toward globalization that developed with the onset of modernization has, however, not been without strife. World War II, for example, exemplifies how ill prepared communities around the world were to grapple with the changes wrought by modernization. That is to say, while advances in science and technology continue to redefine the material practices of daily life, many of the ideals employed to legitimate globalizing practices have not been modified apace, or even accorded appropriate attention. This state of affairs is woefully apparent here in the United States in the jingoistic “war on terror,” which does not take into account U.S. complicity in the production of “terrorism.” In many ways, the perpetuation of the same ideals that justified and sustained the conflicts that marked the period of modernization will likely foster similar hostilities.

Over an extended period following the end of World War II, four writers in Japan take up this issue through their fiction. Ishikawa Jun, Inoue Mitsuharu, Nakagami Kenji and Abe Kōbō not only challenge prevalent ideals through the content of their stories but they manipulate literary form in order to

¹ Habermas, Jürgen, *Legitimization Crisis*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975) 69.

intervene in the unconscious reproduction of these ideals. The methodology they employ reveals not only their concerns for their communities but serves as a mechanism to (re)initiate discursive production in the reader. It suggests that in the period of rapid economic recovery, these authors perceive alienation as a prevalent condition. Yet the pessimism they express is tinged with the hope that this condition can be rectified. Furthermore, their methodology opens up understanding about an important function of fiction—one that moves fiction well beyond notions of entertainment and into the realm of critical social function. In this sense, fiction not only mediates but contributes. It not only represents but produces.

The alienation these authors identify is a perception of a systemic condition perpetuated through discourse. Its conception is based on Karl Marx's theorization of labor as a dialectical process. He argues that "through estranged labor man not only creates his relationship to the object and to the act of production as to men that are alien and hostile to him; he also creates the relationship in which other men stand to his production and to his product, and the relationship in which he stands to these other men."² In this scenario, once a product is made and before it is integrated into society it is alien. Its production has taken something from the producer for which compensation has not been made. This alienation represents the hiatus between the object's production and integration. However, once it has been incorporated into society, the producer gains social standing, which supersedes the sense of alienation. In this way, Sean Sayers argues that alienation "represents the beginning of the process of emancipation through which human beings are gradually freed from a condition of natural immediacy and develop self-consciousness and freedom."³ For Marx, under the historically determining conditions of capitalism, the dialectic is interrupted, making it impossible for the producer to achieve supersession.

² Marx, Karl, "Estranged Labor," *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. by Martin Milligan (New York: International Publishers, 1964) 116.

³ Sayers, Sean, "Alienation as a Critical Concept," *International Critical Thought*, Vo. 1, No. 3 (2011) 292.

From this early conception of alienation, considerable critical speculation has occurred, for example, in the work of such thinkers as Habermas, Jean-François Lyotard, and others concerned with articulating ideas of the “postmodern” in which the ideal embodied in what Lyotard has called “metanarratives” (sometimes “master narratives”) no longer matches the actual social condition writers may face.⁴ In many cases, this tension has been treated, in general following Marx and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, as dialectical, to indicate the hypothesized processes by which a thesis, challenged by its antithesis, leads to sublation. In the process, the thesis is cancelled, transformed, and then transformed by sublation.⁵

In the work of the four authors studied here, however, the sources of alienation are more specific, and the conceptualization more particular to the actual social conditions that inform their works. For example, Nakagami describes a class system that inhibits social mobility, while Inoue questions the ideal of corporate paternalism. As representations of a contemporary condition, their works read as critiques of systems in place as the nation moved away from defeat and grew into a major economic power. Yet, despite this, they express dismay at the distance between prevalent ideals and practice. This perception of distance is critical to a condition of alienation. It is created by what Rahel Jaeggi terms “relationlessness.”

... alienation denotes relationlessness of a particular kind: a detachment or separation from something that in fact belongs together, the loss of a connection between two things that nevertheless stand in relation to one another. Being alienated from something means having become distanced from something in which one is in fact involved or to which one is in fact related—or in any case ought to be.⁶

⁴ For Habermas, advanced capitalism presages crises emerging from persistent alienation. For Lyotard, discursive alienation leads to a condition of paradox that stymies completion of the dialectical process. See: Habermas; Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geof Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁵ The central treatment of this process occurs in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind*, relying on the German expression, *aufheben*. 104-105. See: Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. by J.B. Baillie (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003) 104-105.

⁶ Jaeggi, Rahel, *Alienation* (New York: Columbia U Press, 2014) 25.

This “relationlessness” reflects a perception of distance or disconnection between things that are in fact or should be related. That is to say, even though the relationship is perceived as disconnected, describing something as alienated suggests that at one point in history it was connected or that it should be connected. The two describe very different situations. The first points to a historical progression that has disrupted a relationship perceived as important. The second reflects a belief system that has yet to be fulfilled.

These two implications of alienation have produced lively discourse on its viability as an intellectual concept. According to Herbert Marcuse, as a concept alienation is “questionable” because as a condition it precludes an awareness of it.

I have just suggested that the concept of alienation seems to become questionable when the individuals identify themselves with the existence that is imposed upon them and have in it their own development and satisfaction. This identification is not illusion but reality. However, the reality constitutes a more progressive stage of alienation. The latter has become entirely objective; the subject which is alienated is swallowed up by its alienated existence. There is only one dimension, and it is everywhere and in all forms. The achievements of progress defy ideological indictment as well as justification; before their tribunal, the ‘false consciousness’ of their rationality becomes the true consciousness.⁷

Marcuse argues, essentially, that the lures, such as technology, that have drawn people into a condition of alienation are so powerful that they overwhelm a subjective awareness of the alienating impact of those lures. The subject is no longer able to differentiate from this reality and become aware that he or she exists in a condition of alienation. Marcuse’s interpretation of alienation is historical. It does not argue the transparency of one’s condition was always impossible. Because contemporary subjects have immersed themselves so completely within a lifestyle that constitutes alienation, they cannot see that they are alienated. Theoretically, then, alienation critique should not occur as a lack of awareness of one’s own alienation would preclude such critique. This view seriously shortchanges the power of

⁷ Marcuse, Herbert, *One Dimensional Man* (London: Sphere Books, 1964) 11.

literary works to mediate just such an awareness and to engage it with the intention of clarification or transformation.

The second area of debate arises from this problem and the more prescriptive aspect of some alienation critique, i.e. a tendency toward declarations of “relationlessness” from what should be. In this case, Jaeggi warns, alienation critique has a tendency toward paternalism.

... if the foundation of modern morality and the fundamental conviction of liberal conceptions of society is the idea “that it should be left to each individual how he lives his own life”—that individuals are sovereign with respect to interpreting their own lives—then a theory of alienation that relies on objective perfectionist ideals appears to reject this idea in favor of a paternalist perspective that claims to “know better.”⁸

Since alienation describes a perception of distance or detachment between two things that should be related, the potential exists for critics to claim a severed relationship between two things that were never connected. In this case, the critic may be promoting change that he or she believes would benefit society and using a diagnosis of alienation in order to further the argument. In this case, alienation critique does not necessarily derive from widespread experience but from a paternalistic consciousness like Marcuse’s that wants to provide guidance toward a more utopian vision. However, this criticism of alienation becomes an indictment only if individual corroboration of the condition is not sufficient.

Neither describes the alienation that informs the construction of the works in question in this study.

These authors aestheticize alienation. That is to say, they depict the condition as a lived experience in a particular place and time. Through a variety of techniques, they incorporate the ideals propagated in the justification of certain systems and then use the story’s narrative to show the discrepancy between the ideal and lived experience. For most of the works, this means employing settings based on contemporary society. In the worlds they create, contemporary ideals are set in contrast to the events of the story. This indicates that, though they may not have used the word themselves, they possessed a

⁸ Jaeggi 29.

powerful awareness of and concern about alienation. Thus, Nakagami sets his characterization of a dangerously discriminatory class system within the framework of social mobility. Furthermore, they do not take specific positions on the issues they raise, even though their works can generally be described as critiques. Rather, they create or recreate a discourse through their texts that provides a guided reading of a contemporary situation, but in the final moments of the story, open up the discourse to individual reader interpretation.

This final characteristic is distinctive of this form. In three of the works, this feature is structurally developed as a final scene, a kind of epilogue following the end of the story that functions to resituate what has come before within a larger framework and to provoke questioning about an ideal. It unties the denouement established just prior to it, reflecting perhaps the contemporary uncertainties of the times. However, it also distinctly shifts the interpretive function from the narrator of the text to the reader. In doing so, the authors have made their texts venues for challenging ideals central to the development of the story, and because their stories reflect a contemporary situation, they serve as a call to individuals to re-examine the ideals that justify contemporary directions. They do not simply represent or interpret the contemporary condition, they function as a tool to provoke potentially discursive production in the reader. That is to say, they function as a bridge between relatively universal ideals and the local individual.

These ideals—cultural nationalism, corporate paternalism, social mobility, and sovereignty—are not simply ethical notions propagated to enrich or secure life; they were and continue to be critical notions justifying institutional practices associated with globalization. They are ideals disseminated through state policies, corporate practices, and the media. They are ideals that were fortified, if not developed, during the period of modernization. For example, the ideal of social mobility emerges as an ideal under the auspices of the U.S. occupation of Japan following the war. However, its roots lay in its precursor *risshin shusse*, which combines two earlier ideals—“using knowledge and talent as measures of social

status” (*risshin*) and “increasing one’s prosperity and social prominence” (*shusse*)—but in the late 1800s comes to denote upward mobility.⁹ As Timothy Van Compernelle notes in his study on the relationship between the modern novel and an upwardly mobile national subject, “*risshin shusse*, as two formerly distinct but related discourses cobbled together into one, was bound to the project of modernization, for it was yoked to the new socioeconomic system emerging in the wake of the Restoration.”¹⁰ This vertical conception of mobility becomes more universalized under postwar state policies that disseminate the tools for mobility to a broader spectrum of people—education is made available to everyone. These policies were not generated by a local sense of need to provide a more level playing field for every member of society, but as result of having lost a war waged in tandem with Germany and Italy against multiple countries.

This process exemplifies the universalization of ideals that has become associated with globalization as a process.¹¹ Japan, in part because of its recent defeat and a critical depletion of the resources needed to support its people, absorbed much of the changes arising from ideals disseminating from the United States without violent resistance.¹² However, this dissemination is not always so relatively conflict free. William H. Mott IV, who served as a military and diplomatic officer in the U.S. Army before pursuing scholarship on globalization, describes conflicts arising from globalization in a way that highlights its nature in terms of an alienation that pits the local against the global.

A cultural dichotomy between the global and the local amplifies both political-economic tensions across cultures and contradictions between local perspectives and the global perspective. Rather than converging, the globalizing metanarratives—liberalism,

⁹ Van Compernelle, Timothy J., *Struggling Upward: Worldly Success and the Japanese Novel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U Asia Center, 2016) 3.

¹⁰ Van Compernelle 4.

¹¹ Academic treatment of globalization defines it in multiple ways. For this study, it is conceived as process. See: Krishnaswamy, Revathi, “The Criticism of Culture and the Culture of Criticism: At the Intersection of Postcolonialism and Globalization Theory,” *Diacritics*, Vo. 32, No. 2 (Summer 2002) 106-126.

¹² Other factors have been identified as contributing to the relative smoothness of the transitions taking place under the U.S. occupation. See: Dobbins, James F., “America’s Role in Nation-building: From Germany to Iraq,” *Survival*, Vo. 45, No. 4 (Winter 2003-04) 87-110; Monten, Jonathan, “Intervention and State-Building: Comparative Lessons from Japan, Iraq and Afghanistan,” *The Annals*, Vo. 656, No. 1 (Nov. 2014) 173-191.

capitalism, and democracy—coexist in deep, persistent tension with each other and with these static cultures.¹³

On the one hand, Mott acknowledges the distance between the global and the local, yet he never questions the validity of the metanarratives, i.e. ideals, themselves. While “liberalism, capitalism, and democracy” may exemplify a popular consensus in the United States, they have neither achieved the status of truth nor achieved popular consensus in many parts of the world. In fact, “liberalism, capitalism, and democracy” have historically been contested ideals.¹⁴ Furthermore, ideals, which are both founded upon and generate consensus, should not “coexist in deep, persistent tension” if the process through which they were developed possesses a flexibility that allows for incorporation rather than coercion. Given these conditions, then, globalization exercised through these ideals could not be expected to proceed smoothly. Rather than evidencing local instability or weakness, unrest or resistance to convergence suggests problems with the ideals.

Globalization is thus a complex, inexorable process that refers most broadly to an increasing connectedness worldwide. This complexity arises in part from the spatial and historical breadth of the process. For this reason, Lisa Lowe describes it in terms of geohistory:

By geohistorical, we mean that globalization is not merely a contemporary stage, but rather the longer, extended set of diverse processes that have linked multiple spaces through logics at once political, economic, and cultural. Neither evenly integrating nor rendering homogeneous all parts of the world, these processes have varied in time and location and taken place quite differently in unlike parts of the world. Each space, perspective, and temporality brought together through global processes has a presence in making and transforming our contemporary world condition.¹⁵

Lowe’s description counters the notion of globalization as synonymous with universalization. What globalization does indicate is a broadening and multiplication of links between localities. The shape of

¹³ Ibid. 174.

¹⁴ Liberalism emerges as a concept during The Enlightenment in opposition to hereditary aristocracy. In the Middle Ages, capitalism was associated with usury. Democracy, though rooted in practices of ancient Greece and Rome, re-emerges as opposition to autocracy in the early Modern period.

¹⁵ Lowe, Lisa, “Metaphors of Globalization,” *Interdisciplinarity and Social Justice*, ed. by Joe Parker, Ranu Samantrai and Mary Romero (New York: State U of New York Press) 38.

these relationships depend in part on the global logics that govern the interests in a locality and the unique characteristics of the locality. This web of relationships is sufficiently complex that Lowe concludes that verisimilitude cannot possibly present an accurate representation. Instead, she suggests affective representation that “mediates its ‘structure of feeling’ but also inaugurates a critical genealogy of the representational traditions that have constituted, however inadequately, the manners of knowing its diverse conditions” as a possibility for representation.¹⁶ Thus, globalization presents new challenges to representation. In particular, she challenges the metaphorical implications of words like “modernization” and “advanced” used to make comparisons between societies, which not only institute a pejorative hierarchy but obscures the possibility for building constructive dialogue between the global and the local. Lowe argues for incorporating into language means for diminishing the distances that reflect an alienation arising from globalization.

The failure to do so threatens immense consequences. As exemplified, for instance, by Donald Trump’s successful bid for the presidency using language that oversimplifies the complexities of international relationships in a world in which economic bonds are not contained within states, questions of global stability come into view. In response to this and exigencies arising from a valuation of science and technology over the fields of study that contribute to the development of ethical, if not humane, exercise of these developments, the academy is currently responding to structural crises that appear largely to have derived generally from excessively narrowing fields of study. This issue has principally taken form in the field of literary study in two ways.

The first concerns a university structure that gives precedence to the notion of nation. David Leiwei Li and Ted Mack, for example, argue against nation as the dominant conceptual framework for literary study. Mack, a scholar attached to an area studies program, argues, “While the nation has been the

¹⁶ Ibid. 38.

dominant logic by which we imagine so much during the modern period, not the least of which is literature, it is not the only logic by which people have conceived of literature or their world, nor is it the only way people can.”¹⁷ His work into literary production of the Japanese diaspora in Brazilian communities and Japanese language schools in the Seattle area counter the notion that a body of literature can or should be defined in terms of the physical borders of a nation-state. More broadly, Li, an Asian-American literature scholar, argues that “the drastic transformation in world economy and international politics since the end of the Cold War is accompanied by concurrent efforts in the humanities to question the validity of a nation-bound conception of culture.”¹⁸ In an age in which technology has made transmission across the boundaries of nation-state quotidian events, he questions the logical viability of maintaining the framework of nation with academic institutions. Basically, globalization has brought the modernistic concept of the nation-state as frame for academic study or organization into question.

The second stream arises in connection with the first. As Li points out, “If the humanities comes into being at a point when Europe dominates the world system, how does it reconstitute the world of knowledge after the political decolonization of Asia and Africa and the apparent neocolonization of the globe by late capital?”¹⁹ What he suggests is that despite the sea changes occurring politically and economically, the academy still retains the disparities institutionalized during the period of European colonization. Joseph D. Parker and Ranu Samantrai suggest that these issues may be addressed through greater interdisciplinarity that is informed by a notion of justice that is not fixed as a concrete truth.²⁰

¹⁷ Mack, Ted, “Seattle’s Little Tokyo: *Bundan* Fiction and the Japanese Diaspora,” Dennis Washburn and James Dorsey, eds., *Reading Material: The Production of Narratives, Genres, and Literary Identities* (West Lafayette, IN: Association for Japanese Literary Studies, 2007) 8. See also: Hibi Yoshitaka, *Japaniizu · Amerika: imin bungaku · shuppan bungaku · shūyōjo* (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2014) 15.

¹⁸ Li, David Leiwei, *Globalization and the Humanities* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong U Press, 2004) 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 3.

²⁰ Parker, Joe and Ranu Samantrai, “Interdisciplinarity and Social Justice: An Introduction,” *Interdisciplinarity and Social Justice: Revisioning Academic Accountability*, ed. by Joe Parker, Ranu Samantrai and Mary Romero (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010) 23.

As the crisis of legitimacy for the modern academy continues apace, its claim to neutrality and the objectivity of Enlightenment-derived forms of science seems decreasingly convincing amidst the ongoing proliferation and promiscuity of interdisciplinary knowledge practices. The demand for accountability to the changing epistemological landscape, whether aimed at disciplines or at interdisciplinary fields, works against the domestication of knowledge that inevitably accompanies institutional success.²¹

Parker and Samantrai set systems of knowledge within a much broader landscape than was conceived during the Eurocentric Enlightenment. The “domestication of knowledge” that occurred as a result of “institutional success” overrode systems of knowledge purveyed by institutions that in turn are deemed less successful. However, if “neutrality” and “objectivity” are to be preserved, then the academy must change. Parker and Samantrai suggest as a curative incorporating greater flexibility into the institutional structure to ensure equitable representation of bodies of knowledge throughout the world. In particular, they argue for the development of a flexible notion of justice to underlie academic structures. That is to say, these structures need to reflect that throughout the world multiple understandings of justice exist, each with its own logic of legitimation.

Arguably, what underlies this notion of flexible definitions of justice is a desire for inclusion. Essentially, what Parker and Samantrai are arguing for is an academic, or institutional, response to “relationlessness”—an institutional response to alienation. Furthermore, what is significant about these studies is their focus on finding ways to restructure the academy with systems that encourage a greater multiplicity of voices. As if in answer to the concerns expressed in Jaeggi’s analysis of the pitfalls of alienation as interpretive schema, these scholars may be taking paternalistic positions, but they do so with the ultimate goal of a restructuring that removes the need for paternalism. This study is in part intended as an answer to that call.

²¹ Ibid. 23

By examining works that describe states of alienation, this study contributes local interpretations of the condition to the broader discourse of globalization. The authors identify ideals at work in a local context and time and demonstrate how their practice does not align with the values expressed by the ideal. The context, broadly speaking, is the period of Japan's rapid economic recovery. During this period—from 1945 to 1991—Japan's economy became more globally bound and dramatic shifts occurred in social structures.²² John W. Dower notes that the postwar government, recognizing the end of liberal capitalism, instituted government-directed economic development that would ensure a competitive position within the global economy.

In the new world order, it was to be expected that countries such as China and India would emerge as producers and exporters of textiles and other light industrial products, depriving the Japanese of these traditional markets. Japan had no choice, then, but to seek its import niche elsewhere, namely, in the production of high-value-added manufactures that simultaneously required a heavy input of labor.²³

The redevelopment of heavy industry away from military production to export of electronic and communications equipment, mining and farming machinery, vehicles, and precision instruments, such as gauges, are representative of the changes that fostered closer links to a global market. Notably, these changes to the economy emerged in contravention to occupation plans to limit redevelopment to light industry, such as textiles. The occupation was much more successful in pushing through the institution of reforms based on American democracy.²⁴ Throughout this period, a reformation took place in which institutions consciously adapted a foreign style of governance to traditional systems.²⁵ That is to say,

²² The date set for the end of economic recovery coincides with the end of the “economic bubble.” This occurs when the Bank of Japan finally curbed the appreciation of the yen. Until this time, the metanarratives that had been driving economic recovery had not been challenged by economic conditions.

²³ Dower, John W., *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999) 539.

²⁴ Notably, these reforms were often approved by the Diet. However, Dower notes that behind the scenes, the occupation often coerced passage of certain measures and most significantly the Japanese Constitution. Dower 374-404.

²⁵ Institutions like the Keizai Doyukai (The Japan Committee for Economic Development) adapted prewar ideas and practices to occupation policies. See: Suzuki, Yuzuru, “The Adaptation of Western Management Ideologies: The Revised Capitalism of Keizai Doyukai in Postwar Japan,” *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, Vo. 14, No. 1 (Nov. 2005) 70-83.

much of the discourse was being guided by an occupying force and then modified by local institutions. Paradoxically, it was a period in which despite the institution of democratic reforms, the gap between the institutional and the nation, or the people, was increasing. This phenomenon represents a further division of the notion of local. That is to say, that within globalization discourse, the meaning of the term “local” is not a stable signifier. Its meaning varies depending on the context. Here, the local reflects experience that is shaped by local institutions—the state, educational institutions, and business organizations—but centers on individuals.

Given the general improvement in the quality of life that the economic recovery precipitated, a general sense of well being might be expected to be reflected in the work of authors writing during this period. However, the works of Ishikawa Jun, Inoue Mitsuharu, Nakagami Kenji and Abe Kōbō describe concern over a discrepancy between the ideals propagated by and through local institutions and the practice of them. They portray an interruption or failure of the process of sublation, which would incorporate the local into the global. That is to say, by depicting the local within the framework of an ideal used to legitimize certain globalizing practices, they contrast the claims inherent in the ideal to local outcomes. In this sense, their work provides valuable perceptions that contribute to understanding the relationship between alienation and globalization. In this respect, my use of the notion of alienation is an explicit attempt to specify more exactly a conflict in which abstract discourse and discursive production are simultaneously at stake.

While these authors clearly express cynicism toward the gap between the local and the global, the form they adopt in their responses reveals not only a methodology for countering this alienation but a hope that the alienation can be redressed. Each responds with varying degrees of cynicism. However, each work is also characterized by a form that encourages discursive production at the level of the individual. The form of their intervention is not to dictate but to depict a local framework in which to provoke questioning of ideals legitimating practices connected to and promoting globalization. In this way, these

texts treat globalizing ideals as products of sublation and conceive fiction as a means to incorporate constructively the local or the particular into discourse connected to globalization.

The key to this methodology resides in a distinct element of these works—a lack of denouement. Since denouement provides resolution while alienation forestalls sublation, denouement would be appropriate only if the writer were willing to suggest completion. That is to say, denouement in a story devoted to depicting alienation would characterize it as an inevitable state of existence. These authors, however, use literary form to transfer in the final moments of their stories, the responsibility for supplying a conclusion onto the reader. While this interpretive function is generally at work in fiction, the employment of a lack of denouement represents a strategic modification made to fiction in order to answer environmental demands.

The idea of literary form adapting to environmental demands has been taken up by Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey. Both argue that the novel functioned to help transitions to modernization through modeling. In her 2008 study, Mary Poovey argues for the novel as a means to mediate the transition to modern economy. “I have come to understand this function in terms of *value*: at the end of the seventeenth century, one of the functions performed by imaginative writing in general was to mediate value – that is, to help people understand the new credit economy and the market model of value that it promoted.”²⁶ In this sense, the novel serves as a translation tool, helping people adapt to a new economic system. While Poovey limits the function of the novel to promoting understanding changing economic circumstances, Nancy Armstrong takes it further. She suggests that the British novel was critical in the development of modern subjectivity.

It came into being, I believe, as writers sought to formulate a kind of subject that had not yet existed in writing. Once formulated in fiction, however, the subject proved uniquely capable of reproducing itself not only in authors but also in readers, in other novels, and across British culture in law, medicine, moral and political philosophy,

²⁶ Poovey, Mary, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2008) 1.

biography, history, and other forms of writing that took the individual as their most basic unit.²⁷

The novel here is clearly not just representational of the setting in which it was produced. Rather, it is innovative. It imagines a subjectivity suited to the contemporary condition, which was then reproduced within the reader. From these perspectives, in the period of modernization, fiction functioned to help readers adapt to a world in which the individual figured more prominently.

The works included in this study, however, are clearly not intended to serve as models for a particular subjectivity. In turning over the final responsibility for resolution to the reader, the authors have also abandoned a paternalistic role like that of the novelists identified by Armstrong and Poovey. That is not to say that these endings do not model. To some extent they model a perception of aporia, a representation of alienation as inescapable. Yet, the form itself counters that representation. The lack of denouement functions paradoxically, by insisting on recognition that the difficulty, the aporia, is not casual, not attributable to simple subjective mistakes, and cannot be covered over by appeals to an ideal that is no longer directly available. In this way, the authors render a pervasive ideal, which functions largely outside of visible cognitive notice, which supplies a context that potentially stimulates individual discursive production. By combining representation of discourse with a lack of denouement, these authors move realism beyond representation to cognitive intervention, thus providing a means for bridging the distance between global and local. In this, they serve an important social function.

Ishikawa Jun, Cultural Nation and Paradox

At a time when many authors were reflecting on the war and its immediate impact, Ishikawa Jun writes a story that interprets the instability and transformations occurring in the immediate postwar period as harbingers of an uncertain future. The period in which Ishikawa produced “The Jesus of the Ruins”

²⁷ Armstrong, Nancy, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia U Press, 2005) 3.

(Yakeato no iesu, 1946) was a period in which the legitimacy of the ideal of cultural nationalism that had fostered national unity through a defined notion of not just of a Japanese culture but of a supreme culture was undergoing reconfiguration. Though defeat had challenged claims of supremacy, the ideal of a cultural nation still possessed strong roots and became a repository for the hopes for reclamation of national dignity.

Ishikawa, it would seem, was troubled by the discursive trajectories of the immediate postwar period. In the short story “The Jesus of the Ruins,” Ishikawa represents alienation as a crisis of faith. While the narrator-protagonist intellectually adheres to the aesthetics propagated by the Neo-Confucianist Hattori Nankaku, he eschews the politico-economic principles developed by Neo-Confucianist Dazai Shundai—both of whom were disciples of Ogyū Sorai, a principal figure in the development of Neo-Confucianism. In separating out the aesthetic from the political aspects of Neo-Confucianism, the narrator-protagonist reflects the ambivalent positioning apparent in contemporary discourse on the ideal of a cultural nation. When the narrator-protagonist does find faith, it is paradoxically in the most vile creature imaginable—a lousy, pus-encrusted boy who survives through acts of theft. Despite his venality, he is an innocent—too young to have any complicity in the suffering wrought by war. Yet, the narrator-protagonist does not identify the boy within the Shinto-Buddhist pantheon, but in terms of Christian iconography.

Ishikawa develops alienation through a series of paradoxes. Within the context of religious iconography, Ishikawa recasts the persistence of the ideal as a desperate act of faith, one that is so unbounded by reason that the narrator-protagonist is able to equate a filthy thief with the savior Jesus. Furthermore, this Jesus is not a product of the cultural nation of Japan. Rather, the iconography suggests the undeniable western presence in the form of the U.S. occupation. In turning to western religious iconography of salvation rather than the more Japanese figure of Fugen Bosatsu (Samantabhadra), the Buddhist deity of salvation, Ishikawa forestalls the possibility of a definitively Japanese cultural nation. This figure of Jesus would have resonated at the time with the role of the occupying forces to provide

relief, but it also points to the integration of western cultural elements into local culture. For Ishikawa, who had long-standing relationships with members of the Catholic church in Japan and who was a translator of French literature, not to mention an aficionado of medieval letters, which were profoundly influenced by Chinese culture, the notion of Japan as a discrete cultural nation must have seemed untenable.

In the final moments of the story, the narrator-protagonist returns to the black market in the hope of once again encountering his Jesus. However, as part of the postwar recovery, the market has been bulldozed overnight. The narrator-protagonist imagines that he finds a trace remaining of Jesus. The ambiguity he experiences reflects notes of tragedy and hope. However, more alarmingly the rapidity and the thoroughness of the changes being wrought institutionally have erased all but a trace of the hope he has discovered. In this image, Ishikawa reflects a cynicism concerning the possibility for the resumption of constructive discursive production. Nevertheless, as in the newly razed area of the black market, there remains a trace of hope in the story's lack of denouement.

Inoue Mitsuharu, Corporate Paternalism and the Uncanny

At the time Inoue Mitsuharu published the short story "Ninputachi no asu" ("Tomorrow for Those Women," 1964), the sharply upward trajectory of the economy had already begun. The discursive reflection that was so prominent in the immediate postwar period was being replaced with a renewed sense of confidence and security, in large part fostered by an ideal of corporate paternalism. It was also a time in which the coal mines that had supported wartime imperialism were being systematically shut down because oil imports offered a cheaper source of energy.²⁸ For Inoue, the costs of this dismantlement were symbolized by the disruption to communities in his native Kyushu as a result of government policies mandating reductions in coal production. These policies and the corporate exercise

²⁸ Japan was downsizing its reliance on coal as an energy source. This was due to increasing reliance on cheaper oil imports. In his story, Inoue characterizes the mines' heyday in terms of Japan's imperialism.

of them fostered a need for legitimation of the ideal of corporate paternalism. Inoue builds upon the contemporary downsizing of the mining industry to imagine what life will be like once a mining operation has been shut down on a small island off the coast of Kyushu. The operation, which had essentially “colonized” the island, leaves the economy and environment in a shambles, making it difficult for those who remain to reform a productive community. As a result, they turn to illicit sources of income in order to survive.

Inoue establishes alienation as the subject of his short story by developing the narrator-protagonist as representative of the ideal. He not only reiterates it, but through his actions, propagates it. In this sense, the narrator-protagonist’s decision to witness firsthand the care that a corporation would take in dismantling a major operation becomes an act of reaffirmation. What he finds, however, in no way corresponds to his expectations. The island’s economy and environment have been destroyed. Even common services like restaurants and lodging no longer exist on the island. Despite the firsthand evidence that the corporation is not operating paternalistically, he continues to propagate the ideal. The failure of the ideal to encompass the local is revealed through his interaction with an island woman who serves as his guide. His assumption is that because she speaks the language of the metropole, she assents to the ideal. Alienation is represented in terms of a narrator-protagonist’s inability to process and respond appropriately to experience that contradicts the ideal of corporate paternalism.

In order to portray alienation, Inoue creates a sense of the uncanny. Inoue develops the uncanny through lacunae between a *tabula rasa* narrator-protagonist and an islander foil. By establishing the protagonist as a *tabula rasa* upon which the notion of corporate paternalism has been inscribed, Inoue depicts the lacunae between the promises of the ideal and the impact of corporate activity upon lives, the environment, and community structures. In order to contrast the paternalistic discourse of the metropole with the impact of corporate practice on a locality, Inoue employs a foil—the islander who serves as his guide. Through these two characters, Inoue depicts the “relationlessness” of alienation; the

narrator-protagonist represents the global, while his guide represents the local. The devastation he encounters at the site cannot be reconciled with his expectations, producing an unbridgeable lacunae between himself and the woman.

The lack of denouement in “Tomorrow for Those Women” is established through the woman’s ironic stipulation to the assumptions of corporate paternalism: she assents to the narrator-protagonist’s negative characterization of the island by demanding money for the services she had initially offered out of kindness. By concluding the story ironically, the story ends not on the pages of the text but within the imaginations of the readers. That is to say, since irony requires reader interpretation in order to be understood, by making the final act ironic, Inoue has offset denouement onto the reader. The questioning that never takes place in the mind of the protagonist must take place in the mind of the reader if the story is to acquire meaning. In structuring the story in this way, Inoue effectively forces a resumption of discursive production.

Nakagami Kenji, Social Mobility, and *Monogatari*

Nakagami Kenji was part of the first-generation of Japanese to benefit from democratic reforms instituted by the occupation. Unlike his parents, he received an education. Thanks to these reforms, his drive, and his abilities, Nakagami reached spectacular heights in the world of Japanese literature. However, despite his accomplishments and universal recognition of the quality of his literature, his categorization as a member of the *hisabetsu burakumin* underclass continues to have impact on how his work is read. At the time Nakagami published “Genka” (Phantom flame, 1978), he was in the early stages of his exploration of notions of transmission through language. Nakagami’s success combines with his *burakumin* heritage to cultivate an awareness of the confining power of language. However, it is important to distinguish the source of his awareness from his ultimate goals. That is to say, he never identified as a *burakumin* writer. He writes not as a representative of the *burakumin*, but as a person

sensitive to the kinds of issues experienced by a social group historically subject to discrimination, a discourse perpetuated not only through language but through its implementation.

For Nakagami, the alienation he depicts was likely informed by his lived experiences as a member of a group circumscribed by discriminatory narratives but can be extrapolated to extend more broadly to apply to any group that has been subject to systemic discrimination. Through the concept of *monogatari*, he identifies alienation as so deeply structured into social systems through language that it cannot be redressed by policy changes. Thus, in “Genka,” Nakagami depicts the ideal of social mobility in terms of the rigidity of discourse concerning class. In the story, a courtier from the capital enters the mountains to escape battle. He attempts to throw off the mantle of the capital but finds time and again that it colors his reactions to a woman whom he encounters in the mountains and who does not conform to the expectations of the capital. She, however, is drawn to the capital, though it represents a threat to her safety, and convinces him to escort her there. As they near the capital, they encounter the rigidity of this discourse in the form of a group of men who are neither villains nor enemies and are murdered.

Nakagami develops the “relationlessness” by setting modern concerns within premodern settings. By setting a story about a contemporary ideal within a premodern context, Nakagami makes the story work on two levels. At the level of a discrete story, he demonstrates how contemporary biases that preclude full social mobility have been embedded in language established long ago. Like the stories of Ishikawa and Inoue, the lack of denouement underscores its discursive intent. However, “Genka” was also part of a larger project in which Nakagami projected his discursive world into the body of national literature. By creating a number of stories that depict his world—notably never explicitly identified as *burakumin*—he attempts to modify discourse. Through this technique, in “Genka” and other stories produced during this period, Nakagami attempts to gain the upper hand in discursive production.

Like the other stories in this study, “Genka” ends with a questioning that can only be carried out by the reader. Nakagami begins this shift within the narration of the story. Having killed off the narrator-protagonist, the final moments of the story describe a negative judgment being issued by the sun and trees as sounds that mimic a disapproving clucking. However, the narrative does not clarify the reason for the negative judgment, creating an aporia that serves to promote reflection on issues of social mobility.

Abe Kōbō, Sovereignty and Synecdoche

Of all the authors in this study, Abe connects, most explicitly and most tragically, alienation to a separation from discursive production. In the world that Abe depicts, globalization has produced a society in which the state is acting in its own interest rather than the nation’s and discourse is framed by the threat of nuclear annihilation. In such a world, the individual has little recourse for contributing to, much less altering, discourse. In *The Ark Sakura (Hakobune Sakura Maru, 1984)*, Abe takes up the ideal of sovereignty and situates the question of its possibility within the meta-context of history. In this text, Abe illustrates that the nuclear threat nullifies any notion of sovereignty, suggesting as a recourse that the individual paradoxically simultaneously accepts that it does not exist but continues to question it.

Abe develops alienation through synecdoche and metalanguage. The synecdoche equates the narrator-protagonist’s efforts for control over his name to the state’s insistence on an ideal of sovereignty. Even in his desire to create a world in which he retains control, the narrator-protagonist increasingly encounters forces that push into his domain, eventually taking it over. However, the story cannot be read simply as a protagonist’s search for self because the recurrence of metalanguage continually references a broader scope to the events being depicted. For example, the narrator-protagonist’s world is an ark, connoting Biblical references to a means of salvation from catastrophic world events, and a group of old men known as the Broom Brigade symbolize the vestiges of Japan’s imperial history still working in the dark corners of consciousness.

Abe ends the novel with the protagonist's apparent capitulation. The complexity of globalized relationships overwhelms any attempt at control. The act of acknowledging that the complexity of these forces places them outside human control would seem to be an abdication. Yet, Abe suggests that acknowledgment and abdication can paradoxically return a sense of self and sovereignty.

Though each of these authors challenge ideals, they are not necessarily suggesting that the ideals should be abandoned. They are pointing out deficient and destructive practices that are justified by these ideals through aesthetic expressions that accentuate their impact on the individual. The ideals they center on have been and continue to be important. Yet they were largely developed as adaptations to the radical changes wrought by technological advances occurring during the modernization period. Viewed from this perspective, the alienation expressed in these works suggests that the ideals were not being adapted sufficiently to the demands arising from a greater degree of globalization. As such, they serve as harbingers that a corrective is needed.

However, as Marcuse and Jaeggi point out, writing about alienation presents particular difficulties. Arguably, if these authors had chosen more direct approaches to the development of their stories, their work could have been dismissed as histrionic or censorious. However, in adapting their modes of writing to the subject matter, they avoid the pitfall of paternalism. Even though their depiction of the "relationlessness" between the ideal and its practice is clearly critique, by ending without denouement, they sidestep judgment. At the same time, they answer the first demand of alienation critique, raising awareness of a condition that persists in part because it is unrecognized. These texts achieve this goal and then offer the potential for redressing the issue. They also counter alienation by encouraging discursive production.

Chapter 2. Disruptive Cynicism:

Challenging the Hold of Cultural Nationalism in Ishikawa Jun's "The Jesus of the Ruins"

In the immediate postwar period, Ishikawa Jun's use of Christian iconography in several of his works riled the sensibilities of critics. In 1947, Nakano Yoshio remarked that he "did not particularly read them with the meaning that pertains in Christian doctrine," thus questioning the "internal necessity" of employing Christian iconography.²⁹ Yamamuro Shizuka commented that Ishikawa's use of Christian iconography "stops at being theologically ornamental."³⁰ With regard to "The Jesus of the Ruins" ("Yakeato no Iesu," 1946) in particular, Masamune Hakuchō proclaimed, "From the title alone it smelled foreign, so I felt that I was reading a western novel."³¹ In this work, Ishikawa's deification of a lousy, pus-encrusted juvenile vagrant as Jesus was clearly a provocation. The critics' sense was that the Christian iconography added no meaning to the work. The use of western religious iconography was perhaps felt more acutely given that Japan had recently become subject to occupation by a western country. In addition, Ishikawa had already produced a work—the Akutagawa-prize-winning work *Fugen*—that centered on the notion of the Buddhist deity of salvation, Samantabhadra. Why then would Ishikawa decide to deify a venal creature of the black market as Jesus, a western icon of salvation, rather than as a local religious icon, especially during a period of social and political upheaval?

²⁹ Nakano's critique is primarily directed toward "Kayoi komachi" (1947). While Nakano recognizes both the merit of the work and Ishikawa's literary genius in this work and other recent works, including "Yakeato no Iesu," he believes that Ishikawa's use of Christian iconography obscures the contemporary reality of the immediate postwar period, thus dodging the issues of the time. Nakano Yoshio, "Sōsaku tanpyō," *Ningen*, Vo. 2, No. 4 (April 1947) 70-71.

³⁰ Yamamuro Shizuka, "Dekadansu no bungaku," *Gunzō*, No. 6 (June 1947) 55.

³¹ Masamune panned the work on several other issues. He argued that Ishikawa did not have enough familiarity with juvenile vagrants to portray them realistically. In addition, he also took issue with the deification of the boy. Masamune Hakuchō, "Bungei jihyō (1)," *Chōryū*, Vo. 2, No. 1 (Jan. 1947) 142.

Eventually, critical evaluation of the text made an about-face, establishing “Jesus of the Ruins” as one of Ishikawa’s seminal works. The dark humor that springs from the protagonist-narrator’s adventure into a black market to buy cigarettes alone makes “Jesus of the Ruins” an engaging read. Sharpening the edges of the work’s ironic humor are the whetstones of cultural nationalism and carnal desire. In combining a nationalism with carnal desire, Ishikawa employs a technique similar to that Mishima Yukio uses in “Yūkoku” (“Patriotism,” 1961). In that short story, Mishima fuses patriotic discourse with sexual desire.³² In linking a basic human drive with the logic of nationalism, he attempts to relegitimize it. However, in “The Jesus of the Ruins,” Ishikawa renders the union of nationalistic discourse and the carnal as intellectually or ideologically provocative, promoting a reconsideration of the legitimacy of its tenets. In this way, this text can be read as a response to a discursive paradox apparent in the immediate postwar period: Although the nationalism that had been employed to justify war had been delegitimized by defeat, its logic still held sway in immediate postwar discourse on rebuilding the nation. That is to say, the ideal had become so successfully naturalized that despite its delegitimation, in the immediate postwar period intellectuals and politicians still persisted in propagating it, albeit in modified form. In making nationalism and the discourse that produced it the subject of his text, Ishikawa demonstrates the desperate machinations of a mind attempting to overcome a loss of faith in an ideal while resisting a complete abandonment of its tenets. Through allusion, Ishikawa incorporates aspects of the debates contributing to the prewar and wartime production of nationalism in terms of a singular, superlative national culture, and through parody, he undermines the postwar schisms necessary to support the paradox. In the intellectual and material ruins of a war sustained through cultural nationalism, he depicts as divided a world in which a delegitimized ideal continues to hold sway. The protagonist “watashi” experiences the distance of the claims of the ideal from

³² Rodica Frențiu identifies *thymos*, the desire for recognition, as the source for the main character’s nationalism. In seeking recognition through an act of patriotism, the main character thus relegitimizes the ideal of nationalism. Frențiu, Rodica, “Yukio Mishima: Thymos between Aesthetics and Ideological Fanaticism,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vo. 9, No. 25 (2010) 69-90. See also: Garcin, Thomas, “Representations of Death and Topoi in Mishima Yukio’s *Yūkoku* (Patriotism),” *Death Representations in Literature: Forms and Theories*, Ed. by Adriana Teodorescu (Newcastle upon Tyne, GBR: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015) 228-245.

the hardships of the immediate postwar period as partial alienation: he chooses to retain belief in the aesthetic aspects of the ideal while rejecting the political. In the climactic moment in the text—the paradoxical pairing of a pus-encrusted, thieving juvenile vagrant with Jesus—Ishikawa renders the schisms inherent in the discursive production of cultural nationalism in the immediate postwar period as both natural and illogical. The paradox inherent in the story’s climax, thus, disrupts rather than resolves. Yamamuro, Masamune, and Nakano were right in their assessment of Ishikawa’s use of western religious iconography: Ishikawa does not employ Christian iconography to situate the text within Christian discourse. Rather, he localizes it, grafting the particulars of time and place onto discourse arising from global engagement. Ishikawa employs the iconography of Jesus to provoke questions about the viability of the discursive production taking place in the immediate postwar period.

By the end of the war, Ishikawa already possessed a track record of combining issues related to the aesthetic and political in his work, a tendency that perhaps emerged from the impact of the political upon his life.³³ He had started his career as a lecturer of French at Fukuoka High School.³⁴ However, as a result of his connections with students and union leaders, he was targeted by the Education Ministry and asked to resign. It was this event that precipitated a move to Tokyo and a career writing fiction. Although his first short story “Kajin” (“Beautiful women,” 1935) focused on the more humanistic concerns of a wanderluster who becomes jealous of his partner’s relationship with another man, his writing became increasingly engaged with the political. His novella *Fugen*, which won the esteemed Akutagawa Prize in 1937, began to address the aesthetic and the political through allusion and setting.³⁵ With his 1938 short story “Mars’ Song” (“Marusu no uta”), Ishikawa

³³ See: Noguchi, Takehiko, *Ishikawa Jun ron* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1969); Sas, Miryam, “Chambered Nautilus: The Fiction of Ishikawa Jun,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vo. 24, No. 1 (Winter 1998): 35-58.

³⁴ The name of the school was Fukuoka Kōtō Gakkō. Abe Tomoji and Odagiri Hideo, “Muishiki no sentaku—Ishikawa Jun.” *Bungaku: Shōwa jūnendai wo kiku: bungakuteki tachiba hen* (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1976) 221.

³⁵ The connection between the aesthetic and the political is made apparent through, for example, the main character’s musings about the French poet Christine de Pizan and the main character’s relationship to the character Yukari, the politically active sister of his friend. Because Yukari functions in the story primarily as an object of reflection, I have identified her here as setting. Nadia Margolis interprets the reference to Christine de Pizan as an allusion that connects the Hundred Years War with wartime Japan. Noguchi Takehiko characterizes Ishikawa’s fusion of the political and the aesthetic as the acceptance of dichotomy. Miryam Sas argues, “The parodic, allusive, and allegoric functions in Ishikawa’s prose create a multiple layering of meaning that can serve

focused on the use of the aesthetic to inculcate militarism. Notably, “Mars’ Song” was banned within a week of its publication.³⁶ In 1940, he published a novel, *Hakubyō* (Blank sketch), which focused on the connections between money and art. During the war years he returned to an exploration of classical Japanese literature. Ishikawa had learned to read *kanbun* (a literary style that renders Chinese through Japanese syntax) from his grandfather. For this reason, he claims that he felt classical texts were easy to understand and that he felt an intimacy for them that he did not feel for modern works.³⁷ Despite avowals that the work of modern writers did not hold his interest, his studies led to his publishing a number of critical studies during this period on such renowned writers as Mori Ōgai, Futabatei Shimei and Okamoto Kanoko.³⁸ In an interview with Ishikawa in the 1970s, Odagiri Hideo characterized this work as “research.” However, in a tone simultaneously self-deprecating and iconoclastic, he denied his work as scholarly, claiming that his intent was to spend the war years “studying abroad in the Edo period.”³⁹ In the immediate postwar period, he vigorously resumed his production of fiction, beginning with a series of short stories in which he employed Christian iconography.⁴⁰ Ishikawa published “The Jesus of the Ruins” in the journal *Shinchō* in October 1946. Its celebratory tone set within the destruction caused

both an aesthetic (flower) and a political (dust) purpose.” Margolis, Nadia, “Each ... according ... to his intention’: Three Phases of Christine de Pizan’s Literary Influence Through the Ages,” *Florilegium*, Vo. 18, No. 1 (2001) 97-121; Noguchi 43; Sas 37-38.

³⁶ Ishikawa and his editor were also fined for the publication of the story. Ishikawa notes that in the interim from writing to publication, censorship standards became significantly more stringent. Nonetheless, he thought “Mars’ Song” would not violate censorship standards. Abe 230; Tyler William J., *The Legend of Gold and Other Stories* (Honolulu: U of Hawai’i Press, 1998) 247-248.

³⁷ Abe 232.

³⁸ During an interview with Ishikawa in the ‘70s, Odagiri Hideo recalls being struck by a lack of modern texts on the bookshelves in Ishikawa’s Roppongi apartment. When he commented on this, Ishikawa replied, “I don’t read trash.” Abe 232.

³⁹ Abe 232.

⁴⁰ The works that employ Biblical allusions include “The Legend of Gold” (“Ōgon densetsu,” 1946), “The Jesus of the Ruins,” “Moeru shiba” (The burning bush, 1946), “Gaka” (The Song of Solomon, 1946), “Yuki no Ibu” (Eve of the snow, 1947), “Kayoi Komachi (Kayoi Komachi, 1947) “Shojo kaitai” (Immaculate conception, 1947), “Saigo no bansan” (The last supper, 1948). See: Kotani Haruo, “Ishikawa Jun no seikon: Kikai to shite Kurisutokyō,” *Nihonjin ha Kiristukyō wo dono yō ni juyō shita ka* (Kyoto: International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 1998) 103-119.

by the war contributed to Ishikawa's classification as a Shin Gesaku-ha (New Gesaku School) or Burai-ha (Decadent School) writer.⁴¹

"The Jesus of the Ruins" is the story of a robbery-assault cum religious conversion. It is divided into two parts: the first takes place in the black market, symbolic of the physical damage wrought by war and also the volatility of the immediate postwar period, and the second occurs in an area that the narrator-protagonist describes as the world of streetcars, symbolic of more stable cultural conventions and ideologies. The narrator-protagonist "watashi," who lives in the world of streetcars, decides to venture into the black market to purchase cigarettes. There he encounters a juvenile vagrant, a war orphan covered in filth and dried pus. In the black market, the narrator-protagonist is impressed by the boy who demonstrates great skill in obtaining food and evading police capture, and seems to possess a paradoxical majesty. His personal encounter with the boy begins when the narrator-protagonist attempts to help a female vendor whom the boy assaults. When the protagonist leaves, he is followed and robbed by the boy. The story concludes with the protagonist returning to the site of the black market, only to find that it has been fenced off and bulldozed.

The Production of Cultural Nationalism

To read "The Jesus of the Ruins" through the lens of cultural nationalism an understanding of the various aspects of the discourse that contributed to its production is essential. Cultural nationalism emerged as a response to the cultural impacts of a modernization rooted in widespread westernization. The stage was set with the development of *kokugaku* (national learning) into *kokubungaku* (national literature) in the late 1800s.⁴²

⁴¹ Ishikawa never ascribed to the tenets of a movement. This term arises to describe a tendency in fiction produced during the immediate postwar period. According to William Tyler, the term "Burai-ha" was coined by Dazai Osamu to describe himself and his literary colleagues who shared a skepticism of authority and a lifestyle characterized by a devotion to alcohol and sex. Tyler 272. See also: Asago Itsuo, "Shin Gesaku Ha no meimeisha," *Todai ronkyū*, No. 16 (April 1979); Kubota Yoshitarō, "Sakaguchi Ango oboegaki: Shingesakuhā ni tsuite no techō kara," *Nihon bungaku*, Vo. 9, No. 11 (December 1960) 29-36; Okuno, Takeo, *Burai to itan* (Tokyo: Kokubunsha, 1973); Sasaki Kiichi. "Shin gesaku ha ni tsuite," *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kanshō*, Vo. 27, No. 5 (April 1962); Tsukakoshi Kazuo, *Buraiha to sono shūhen* (Tokorozawa-shi: Asahi Shinbunsha, 2001).

⁴² Michael Brownstein argues that the development of a Japanese canon was a reaction to a perceived threat from westernization. In defining a national canon, he argues that Japanese scholars, such as Konakamura Kiyonori and

However, it was through voices like Okakura Kakuzō, also known as Okakura Tenshin, who characterized Japanese tradition as a remedy to the ills of westernization. As Tessa Morris-Suzuki points out, by pairing nation with tradition or culture, the two gradually came to be regarded as intrinsic to each other. The nationalistic turn took concrete shape as the nation was gearing up for the Pacific War. The tensions at work in the discursive production of cultural nationalism are perhaps best encapsulated in the subjects raised at a 1942 symposium sponsored by Bungakukai (The Literary Society) called “Kindai no Chōkoku” (Overcoming the modern). At that time, the ideal of cultural nationalism was propagated through the terms “Nihon seishin” (Japanese spirit) and “Nihon bunka” (Japanese culture), and inculcated through tradition or culture, often identified as superior to others, in particular to those of the west. The ideal became so thoroughly integrated or naturalized that despite Japan’s defeat, notions of cultural superiority re-emerge during the nation rebuilding process of the immediate postwar period. Even in the ‘70s and ‘80s when its tenets once again took root, it was voiced not as a form of nationalism but as an exploration of cultural or ethnic uniqueness. Thus, its earliest invocations often focused on the importance of culture as a stabilizing response to unrestrained westernization. The various positions represented in the production of the ideal of cultural nationalism are at the core of Ishikawa’s representation in “The Jesus of the Ruins.” He, like his contemporary Sakaguchi Ango, was responding to the paradoxes inherent in the production of the ideal. However, Sakaguchi addresses the ideal more directly in his texts and thus provides a clear contemporary perception to develop an understanding of and contrast to Ishikawa’s complex treatment of it.

In 1942, Sakaguchi Ango responded viscerally to the campaign for promoting “bunka” (culture). He wrote a highly polemical essay that challenged the primacy of culture in the development of a notion of Japan. “Nihon bunka shikan” (“A personal view of Japanese culture”), published in the journal *Gendai bungaku* in March of that

Haga Yaichi, were attempting to define elements distinctive to Japanese civilization. Brownstein, Michael C., “From Kokugaku to Kokubungaku: Canon-Formation in The Meiji Period,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vo. 47, No. 2 (Dec. 1987) 435-460.

year, is a highly charged rejection of the cultural iconography that had been developed narratologically since the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴³ Sakaguchi situates the essay within this discourse by framing it as a response to a book, also entitled *Nihon bunka shikan*, in which German architect Bruno Taut extols the aesthetics of Japanese traditional architecture. In particular, Sakaguchi confronts the characterization of such historical sites as Hōryūji Temple and the Katsura Detached Palace as cultural icons.

I know next to nothing about traditional Japanese culture. I've never seen the Katsura Detached Palace which Bruno Taut praised so highly, nor am I familiar with his precious Mochizuki Gyokusen, Ike Taiga, Tanomura Chikuden, or Tomioka Tessai. ... For one thing, I'm not much of a tourist, so the towns and villages of our homeland, with all their various local customs and landmarks, are a mystery to me. On top of that, I was born in what Taut called the most vulgar city in Japan, Niigata, and I adore the strip running from Ueno to Ginza and the neon lights, both of which he despised.⁴⁴

In this passage, Sakaguchi recasts iconic culture as “touristic.” As a person who is living in Japan, what holds more immediate value to him is the vitality of the urban environments of Niigata, Ueno and Ginza. For Sakaguchi, Japan is a place in which living occurs, making culture an evolving and somewhat personal concept. For Taut, Japan is a reified conception represented by historical customs and landmarks. Ultimately, the validity of Taut’s characterization of Japan comes into question because he is a tourist. In dismissing the historical in favor of the modern everyday, Sakaguchi is echoing the divergent positions of contemporary discourse on the term “Nihon bunka.”

James Dorsey, in his analysis of the essay, characterizes Sakaguchi’s response as the work of an “iconoclast” intent on denying an aesthetic definition of Japaneseness.

While so many had worked so hard to negotiate Japan’s place in the world and to delineate the boundaries of its cultural hegemony through readings of the Hōryūji, Ango refuses to be drawn into the alluring quest for the symbols of national identity. Nor is he seduced by a desire to expose the specious logic and shaky evidence behind the invocation of these structures as

⁴³ For further reading on the narratological development of this iconography, see: Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2002); Surak, Kristin, *Making Tea, Making Japan* (Palo Alto: Stanford U Press, 2012).

⁴⁴ Sakaguchi Ango, “A Personal View of Japanese Culture,” trans. by James Dorsey, *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature*, Vo. 1 (New York: Columbia U Press, 2005) 823. Sakaguchi, “Nihon bunka shikan,” *Sakaguchi Ango Zenshū* 03 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1999) 356.

symbols of the nation—reason has no place in the mythical realm of nation-building Rather, Ango cuts the Gordian knot by dismissing the realm of signifiers of nation in its entirety.⁴⁵

Dorsey describes Sakaguchi's response as opposition not just to the ideal of cultural nationalism but to the discursive production of it. For Sakaguchi, discursive production should reflect local experience. To make his point, Sakaguchi limits his attack to the icons that have participated in this definitional process, not engaging the ideology that these icons have been used to propagate: They are a static representation reflecting a foreign tourist's essentialization of Japan. As Dorsey points out, he does not direct his opposition toward the logic used to justify the ideal; he contrasts the claims made by the ideal to the material icons associated with daily living and expresses his affective connection to these icons. Any notion of "bunka" must reflect materially a world that people engage on a daily basis.

Sakaguchi's resistance to the ideal of cultural nationalism was no doubt an expression of opposition to the Pacific War. However, as Tessa Morris-Suzuki notes, the term "bunka" was and continues to be a focal point of debate over notions of nation.⁴⁶ Building upon the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, she outlines how "bunka" came eventually to represent nation. During the period of the Meiji Restoration, it was used interchangeably with the phrase *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment) by influential figures such as the philosopher Nishi Amane. At this time, the term signified contemporary transformations occurring as a result of the application of western achievements. Although it figured largely in discourse pertaining to the changes taking place as a result of adopting these achievements, it had yet to be associated with notions of nation. Morris-Suzuki describes the gradual discursive shift to associating nation with culture as a growing sense of nationhood in response to concepts of "the West" and to developments in anthropological discourse. Kang Sang-Jung and Murai Osamu

⁴⁵ Dorsey, James, "Culture, Nationalism, and Sakaguchi Ango," *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vo. 27, No. 2 (Summer 2001) 353-354. See also: Shields, James Mark, "Smashing the Mirror of Yamato: Sakaguchi Ango, Decadence and a (Post-Metaphysical) Buddhist Critique of Culture," *Nichibunken Japan Review*, Vo. 23 (2011): 225-246; Slaymaker, Douglas N., "Sakaguchi Ango," *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 99-130.

⁴⁶ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa, "The Invention and Reinvention of Japanese Culture," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vo. 54, No. 3 (Aug. 1995): 761.

more particularly tie notions of culture to those of nation, producing an ideal of cultural nationalism, as occurring under the auspices of a definition of “the West” as rational, progressive and scientific.⁴⁷

Early evidence of this association occurs in the work of Yanagita Kunio and Okakura Kakuzō, who would be instrumental to the discourse that suggested regional resistance to Western imperialism in the 1930s and 1940s.

Yanagita’s work provided definitions of ethnic homogeneity to support cultural nationalism. However, it should be noted that his position on homogeneity developed alongside the emergence of cultural nationalism.

According to Fukuta Ajiō, his early fieldwork into the customs of rural villages emphasized their diversity.⁴⁸

Morris-Suzuki, thus, concludes that the emphasis on nation compelled by the state’s colonizing practices engendered analysis that focused on comparing nations. This analytical framework was founded on an assumption that nations must possess cultural homogeneity. Okakura, for his part, provided rational rhetoric for the state’s imperialism. His 1903 *The Ideals of the East With Special Reference to the Arts of Japan* opens with the declaration that “ASIA is one,” united by a “broad expanse of love for the Ultimate and Universal.”⁴⁹ By comparison, the “maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic” “love to dwell on the Particular, and to search out the means, not the end, of life.”⁵⁰ While this earlier work rallies national and regional spiritual unity, three years later, in his *The Book of Tea* (1906) he identifies the Japanese culture as an antidote to western militarism. The militarism practiced by the west was not something alien to Japanese culture, he argues, but an unfortunate tendency that Japan had overcome in the Muromachi period. In particular, it was the development of refining cultural practices, such as the tea ceremony and flower arrangement, that curbed the militaristic character of earlier periods. Historian F.G. Notehelfer notes that in *The Book of Tea*, Okakura was clearly

⁴⁷ Kang Sang Jung and Murai Osamu, “Ranhansha suru orientarizumu,” *Gendai Shisō*, Vo. 21, No. 5 (May 1993) 182-197.

⁴⁸ Fukuta Ajiō, “Shoki Yanagita Kunio no minzokugaku,” *Yanagita Kunio no minzokugaku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1992) 82.

⁴⁹ Okakura’s major works were all written in English. *The Book of Tea* was later translated by Muraoka Hiroshi in 1929 into Japanese. Notably, in 1905, Nitobe Inazō also published in English. His book—*Bushido*—explained Japan’s samurai tradition. Okakura, Kakasu, *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (London: John Murray, 1903) 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 1.

suggesting that this successful synthesis of Asian spirituality and military tradition, epitomized by the art of tea, could answer the negative influences of western culture and its tendency toward militarism and colonialism.⁵¹ Notably, these books were written and published in English and thus originally intended for an English-speaking audience. While Okakura's intentions, as Notehelfer argues, were pacifist and not intended as antagonistic toward the west, in the end *The Book of Tea* and *Ideals of the East* played a pivotal role in the discursive production of cultural nationalism intrinsic to the development of militarism.⁵²

At a more popular level, the term "bunka" continued to be associated with technological development. By the Taishō period, the word "bunka" was commonly attached to commercial products, such as "cultural houses" (*bunka jūtaku*) and "cultural pots and pans" (*bunka nabe*).⁵³ Connecting the word "bunka" to domestic goods suggested a lifestyle characterized by the ease of modern innovations imported from the west, which lent prestige to a commodity.⁵⁴ "Bunka" in this sense referenced the "bunmei kaika" and "western" senses of the word, and increased the exchange value of the item. Notably, in this usage of "bunka," a connection to things Japanese was completely absent. Thus, the commercial usage of "bunka" with its complete lack of referentiality to Japanese culture or tradition strengthened the link between "bunka" and the west and capitalism. The

⁵¹ Arguing that Okakura's perspective was Hegelian, Notehelfer frames Okakura's works as idealistic. If so, this would situate Okakura's efforts to preserve the traditional arts and promote new forms of expression within "end of history" discourse. Notehelfer, F.G., "Okakura Kakuzo and *The Book of Tea*: The Role of Culture in a Military Age," *Journal of Japanese Trade & Industry*, Vo. 21, No. 4 (2002) 49. For more on Okakura see: Inaga Shigemi, "Okakura Kakuzō and India: The Trajectory of Modern National Consciousness and Pan-Asian Ideology Across Borders," trans. by Kevin Singleton, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vo. 24 (Dec. 2012) 39-57; Kinoshita Nagahiro, "Okakura Kakuzō as a Historian of Art," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vo. 24 (Dec. 2012) 26-38; Murai, Noriko, "Okakura's Way of Tea: Representing Chanoyu in Early Twentieth-Century America," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vo. 24 (Dec. 2012) 70-93; Murai, Noriko and Yukio Lippit, "Okakura Kakuzō: A Reintroduction," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vo. 24 (Dec. 2012) 1-14; Rosenfeld, John, "Okakura Kakuzō and Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita: A Brief Episode)," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vo. 24 (Dec. 2012) 58-69; Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Okakura Tenshin—Ajia kan ni tatsu bunmei hihan," *Asahi Journal* (27 May 1962) 56-61; Takeuchi Yoshimi, "Okakura Tenshin: Civilization Critique from the Standpoint of Asia (1962), trans. by Christopher L. Hill, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vo. 24 (Dec. 2012) 15-25.

⁵² Okakura, who had been educated largely in English and had lived with missionaries during his childhood, maintained congenial relationships with westerners. It was this familiarity, Notehelfer points out, that made him comfortable with critiquing the west.

⁵³ Ogi Shinzō, *Tōkyō Kūkan*, Vo. 3 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1986) 76-79. See also: Morris-Suzuki.

⁵⁴ Morris-Suzuki 763.

material transformations apparent in the everyday also likely engendered a sense of westernization as a kind of colonization of indigenous lifestyles.

By the 1930s and 1940s, an understanding of “bunka” that connoted elitism was amended to define groups of people in terms of nation.⁵⁵ “Bunka” would by and large be conceived in the terms developed by Okakura. This understanding built upon connotations of elitism, but instead of defining elitism in terms of technological superiority, it turned to traditional aesthetics and spirituality. For example, in 1937, Prime Minister Hirota Kōki instituted the Culture Award (Bunka Kunshō) to scholars, writers, and artists for outstanding work in the field of culture.⁵⁶ Instead of “bunka,” westernization was referenced by “kindai” (modern) or “kindaika” (modernization) and “bunka” became the remedy for modernization, which had occurred as a result of westernization.

Intellectual concern over modernization centered philosophically over the divisiveness of western thinking and its devotion to notions of progress. The scientific reasoning intrinsic in westernization had caused divisions that were undermining society. The resulting divisiveness disrupted unity. Progress implied continual change, undermining stability. In July 1942, the “Kindai no chōkoku” symposium took up the question of how to address this social devolution. One of the conference’s organizers, Kawakami Tetsutarō stated, “Certainly, our intellectuals have not yet individually accounted for the blood of the Japanese that has been the true, original moving spirit of our spiritual life until recently and its rivalry with Western intelligence which has been clumsily systematized in the present.”⁵⁷ In this statement, Kawakami clearly sets westernization against the “spirit” of native cultural systems. Because the Japanese spirit had not been brought to bear on the changes wrought by westernization, social cohesion has suffered. In a similar vein, Kyoto philosopher Nishitani Keiji negatively

⁵⁵ Morris-Suzuki 763.

⁵⁶ Hirota Kōki only briefly held the office of prime minister. He was selected to replace Okada Keisuke after the Feb. 26 Incident. In the first year, Hirota handed out nine awards for work in fields as varied as metallurgy and painting. In literature, the award was given to Kōda Rohan.

⁵⁷ Kawakami’s statement is taken from: Harootunian, Harry D., *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U Press, 2011) 35. See: Kawakami Tetsutarō, “Kindai no chōkoku’ ketsugo,” *Kindai no chōkoku* (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1979) 166.

compared westernization to the earlier phenomenon of sinification.⁵⁸ The problem with westernization was the emphasis on “progress,” which undermined stability and set in its place a system based on continual change.

The symposium, occurring shortly after the onset of war with the United States, reflects the irony that the nation was now at war with a source of an eagerly sought modernization and the technological advances that enabled global military aggression. However, it was also a corrective to the scale, speed, and nature of local adaptations of globalizing ideas and technology. While the adaptations had contributed to its defeat of Russia in 1905, establishing Japan as a world power, at home the development of a consumer culture that touted household goods as “culture” made apparent that local discourse had been displaced. H.D. Harootunian argues that ultimately what lay behind their concerns was the impact of capitalism upon local values.

Just as social relationships no longer cohered to a fixed order of the world, so representations of the social totality were always in danger of being undermined by a system of development driven by ceaseless change. In fact, it was value itself that was put into crisis, and, with it, the problematizing of representation under capitalism, which many saw in the appearance of social abstraction and commodification and the elimination of concreteness and referentiality.⁵⁹

Though Harootunian never explicitly outlines what he means by “value,” its diminution produced crisis, i.e. in the endless stream of change wrought by the adoption of capitalist systems, a sense of what is important had been lost, or, as the participants of the symposium would argue, had been forgotten. In essence, commodity culture had presumably displaced conventional local value systems. The remedy was a return to the “spirituality” represented in the local, i.e. national, culture of the past. Thus, in the interwar period, the notion of “bunka” had undergone a partial inversion. While it still retained the nuance of elitism, that elitism became bound to the past and to a notion of nation rather than a global world of ideas or technological advances. In other words, the symposium represents a response to alienation arising from the absence of the local in discursive production of modernization. In this sense, the symposium can be read as a local correction in the process of discursive production.

⁵⁸ Nishitani Keiji, “‘Kindai no chōkoku’ shiron,” *Kindai no chōkoku* (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1979) 19.

⁵⁹ Harootunian 40.

Ironically, the scale of the corrective was as extreme as the globalizing events that had precipitated it. In this sense, Sakaguchi's iconoclastic, visceral rejection of the iconography associated with cultural nationalism reflects the extremity of its practice. Furthermore, Sakaguchi's restriction of his attack in 1942 to notions of Japanese *bunka* represented by a foreign architect is suggestive of limits placed on discursive production through censorship during the war years. By contrast, the tone of his 1946 polemic "Darakuron" ("On Decadence") unleashes a clear condemnation of the ideology supported by the notion of a national culture. Sakaguchi counters national identity with a human universalism, which he defines as decadent. His notion of decadence is represented by the inclination of widowed women to remarry. He contrasts this natural response to rectify tragedy with the wartime "samurai ethic" (*bushidō*).

The military had a most sensitive understanding of corruption, and the fact that they should go to the extent of contriving such a prohibition was a result, not of any lack of understanding of the inconstancy of a woman's heart, but rather of all too clear a knowledge of it.

It is generally claimed that in ancient days the Japanese *samurai* had no knowledge of the feelings of women and children, but this is a superficial view, and the greatest significance of their invention of that thoroughly uncouth code, the *samurai* ethic, was in fact as a barrier against human weakness.⁶⁰

In his sarcastic condemnation of a militarism based on feudal codes, Sakaguchi eventually equates Japan's militarism with the war widow's desire to remarry; both exemplify an inexorable drive to fall. This fall is driven by a human tendency toward inconstancy. Throughout the essay, Sakaguchi describes paradoxical moments of joy during times that would rightly demand sorrow or terror. Yet, like the war widow, he cannot sustain this state and so guiltily collapses into pleasure.

Japan's surrender, then, comparably is a similar kind of fall, and from this fall springs hope. It portends the abandonment of the ethic that sustained Japan's pursuit of war. "Japan was defeated, and the *samurai* ethic has perished, but humanity has been born from the womb of decadence's truth."⁶¹ Defeat provides a release not

⁶⁰ I replaced the word "inconsistency" with the word "inconstancy." Sakaguchi Ango, "Discourse on Decadence," trans. by Seiji M. Lippit, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vo. 1, No. 1 (Oct. 1986) 1-2. Sakaguchi Ango, "Darakuron," *Ishikawa Jun, Sakaguchi Ango, Dazai Osamu shū*, Vo. 78 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1975).

⁶¹ Sakaguchi 5.

only from the grip of a state-enforced ethic but from the demands it imposed. The ideology that had sustained war was bankrupted, and without it, people were now free to pursue, if not indulge, in their humanity.

Alan Wolfe characterizes Ango's notion of decadence as reflecting both a cynicism toward collective subjectivity and a hope for more individualized subjectivity development. Defeat had unraveled the notion of a collective *kokutai* (national polity), but Wolfe identifies in Sakaguchi's "decadence" the concern that the process of collective identification had not been sufficiently disrupted.⁶² That is to say, read as a response to contemporary discourse doesn't Sakaguchi's expression reflect the same impetus for writing as his earlier "Nihon bunka no shikan"? Furthermore, while Sakaguchi takes aim at the "samurai ethic," he does so within the frame of nation. Douglas Slaymaker argues similarly in his analysis of Sakaguchi's postwar writings.

He does not doubt that a quantifiable and identifiable national culture exists even while he reacts to the ludicrous assumptions that underscore much essentialist writing on culture. He seems almost equally essentialist in the end, but to different ends. That is, even while professing a distrust of essentialized culture, he comes close to delineating one himself. In this we find a trajectory parallel to the other flesh writers, who also focused on a radical individual in order to reject one ideological system only to erect another.⁶³

This characteristic represents a thread common to the discourse on culture in the immediate postwar period and suggests that despite defeat, the ideal of cultural nationalism had only been partially delegitimized. That such a staunch critic of cultural nationalism was reproducing, albeit in different terms, the ideal, indicates that its legitimating power had not been completely undermined by defeat.

In fact, while Sakaguchi celebrated delegitimation, most other authors, scholars and political figures who published on the question of culture directed their arguments toward a reconstitution of the notion of "culture" within the framework of nation. For example, in October 1945, Hisamatsu Sen'ichi, a national literature scholar, rather than rejecting cultural nationalism, suggests reconfiguring it around Japanese cultural icons that had

⁶² Wolfe, Alan, "From Pearls to Swine: Sakaguchi Ango and the Humanity of Decadence," *War, Occupation, and Creativity: Japan and East Asia 1920-1960* (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i Press, 2001). See also: Jacobs, Paul. *Sakaguchi Ango and his flesh literature*. Diss. University of Colorado at Boulder, 2011.

⁶³ Slaymaker is here responding more specifically to an essay Sakaguchi had published called "Nihon Seishin" (Japanese spirit), which notably reflects the phrasing associated with cultural nationalism. Slaymaker 117-118.

already achieved recognition in the west.⁶⁴ He argues that the American decision to spare Kyoto and Nara from aerial bombings, interest in *ukiyo-e*, and translations of several Japanese classics—the *Man'yōshū*, *Kojiki* and *Genji monogatari*—provide evidence of western esteem for Japanese culture. Although Hisamatsu never explicitly states it, the underlying assumption of his argument is that while other aspects of Japanese society have been compromised by the war, since the west continued to value Japanese arts throughout and in spite of the war, the nation's artistic culture already holds promise for restoring Japan's global status. That is to say, the arts are an aspect of Japanese culture for which redemption is unnecessary. Hisamatsu builds upon this point to suggest that "in peace Japan hereafter should establish a cultural state (*bunka kokka*)."⁶⁵ Despite the historical fallacy contained within Hisamatsu's assertion that the association of culture with politics would result in peace, the framework he proposes raises an interesting point. By envisioning a cultural system in which value is assessed in a global environment, Hisamatsu makes the notion of nation a global concern. Nevertheless, his conception of a cultural state reconstitutes the ideal of cultural nationalism quite literally in terms of a nation rooted in a singular culture.⁶⁶ While Hisamatsu's position eerily replicates the aesthetic foundation for a cultural nationalism expressed by Okakura in 1906, by centering judgment of cultural value outside Japan, he defines a notion of nation within a framework of global valuation.

By and large, most cultural critiques in the immediate postwar period maintained the notion of the Japan as a singular culture, taking critical aim at a notion of Japanese culture that had sustained wartime cultural nationalism.⁶⁷ However, Aoki Tamotsu argues that behind the atmosphere of criticism was "a feeling of hope for

⁶⁴ Hisamatsu Sen'ichi wrote the preface for the college-textbook *Nihon Bungaku* (Japanese literature) published by Yūshindō in 1960.

⁶⁵ Hisamatsu Sen'ichi, "Nihon no bunka ni tsuite," *Kokugo to kokubungaku*, Vo. 22, No. 10 (Oct. 1945).

⁶⁶ Kuwabara Takeo argues against this notion of Japan as a singular culture. In "Nihon bunka no kangaekata," he notes that the notion of a singular culture can be explained in part by the dissemination of teaching from the capital after the Onin War. Until that time, the culture of *kemari* kickball and waka poetry was something distinctively associated with Kyoto—and not the surrounding areas. Kuwabara Takeo, "Nihon bunka no kangaekata," *Kuwabara Takeo zenshū* 3 (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1968) 416-417.

⁶⁷ Aoki Tamotsu, "Nihon bunka ron" no henyō: *Sengo Nihon no bunka to aidenteitei*— (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1990) 55.

embarking upon a new Japan that incorporates a strong expectation that Japan not become as it was before.”⁶⁸ That is to say, through critique of the past, a new course could be derived. However, Aoki also concludes a dual-edge to this method of reconstituting Japan.

The positioning of Japanese society and its culture conducted by Japanese “intellectuals” “since the Meiji Restoration” occurred by means of comparison to the models of “modernization” and “democratization” achieved in Western Europe/America. The method of “positioning Japan” in this world was once again emphasized in postwar Japan. They set on the pinnacle “the Yamato race” as the world’s supreme race. The wartime “worldview” that arbitrarily set “the savage Americans and British” (*kichiku beiei*) as inferior once again overturned and spurred recognition of the “uniqueness” of the “non-inferiority” of Japanese society.⁶⁹

Aoki describes how comparison with western nations solidified a notion of Japan as nation. This comparison was not stable. In the Meiji period, the west was elevated in relation to Japan through “models of ‘modernization’ and ‘democratization.’” This positioning was inverted during the war through a characterization of the west as brutal. However, in defeat, the derogatory characterization was abandoned, and the west, in particular, America, was once again elevated, imbuing the nation’s defeat with a kind of nobility. That is to say, in the face of such a superior adversary, even a culture as “non-inferior” as Japan’s could not help but experience defeat. Inversely, their critique of nation reinforced a sense of cultural nationalism. In this sense, World War II functioned to solidify a sense of national unity. The critiques, which pointed out complicity and the errors committed, also identified national paths to overcome and adapt to the postwar world that commonly centered on ethnic superiority. While they reflected a desire or need for correcting fallacies of wartime discourse, they also reconstituted the notion of national culture. Aoki’s analysis, thus, characterizes immediate postwar *bunka* discourse as fundamentally paradoxical—defeat against a superior culture becomes a kind of victory.

The discourse on culture at the time Ishikawa wrote and published “The Jesus of the Ruins” can generally be described as reflecting a desire or need for correcting assumptions of wartime discourse. Defeat had reconfigured cultural nationalism’s claim of ethnic superiority and pointed out the culpability of intellectuals in

⁶⁸ Aoki, Tamotsu, *“Nihon bunka ron” no henyō: Sengo Nihon no bunka to aidenteitei*— (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1990) 55.

⁶⁹ Aoki 63.

propagating its false claims. At the same time, the notion of a national culture was not abandoned, attesting to the importance it retained. What that notion entailed varied significantly, although all had roots in the wartime ideal of cultural nationalism. For Hisamatsu, it centered on classic arts, echoing Okakura's argument for the role of the tea ceremony. Nevertheless, because the paradigm of nation and its uniqueness remained critical components of the discourse, the ethical redresses paradoxically were providing the bases for a resurgence of cultural nationalism. That is to say, though the wartime ideal of cultural nationalism came into question, the assumption that a unified national culture exists did not. Rather, the question was how to reconstitute it.

Culture in the World of Streetcars

While "The Jesus of the Ruins" never directly addresses the issue of cultural nationalism, its structure replicates the complexity of opposing positions within its discursive production. Through its two principal settings—the world of the black market and the world of streetcars and shrines—the discursive elements are reflected and developed through the narrator-protagonist's consciousness. Thus, as he traverses the two worlds, he responds to visual stimuli to recollect and reflect, recreating the various positions within cultural nationalism's discursive production and its delegitimation within the narrator-protagonist's conscious.

The introduction to the world of streetcars and shrines occurs through reference. Ishikawa begins "The Jesus of the Ruins" with the narrator-protagonist's impressions of the black market, in particular its denizens, and punctuates the nature of these people by noting an absence.

It was as if no one had survived from the last century and, no, there had never been an era in the history of modern Japan when people had paraded about smugly wearing the look of His Majesty's loyal subjects--when the land had been populated by a race of so-called Neo-Confucian gentlemen who were only too happy to be of unquestioning service to the empire (*kunshi koku*).⁷⁰

⁷⁰ It should be noted that Tyler added considerable context to his translation to make the significance of the term clearer. Ishikawa Jun, "The Jesus of the Ruins," *The Legend of Gold and Other Stories* (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i Press, 1998) 78. Ishikawa Jun, "Yakeato no Iesu," *Shinchō* (Oct. 1946) 97.

This observation sets the world of the black market into comparison with that of streetcars and shrines. In the black market, one does not find representatives of “kunshi koku,” which literally means “a country of men of virtue.” The term itself is archaic, reflective of feudal period ethical systems that had been supported by Neo-Confucianists. Thus, the world that takes root in the physical debris of war is set as a counterpart to one in which traditional values are still operative.

Viewed ironically, the comparison also points to the culpability of Neo-Confucianism in the creation of the ruins. Neo-confucianists had staunchly supported the Tokugawa shogunate, and thus the Meiji shift to constitutional democracy and the restoration of the emperor had led to a systematic reduction of state support for Confucianist institutions. From the late 1800s, Neo-Confucianists had critiqued a decline in morals produced as a result of westernization. Figures such as Motoda Eifu, who had served as a personal tutor on Chinese classics to Emperor Meiji and contributed to the drafting of the 1890 *Imperial Rescript on Education*, called for a return to the traditional Confucian values of loyalty and filial piety.⁷¹ Yet, as Kiri Paramore points out from 1918, Confucianism served a “dual role” “as a lens for understanding the deficiencies of Western modernity, but within a modernist nationalist paradigm also used to justify nationalist goals—including war.”⁷² This shift not only signaled an about-face in the state’s attitude toward Confucianism but tied Confucianism, or Neo-Confucianism, to the discursive production of cultural nationalism. In short, its scholars and supporters argued for a return to the traditional values represented in part by Confucianism. In this sense, the contrast points to the relationship between a belief system and its physical product. Furthermore, with defeat, the belief systems

⁷¹ Gluck, Carol, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U Press, 1985) 105. See: Motoda Eifu, *Yōgaku kōyō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1939).

⁷² In 1918, the Shibunkai, an organization of Confucian scholars, is organized. Paramore argues that the Shibunkai “presided over a rise in the popularity and social integration of Confucianism in Japanese society and beyond over the coming decades” Paramore, Kiri, *Japanese Confucianism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press) 154. See also: Freiner, Nicole L., *The Social and Gender Politics of Confucian Nationalism: Women and the Japanese Nation-state* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Maruyama Masao, *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, trans. by Mikison Hane (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U Press, 2014); van Bremen, Jan, “Beacon for the Twenty-first Century: Confucianism after the Tokugawa Era in Japan,” *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan*, ed. by Roger Goodman and Kirsten Refsing (London: Routledge, 1992) 130-152.

that had supported an all-out war had come under scrutiny, at least partially delegitimizing them. Thus, like the debris of the black market, Neo-Confucianism also lies in ruins. In this way, this complex reference to “kunshi koku” relates the black market to the world of streetcars and shrines, points to the discursive production of cultural nationalism and exposes it as delegitimated.

Notably, this delegitimation is not developed as resentful or angry; the narrator-protagonist is ambivalent. His partial allegiance to Neo-Confucianism is revealed as a recollection as he plans his route home from the black market. He considers passing through the Tōshōgū Shrine precincts, which in turn reminds him of a gravestone of a renowned Neo-Confucianist he discovered at a nearby temple.⁷³ The shrine is one devoted to the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, Tokugawa Ieyasu, referencing the feudalistic foundations of Neo-Confucianism. The gravestone belongs to the Neo-Confucian scholar Dazai Shundai,⁷⁴ who was a Meiji period scholar best known as a principal disciple of the Neo-Confucian philosopher Ogyū Sorai, who in the early eighteenth century urged reform of the troubled Tokugawa government by turning to the teachings of Song Confucianists. He, along with Hattori Nankaku and Yamagata Shūnan, disseminated Ogyū’s teaching following his death. In particular, Dazai is known for pursuing the more political aspects of Ogyū’s teachings.⁷⁵ However, the narrator-protagonist’s interest in Dazai’s grave is not testament to his appreciation of the man’s ideas. The narrator-protagonist dismisses his importance, noting, “Because the study of the Confucian classics is outside my area of interest, Dazai’s thought has no significance for me.”⁷⁶ It is not the man buried in the grave to which he had been drawn, but to the inscription upon his gravestone.

In short, my interest in Shundai lay solely in his epitaph. Both the words of the memorial and the characters in which they were written came from the pen of no less a figure than Hattori Nankaku, the greatest master of Chinese verse as it was practiced in Japan in the eighteenth century. It is Nankaku

⁷³ Tōshōgū Shrine is located in Ueno Park. It enshrines Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate.

⁷⁴ Dazai Shundai (1680-1747) is noted for developing the concept of “political economism” (*keiseisaimin*). Najita, Tetsuo, “Political Economism in the Thought of Dazai Shundai (1680-1747). *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vo. 31, No. 4 (Aug. 1972): 821-839.

⁷⁵ Maruyama Masao distinguishes Dazai from Hattori in *Nihon seiji shisō shi kenkyū* (Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan) in terms of the political versus the aesthetic in 1952.

⁷⁶ Ishikawa, “Yakeato” 101.

who is to be credited with having laid the foundation for the great revival of interest in Chinese poetry and belles lettres that flourished among the citizens of the city of Edo; and, as a latter-day child of that time and place, I count myself fortunate to be an heir—however distant—to the great literary tradition that he fostered. When it comes to the spirit of Nankaku and his works, I consider myself neither stranger nor alien.⁷⁷

Although the narrator-protagonist remains loyal to Ogyū's aesthetic lineage which had been propagated by Hattori, he discounts its political development.⁷⁸ At the same time, by declaring this lineage in terms of a rejection of another lineage, both disseminating from the same philosophical discourse, Ishikawa has inversely incorporated the political into the narrative, if only as a shadow. Thus, in choosing to revere as a writer-scholar the aesthetic lineage of Hattori while rejecting the political lineage of Dazai, "watashi" expresses selective adherence to Neo-Confucianism. This thought combined with his reflections on "kunshi koku" suggest a critical stance toward Neo-Confucian complicity with all-out war. Yet, he cannot reject Neo-Confucianism completely. Notably, the narrator-protagonist's turn of mind reflects the approach commonly exhibited in immediate postwar discourse on culture. Like Hisamatsu, he fosters the aesthetic over the political, glossing over the complicity the aesthetic played in promoting militaristic ideology.

A sense that this delegitimation has caused a widespread spiritual crisis is reflected in his sense of the epitaph's importance. The inscription as representative of an aesthetic cultural lineage performs synecdochically to become a statement about society's relationship with its cultural lineage.

Fortunately, the memorial tablet had escaped damage in the war, and Nankaku's inscription was perfectly intact. Yet even in surviving the flames when so much else was in ruins, given the amnesia of the times, thought of it had slipped from public memory, and the tablet was now in danger of falling into oblivion.⁷⁹

The stone tablet, an artifact from the past, symbolically preserves a literary lineage. Having survived the war, it now faces another threat—"the amnesia of the times" (*bōkyaku*)—extending the significance of the epitaph beyond the scope of the narrator-protagonist's personal fears to a statement about an immediate postwar

⁷⁷ Ishikawa, "Jesus" 88-89. Ishikawa, "Yakeato" 101-102.

⁷⁸ In 1724, Hattori published a collection of Chinese poetry entitled *Tōshisen* (唐詩選), which became by virtue of its popularity the standard bearer for Tang poetry.

⁷⁹ Ishikawa, "Jesus" 89. Ishikawa, "Yakeato" 102.

social trend. While the details of this instance pertain to the narrator-protagonist's personal experience, what is being described is a process prevalent in the immediate postwar period. That which is being forgotten includes but is not limited to Hattori's Neo-Confucianism.

This amnesia, and ambivalence, is represented as a kind of spiritual crisis. Having recognized the importance of the epitaph, the narrator-protagonist has obtained and carries with him the tools for making a rubbing.

A rubbing is, to be sure, a nullity and an imperfection. For once the paper is pulled from the stone, it becomes nothing more than a secondhand acquaintance with a lost age—a pale copy, yea a mere tracing, taken from the annals of the history of arts and letters. Yet even a leftover has a life of its own, does it not? And weren't there plenty of cracks in the walls of my temporary and ever-so-humble abode? And wasn't a rubbing just the thing to keep up appearances and paper over the worst of the holes in my life? ...⁸⁰

The original derived its meaning from the context in which it was produced and thus becomes less connected and relevant in current times. Now it is a "leftover" (*zanketsu*).⁸¹ Nevertheless, it can also serve a purpose. The narrator-protagonist believes that the rubbing will function both materially and spiritually to paper over "cracks in the walls" and "holes in my life" that presumably were caused by the war. Thus, through synecdoche, the tablet becomes representative not just of the literary or the aesthetic, but of a crisis in the narrator-protagonist's belief system. That is to say, the drive to excavate the aesthetic from a philosophy and reconstitute it is represented as an act of desperation. The desire even for "nullity and imperfection" indicates the depth or degree of his spiritual crisis. Even the delegitimated is better than nothing at all.

This crisis is amplified by inaction. Although the narrator-protagonist carries the utensils necessary to make the rubbing, he has yet to do it. Symbolically, then, he has yet to paste over the "worst holes" in his belief system. His failure to act is characteristic of this ambivalence. Though the narrator-protagonist's desire to obtain a rubbing represents an impulse for redemption, at the time of the story he has yet to follow through. This gap

⁸⁰ Tyler has extrapolated significantly from the original text in this passage in order to capture both the literal and figurative meanings. Ishikawa, "Jesus" 90. Ishikawa, "Yakeato" 102.

⁸¹ Though "zanketsu" more literally indicates that something is partial or incomplete, I have retained Jefferson's more figurative translation. The rubbing as "zanketsu" serves as a pale reflection of something from the past.

between intent and action represents not only a spiritual vacuum, but the narrator-protagonist's awareness of his emptiness.⁸² Though the world of streetcars may have physically survived the war, the ruins here are no less palpable than those in which the black market took root.

Notably, in choosing an intellectual lineage deriving from Hattori, Ishikawa also references a global transmission of ideas. Hattori was a disciple of Ogyū, who sought a renewal of Confucianism through a rereading of the *Analects* and other Confucian classics in the original language rather than through the commentaries of Zhu Xi, a Song dynasty scholar.⁸³ The cultural past he seeks to revive is not one bound by nation but one that has been transmitted through different languages and cultures. In this way, Ishikawa, who had learned to read and write *kanbun* from his grandfather, incorporates another paradox into his constellation: While cultural nationalism laid claim to a spirituality rooted in part in Neo-Confucianism as representative of nation, that spirituality had already traversed cultural boundaries before it was localized.

Paradox of the Black Market

The black market is a symbol rich in the paradoxes of the immediate postwar period. Within the context of the debate on modernization, the world of the black market represents the materialization of largely unmitigated commercial pursuit. It may have been built upon the ruins but possesses a primal vitality, if not spirituality, quite opposed to the world of streetcars in which, at least for the narrator-protagonist, a traditional spirituality ambivalently still holds sway. In this sense, the black market stands in for the unrefined pursuit of capitalism or westernization. Paradoxically, it has emerged from a war ostensibly waged to combat or at least localize

⁸² The persona "watashi" adopts here possesses similarities to that assumed by Nagai Kafū following the banning of several of his stories around 1909. More specifically, "watashi"'s rejection of the political is similar to Kafū's response to having several of his works banned for ostensibly prurient reasons. Jay Rubin concludes, "In the end, faced with an impossible situation, Kafū could only conclude that writers and policemen lived in two separate worlds, that art was an irrelevancy, a means of escape. He concluded this and concluded this over and over and over again in fiction, poetry, essays, and interviews until he had fashioned for himself and the public a unique persona embodying his bitter rejection of all that was respectable and thus acceptable to the state" (121). Rubin, Jay, "Working Under the Mature System," *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle: U of Washington Press, 1984).

⁸³ Flueckiger, Peter, *Imagining Harmony: Poetry, Empathy, and Community in Mid-Tokugawa Confucianism* (Stanford: Stanford U Press, 2010) 76.

westernization. Despite these negative connotations, the black market also provides the means for survival in a world where infrastructure has largely been reduced to rubble. Under the rationing and distribution systems of the immediate postwar periods, the black markets provided an illegal means for supplementing the limited government allotments of various goods, most notably rice.⁸⁴ In this sense, they provided an essential function for life in urban centers. Yet, the goods they provided were sold for heavily inflated prices. Thus, they were simultaneously sites of salvation and exploitation. According to Owen Griffiths, in the immediate postwar period the paradoxical nature of the black market was amplified.

On the one hand, it [the black market] grew to become a defining structure of war, defeat, and occupation, impoverishing many who struggled to keep body and soul together, particularly from 1944 onward. As such, it has become a powerful symbol of the *yakeato jidai* [era of scorched earth] and of the victim's consciousness (*giseisha ishiki*) which has characterized Japanese thinking about war and defeat throughout postwar history. On the other hand, as virtually the only thriving sector of the early postwar economy, the black market was also one of the few outlets for entrepreneurial activity and employment available to the Japanese people. This was not necessarily out of choice, but out of the simple need to survive, particularly for those who had no jobs, no families, and no belongings to sell. Hundreds of thousands gravitated to the black market because it offered the promise of survival, and should therefore be understood as part of the language of *shinsei* [new life] and the new Japan.⁸⁵

From a site of salvation and exploitation, it had come to embody the complex response to defeat: the harm of wartime policy, a sense of victimhood, and new promise for the nation.⁸⁶

⁸⁴Government records from this period are spotty, so accurate figures concerning the distribution of rations are unavailable. However, according to John Dower, for example, "Tokyo residents failed to receive a full month's ration in six out of twelve months in 1946." Dower, John W., *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999) 96. See: Gerteis, Christopher, and Timothy S. George, ed., *Japan Since 1945: From Postwar to Post-Bubble* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012); Solis, Jesus, *Japan's Black Market: Yakuza, SCAP, and the Culture of the Yami'ichi*, Diss. (University of Colorado at Boulder, 2012).

⁸⁵ The translation of "yakeato jidai" as the "era of scorched earth" is Griffiths'. However, it occurs earlier in the text, so I have inserted it here for clarity. Griffiths, Owen, "Need, Greed, and Protest in Japan's Black Market, 1938-1949," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2002) 847.

⁸⁶ In his analysis of Hotta Yoshie's postwar fiction, Seiji Lippit develops the literary symbolism of the black market as "a world of criminality, corruption, and violence as well as an idealized resistance to state authority" (308) and "as both abstract and concrete space, functioned in effect as a receptacle for the massive flows into the city that marked the implosion of empire" (308). Lippit's characterization of the postwar black market represents a significant shift in its development. In the postwar period, the black market would become a site where Japan's colonial subjects who were not repatriated, for example, were relegated. In this sense, the postwar black market comes to represent memory of Japan's imperialism, which was being simultaneously eradicated from discourse. During the period in which Ishikawa wrote "Yakeato no Iesu," this valence of meaning had to be developed. Lippit,

The paradoxical nature of the black market described by Griffiths is apparent in its depiction in “The Jesus of the Ruins.” The protagonist visits Ameya Yokochō, or Ameyochō, the black market located under the train trestles between Ueno and Okachimachi, to purchase cigarettes. Initially, the narrator-protagonist describes Ameya Yokochō pejoratively. It is an unbridled world. Everything is in excess. The summer heat is oppressive. Tempers flare. The sound of hawkers vending their wares is “ear-splitting” (*kanagirigoe*).⁸⁷ It is a cacophony of sound and activity that has emerged from historical circumstance.

It is also what comes in the wake of war and its fires: a city in ruins, the burnt-out shell of a metropolis. Its creatures have (naturally) hatched out of the debris, and now they survive by the sheer tenacity with which they came into the world and by which they cling to life.⁸⁸

The ruins are the rubble from destroyed infrastructure left in the wake of the fire bombings of Tokyo. Nevertheless, they serve as fertile ground for the survivors of war. In this passage, the narrator-protagonist describes the black marketeers as a paradoxical natural phenomenon. Though the aerial bombings of Tokyo have left the area in rubble, in clearing away the infrastructure, it has also provided fallow land for the black marketeers to set down the roots that sustain their lives. This depiction characterizes the black marketeers through a sympathetic lens. Yet they are not quite human; they are merely “living things” (*ikimono*), suggesting that the act of survival has somehow stripped them of the characteristics that would define them as human.

At the same time, Ishikawa characterizes the black market as a place for the relentless pursuit of gain. It is a site of exchange where Darwinian principles hold sway.

The business of the marketplace is the transactions of beasts, the winners in the game of profit and loss being decided in a single bite. It is a dog-eat-dog world; and no matter how much one creature feeds or is fed upon, the time never comes when either party announces he or she has had enough. No, it appears that there will never be a time in which they will lift their heads and, momentarily studying the sky decide to take a breather.⁸⁹

Seiji, “Spaces of Occupation in the Postwar Fiction of Hotta Yoshie,” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vo. 36, No. 2 (2010) 289-312.

⁸⁷ Ishikawa “Jesus” 72. Ishikawa, “Yakeato” 94.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 73. Ibid. 94.

⁸⁹ Bracketed portion not included in the English quotation. Ibid. 73. Ibid. 95.

The “living things” become “beasts” driven to feed an insatiable appetite for buying and selling. They are driven entirely by self-interest without a care for the collective. They represent a community bound together paradoxically by self-interest. This drive for exchange completely consumes their attention, leaving no room for anything else, even a momentary appreciation of a blue sky. It is a place in which the commerce of need and desire become the foundation for the conventions that structure its functioning.

Furthermore, the protagonist does not view the black market as a temporary aberration that will be remedied once stability has been re-established. “They were the ‘newly created society.’”⁹⁰ This reflection on the black market reflects the narrator-protagonist’s concern for the future of society in general as if the black market were a Petri dish in which the growth of self-interest were nourished. This self-interest precludes an attentiveness to anything other than the pursuit of profit. The black marketeers who are not willing to spare an aesthetic moment to appreciate the sky would certainly have no use for poetry. In other words, their attention is devoted to the immediate; war has reduced the scope of their appreciation to profit and loss.

The black market operates as a microcosm; its character is antithetical to the world of streetcars. It is a site representative of the ills that cultural nationalism was supposed to redress. The black market may offer immediate salvation but only at the cost of exploitation. Ultimately, the black market is represented as a site of paradox. As such, it is the logical place for the convergence of an icon of the degradation of war with an icon of salvation.

Deification and Conversion as Discursive Production

The narrator-protagonist who in acknowledging the “amnesia of the times” in the world of streetcars and shrines and the absence of “men of virtue” from the black market has expressed an awareness that an ideal that embodies the notion of cultural supremacy does not make sense in a defeated nation. His sense of alienation is expressed as a desire to preserve the language of Hattori Nankaku, signifying a partial return to the ideal of

⁹⁰ Ibid. 78. Ibid. 97.

cultural nationalism. However, his interaction with the juvenile vagrant will alter this course of action. Instead of returning to a Neo-Confucian lineage, the narrator-protagonist undergoes a rather sudden conversion that pairs paradoxically a product of war—the street urchin—with religious iconography associated with the victor. However, his conversion is not straightforward. In the moments before deification, the narrator-protagonist's thoughts concerning the boy swings like a pendulum, incorporating several valences into the deification process. In this way, Ishikawa depicts the deification as a discursive production responsive to the delegitimation of cultural nationalism.

When the narrator-protagonist escapes the fracas of the black market and re-enters the world of streetcars and shrines, he compares the clumsiness of his feet to the lightness and surety of the boy's feet. The boy's nimbleness, the narrator-protagonist reasons, must indicate his greatness.

Might it just not be the case that he ranks among the very first of men—that, yea, he is to be the leader of a new breed of humankind that dwells in the place of ruin and sends out its tendrils to cover the earth? Indeed it may very well be the case that he has been singled out to play the role of the Son of Man. The signs are all unclear, and I feel uncertain in going so far as to suggest he has been chosen as our lord and savior, as the name Christ implies. Yet surely I am not wide of the mark in saying he is at least our Jesus, and a very human Jesus at that. Yes, am I not on target in calling him 'the Jesus of the ruins'?⁹¹

In this passage, the tone is speculative as befits the first stages of a conversion. The narrator-protagonist begins his conversion as a comparison between the boy and the "Son of Man" (Hito no Ko), a moniker for Jesus that emphasizes his humanity or imperfection in comparison to God. For the narrator-protagonist, the idea of an imperfect being serving as the progenitor of a "new breed of humankind" arising from the spiritual rubble of war makes sense—Jesus was after all of humble origins. Furthermore, his speculation does not just exemplify an imagination set loose by a sense of alienation; the direction of his thoughts reflects the tenor of contemporaneous discourse that was emphasizing newness.

⁹¹ I have altered the translation, deleting the phrase "who has come to save us" in order to preserve the distinction made in the text between the words "Jesus" and "Christ." Ibid. 86. Ibid. 100-101.

A focus on newness in the immediate postwar period reflected a discursive drive to recover from defeat. “New,” like the term “bunka” in the Taishō period, had achieved currency, becoming attached to all manner of ideas. More than a hundred magazines and journals starting up or adapting to the postwar environment employed the character for “new” or the katakana “nyū” in their titles.⁹² As John Dower notes, the “cult of the new was omnipresent.”⁹³ Dower’s characterization of this trend as cultish denotes the spiritual importance connected to the idea of newness. It reflected a spirit of adaptation in response to the devastation wrought by war but also to the changes occurring under the U.S. occupation. However, “cult” also denotes the excessiveness of this trend, a point that Ishikawa is likely parodying in his comparison of a pus-encrusted boy to the “Son of Man.” Notably, although immediate postwar discourse tended to emphasize the “new,” in terms of discursive production, discourse hailing newness was not new. “It was the rhetoric of ‘newness’ itself, however, that most revealed how old and familiar the ‘new’ slogans and exhortations really were.”⁹⁴ In particular, Dower references wartime slogans, such as “A New Culture Tied to a Radiant Past,” which combined newness with a codified past.

Through this paradoxical comparison of a pus-encrusted boy to the “Son of Man” set within a postwar discourse of newness, Ishikawa parodies the excessive nature of current discursive production. The narrator-protagonist, reflecting the trend toward a spiritual or ideological “newness,” illogically pairs a boy, who deserves both sympathy and condemnation, to an icon of ethical virtue. Ishikawa accentuates a sense of the irrationality in his development of the narrator-protagonist’s reasoning in his comparison of the boy to Jesus: the boy may be the “Son of Man” in terms of representing the onset of a “new breed of humankind,” but it still may not be appropriate to term him as “Christ” the savior. He leads by virtue of his unilateral commitment to survival, regardless of the ethical implications. The boy, a survivor of the deprivations of war, has come to symbolize the type of human behavior that will survive, even thrive, within the ruins of war. In this way, Ishikawa

⁹² Dower 177.

⁹³ Dower 177.

⁹⁴ Dower 177.

simultaneously acknowledges the leadership role of the boy, while questioning the direction in which he is leading. The complex logic represented in this exercise of reasoning is characteristic of Ishikawa's style, so much so that Abe Kōbō has termed it "a chambered nautilus" and William Tyler compares it to a "crystal."⁹⁵

Furthermore, this distinction between Jesus as "Son of Man" and as "Christ" reflects Ishikawa's long-term relationship with Catholicism. Although he never became a Christian, Kamiya Mitsunobu and Kotani Haruo credit the depth of his knowledge concerning Christianity to relationships he developed from the time he was a student of French.⁹⁶ In particular, they identify his encounters with the ideas of the French poet Paul Claudel, who was Catholic.⁹⁷ Ishikawa had attended lectures and a welcome reception for the poet shortly after he arrived in Japan. The deep impression Claudel had on Ishikawa, arguably already familiar with Christianity through his study of French, spurred an intellectual interest in the religion. "Thus, it is not that Ishikawa believes in Catholicism himself, but as a purified form of belief, he shows deep respect."⁹⁸ In this sense, Ishikawa's depiction of the narrator-protagonist's quandary over whether to name the boy "Christ" or "Son of Man" reflects an informed understanding of the nuances between the names.

The narrator-protagonist's conversion does not occur without resistance. The doubts he acknowledges about the boy as Jesus are amplified as he ventures further into the world of streetcars. After he notices that the boy has followed him out of the black market, he rationalizes the impending threat represented in the boy's decision to follow him by overturning his impressions of the boy as Jesus.

Yet what need had I to pay attention to him now that I had gotten back to the business that brought me here in the first place? I had already wasted too much time loitering on the way. Besides, from the top of a broad and open space like Ueno Hill, the boy did not look much like Jesus. He had changed, and curiously enough, here on "Mount Ueno" he lost the Jesus-like aura that had come so naturally to him when he had moved through the crowd in the marketplace.

⁹⁵ Abe Kōbō, "Kaisetsu," *Nihon no bungaku*, Vo. 60 (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron sha, 1967) 514. Tyler, William Jefferson, "The Art and Act of Reflexivity in The Bodhisattva," *The Bodhisattva or Samantabhadra* (New York: Columbia U Press, 1990) 140. See also: Sas.

⁹⁶ Kamiya Mitsunobu, "Ishikawa Jun to kirisutokyō ni kan suru kanken," *Kirisuto Bungaku Kenkyū*, Vo. 29 (2012); Kotani.

⁹⁷ Paul Claudel served as a French ambassador in Tokyo from 1922-1928.

⁹⁸ Kotani 107.

No longer the progenitor of a new race, he had become instead—in the words of the New Testament—the sole survivor of a generation of swine who, possessed by the devil, had flung themselves over a precipice and perished in the waters below.⁹⁹

By the time the narrator-protagonist had reached Ueno Hill, he had already resituated the lens of the world of streetcars and shrines. The setting of Ueno Hill or “Mount Ueno” (Ueno no Yama) somehow diminishes his impressions of the boy. The sudden shift in his assessment of the boy is certainly an attempt to eradicate a rising sense of fear. However, it is also clear that Mount Ueno has somehow conferred the power to do so. Ueno Hill is not just a random location; it alludes to “bunka.” From the Edo period onwards, Ueno Hill has served as a site devoted to culture. Shortly after the Tokugawa shogunate erected Kan’ei Temple in 1625, Ueno Hill became a popular site for *o-hanami* (cherry-blossom viewing), and it served as a battlefield in 1868.¹⁰⁰ In the Meiji period, after a visiting Dutch physician, Anthonius Franciscus Bauduin, commented on the area’s natural beauty, Ueno Park was established. During this period, a museum (now Tokyo National Museum (Tokyo Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan), Ueno Zoo, Tokyo School of Fine Arts (Tokyo Bijutsu Gakkō) and Tokyo Music School (Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō)) were established.¹⁰¹ Thus, Ishikawa, who vacationed in the Edo period during the war, certainly intended the narrator-protagonist’s weakening convictions concerning the boy as Jesus to be read against traditional culture, if not the ideal of cultural nationalism. The Jesus-like “aura” (*seisai*) imparted by the setting of the black market fades within the world of traditional culture. Within this world, he assumes a more sinister character. Alluding to the New Testament parable of the demons and the pigs, the narrator-protagonist identifies him as a demon.¹⁰² Within the world of culture, the boy’s characterization reverses; rather than an emissary of God, he is the spawn of the devil.

⁹⁹ Ishikawa, “Jesus” 90. Ishikawa, “Yakeato” 102.

¹⁰⁰ “Daigokai Ueno Kōen no rekishi,” *Chirigaku Enshū* 3, 4, <http://www.rikkyo.ne.jp/~z5000002/p1000/05-ensyuu/05-ensyuu05/0505-1.html>. Accessed June 11, 2016.

¹⁰¹ The Tokyo School of Fine Arts and the Tokyo Music School were merged in 1949 to form Tokyo University of the Arts (Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku).

¹⁰² The parable of the demons and the pigs can be found in Matthew 8, Mark 5 and Luke 8. The parable recounts Jesus’ encounter with two men possessed by demons. The demons begged to be driven into a herd of pigs rather than be tortured. Jesus complied. Once the demons had entered the pigs, they ran down a steep bank and into water, where they drowned.

As the boy, now enemy (*teki*), gains ground, the narrator-protagonist senses the boy's approach as an imminent threat and in this state of mind, reasserts his original assessment of the boy as more beast than human. In the immediate postwar period, the word "teki" would have inevitably recalled the pervasive wartime discourse on Americans. This combined with a characterization of the boy as bestial recalled wartime propaganda perhaps best exemplified by the term "kichiku beiei" (the savage British and Americans).¹⁰³ Jesus, as a feral wolf "grinding and gnashing" (*narasu*) his teeth stalking his prey, alludes to the propagandistic representations of Americans as a people prone to brutal violence. This subtle comparison to a wartime foe conveys association with the west or America to the boy, solidifying his connection to western iconography.

Acknowledging the impending attack, the narrator-protagonist weighs how best to fend against his the beast and realizes that the only thing he carries with him is the blank piece of paper he had brought with him intending to take a rubbing from the grave of Dazai Shundai.

Alas, a blank sheet of paper is far too transparent and insubstantial a thing to be of much use in times like these. And here I was calling upon it to serve as a weapon in mortal combat with a wolf.¹⁰⁴

In considering whether a piece of paper might serve as a defensive weapon, Ishikawa makes it a symbolic pivot for the various threads developed throughout the story. In a literal sense, a piece of paper does not possess the heft necessary to serve as a weapon. This lack is amplified by the fact that it is blank. The piece of paper had been intended to make a copy of Hattori's words. Notably, because it would have been a rubbing, the words would have been reproduced and thus could have bolstered his resolve or courage in battle. Yet, the protagonist-narrator had yet to make the rubbing, and for this reason, the paper remained blank. Thus, he was not even armed with Neo-Confucian principles that would have been contained in the words. The war, which had left the world of streetcars in intellectual ruins, had also left the narrator-protagonist spiritually defenseless against the offspring of the black market represented in the form of a war orphan.

¹⁰³ Aoki 63. See also: Dower 65.

¹⁰⁴ Ishikawa, "Jesus" 92. Ishikawa, "Yakeato" 103.

Yet, even with the boy's criminal intent now apparent, the narrator-protagonist will once again reverse himself. Unarmed, the protagonist-narrator at first succumbs to the feral attack by the youth, but to his surprise, he finds the physical strength to overpower him. He pins him to the ground, which permits him close scrutiny of his face, and he discovers that the boy's face does not reflect the ferocity of his actions.

To the contrary, it was the incarnation of the pain that had etched itself upon Veronica's veil. It was the living, suffering face of Jesus of Nazareth as he made his way along the road to Calvary. I knew it immediately, the recognition of it having come to me in a piercing flash of insight. The boy was Jesus, the Son of Man; and he was also Christ, the King and Messiah. Surely the enemy had been sent to bring me this message of salvation.¹⁰⁵

Paradoxically, in the throes of a violent encounter, the narrator-protagonist recognizes the boy's suffering, recalling the iconic image of war orphans in the immediate postwar period. Not only were they numerous—in 1948, the Welfare Ministry (Kōseishō) identified 120,000 juvenile vagrants, a quarter of them being children orphaned by the war—they were young enough to lack culpability in the pursuit of war.¹⁰⁶ In particular, Ueno was a mecca for these children.¹⁰⁷ Ōtani Susumu argues that while the political and economic chaos of the times contributed to this situation, the continuation of their plight was also the result of popular sentiment. The children, who had been orphaned during the war, served as reminders of suffering and defeat. In one sense, they were true victims of the war, having been too young to bear any responsibility for it. Yet, most people did not have the wherewithal to take on the care of strangers, and so they also represented sources of shame. Shiga Naoya makes this sense of shame a focus in a short story published in 1946 entitled "Haiiro no tsuki" (Gray moon).¹⁰⁸ In the story, Shiga depicts the death by starvation of a juvenile vagrant as the narrator rides Tokyo's Yamanote Line. Despite the boy's obvious suffering, no one comes to his rescue, and he dies on the train car just

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 93. Ibid. 104.

¹⁰⁶ According to a Welfare Ministry survey in 1948, Japan had about 120,000 juvenile vagrants, of which 30,000 were war orphans. See: Henmi Masaaki, "Dainiji sekai taisen go no Nihon ni okeru furōji/sensaikoji no rekishi" (Oct. 1994); "Reminiscences of Religion in Postwar Japan," *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (June 1966) 166-187.

¹⁰⁷ Ōtani Susumu, "Muretsudofu furōjitachi," *Haisen Nihon no shukuzu ikiteiru: Ueno chikadō no seitai* (Tokyo: Yūjinsha, 1948) 96.

¹⁰⁸ Shiga Naoya, "Haiiro no tsuki," *Shiga Naoya Zenshū 4* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973) 211-217.

a few stops after he embarks. The story concludes with the narrator disembarking from the train, carrying the weight of his inability to do anything to help the child. Thus, in the immediate postwar period, juvenile vagrants had achieved iconic status as symbols of innocent suffering that highlighted public culpability and shame.¹⁰⁹

For the narrator-protagonist, a visage of suffering finalizes his conversion. Unlike the previous incarnation of the boy as Jesus, this time he also names him Christ. The boy's iconic power as a symbol of the suffering wrought by war re-emerges at the moment the narrator-protagonist regains his sense of power. His surprise at being able to gain control spurs a reassessment. Now that he has the boy pinned down, he scrutinizes the boy's face and finds suffering. That is to say, the fear that had transformed the boy into a feral wolf in the protagonist-narrator's imagination had vanished allowing him to see the boy as a victim of the actions of men. Even more significantly, as Christ, he now also has been ascribed the power of salvation. However, what the boy will be saving the narrator-protagonist from and how he will do it are not at all clear. Perhaps he serves as a reminder of the costs of war, curbing the narrator-protagonist from exercising his greater power upon the boy. Yet, as a thieving, violent juvenile, the boy is a far cry from Christ the savior, who modeled an ethic. This latter reading highlights the paradox. Thus, the narrator-protagonist's conversion begs the question: How can a thieving, filthy boy, no matter what the cause for his plight, be called a savior?

Ishikawa's depiction of a spiritual conversion combines multiple valences developed in the story as parody. In developing the boy's symbolic association with the west as both feral and salvational, Ishikawa accentuates the antithetical nature of the characterizations. Just as in the boy's threatening approach, the western military advance on Japan signaled a terrifying turn. However, upon arrival, American soldiers proved to be more compassionate than evil. This combined with the suffering at home as a result of the bombings and depletion of basic resources, evidenced in the face of the boy, prompted a rapid reversal of the wartime characterizations of

¹⁰⁹ Wakamatsu Shinya attributes the greater praise for "Haiiro no tsuki" over "Yakeato no Iesu" in the immediate postwar period to the portrayal of shame in Shiga Naoya's short story. This sense of shame is completely lacking in "Yakeato no Iesu." Wakamatsu Shinya, "Yakeato de kyokō wo tachiageru koto: haisen chokugo kara miru Ishikawa Jun 'Yakeato no Iesu,'" *Shōwa bungaku kenkyū*, Vo. 65 (Sept. 2012) 35-46.

the west. In this sense, the sudden and irrational conversion represents a parody of the sudden reversal of the discursive production concerning the west. The conversion also suggests the makeshift nature of immediate postwar discourse. That is to say, the stability of the ideal of cultural nationalism comes into question. Notably, what presents a challenge emerges from the black market. The narrator-protagonist's conversion is an immediate response, based largely on his exercise of carnal desire and thus lacking sustained consideration.

Ishikawa underlines the lack of considered thought in the narrator-protagonist's conversion by emphasizing the impossibility of its continuity. Reflecting an ephemerality characteristic of the immediate postwar period, the narrator-protagonist will not be able to find his Jesus again. The next day the protagonist-narrator returns to the site of the black market in order to once again encounter the boy and an *o-musubi* (rice ball) seller. However, even in the brief duration since his last visit, the black market has been fenced off and partially razed, testifying to the rapidity of change in the immediate postwar period. What structures remain remind him of an empty stable (*uma no inai kyūsha no retsu*), and in the razed area all he sees are the traces of some living thing.¹¹⁰

They were the marks of an unidentified being that had walked upon the face of the earth and left its telltale imprint. As a matter of fact, the traces looked ever so much like footsteps—yea, even hoofprints—that a strange creature, having wandered into the desert, left as its tracks in the sand.¹¹¹

These closing words recall the narrator-protagonist's comparison of the black marketeers to beasts. Contrary to his expectations, almost all evidence of the "new breed of humankind" has been cleared away. The empty stalls and the marks in the sand are all that is left to attest to their presence. This final image does nothing to resolve the story. Instead, it raises questions: Where have the black marketeers gone? What has happened to the boy? Has the "new breed of humankind" simply been banished from sight? Without his newly made god, what becomes of the hope generated from the narrator-protagonist's newly formed faith? Notably, the destruction of it is not the result of a return to rationality. Its downfall lies in the environment of the times. In ending with the narrator-protagonist's desire for a return, Ishikawa provides a moment of forestalled signification. It reflects

¹¹⁰ Ishikawa, "Jesus" 96. Ishikawa, "Yakeato" 105.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 96. Ibid. 105.

doubts that any form of sustainable discourse can be achieved, while simultaneously reigniting discursive production.

***Ga-zoku* Framework for Conversion**

The ambiguity arising from the forestalled signification inherent in the ending of “The Jesus of the Ruins” functions to raise questions rather than provide denouement. However, the questions raised are not random; they are guided. In these final moments, the topos of change so rapid and unceasing that stability seems impossible recalls discourse on modernity, and thus inversely the production of the ideal of cultural nationalism. The reference to “a strange creature” (*kemono*) alludes to contemporary discourse on newness, i.e. the “new breed of humankind,” and tensions reflected in discourse on westernization/modernity and cultural nationalism in terms of conventional conceptions of *ga* (refined) as traditional culture and *zoku* (vulgar) as carnal desire. As Harootunian notes:

Seen as a distinct and lively material culture appealing to the desire of the masses for endless consumption of commodities, the trope of Americanism soon took on the association of a negative image that could, as we shall see, easily mobilize the effort to imagine its positive other that represented value, quality--all that was genuinely good, beautiful, and true (values that had already been embraced like a shield of armor by Japanese middle-class intellectuals in the 1920s). The threat of merging producers with consumers reinforced a division of culture into high and low, the former devoted to enduring value and the latter mired in the desire for commodities."¹¹²

Thus in the debate justifying cultural nationalism, the specter of a commodity culture centered on satisfaction of desire is paired with American culture, a more capitalist form of westernization. This pairing is then set in contrast to “enduring value” represented by traditional culture, which is characterized as refined. This frame resituates the narrator-protagonist’s internal struggle between his carnality and refinement in terms of the discursive production of cultural nationalism.

¹¹² Harootunian 49-50.

Ishikawa develops *ga-zoku* tensions spatially: the world of the black market is associated with *zoku*, while the world of streetcars with *ga*. They manifest as a dichotomy within the narrator-protagonist. In the cacophony and lawlessness of the black market, the narrator-protagonist had had to adopt “a certain air” of refinement.¹¹³ “Ga” here is like something worn—not an innate characteristic. Thus, in the environment of the black market, a place devoted to the satisfaction of immediate needs and desires and home to a juvenile vagrant who freely and openly thwarts social conventions, if not tradition, the narrator-protagonist begins to divest himself of refinement and indulge his base nature.

His indulgence is expressed as an appreciation of the juvenile vagrant. After being chased off from a sardine stall, the boy moves quietly and assuredly through the crowd, offering the protagonist a chance for further observation.

Dirty, foul-smelling, and glowing with an other-worldly black sheen, he revealed himself in all of his ugly glory. He stood in the midst of the squalor and stench of the marketplace, and he outshone it in his filthiness. He arrested every eye; and in doing so, did not the denizens of this lowly place—these vulgar and undaunted types who never flinched in the face of anything—secretly turn inward and, taking a long look back at themselves and the state in which they lived, suddenly realize they were no different?¹¹⁴

The boy should be anathema to a refined outlook. However, from the perspective of the narrator-protagonist, the degree of filthiness confers upon the boy a kind of majesty. The other denizens of the black market may smell and may be filthy, but the boy’s outstrips anyone else’s. As a spawn of the black market, he embodies naturally all that is repulsive about it. The completeness of his embodiment conveys a purity, reflected as an “other-worldly sheen” (*kurobikari*).¹¹⁵ The narrator-protagonist’s dark glorification of the boy signifies a lapse in refined judgment that contrasts with his initial assessment of the boy.

His first sighting of the boy produces a rational response more reflective of refined judgment. In his characterization of the boy, the narrator-protagonist establishes an intellectual and moral distance. Ishikawa

¹¹³ Ishikawa, “Jesus” 85. Ishikawa, “Yakeato” 100.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 80. Ibid. 97.

¹¹⁵ The phrase “*sei ni miirareru*” is used to convey spirit possessions. It is typically found in tales in which the spirit of people, plants or animals takes possession of a human being.

portrays this distance through a questioning concerning the taxonomic definition of the creature the narrator-protagonist observes emerging from a commotion over a theft from a sardines stall.

Here was a creature for whom there was no proper name, because the taxonomy of his kind had yet to be invented. ... Yes, there it was, a set of rags, and it was standing on its own two feet. Fanned by the breeze, it began to walk about, acting ever so much like a human being who was out for a stroll. Behold, the boy was black as the sludge in a ditch, and it was impossible to tell at a glance where the ragged edge of his clothes ended and the flesh underneath began. He was so caked in dirt and filth, he looked as if he were covered in scales. To make matters worse, his head and face were covered in boils. The boils oozed with pus that, baked to a crust in the terrible heat of the sun, had dried and begun to reek with an awful smell. Indeed, the stench was so potent that it seemed to reach out and attack one's nostrils.¹¹⁶

In identifying the boy as a “creature” (*ikimono*) for which there is no “proper name” (*tekisetsu jūbun naru na*), the protagonist engages in hyperbole to express the degree of revulsion prompted by the boy’s appearance and smell. Yet, his characterization is also literal. The degree of his filth and smell make the juvenile vagrant so distant from any familiar image of boyhood that the protagonist cannot find the language to name him. This moment initiates a line of thought in the protagonist that will recur throughout the text—how to name the boy. In doing so, he initially attempts to engage in a scientific line of reasoning, much like an anthropologist. However, he is not dispassionate. The point from which his question arises is his sense of revulsion—a judgment of refinement.

The protagonist-narrator’s judgment based on traditional values cannot hold in a time and place where those values no longer apply. In the black market, elevation occurs through the ability to survive. The narrator-protagonist’s growing appreciation is further supported by the reaction of black marketeers, in particular a man whom it would seem had been hired to patrol the area, to the boy. This man in military boots has the bearing of a soldier, using language as a “whip” (*muchi*).¹¹⁷ As the only representative of law in the black market, even his language represents an authority rooted in fear of what might come next. Yet, he is curbed from effectively

¹¹⁶ Ishikawa, “Jesus” 76-77. Ishikawa, “Yakeato” 96.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 76. Ibid. 96.

exercising his authority by the power of his revulsion. Rather than lay hands on the filthy creature, he limits his treatment of the boy to verbal haranguing.

Yet in backing off and simply using threats instead of actually taking the boy in hand, he suggested by his manner that, were there a cowering dog in the marketplace, surely it was none other than himself. And, like a dog that is easily frightened by the demon that lurks in the shadows, it appeared he had decided to confine his barking to a safe distance.¹¹⁸

The protagonist-narrator again supplies a more symbolic interpretation of events. The patrolman's avoidance of the boy's filth confers upon him the status of "demon" (*toorima*).¹¹⁹ In one sense, his explanation provides a rationale for the apparent power inversion taking place before his eyes. That is to say, the patrolman should have easily been able to overpower the boy, and yet because he is intimidated by the boy's filth, he succumbs, relinquishing his position of power. The boy, on the other hand, appears to have recognized this inversion and struts unafraid through the market. In the boy's diminution of the patrolman, the narrator-protagonist witnesses a man awestruck by the boy. It is an awe born of revulsion rather than belief. However, for the narrator-protagonist, who is still functioning primarily as an observer, the authority the boy commands in this relatively lawless world elevates him above all others.

For the narrator-protagonist, recognition of an inversion taking place within himself does not occur until the boy acts upon a desire that he himself acknowledges—his carnal desire for the woman who sells *o-musubi*. After the boy steals one of her *o-musubi*, he attacks the female vendor, setting his teeth into one of her plump thighs with "a slapping sound loud enough that it could be heard beyond the confines of the stall."¹²⁰ After satiating his hunger, he, without a hiatus of any kind, turns to satisfy another desire. The narrator-protagonist watches with envy.

I was mesmerized, yet no matter how much I might be overcome by the sight of a beautiful pair of legs, never—no, never—would I throw caution to the winds and rush forth to embrace them

¹¹⁸ I have changed Tyler's translation slightly to reflect the spiritual aspect of Ishikawa's language. More specifically, I replaced the word "specter" with "demon." Ibid. 77. Ibid. 96.

¹¹⁹ Tyler translates "toorima" as specter. Actually, it more precisely refers to a demon who brings bad luck to people or houses it passes by.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 82. Ibid. 98.

in full view of the public as the boy had just now done. No, it was something I simply could not do, and the reason lies solely in the fact I do not possess one iota of the spunk and courage demonstrated by this young man. It is just that simple. ...¹²¹

In this observation, the protagonist-narrator acknowledges the differences between himself and the boy.

Although he shares a feeling of desire engendered by the sight of the woman's legs, he cannot act on it in the way the boy has done. The reason he gives is not because it would be a violation of law or moral code, but simply because he lacks the "spunk and courage" (*yūmōshin*) to pursue his desire. The absence of refinement in his reason is certainly self-deprecating, which could be interpreted as refined. However, his self-deprecation applauds the boy for possessing a spirit that he lacks. In acknowledging his own limitations with respect to the boy, he is beginning the conversion process, placing the boy above himself in terms of the virtues of "spunk and courage." That is to say, he is beginning to elevate "zoku" over "ga."¹²²

Ishikawa deepens the narrator-protagonist's commitment to his baseness by giving him the opportunity to act on his desire for the woman. In attempting to disengage herself from the boy, the woman, with the boy in tow, staggers in the direction of the narrator-protagonist. He rationalizes that he is in danger of being "crushed underneath when the boy and the woman toppled to the ground," so he decides that he will grab hold of the woman when they reach him.¹²³

Yet, given the unexpected stroke of good luck that was now about to come tumbling my way, what need had I to be shy about standing in the shadow of the boy's glory? By basking in the virtuous light of his courageousness, why not make happenstance the happy occasion in which I saw to the fulfillment of my basest desires?¹²⁴

Within this rationalization to justify titillating contact with the woman's flesh, logical contradictions pertain. By claiming that he is in danger of being "crushed underneath" and that their unavoidable approach is an "unexpected stroke of good luck," he attempts to absolve himself of base intent. However, by acknowledging that that intent—like that of the boy—would somehow make him culpable, he reveals an underlying belief that

¹²¹ Ibid. 83. Ibid. 99.

¹²² In the elevation of "ga" over "zoku," echoes of Kotani's evaluation of Claudel's impact on Ishikawa occur.

¹²³ Ibid. 83. Ibid. 99.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 83. Ibid. 99.

what he is about to do is wrong. Nevertheless, he gives sway to this rationalization and becomes entangled with the boy and the *o-musubi* woman, achieving his goal of laying hands on her but also becoming scraped up in the process. The humor built into this scene belies the seriousness of what is occurring. The narrator-protagonist's rationalization may be ridiculous. Nevertheless, in acting upon it, he has taken the next step in his conversion. In using the boy's virtue of "spunk and courage" to pursue his "basest" (*rōretsu*) desires, he has made himself, at least momentarily, the boy's disciple. Notably, he engages in this intellectual act, not out of consideration of or for the boy, but as a justification for pursuing his own sexual desire. In this sense, the narrator-protagonist's conversion springs from his desire for a woman who is selling *o-musubi*, i.e. from the carnal rather than the intellectual.

When he returns to the world of streetcars, his reflection begins to take on hues of more refined thinking. He is covered in mud and blood from his tumble with the boy and the woman. He is made aware of this fact through the looks he receives as he walks through the streets. This, in turn, triggers a confession. "By making myself appear ever so prim and proper, I have advertised myself to the world as a paragon of refinement."¹²⁵ With the experience of his tumble with the woman and the boy fresh in his memory, he cannot deny his own baseness. At the same time, he possesses an awareness of how one should at least appear in the world of refinement, and so he immediately begins to clean himself up, seemingly ready to forget his experience with the boy. Yet, his thoughts return to his experience, and he begins to justify his decision as a religious act.

Nonetheless, by virtue of possessing at least a touch of the coarse and common disposition that is enchanted, if only in passing, by the sight of a good-looking pair of legs such as those on the woman at the *o-musubi* stand, had I not revealed something of my true self and thereby found favor with God? And had not God therefore sent me his bearer of the good tidings of the gospel? My hands and feet began to shake in fear and awe of what had happened to me.¹²⁶

The narrator-protagonist expresses his belief that his salvation had been earned by revealing his base nature. That is to say, by confessing his baseness, he has become righteous, reflecting a paradoxical tenet of Christian

¹²⁵ Ibid. 85. Ibid. 100.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 94. Ibid. 101.

ideology. In essence, the narrator-protagonist is arguing intellectually that refinement emerges through exposure of his baseness, in essence through confession.

While the *ga-zoku* tensions throughout the narrator-protagonist's conversion incorporate humor into the telling of the story, it also represents an inversion of the modernity debates connected to the discursive production of cultural nationalism. In those debates, a sense that tradition offered a solution to unceasing social change, a product of westernization, was clearly voiced. As literary critic Kamei Katsuichirō points out:

In a word the Japanese who have lived through the 1920s and 1930s . . . have lived in a time without belief. Since the Meiji period there has always been a diversity of responses to the question that asks what kind of prospects have been produced by this disorder and misery. Whether it is the influence of foreign thought or the diffusion of science, for me it is only the intention that pursues the inexpressible truth in the words Kami and Buddha. However vague my hope, if there is strength to ride over the modern it is in this belief in the gods. Indeed, the resurrection of the gods is, I believe, the central problem of contemporary thought.¹²⁷

Kamei employs "this disorder and misery" in the place of "modernity," thereby equating them. His solution to this problem is to reassert traditional religious values inherent in Buddhism (Buddha) and Shintoism (Kami). However, if viewed from Harootunian's interpretation of these events as resistance to the influence of capitalism, Kamei's suggested course of action takes on different nuances. That is to say, Kamei's solution is a response to the extent to which a commodity culture inherent to capitalism, particularly that practiced in America, had taken root in Japan. If read from this perspective, the *ga-zoku* tensions in the narrator-protagonist's conversion represent his alienation from the ideal of cultural nationalism. His conversion is predicated on a loss of faith in the delegitimated ideal. As a result, he shifts away from traditional values and embraces a culture founded on self-interest, or as the narrator-protagonist characterizes it when describing the black market, "no matter how much one creature feeds or is fed upon, the time never comes when either party announces he or she has had enough." His conversion, then, becomes a discursive production to allay his sense of alienation.

¹²⁷ Translation by Harry D. Harootunian. Harootunian 41.

Conclusion

This final union of the *ga-zoku* dichotomy in the narrator-protagonist's interpretation of the boy is the focus for interpreting this story.¹²⁸ Writing in the immediate postwar period, Hiroshi Henmi wrote that Ishikawa's "motif rings false because one can sense the tendency to establish fantasy."¹²⁹ However, with critical distance, the brilliance of the pairing has become clear. Wakamatsu Shinya notes that "by means of coupling the images of the *zoku* (juvenile vagrant) and sage (Christ), the work achieves an inversion, which is its unique characteristic."¹³⁰ That is to say, by building upon the iconic quality of juvenile vagrants as innocents representing the suffering still pervasive in the immediate postwar period, the narrator-protagonist's conversion highlights Ishikawa's contemporary reality. Yamaguchi Toshio interprets this inversion more particularly.

The "fiction" of comparing a "human being" to a "god" that is offered here traces the "fiction" of the modern emperor system since the Meiji Restoration. It is parody. The emperor was mythologically deified. In the name of this "god," militarism was advanced. After a tragic defeat was brought about, that "god" came to function as bitter irony toward the farce of his "humanization."¹³¹

According to Yamaguchi's reading, Ishikawa's deification of a juvenile vagrant performs an operation inverse to the humanization of the emperor at the end of a bitter war that had been fought in his name, making an intellectual process the central point of the story. In essence, Yamaguchi interprets Ishikawa's paradoxical representation as highlighting the constructedness of emperor-based ideology and questioning the legitimacy of pairing godhood and humanity. For such a reading, the *ga-zoku* dichotomy has to be treated as an either-or proposition.

However, the multivalent quality of Ishikawa's depiction suggests that during the final tussle between the boy and the narrator-protagonist in which the boy is declared Christ the savior, the narrator-protagonist overcomes

¹²⁸ Wakamatsu Shinya's article counters critique of the story for a lack of realism in his depiction of his juvenile vagrant. Wakamatsu Shinya, "Yakeato de kyokō wo tachiageru koto: Haisen chokugo kara miru Ishikawa Jun 'Yakeato no Iesu,'" *Shōwa Bungaku Kenkyū*, Vo. 65 (Sept. 2012) 37.

¹²⁹ Henmi Hiroshi, "Bungei hihyō: Bungaku to shinjitsu," *Shin Bungaku* (Jan. 1947).

¹³⁰ Wakamatsu 37.

¹³¹ Yamaguchi Toshio, "Ishikawa Jun 'Yakeato no Iesu' ron,'" *Ishikawa Jun Sakuhin Kenkyū: "Kajin" kara "Yakeato no Iesu" made* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha Shuppan, 2005) 372.

the *ga-zoku* dichotomy: the boy is both a victim and a thief. The parodic hyperbole in which the narrator-protagonist links this realization back to discursive production reminds that what Ishikawa has been depicting is a struggle between cultural nationalism and westernization. Ishikawa does not employ linear logic in developing the intellectual theses in “The Jesus of the Ruins.” Through the deification of an unlikely candidate for Jesus, Ishikawa creates a humorous model of contemporary thinking. By parodying the rapidity of conversion in intellectual discourse within the context of the immediate postwar period, he has incorporated the varying positions that contributed to the production of the ideal of cultural nationalism and set them into relationships within a contemporary elements. He largely achieves this through multivalent symbolic representation. Jesus, for example, represents at any given moment suffering, salvation, and the west. In this way, the text operates not as a venue for delivering a particular message, or even as a means for exploring interiority or humanity. As Miryam Sas argues in her analysis of Ishikawa’s style in *The Bodhisattva*, “While undermining notions of a national or cultural unity or unproblematic authority, Ishikawa's juxtapositions and links across time and space reveal the multilayered complexity already existing in the cultural, literary, and religious images he draws on and reinvents.”¹³² “The Jesus of the Ruins” exercises a gravitational force upon discursive positions, juxtaposes them, and then calls upon the reader to make sense of the provoking deification of a pus-encrusted thief.

Through a paradoxical pairing of a filthy, thieving juvenile vagrant with Jesus, an icon of salvation, Ishikawa provokes reflection on the discourse of cultural nationalism. The pairing itself defies logic, which instigates questioning—a questioning that pointedly reflects on the rising specter of victimization. The questioning provoked by the incongruity of the pairing is thorough enough that he did not need anything further. However, in adding a final scene in which almost all traces of the world from which the vagrant Jesus have been bulldozed, Ishikawa underscores the rapidity of change that places even the protagonist’s questionable rediscovery of faith into question. Just as quickly as the protagonist recovers his faith, it is almost completely lost as part of the

¹³² Sas 49.

postwar recovery process. It is on this open-ended note that the story ends: The protagonist returns to the black market in order to reconnect with the vagrant savior only to find that it has been bulldozed. Where has the vagrant Jesus gone? Seemingly, this would signal an end to his newly found faith, no matter how poorly founded. However, even within the cleared area, the protagonist identifies traces of the black market. These traces are significant because they serve simultaneously to represent the narrator-protagonist's hope but also to resituate the questioning provoked by the incongruous pairing within the framework of a recovery that threatens to destroy all traces of the ugly consequences of actions taken under the auspices of cultural nationalism.

Ishikawa's dark parody of intellectual discourse in the immediate postwar period clearly expresses a sense of alienation. He suggests a comparison between the narrator-protagonist's desperate intellectual maneuvering and the intellectual discourse of the immediate postwar period. The work would seem to stop at making this comparison. That is to say, Ishikawa's critique does not extend to offering an alternative course for intellectual development. In this sense, it reads as an expression of cynicism toward the contemporary direction of intellectual discourse. However, the structure of the story suggests a more productive intent. If all that was intended was an expression of cynicism, then why include the final scene? This brief depiction caps an imaginative rendering with a reminder of contemporary events. Furthermore, it undermines the viability of the conversion that has been depicted. Will the narrator-protagonist be able to rediscover faith or will the environment of the immediate postwar period destroy any foundations he attempts to set down? The final scene redirects attention from the immediate events of the story toward the future. In doing so, Ishikawa calls upon readers to imagine this for themselves. In this way, the text, though a powerful expression of cynicism, also functions to provoke thinking that has the potential to disrupt the alienation Ishikawa has poignantly described.

Chapter 5. Productive Aporia and Sovereignty in Abe Kōbō's *The Ark Sakura*

Abe Kōbō is renowned for turning settings emblematic of modernity into worlds in which the fantastic occurs. However, for *The Ark Sakura* (*Hakobune sakura maru*, 1984), no such manipulation was necemetassary. In this novel, Abe builds upon a contemporary global condition rooted in the imagination—mutually assured destruction. In the 1950s John von Neumann, an influential member of the Atomic Energy Commission and an advisor to the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project, developed the nuclear equilibrium strategy of mutual assured destruction to ensure freedom against the threat of Soviet totalitarianism.¹³³ Von Neumann calculated that a network of intercontinental ballistic missiles equipped with compact hydrogen bombs would provide a virtual shield against Soviet aggression. The impact of Neumann's strategic zero-sum policy, however, far exceeded mere deterrence; it fostered a shift in the nature of international relations. Jean Baudrillard notes that the institutionalization of political response to imagined situations rather than material ones became one of the markers of the Cold War.

The risk of nuclear annihilation only serves as a pretext, through the sophistication of weapons (a sophistication that surpasses any possible objective to such an extent that it is itself a symptom of nullity), for installing a universal security system, a universal lockup and control system whose deterrent effect is not at all aimed at an atomic clash (which was never in question, except without a doubt in the very initial stages of the cold war, when one still confused the nuclear apparatus with conventional war) but, rather, at the much greater probability of any real event, of anything that would be an event in the general system and upset its balance.¹³⁴

Baudrillard's cynical interpretation of the possibility of nuclear annihilation underscores a distinctive quality of Cold War discourse: its hyperreality. With the risk of nuclear attack, an anticipation that nuclear proliferation would only further the likelihood or accelerate the occurrence of nuclear apocalypse, begins to determine, or is used to justify, material action. With such imagination already at work on the world stage, perhaps Abe did not

¹³³ Poundstone, William, *Prisoner's Dilemma* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 129.

¹³⁴ Baudrillard, Jean, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan Press, 1994) 32.

feel that amplifying hyperreality was necessary. *The Ark Sakura*, while possessing fantastic elements, retains a plot driven by a contemporaneous discourse already infused with the fantastic.

The spectral nature of nuclear threat is also apparent in much of the commentary connected to the novel. Shortly after publishing *The Ark Sakura* (*Hakobune sakura maru*) in November 1984, Abe Kōbō stated, “Japan is the only country in the world to have been victimized by an atomic bombing. However, it is not that Hiroshima or the Japanese were bombed. The globe was bombed.”¹³⁵ Initially, most interviewers, critics and Abe himself focused on this aspect of the novel. Hiraoka Tokuyoshi, French literature scholar, critic and author, comments:

In conclusion, in terms of how to deal with the nuclear in our politics, whether the author sides with anti-nuclear movements or is “anti-anti-nuclear” is surely a matter of primary concern and interest for many readers, and depending on one’s point of view, whichever he is interpreted to be, is surely grounds for a favorable evaluation. However, for a novel, it doesn’t matter in the end. Which is to say, in addition to casting a shadow implicitly and explicitly on our lives, the issue of whether we can imagine the nuclear, whether we can imagine the terror of nuclear war, even if we put aside the question of whether or not to put it into a work, must confer profound respect for the ambition of Abe Kōbō, who resolutely challenged head on setting the reality right before our eyes as a major issue—so much so that it calls the abilities of current authors into question.¹³⁶

The focus on nuclear apocalypse in the immediate term is understandable given the historical period into which the novel was released. Countries were rushing headlong into an arms race. India and Pakistan, which were embroiled in mutual antagonisms, were developing their own nuclear weapons, reigniting global concerns over the likelihood of nuclear aggression. Locally, critics were expressing these concerns in terms of Japan’s role in forming international nuclear agreements.¹³⁷ As the only country to have experienced firsthand the devastation of a nuclear bombing, it was felt that Japan should have a significant voice in the development of such agreements. Even decades later, Christopher Bolton would conclude in his analysis of *The Ark Sakura* that: “...the

¹³⁵ Abe Kōbō, “Kakujidai no ‘hakobune’: Dai 54 kai Shinchō bunka kōenkai,” *Abe Kōbō Zenshū* 28 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1997) 23.

¹³⁶ Hiraoka Tokuyoshi, “Muningen no shūmatsuzu: Abe Kōbō *Hakobune sakura maru* wo megutte,” *Bungakukai* 39, 2 (Feb. 1985) 228.

¹³⁷ See: Momoi Makoto, “Kakukakusan jidai no sekai to Nihon,” *Kakushin*, Vo. 50 (Sept. 1974) 142-152; Muramatsu Takeshi, “Kakukakusan to Nihon no kakuboyū,” *Kaku naki Nihon no anzen hoshō* (Tokyo: Jiji Mondai Kenkyū, 1965) 163-184; Ohara Shin’ichirō, “Iyō na kakugaikō no ‘hanazakari’—kakukakusan to Nihon no yakuwari,” *Sekai shūhō*, Vo. 55, No. 28 (July 1974) 36-41.

structure and the difficulty of the novel reflect the nuclear tension of the 1980s. Abe produced a novel that reproduced that tension, a novel that gets stuck in the same way, a novel of suspense where finally nothing really happens, in which the nothingness has an oppressive significance of its own."¹³⁸ In this way, Bolton concludes that the irresolvability of the logic of mutual assured destruction is reflected in a lack of denouement in the novel.

While Abe certainly capitalized on the nuclear-oriented readings of his novel, they do not account for a significant shift in the course of the novel's development. Even several years into the work, Abe, who often wrote and spoke about his current literary project, made no mention of the nuclear or an ark. In an article written four years before the novel debuted, he referred to the work as *Desire Prisoners* (Shigan shūjin) and identified two primary motifs: meting punishment (*keibatsu wo shikkō suru*) and seeking freedom (*jiyū wo motomeru*).¹³⁹ If this is the case, then Abe likely incorporated the nuclear threat as the novel's frame rather than primary focus. Both Biblical allusions to an ark and contemporary fears of nuclear apocalypse are conceits that compel the reader to consider what Abe identifies as the novel's root issue.

I think that because there is the state, there is the nuclear, and so the nuclear and the state are a single thing. It took the period from World War I until World War II to establish the principle of state sovereignty. Something that guarantees the agreement that one must not transgress state sovereignty, frankly, does not exist anywhere. It does not exist, but because an agreement exists from the outset, the state endures, so it protects the agreement, in any case, for the sake of self-preservation.¹⁴⁰

In this statement, Abe identifies reframes the issue of nuclear weaponry as a product of the pursuit of state sovereignty. The notion that a state possesses supreme authority over territory occurs only in the form of an inter-state agreement to honor boundaries, implying a relationship in which all parties stand equal. However, nuclear threat puts into question the notion of sovereignty. The nuclear represents the ability to transgress boundaries in a way not conceivable before World War II. Unlike conventional weaponry, he argues that even

¹³⁸ Bolton, Christopher, *Sublime Voices: The Fictional Science and Scientific Fiction of Abe Kōbō* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U Asia Center, 2009) 252.

¹³⁹ "Shōsetsu *Shigan shūjin* shippitsu ni sennen suru Abe Kōbō-shi," *Abe Kōbō Zenshū* 27 53.

¹⁴⁰ Abe Kōbō, "Kakujidai no 'hakobune,'" *Abe Kōbō Zenshū* 27 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1997) 241-242.

the threat of nuclear aggression is enough to transcend those boundaries. In this sense, policies of nuclear deterrence cast the sanctity, even the possibility, of sovereignty into doubt. How can a state claim to be sovereign or to respect sovereignty if the threat of nuclear attack is a constituent element of the definition of sovereignty? A state in fear of nuclear attack has already acknowledged that it is not sovereign, and a state wielding nuclear weaponry has declared the possibility that it may not respect the sovereignty of other states.

If nuclear threat serves as a conceptual frame rather than just the novel's subject matter, then Bolton's reading of the novel's lack of denouement, while applicable, is incomplete. Abe is not simply reproducing an aporetic state in the narrator-protagonist's mind. He is employing the story of an individual to reflect simultaneously on political and human conditions. The nuclear threat involves issues of state sovereignty and the materialization of hyperreality. Moreover, *The Ark Sakura* is the story of a man, who is alienated by society, attempting to regain control over his environment. Thus, Abe frames the story of an individual's journey in terms of globalization issues. The structural layers that this frame provides establish a synecdochic relationship between Mole and the state. Abe develops the points of comparison by setting his actions within a constellation of characters that also serve as representatives of other aspects of contemporary Japanese society. Abe's depiction of Mole's attempt to gain sovereignty over his life as futile delegitimizes the modern political ideal of state sovereignty. Abe then builds upon this delegitimation in the final moments of the novel, having his narrator-protagonist emerge into a world quite different from the one he has known. To the narrator-protagonist, the world has become translucent. In depicting the world as altered in terms of perception, Abe reveals that the change resides within the narrator-protagonist's mind. Despite the radical nature of this change, the narrator-protagonist makes no attempt to explain the source of his altered perception. In this way, Abe ends the novel with a directed question: What has occurred to make the world appear so different?

The plot of *The Ark Sakura* centers on the narrator-protagonist's efforts to establish control over how he is regarded. Abe depicts this struggle largely through the narrator-protagonist's attempts to establish his name. The depiction of his desire for control is developed symbolically through a beetle called the eupcaccia, an insect

whose self-sustaining lifestyle epitomizes the control that the narrator-protagonist hopes to achieve. However, his plans are tragically flawed by his failure to recognize that the solitary lifestyle of the eupcaccia is quite different from what he is trying to achieve.

The story opens with the principal character, Mole, beginning to populate his ark—a cavernous underground mine that had been abandoned. Mole has already equipped the mine with the infrastructure necessary for survival. However, he has yet to invite anyone else aboard. Mole, who is scarred by an abusive father and a history of being bullied for his weight, wishes to choose whom he will save carefully. Ironically, the first and only invitation he issues is to a confidence man, an insect dealer who has sold him a fake beetle that he has named the *eupcaccia*. As soon as people, mostly uninvited, begin to board the ark mayhem ensues. Two skills, who were working at the market where Mole bought his beetle, have stolen boarding passes. They are joined by “stowaways,” members of a local gang who have somehow found another entrance to the ark. Mole also discovers that The Broom Brigade, a group of elderly men who clean streets during the night are also aware of the ark and have been making their own plans to populate the ark. This disturbing revelation is compounded when Mole discovers that the group is led by his abusive father. As each new member boards the ark, a new round of jockeying for control of the “ship” occurs, climaxing with Mole’s attempt to achieve sovereignty figuratively and almost literally being flushed down the ark’s powerful and large toilet. After his failure, Mole abruptly abandons ship. Emerging from beneath the center of town, Mole experiences a moment of revelation in which he recognizes himself, other people, and the city itself as transparent. Abe’s figurative portrayal is suggestive of some kind of apocalyptic event having occurred. Yet, the interpretive narrative voice, so prevalent in the earlier parts of the story is suddenly silent, leaving the meaning of the final “apocalypse” open to interpretation.

Synecdoche

Abe establishes synecdoche through the language he employs to characterize an abandoned mine that Mole calls home. Throughout the novel, Abe alters how he references this location. It is alternatively a mine, a nuclear fallout shelter, a ship and an ark (*hakobune*). As a mine, it is a territory that will connect to notions of state sovereignty as well as commercial opportunism. As a shelter from nuclear fallout, it references contemporary history and the metanarrative of mutual assured destruction as well as providing a rationale for the protagonist's quest. As an ark, it alludes to the biblical tale of a flood, recasting the horror of nuclear apocalypse as rebirth. As a ship, it references a hierarchical social structure in which Mole can recoup his name. Each reference incorporates meaning, making the mine the locus of a constellation of influences all affecting the success or failure of Mole's quest. However, they also establish Mole's story as a commentary on the contemporary world of the author.

The mine over which the narrator-protagonist claims control possesses a complicated provenance. It is a labyrinth of tunnels created by corporate shale-mining operations. Four companies, each vying to mine the bulk of the shale deposit contained within this particular piece of ground, have created a jumble of tunnels.

Yet the degree of complexity involved could not be attributed solely to haphazard, trial-and-error procedures. Four companies had leapfrogged through the mountain in fierce competition, ignoring all agreements. If Company A crawled under the belly of Company B and tied up its legs, Company B swung ahead of Company C and pinned down its head; Company C poked holes in Company D's arse, while Company D slammed Company A in the ribs. Unreported cave-ins--even bloodshed--had apparently been everyday affairs.¹⁴¹

Each company pursues different paths to acquire the resources held within the ground. Nevertheless, they share one goal: profit. That is to say, the territory's value lies in what it provides others. Notably, these companies have pursued that profit without heed for mutual respect or even safety. As soon as the territory is depleted of shale, they abandon it, selling off the land above to housing developers. These mines are relics of the negative impact of corporate competition.

¹⁴¹ Abe Kōbō, *The Ark Sakura*, trans. by Juliet Winters Carpenter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988) 181-182. Abe Kōbō, *Hakobune Sakura Maru, Abe Kōbō zenshū*, Vo. 27. (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1997) 365-366.

Mole comes to gain access to the mines after his father Inototsu purchases a piece of land above the mines. This parcel of land has an entrance to the mine. However, in answer to a challenge by the insect dealer, Mole points out that owning the land on the surface does not, to his mind, equal ownership of the land underneath.

“Even if operations have been shut down, the place must still be registered in somebody’s name.”

“Officially, it doesn’t even exist. I checked it out at the city hall. There’s no street number, no address of any kind.”

“But it is Japanese territory, isn’t it?”¹⁴²

While the surface above the mine may have been bought and sold, because the mine has never been mapped as a residential plot, it remains a wilderness over which no one has yet to lay claim. By virtue of having access to the mine’s opening, Mole believes he has found a loophole by which he can lay claim to this underground territory. In not registering ownership with the government, Mole has retained the right to claim the mine as his own sovereign state. That, of course, is not to say that the Japanese government would agree with his judgment. Nevertheless, this exchange between Mole and the insect dealer raises the issue of sovereignty in terms of individual ownership.

Solely as property, the mines would have remained a place where Mole could live out his life in isolation. However, he has repurposed the mines into a nuclear fallout shelter. In characterizing Mole’s intent for the mines in this way, Abe has set the novel’s events within the contemporary discourse of mutual assured destruction. Though the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty had been signed in 1968, the spread of nuclear weaponry was still occurring. The treaty’s ineffectiveness had been underscored in December 1974 when the International Court of Justice failed to issue a ruling on the Nuclear Tests Case. Australia and New Zealand, neither of which possessed nuclear weapons, filed a suit against France’s planned atmospheric testing of atomic weaponry in the South Pacific. Because France had cancelled the weapons test, the court decided that the case had no standing and so declined to rule. However, the international response to the court’s failure to resolve the

¹⁴² Ibid. 47. Ibid. 278.

issue brought forward the inequities inherent in the NPT. In 1981 the Israeli bombing of an Iraqi nuclear reactor thought to be supplying materials for nuclear weapons continued to remind the public of nuclear threat, so that by the 1980s governments were discussing how to back away from the strategy of mutual assured destruction. In 1982, the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki addressed a special session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament. During the period in which Abe was writing *The Ark Sakura*, Japan experienced a sharp resurgence of protest against nuclear armament. Lawrence Wittner notes, “Hundreds of thousands of Japanese demonstrated against nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Tokyo. Once again, tens of millions of people signed antinuclear petitions.”¹⁴³ Though popularly the tide had turned against the metanarrative of mutual assured destruction, many countries still persisted in believing nuclear weapons necessary for preserving their sovereignty. Against this backdrop, Mole’s fears, while extreme, do not extend to paranoia. This metanarrative provides a degree of legitimacy to Mole’s decision to create a fallout shelter. He has created a space that will allow him and other occupants of the mines to survive the past and move into the future. Yet, the logic of mutual assured destruction emerges here as the conceptual prison. In trying literally to escape the outcome projected by mutual assured destruction, Mole has become imprisoned by the fear the discourse engenders.

Mole may be motivated by fear, but he is also not without hope. Mole expresses his hope for freedom from the grip of the nuclear threat by referring to the mines as an ark. “*Hakobune*” originally referred poetically to a four-sided ship (*fune*) that looked like a box (*hako*). The word took on new hues through medieval translations of the Christian Bible, applying a physical characterization to the ship that Noah built to preserve life during a mythological cleansing. *Hakobune*, in this sense, signifies both an “ark” and the apocryphal tale of the Christian “flood,” which depicts an event generated by a supernatural being who literally washes away human evil from the face of the earth—perhaps even the hearts of men because those chosen for salvation demonstrate an

¹⁴³ Wittner, Lawrence S. “The Power of Protest,” *Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vo. 2, No. 7 (July 13, 2004) 1. .

absence of that evil. In this sense, *hakobune* draws on Christian mythology, which identifies an end that leads to a new beginning.

This idea of a new beginning is also reflected in the language Mole uses to refer to the apocalypse. Abe employs the term “*go-hasan*,” which originates from the method of clearing an abacus (*soroban*) of its previous calculation in order to begin anew, as “apocalypse.” Notably, rather than the more spiritual terms of “*mokushi*,” “*hametsu*,” or “*daisanji*,” which Abe could have used to designate apocalypse, “*go-hasan*” retains the technological sense of instrumentation. Apocalypse is characterized as an act of clearing that both wipes away a previous calculation and begins a new calculation in which no detail or information has yet to be entered. In this sense, an apocalypse represents the act of resetting, severing what came before from what will come. By contrast, “*mokushi*” (revelation), the term used to translate the Biblical notion of apocalypse, might be expected given the novel’s reference to the biblical story of the flood. “*Hametsu*” connotes Buddhist notions of cycles of decline and rebirth. Both these terms reference religious representations of the end of one world and the beginning of a new one. “*Daisanji*” (catastrophe) implies an accident or occurrence that inflicts widespread misery. It conveys the sense that an apocalypse arises from natural or human causes. However, as public response to the Great Kantō Earthquake attests, a deific source may be attributed to “*daisanji*” as well.¹⁴⁴ Thus, Abe’s choice to bypass these terms in favor of “*go-hasan*” is significant. Even though he alludes to the Biblical narrative of the flood, he has chosen a term that is devoid of deific judgment. In this sense, he has secularized the Christian narrative, employing it more for the concept of a global event that cleanses the world just as “*go-hasan*” resets an abacus. However, rather than a flood, the event that offers a reset is an atomic apocalypse. In a

¹⁴⁴ Following the Great Kantō earthquake, numerous rumors spread concerning its cause. Among these were the beliefs that the earthquake was divine retribution for the gains Japan achieved from Germany in Asia despite nominal participation in World War I and for the growing materialism and extravagance in lifestyle. See: Bates, Alex, *The Culture of the Quake: The Great Kanto Earthquake and Taishō Japan* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, 2015); Lee, Jin-Hee, *Instability of Empire: Earthquake, Rumor, and the Massacre of Koreans in the Japanese Empire*, Diss. U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2004; Schenking, J. Charles, “Admonishment: Interpreting Catastrophe as Divine Punishment,” *The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Chimera of National Reconstruction in Japan* (New York: Columbia U Press, 2013) 116-152.

sense, Abe has evacuated from the meaning of apocalypse any sense of moral purpose. It is not a directed event, at least in any deific sense. The world will not be cleansed of evil. Nor, if Baudrillard is correct, is it likely to occur. Abe uses it as a conceit to provide a rationale for the novel's plot. It is the reason for Mole's creation of an ark, and for the need to populate it. Mole ostensibly is not just surviving nuclear fallout, he will be preserving the human race. Therefore, he must invite a few chosen people aboard in order to save them.

The high moral ground that the terms ark and fallout shelter lend to the mines will eventually give way to more mundane concerns. As a ship, it must possess a clear-cut social hierarchy in order to weather the storm of a nuclear winter. "... the ship would be cut off from the outside world in an instant, and a siren would sound the alarm, calling all hands to their posts. And then, for however long, this would be all that remained of the world."¹⁴⁵ Rather than raise sails and cast off, the crew would be responsible for maintaining air quality and handling waste. As the designer of the ship, the captaincy would naturally fall to Mole, or at least so he assumes. After all, who would know the technology better than the man who had created it. Thus, it is through this characterization of the mines, that it becomes clear that Mole is not solely motivated by fear of a nuclear apocalypse. Mole's personal goal also becomes apparent: He wants to be captain. That is to say, his hope is to achieve social authority.

Thus, the mines serve as a fixed location in which a constellation of influences congregate. Abe characterizes Mole's quest for captaincy in terms of history, politics, and ethics, all reflected through his various names for the mine. He uses synecdoche to recast a personal desire for authority and control as a reflection on a more abstracted issue of sovereignty.

Sovereignty

¹⁴⁵ Abe, *The Ark* 183.

While “sovereignty” is never specifically referenced in *The Ark Sakura*, Abe devotes considerable attention to the theme in a lecture given shortly after the publication of the novel. Yet, while he was writing the novel, sovereignty was never mentioned. Rather than sovereignty, he identifies “the pursuit of freedom” as a major motif. Though the terms express different ideas, they are inversely related. Sovereignty concerns the ability to control, while freedom denotes an absence of restraint. Thus, the two concepts express inverse perspectives on the issue of control. Commonly, sovereignty is associated with governments, while freedom reflects more popular or individual concerns. This difference reflects Abe’s development of synecdoche. At the individual level, Mole will pursue freedom, and this pursuit will be expressed in terms that reflect more broadly. Thus, Abe employs the most celebrated symbol of the novel—the eupcaccia, or the clockbug (*tokeimushi*)—to develop the notion of sovereignty. This development is reflected in the narrator-protagonist’s decision to make the beetle an emblem for the state he is creating in the mines because its life cycle is representative of self-sufficiency.

However, the narrator-protagonist’s characterization of his emblem will reveal a fatal flaw in his logic.

After encountering the eupcaccia in a bazaar located on the roof of a department store, Mole is immediately enchanted by it. The seller, the insect dealer, regales Mole with a detailed description of the beetle’s life cycle as part of his sales pitch. Because it is legless, a living eupcaccia, for the most part, remains in one place. It pivots in a circular pattern around its thorax, its head following the trajectory of the sun, spinning like the hands of a clock. From sun-up to sundown, it feeds on its own excrement. Mole connects with the largely isolated and self-sufficient life of the eupcaccia, imbuing in its contained cycle a mythic function—that of revelation.

The clockbug contained, I felt, a revelation that could save humanity much rancor and anxiety. Take the anthropoids, who are thought to share a common ancestor with the human race. They exhibit two distinct tendencies: one is to make groups and build societies—the expansionary tendency—and the other is for each animal to huddle in its own territory and build its own castle—the settling tendency.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Juliet Winters Carpenter translated “*kakuchō keikō*” as “aggrandizing principle.” I altered her translation here to reflect the contrast I believe Abe intends to establish. Abe, *Ark* 18-19. Abe *Kōbō Zenshū* 27, 259.

The eupcaccia, which has lost its primary means for movement as part of its evolutionary development, serves as an emblem of the “settling tendency.” Because it is self-sufficient, it has no need to venture out or expand into others’ territories. As a result, it does not cause the kind of conflicts that are associated with the “expansionary tendency.” The “settling tendency” denotes self-sufficiency and an isolated and stationary positioning, characteristics Mole associates with his ark. Thus, in identifying the eupcaccia as an emblem for his ark, Mole also refines the kind of sovereignty he wishes to pursue. The ideal of sovereignty becomes closely associated with a notion of self-sufficiency.

Mole’s comparison of the human race to anthropoids echoes Abe’s exposition that state sovereignty occurs only through agreement. Mole’s world of settling and expansionary tendencies, likewise, describes a world in which states do not exist in a stable status quo. Those that choose to settle will always be subject to the whims of those who are expansionary. In the period in which the novel is set, for example, a status quo largely existed by virtue of the standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union. Under the umbrella of U.S. protection, states like Japan could enjoy a sense of sovereignty. However, as Donald Pease points out, this sense is essentially a fantasy that masks relations of domination.¹⁴⁷ To Mole, this drive for expansion originates not in reason, which distinguishes anthropoids from humans, but in satisfying a primitive urge. From this perspective, the impulse that fosters the development of increasingly murderous forms of weaponry for the sake of expansion is primitive. What rationality has added is the improvement in technology that has made expansion more catastrophic. Mole acknowledges somewhat scientifically, i.e. rationally, the nature of contemporary societies and the vulnerability of choosing to follow the “settling tendency.” Nonetheless, he commits to it. Mole’s pursuit of self-sufficiency as an ideal will be his fatal flaw. In choosing “settling” over “expansionary” tendencies, he chooses an emblem for his state from within the paradigms dominating modern political relationships. In describing the motifs of the novel four years before the novel debuted, Abe points out:

¹⁴⁷ Pease, Donald, *New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2009) 37.

Now, in the name of the stagnation of western civilization and the revival of the oriental spirit, the yearning for things that are self-sufficient tends to be fairly strong, but, in a manner of speaking, that is something like seeking freedom in prison.¹⁴⁸

The phrases “western civilization” and “oriental spirit” connote the cultural nationalism that contributed to Japan’s imperialism in the earlier half of the century.¹⁴⁹ Invoking these ideas simply locks one into the logic that created them. The notion of self-sufficiency implies freedom from the outdated concepts that promoted cultural nationalism. However, when the concepts like the “oriental spirit” and “western civilization” are used to justify “self-sufficiency,” the logic of cultural nationalism still holds sway. That is to say, the strictures of the logic have been reconstituted in the effort to escape it. In this way, the ideal forms a “prison” in which self-sufficiency, which appears synonymous with freedom, even if achieved, cannot provide freedom. In this statement, Abe identifies the pursuit of freedom in the form of self-sufficiency as a paradox as long as the institutional structures of western civilization and the revival of the oriental spirit are in place.

However, over time, Abe revised his position. He claims to have found inspiration in the blind devotion of rightist youths, whom he interprets as the “generation’s vanguard.” Although he does not specify what aspect of the rightists are representative of a “generation,” in the ‘60s and ‘70s numerous incidents of violence were perpetrated by nationalist youths who were demonstrating their fervor for an ethnic- and emperor-based state and opposition to communist movements in Japan. Nathaniel Smith, noting that these protests were doomed to fail, argues that these acts hold for rightists value in enabling “individual forms of sovereignty” in opposition to a more juridical sense of citizenship.¹⁵⁰

Acts that flaunt the laws of postwar Japan become to the rightist, then, a form of sovereign protest that channels a broad ethno-religious ideal of the Japanese nation counterposed against the postwar juridical state. These violent acts allow the rightist to offer himself up in a measure

¹⁴⁸ Abe, “Shōsetsu” 53.]

¹⁴⁹ The specifics of this debate were developed more fully in the chapter on Ishikawa Jun’s “Yakeato no Iesu.” See also: Harootunian, Harry D., *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U Press, 2011); Morris-Suzuki, Tessa, “The Invention and Reinvention of Japanese Culture,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vo. 54, No. 3 (Aug. 1995) 759-780.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, Nathaniel, *Right Wing Activism in Japan and the Politics of Futility*, Diss., Yale University 2011 5.

of sacrifice to this ideal form. He thus repositions himself as an imperial subject rather than a juridical one.¹⁵¹

The ideological stoicism of rightist violence provides a means for simultaneously acknowledging and unbinding themselves from a juridical nation. This, Smith terms, the politics of futility.¹⁵² The paradox inherent in rightist violence is reflected in Abe's revision of the subject of his novel. "For this reason, in this work, the theme expanded from 'freedom of desire prisoners' to 'freedom that never awakens (*jikaku shinai*) to the loss of one's control.'"¹⁵³ While Smith and Abe differ in their characterizations of rightists' degree of self-awareness, they both describe a degree of political conviction that is in contravention to as well as defined by the contemporary political world, i.e. "prison." This shift, though subtle, is significant and centers on both the issues of awareness and control. In his earlier thinking, Abe remains optimistic that people can shape the form of their "prison." However, he now suggests that that control has been lost and freedom can only be obtained through ignorance of that loss. From this perspective, freedom can never be attained. However, a sense of freedom can.

Through a spiritual act, the individual may achieve a state that a prison would seem to deny. That act turns on notions of desire, which represents both a futuristic end and a lack. The point in question is the direction of desire. If it emanates from resistance to the prison—the ideal—then freedom is impossible. That is to say that fighting it only serves to reify it. Only when one accepts the "prison" does one gain the capability of unbinding from the constraints—the fear and anxiety—concerning the prison. In this scenario, the person who resists is doubly bound: first, by the prison, and second, by the negative emotions toward the prison. Only when one abandons both, can one attain a sense of freedom and pursue a unique desire that is not directed by the ideal. Freedom, then, would seem to suggest a spiritual, although not physical, escape from "prison."

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 22.

¹⁵² Ibid. 4.

¹⁵³ Abe, "Kakujidai" 240.

The shift in Abe's conception of freedom appears to have coincided with the development of nuclear apocalypse in the framework of the novel, and it is through the issue of nuclear weaponry that Abe reveals a layering in his thinking.

Throughout I have been thinking why must they have finally reached such an enormous weapon of destruction--in that background, of course, there is an essentially violent system called the state. Must we protect the thing called the state to the degree that we must finally reach this point? Also, this only being a strange way of speaking, it is a question of whether the state possesses such a right. In short, at the root of the name 'state sovereignty' is a way of thinking that what kind of thing is permitted for the sake of protecting the state. If that were so, it becomes a matter of, for the sake of one's household, committing theft, committing what is acceptable. However, a household is small, and the state is large--that is nothing more than an issue of level.¹⁵⁴

In comparing the state to a household, Abe identifies the same kind of operations occurring at the state and personal levels. Sovereignty, then, can pertain not only to the ability of a government to exercise control over a territory but to individual control over a more particular environment. Given this, it should be no surprise that he configures his character Mole so that his personal acts can be read in terms of state interests. As the creator of the ark, Mole is sovereign. Yet, he is also a man troubled by a past. Mole attempts to address both in his creation of an ark. Yet, Mole does not take into account the likelihood that expansionary human beings will interfere with his plans. Ultimately, challenges will be made to his sovereignty over the mines. That is to say, interlopers will seek to appropriate the mines and the material resources he has invented for their own advantage.

Abe hints at the fatal flaw in his portrayal of how the narrator-protagonist thinks through his choice of the eupcaccia as emblem. When Mole purchases the eupcaccia, it is not solely because it symbolizes self-sufficiency. It holds a value that sets it apart from other commodities available in the bazaar atop a Tokyo department store. Here, a man offers a water cannon he designed himself for ten million yen, while another vendor sells used candy wrappers and matchbooks as "Mementoes of My Departed Husband." These items hold no interest for him.

¹⁵⁴ Abe, "Kakujidai no 'hakobune': Dai" 23.

All I could discern around me was out-and-out greed, and total lack of concern for psychology. Personally, I didn't mind a little wool over my eyes as long as the result was sufficiently entertaining. That was where the eupcaccia shone: now *there* was the unmistakable touch of the professional.¹⁵⁵

The eupcaccia alone captures his attention. He knows that it is fictitious—a creature whose existence has been fabricated by the insect dealer for the sake of a confidence scheme. In fact, its existence, much less its survival, contradicts Darwinian reason. How could a legless beetle exist, much less survive? For Mole, its fantastically fictitious quality is what makes it stand out in the marketplace. Enchanted by the imaginative narrative the insect dealer has spun about the eupcaccia, Mole assigns it value over those things that might be practical but lack imagination. While used candy wrappers and an overpriced invention logically would not be particularly tempting, Mole's characterization of them as lacking "psychology" establishes a hierarchy in which the value of imagination supersedes that of practicality. Thus, in employing the eupcaccia as a totem for his sovereign underground state, Mole is employing a fiction to serve as the symbol of his state.

Mole's treatment of the eupcaccia as a totem represents both an act of consumption and production. It is functioning as what Roland Barthes would term a modern myth. In his 1957 critique of consumer culture, *Mythologies*, Barthes demonstrates how prevalent "ideological abuse" had become. These abuses are essentially misrepresentations, and in becoming commonplace, they develop into regularly consumed modern mythologies. This is possible, he argues, because the myths have become naturalized.

In fact, what allows the reader to consume myth innocently is that he does not see it as a semiological system but as an inductive one. Where there is only an equivalence, he sees a kind of causal process: the signifier and the signified have, in his eyes, a natural relationship. This confusion can be expressed otherwise: any semiological system is a system of values; now the myth consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system.¹⁵⁶

In employing the eupcaccia as totem, Mole attempts to naturalize it. He is consciously treating a fiction, or an imaginary, as fact and creating a semiological system that will attach the value of self-sufficiency to his sovereign

¹⁵⁵ Abe, *Ark* 27. Abe, *Hakobune* 265.

¹⁵⁶ Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, trans. by Richard Howard and Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012) 242.

state. Thus, through the eupcaccia, Abe accentuates the constructedness of the ideal of sovereignty. He moves the condition of hyperreality created by the metanarrative of mutual assured destruction and moves it fully into the realm of fiction. Its structure is weak, built upon illusion presented as truth. Nevertheless, the eupcaccia provides the means to link his individual desires to society and justify his vision for the mine—that is to say, the materialization of his personal desire to rename himself. The fictional insect becomes a source of legitimation.

Through the eupcaccia, Abe not only characterizes Mole's desires for the ark in terms of statehood, he develops an understanding of sovereignty as a naturalized fiction. Whether Mole has either taken an ideal that is fundamentally fictive and attempted to naturalize it through the emblem of the eupcaccia or having already naturalized the fictive concept of sovereignty in his mind, he adopts a symbol for his state that reflects an error in logic. Mole's ark is established on a weak foundation: it is legitimated by a fictive ideal adopted to bring his desires to fruition. Furthermore, as a state, he has also opened up the possibility for territorial claims to be made. The foreshadowed unraveling of the conceptual framework will begin as soon as people board the ark.

Sovereignty in a name

Though the narrator-protagonist couches his efforts in terms of saving the human race, ultimately what he will seek is to erase a past that constrains him. The narrator-protagonist is a loner, a man who lives and works in an abandoned mine. He spends his time creating devices to provide the mine's infrastructure and to entertain the mind. For example, perhaps as a passing nod to television, the narrator-protagonist designs lenses that make satellite photos appear three-dimensional, providing the illusion that he is traveling while remaining firmly seated on a huge toilet, oddly placed in the central open area of the ark. He is not a hero; his viewpoint is highly anthropomorphic, and so placing his own needs above the environment's, he earns what cash he needs to outfit the ark by disposing of chemical waste down the toilet and into the ocean. His preference for isolation is no doubt informed by his past. He is the product of rape, scarred even further by the abuse of his father, the rapist.

Alone in his ark, the protagonist plans to survive the end of the world—the inevitable outcome of nuclear assault—with a select group of people.

The novel opens with a self-introduction that expands upon how the protagonist has been hemmed in by names. He prefers to be called Mole rather than the more derogatory moniker “Pig.” Although the specific origin of the nickname Pig is never made clear, the protagonist flinches at every mention of the term. Given his response to the word and his current weight of 215 pounds, it was likely employed as a taunt about his physique. He describes it as a history that “trails after me like a shadow.”¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, “Mole has a certain charm and is fitting” to describe his underground lifestyle.¹⁵⁸ These nicknames serve as descriptors that stand in for Mole’s proper name—which is never revealed—yet do not quite achieve the same status. The protagonist has been reduced to character traits that in one case derive from a derogatory perspective and in the other a more neutral description.

As monikers, Mole and Pig correspond to specific subjective consciousnesses set within a larger social environment. Both mark him as a societal victim. However, the name of Mole offers more solace in its accurate depiction of his lifestyle. They are concepts attached to the form of the narrator-protagonist, redefining his signification. In a sense, then, Mole retains an abstract quality, representative of something larger, although the specificity of his particular history and situation works against his conceptuality. In commenting on the naming in Ōe Kenzaburō’s *Man’en gannen no futtoboru (The Silent Cry)*, Karatani Kōjin notes a similar oscillation between “absolute knowledge” and the immediate and contingent. Building upon Hegel’s notion of grief in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Karatani argues that proper names are “connected to the notion of something irreplaceable and unlike any other.”¹⁵⁹ A name attaches specificity to a character whose unique historical presence connotes value that arises from a particular environment, that is to say, a particular time and space.

¹⁵⁷ Abe, *The Ark Sakura* 3. *Abe Kōbō Zenshū* 27, 250.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 4. Ibid. 250 I altered the translation to correspond more exactly to Abe’s word choice.

¹⁵⁹ Karatani Kōjin, *History and Repetition*, ed. by Seiji Lippit (New York: Columbia U Press, 2012) 160.

Conversely, the absence of that named character connotes loss or “grief.” Without proper names, Karatani states, history ends. “It means the subsumption of all particular and contingent events, the subsumption, that is, of everything that makes history history. In the deepening of our ‘grief,’ however, we come to realize the necessity of individual, contingent events, we realize that they cannot possibly be otherwise.”¹⁶⁰ This notion of connecting naming to history serves as a conceit that will allow Abe to develop his narrator-protagonist’s quest synecdochically. If the narrator-protagonist had been given a specific name, say Takahashi, the degree of specificity would have situated him in his own particular and unique history. However, through nicknames, Abe emphasizes relational aspects of his narrator-protagonist, thus encouraging a more comparative or symbolic reading of him and his history. That is not to say that Mole lacks a specific history.

Despite his lack of a family or given name, the narrator-protagonist does emerge from a specific history, or at least a specific event. Though most of his background remains shrouded in vague references, much like his description of how he came to be named Pig and Mole, he does identify his conception specifically. He, by his own accord, is a product of rape.

“My life began with an apocalypse. My mother was raped by Inototsu, you see, and that’s how she was mated.” Perhaps I shouldn’t have said so much. But I wanted to impress it on her that I, for one, was not the sort of man who could go around brandishing the traditional male prerogatives. I was a mole, someone who might never fall into a marriage trap, but whose prospects for succeeding in any such scheme of his own were nil. Yet I was the captain of this ark, steaming on toward the ultimate apocalypse, with the engine key right in my hand.¹⁶¹

In using the same term to describe a nuclear apocalypse and the rape of his mother, the narrator-protagonist imbues his father’s act of rape with so much power that it equates to events like Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His conception, which he notably played no part in, has shaped his sense of “the sort of man” he is. He believes that being a product of rape means that he will never commit rape, a characteristic that he hopes will impress the woman with whom he is speaking. Regardless of whether the logic of his statement makes sense, it is clear that

¹⁶⁰ Karatani 160.

¹⁶¹ I altered Carpenter’s translation slightly to reflect Abe’s more technical description of his mother’s insemination. Abe, *Ark* 233. Abe, *Hakobune* 402.

he regards the event as defining. It has stained his life. Yet, his use of apocalypse here is also suggestive of the hope he has invested in the coming apocalypse. He is seeking an opportunity for a rebirth in which he can wipe away the stain and assume a degree of agency in the creation of his self.

Notably, Mole's objective description of his birth and his nicknames reveals his alienation. He has had no say in his characterization nor the circumstances of his birth, arguably the result of a territorial conquest of his mother's body. He may accept the name Mole and dislike the name Pig and the circumstances of his birth, but he is powerless to change any of it. The ark and the apocalypse have provided a means by which he can recoup both. As captain, he envisions a shift in his personal circumstances, proof that he has claimed control over his environment. Thus, he confers upon himself, rather than having the title conferred upon him by some institution, the name of "Captain."

Mole's adoption of the moniker "captain" amounts to an attempt at discursive production. Almost as soon as he decides to bring aboard his first "crew" member, the insect dealer, Mole realizes the contingency of this moniker.

To erase any doubts, as soon as he came back from the men's room I could inform him that I was the captain, and have him sign a pledge stating that once aboard, he agreed unconditionally to follow any counsel to disembark. The ship was mine. I discovered her, designed her, and built her. It was only proper for the crew to fall in line with my policies.¹⁶²

His realization occurs as afterthought to having issued his invitation. Mole recognizes that he has made himself vulnerable to the judgment of others and attempts to counter that instability or threat with a written "pledge," which he never actually secures. In fact, when the insect dealer first employs the name "Captain," he senses a hollowness. "The sensation of being called Captain brought nothing like the feeling I had so long anticipated. On the contrary, I rather felt he was laughing at me."¹⁶³ Mole interprets the insect dealer's use of his title as ironic:

¹⁶² Ibid. 25. Ibid. 264. I replaced the word "form" with "pledge" and "obey any orders" with "follow any counsel."

¹⁶³ Ibid. 62. Ibid. 287. I altered the translation slightly to reflect Abe's language more exactly.

the insect dealer simultaneously signals that he recognizes the title as Mole's attempt at control while indicating that he does not necessarily acknowledge Mole's authority. He may have managed to introduce the notion of himself as captain into the insect dealer's language, but this irony acknowledges a gap between the signified and the signifier. The word "captain," when produced by the insect dealer, does not solely denote a position in the hierarchical rankings aboard a ship; he is simultaneously signifying his skepticism toward the narrator-protagonist's characterization of himself. The narrator-protagonist's name is thus developed like the various claims over a contested territory. In seeking captaincy, Mole attempts to establish sovereignty.

Characters as Constructs of Modernity

Just as Mole is represented as conceptual construct, so too are the other "combatants." As the insect dealer, the skills (*sakura*), Mole's father and the Broom Brigade come aboard, they each bring competing aspects of modernity that threaten Mole's sovereignty. Abe accentuates the synecdochic intent of this "battle" by rendering each symbolically through their naming. He alternates between proper names, nicknames, titles, and generalized categories in his naming. The vendor is sometimes the insect dealer and at other times Manta Komono. The skills remain anonymous, although care is taken to distinguish them from cherry blossoms, an allusively rich symbol. Only the leader of the Broom Brigade is afforded a proper name—the rest of the members are referred to by their titles. By identifying his characters in this way, Abe yokes broader social forces into the portrayal of the struggle for control of the ark.

In the case of the first person invited aboard the ark, the insect dealer, the struggle extends to the use of his personal name. Throughout most of the novel, the narrator, the internal voice of the narrator-protagonist, consistently refers to the vendor by the title insect dealer. This is in spite of having learned his name on their journey from the market to the ark.

"What's your name again?" I asked.

"Son of a gun. I guess we never did introduce ourselves. Komono here. Manta Komono. Sorry, I'm all out of namecards."

“Unusual name.”

“It comes from a word for a kind of reed, the kind used to make mats. My ancestors were probably roadside beggars who sat on reed mats all day.”¹⁶⁴

Despite Komono’s rather deprecating characterization of his family’s origins, the name Komono (菰野) literally translates as “reed fields.” His surname connotes “reed plains,” the designation for Japan in Shintoism’s originary myths. While the Chinese characters Abe employs vary from those in, for example, the *Kojiki*—“ashihara” (葦原)—his surname, Komono connotes the Japanese mythical state. This connection is reinforced by his admission to being a member of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces. This name is set into oscillation with the moniker Mole attached to him in the marketplace—“the insect dealer” (*konchūya*). Mole admittedly struggles with the idea of calling him by his surname. When he eventually he does begin to call him by his family name, he does so with “some trepidation at this change in our [their] relationship.”¹⁶⁵

Komono will eventually murder Mole’s father and assume his position as the leader of the Broom Brigade. The Broom Brigade (Hōkitai) is a group of elderly men who, during the night, clean the streets of the town above the ark. These men still exhibit signs of the strict training of a more militaristic era.

It all began with a movement to collect empty beverage cans, organized by a few elderly citizens. They attracted a growing following, and the movement began earning a name for itself as a way of getting old people reinvolved in society and giving them new purpose in life. Gradually it became more structured, with uniforms and a badge showing two crossed bamboo brooms. Clad in dark blue uniforms like combat suits, the oldsters parade around in the middle of the night, when ordinary people are in bed, and sweep the streets till dawn. They work in the wee hours because they don’t want to get in people’s way. Imagine them marching abreast in a single row, softly intoning an old war song and swinging their brooms in rhythm, casting a shadow under the streetlights like some monster centipede creeping through the night.¹⁶⁶

The uniforms, old war songs, and coordinated movements under the shade of night connote traces of militarism surviving in postwar Japan. This militarism does not parade out in the open during the day. Rather, it goes to work in the evening “when ordinary people are in bed.” This paramilitary activity is a vestige, hovering in the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 56-57. Ibid. 27.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 153. Ibid. 346.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 155. Ibid. 348.

dreams or subconscious of postwar Japan. Notably, the members of the Broom Brigade are the elderly—those who still retain firsthand memories of Japan’s militarism. Like the nationalistic fervor that spurred international aggression, they have been relegated to the shadows. In this sense, Komono’s assumption of leadership will represent a reunion of militarism with the mythic belief system that helped legitimize Japan’s imperial expansionism.

Komono’s assumption of control is made possible by the death of Mole’s father, who comes aboard the ark only as a radio voice and as a corpse. Although not physically present, Mole carries his father with him as personal history. He characterizes his own existence as the product of the rape of his mother by his father, Inototsu, a large, brutish man, whom Mole likens to a boar. Mole finds his criminal origin impossible to deny so that when he himself is wrongly accused of rape, he feels a sense of guilt over a crime he did not commit. “I found it difficult to defend myself by claiming that I was a piglet because Inototsu’s blood ran through my veins.”¹⁶⁷ Mole’s logic is paradoxical, asserting both innocence and guilt in a single statement. An inversion has occurred: His father has raped and yet never been accused, while Mole has never raped and yet suffers the public ignominy of accusation—the son symbolically assumes the father’s guilt. As the offspring of rape, he possesses the blood of a rapist. This physical connection confers at least some portion of his father and thus responsibility for his father’s crime. As a result, he shares guilt for the rape of his mother. This sense of guilt makes him feel he cannot defend himself against a separate instance of rape. The rape and the false accusation link father’s and son’s histories. In this sense, his father coming aboard in terms of voice is symbolic of the conceptual link between the two. Mole will reluctantly have to confront his paternity as personal past to obtain sovereignty. When the location of the ark is recognized as coinciding with a fisherman’s inn that his father had run, Mole reacts viscerally. “I felt sick with embarrassment, as if he'd told me my fly was open. I didn't want to hear any more. To have the past dragged aboard my ship was the last thing I wanted. When we set sail, I wanted my slate

¹⁶⁷ I significantly altered Carpenter’s translation here to reflect Abe’s genetic connection between Mole’s father and the name “Pig.” Abe, *The Ark Sakura* 42. *Abe Kōbō Zenshū* 27, 275.

as clean as a newborn baby's."¹⁶⁸ Mole's father as personal past represents a threat to Mole's endeavor to gain sovereignty.

The final two key players in the drama aboard the ark, like Mole, never acquire proper names. The shills do not even earn nicknames; they are distinguished only by gender. They are known throughout the text in terms of their function, which they define in the following manner:

"According to a dictionary, a *sakura* is a shill, a street vendor's assistant with the function of encouraging customers' desire to buy something, or somebody who focuses on inciting onlookers by colluding with a speaker. Its etymology appears to have been 'seeing the cherry blossoms (*sakura*) for free.' Only nobody calls us that anymore. The job's no different, but we have a respectable-sounding title: sales promoters, we're called. The department stores treat us like proper agents, with our own bank accounts and everything."¹⁶⁹

Their function precludes open identification; that is to say, their function would be nullified if it were known. By tricking consumers into buying, they sacrifice individual specificity in favor of financial gain, not simply for themselves but for the corporations for which they work. The value placed upon their role is acknowledged by the department store's titling them "sales promoters."

Of the characters aboard the ark, their ideology is the most slippery and their behavior the most difficult to predict. As promoters, they are like utilities, ready to serve the interests of others. They are even willing to serve the interests of war. The female shill declares for the male shill, "After all, that's his job. His and mine. It has nothing to do with our real feelings. Don't forget, we're *sakura*. Decoys. Shills. Our job is showing interest to attract customers."¹⁷⁰ That is to say, regardless of how they might feel personally, they will promote anything, even war. Just as the mining companies riddled the ground indiscriminately, their ethical systems are centered around profit. Their allegiances are transferrable. Rather than a belief system, what guides allegiance is money, or the potential for it. Though their actions may harm, this is not their intent. They calmly appraise current

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 39. Ibid. 273.

¹⁶⁹ I altered Carpenter's translation slightly to reflect the text more literally. Ibid. 32. Ibid. 269.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 270.

situations and gauge the most profitable outcome for themselves. That is to say, they are guided by self-interest. As such, they are representative of business interests.

Thus, as the territorial contest begins, personifications of the major elements of Japan's modernity have come aboard the ark. These personifications support the synecdoche already established through the eupcaccia emblem, biblical allusions, and the apocalyptic framework. They allow the territorial contest to be read more conceptually as a battle for sovereignty rather than the product of individual ambitions.

From salvation to contestation

As each of these symbolic forces—the mythic state, personal and national histories of violence, and commerce—board the ark, they bring with them unique challenges to the sovereignty Mole is attempting to declare. Abe has set the stage for a parody of competition for control of a “state.” Once the safe haven of a sole inhabitant, the varying desires of Mole, Komono, the Shills, and the Broom Brigade set in motion a maelstrom symbolized by the powerful suction of a rather large toilet situated centrally within the ark. The suction is so powerful that it pulls Mole's leg down into the piping, preventing him from extricating it, even with the help of the “crew.” The future of Mole as captain and the ark as salvation comes increasingly into question. The ark, rather than a site of salvation, becomes an arena for various interests to vie over control of the ship.

Even before Mole returns to the ark with his first “crew” member, the battle for control of the ark has begun. The Shills have stowed away before they arrive. However, even as Mole is adjusting to their presence, they discover an intruder, a member of a local youth gang. Soon, through Mole's friend Sengoku, Mole and his father, now leader of the Broom Brigade, begin to negotiate for the disposal of a corpse. This leads to the revelation that Mole's father also claims ownership of the mine and has been developing his own plans for populating the ark in the event of nuclear holocaust. This prompts the decision to send the insect dealer to negotiate with Mole's father. However, rather than negotiate, the insect dealer kills Mole's father and assumes leadership of the Broom Brigade. When Mole's father does finally board the ark, it is as a corpse—the symbol of Mole's past

lies splayed out on the floor of the ark. Even though it is dead, it remains physically present. Mole cannot cleanse it away because his leg is jammed in the toilet, preventing him from flushing his father and his past down the toilet.

Around him, the Broom Brigade is engaged in a skirmish with a gang of youths over a group of young girls who have gone missing somewhere in the ark. The Broom Brigade, under the leadership of Komono, has begun to take over and is outlining a plan for screening “crew” members. This discussion is characterized in terms of life and death—to be chosen means life, while not being chosen is called a “death sentence.” The virtual apocalypse has become real in terms of their decision-making and reveals the dark nature of the process they all have engaged in. Their discussion is a moment of epiphany for Mole. “They were right. I too had been signing secret death sentences without benefit of trial, all along. Whose way was more cruel?”¹⁷¹ Mole’s hope of cleansing history and bringing about a new beginning is being recast as its opposite—condemnation of all who were not brought aboard. As hope, the apocalypse retained nuances of futurity. However, as doom, the apocalypse served as a means for making the virtual real. The Broom Brigade was instituting a militaristic system that was substituting “a new beginning” (*go-hasan*) for “self-sufficiency” (*jūsoku*).¹⁷²

“For years, under the leadership of Commander Inototsu, we in the Broom Brigade dreamed of the establishment of an independent self-governing old people's kingdom. ... Fortunately, the day when our dream becomes reality is not far off. Hellfire of uranium and plutonium will rain from the sky, and that will be the start of the apocalypse--or what Sengoku over there calls the New Beginning.”¹⁷³

The Broom Brigade has unknowingly co-opted the language Mole has been using to achieve a very different vision. Mole’s ideal of a place for peaceful “settling” is rapidly being conquered as a refuge for the aged.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 302. Ibid. 447.

¹⁷² Ibid. 303. Ibid. 448.

¹⁷³ I altered Carpenter’s translation slightly, replacing “paradise” with “kingdom.” Sengoku’s New Beginning is rendered as the same term as Mole’s apocalypse, suggesting that the idea has been transmitted from Mole. Nevertheless, Sengoku, not Mole, is acknowledged for the idea. This reattribution further undermines Mole’s authority. Ibid. 283. Ibid. 435.

In this new vision, the mines will become a kingdom, rather than a nation-state. However, for the adjutant of the Broom Brigade, the difference is trivial. "‘Kingdom’ in this case is merely a manner of speaking, you understand, used to suggest an ideal realm isolated from the rest of the world."¹⁷⁴ As soon as a territory is given the name of state or kingdom, the issues they raise are the same. The adjutant comments, "‘ Hence the two great pillars of any state are its army and its police. There can be no state in which the domination principle fails to function."¹⁷⁵ The adjutant has astutely redefined Mole’s pursuit of “freedom from” as “control over.” This difference is a nuance that informs the difference between democracy and militarism. The adjutant has placed himself in a position to serve either Komono’s move toward a more militaristic state or Mole’s dream of self-sufficiency, which the adjutant characterizes as “democratization”—“a mere expedient the state was forced to adopt in order to increase individual production efficiency.”¹⁷⁶ Through this discussion of the ideological underpinnings of the state they will establish in the ark, the adjutant insists his policing services will be essential, regardless of the form it takes.

For the skills, questions of nation-building are less important. They focus, instead, on the commercial potential of the ark. Rather than a vehicle for salvation, the skills view the ark in terms of its sales value, proposing that it be used as a studio for pornographic films, a refuge for escaped criminals or a ward for a mental hospital. In this way, they assume a relatively neutral position. They make suggestions about the best use for the ark, but they do not overtly attempt to take control. From their perspective, Mole’s ingenuity in developing various devices to ease life aboard the ark achieves a measure of respect, which becomes a lifeline for Mole. Only the skills remain with the “Captain,” who is becoming increasingly convinced that his plan for “go-hasan” is failing. Even worse, he fears that his predicament may end in a disabling injury to his leg or even his death. As his final act as

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 293.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 293.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 293.

“Captain,” he wants to convey his authority to the only people who have stayed by his side during the ordeal—the skills. His authority receives its final death blow in the male skill’s response.

“Me? Captain?” The skill’s face froze in the beginnings of a laugh. “You sure you haven’t got mixed up with somebody else? If I were the captain, this would be the S.S. Sakura—a skill ship. What a laugh? No compass, no charts. Just a ship that pretends to be going somewhere, when all along it has no intention of moving an inch.”¹⁷⁷

Building upon the fact that a mine aka ark aka ship will never move spatially, the male skill highlights the ideological differences between the *sakura* and Mole. Under Mole’s direction, the ark was a means to travel to a post-apocalyptic future. Under the leadership of a skill, even this would be impossible. In his rejection of the role of captain, the male skill, the personification of commercialism, acknowledges that the ship would lack any of the ideological instruments for travel. His ship would be one of pretense—a virtual ship that promised but never delivered. Ironically, the male skill has accurately described what has already occurred. Mole has, perhaps unwittingly, coopted his own stated purpose for his personal ambition. His intentions throughout the skirmish aboard ship remain focused on preserving his status and control. His interactions with the various characters as concepts reveal Mole’s purported goal of saving the human race as an imaginative ruse. He, like the *sakura*, is a skill. He has been selling his efforts to acquire control over the creation of self as an altruistic goal.

Territorial contestation comes to an abrupt end when Mole decides to set off the dynamite intended to seal off the ark from the poisonous radiation of a post-apocalyptic world. All efforts to extricate his leg from the toilet have been ineffective, and Mole has come to realize that the only way to release his leg from the toilet’s suction is to disrupt the channels of water that create it. The decision, rather than signaling a new beginning, punctuates his recognition of failure. Mole’s hope has been appropriated and his position as captain usurped. Yet, the explosion underscores that everything that Mole, Komono and the Broom Brigade have been working for has been in response to a virtual reality. Even though the apocalypse has not occurred, to the people locked inside

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 272. Ibid. 428.

the mines, it would seem that it has, and presumably they would begin the new life that had just been a matter of discussion up until this point. Mole, however, will not.

His dream for a self-sufficient sovereign state having failed, Mole decides to abandon ship. Once his leg has been extracted from the toilet, he, along with the skills, make their way to an escape route. However, the skills have decided to stay aboard the ark—a decision that surprises Mole.

"The world outside is exactly the same as before. All that about a nuclear war was a pack of lies. Don't tell me you're going to stay here *knowing* it was a lie."

"That depends. If you imagine it really happened, then it *seems* real. And you've been saying so all along, haven't you? That one of these days it really would happen. That a nuclear war starts before it starts...."¹⁷⁸

Unlike the narrator-protagonist, the male skill has no reason to leave. Illusion to him is real. Nuclear warfare will always be a possibility. As such, it is not untruth. The materialization that has occurred as a result of the explosions only established the nuclear apocalypse as hyperreal. From his perspective, this sense that what is imagined is real is just as real as the world outside the ark. His matter-of-fact expression of his understanding of the realness of illusion seems antithetical. However, as a skill, fostering illusion would be part of his function. From the moment he entered the ship, he possessed an understanding of the hyperreality of the situation and thus feels no particular need to leave. For Mole, however, it is a revelation. Though he has acted as a skill, he draws a line at consciously living in an illusion. Mole's decision to leave is not just a surrender. Despite his apparent failure, the mines have actually provided the means for a transformation that he is not yet aware has already occurred.

Abnegation

In making the characters representative of the various logics that interact conceptually and then depicting their interaction as competition for control over a symbolic state, Abe would seem to be creating an allegory, even a

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 331.

parody, of modern state-building. If the novel had ended with Mole simply deciding to leave the ark, an allegorical reading would hold. However, Abe caps the novel with a final scene that reframes the story.

Mole leaves the ark to find the world somehow transformed. As he emerges from an underground tunnel into the center of the city of Kitahara, he is overcome.

Transparent rays of sun, the first I had seen in a long time, stained the streets and buildings red. The area was lively with the mingled flow of bicycles moving south along the riverside fish market, and commuters hurrying north to the station on foot. On a truck marked LIVE FISH, a small flag fluttered in the breeze, inscribed with the words FISH BEFORE PEOPLE. Another truck, waiting at a stoplight, proclaimed, WHEN I AM GONE AND THE CHERRIES BLOOM, LOVE WILL ALSO BLOOM.¹⁷⁹

The brightness of the sun, momentarily blinding for someone who has spent considerable time in the muted lighting of a cave, mimics the flash that announces an atomic explosion. The sudden flood of light combined with the suggestive red staining connotes the occurrence of an apocalypse. This impression is immediately denied by the unaffected liveliness of the city center. Yet its traces suggest that some kind of apocalypse has occurred. The uncanniness of this apocalypse is heightened by the appearance of paradoxical slogans appearing upon a pair of delivery trucks. The first inverts the conventional hierarchy of the food chain, which is all the more strange since the truck's purpose is to deliver fish to market for human consumption. The second is also paradoxical. Love is an emotion attributed to human beings, yet in this aphorism it does not bloom until "I" (*ore*) has disappeared. How could love "bloom" when "I" no longer exists to produce the feeling? Does this "I" refer to material human existence? Could it denote individual subjectivity? Both slogans take on the paradoxical aspect of Buddhist koans, irresolvable puzzles intended to provoke meditative thought. They also share a common focus—a questioning of the notion of self—and they both are placed upon commercial vehicles, suggesting that this subjective questioning should be considered within a commercial system. The sense that the self has suffered some kind of apocalypse is heightened by Mole's realization that he and everyone else have become

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 335 Ibid. 469.

transparent. Thus, in the final moments of the novel, Abe undermines a simple allegorical reading of the text by opening up the outcome of the narrator-protagonist's story to question.

The abruptness of the shift exacerbates a sense that the foundations of the text itself have been undermined, creating an aporetic sensibility. Mole does not simply jump ship; he emerges back into the state of Japan that has somehow been altered by a kind of apocalypse—a revelatory new sight. Mole's first desire as he emerges from underground is to take a picture. However, the act of picture-taking is disrupted by something unexpected. People and structures appear transparent. The disruption of his expectations halts action and spurs a decision never again to think about who should be saved. Something clearly has shifted. By ending depiction at this moment, Abe has curtailed analysis, providing only recognition and judgment. The novel's abrupt ending serves as another puzzle. Rather than allegory, Abe appears to be exercising a form of writing he discussed with French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet in 1979. In that discussion, Abe espouses a form he calls the "temporalization of space" (*kūkan no jikanka*).¹⁸⁰

What makes visible invisible time in space is the *monogatari*. You possess this element subconsciously as one pillar. For the other, you throw yourself into the thing itself that has adapted to things yet has still not become a conception. You always maintain those two poles in a state of heightened tension.¹⁸¹

While this statement assesses Robbe-Grillet's mode of writing, Abe claims that it is also a point of similarity between them. In particular, Abe's adoption of the detective form in many of his novels reflects his dedication to this form. In these novels, the story begins with a question that can change or be adapted as new information becomes available. Rather than begin with a specific frame and then constructing a story that essentially leads to a conclusion already decided at the outset, Abe espouses a fictional form that provides a platform for developing a story that avoids becoming a determination. It would seem that when plot is driven toward a predetermined goal, the novel spatializes time, whereas in the case of thought developing during the course of a novel, space has become temporalized. Read from this perspective, the allegorical framework, in this sense,

¹⁸⁰ Abe Kōbō and Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Aregori— wo koete," *Abe Kōbō Zenshū* 26, 339

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* 340.

represents time, or rather a determined perspective that arises from a specific historical time. This discussion, conducted while Abe was still in the early stages of writing *The Ark Sakura*, indicates that he had just this kind of tension in mind when constructing the novel.

Abe's conception of the "temporalization of space" suggests that in the final moments of the novel, the protagonist himself is adapting. He not only abandons the ship but also the conceptual framework that informed his decision to build and populate the ark. Notably, it was a conceptual framework that he had tied to territory: In order to be reborn as captain, i.e. sovereign, Mole had to assert authority over the ship, i.e. the mines. His decision to leave acknowledges that sovereignty will not be obtained through territorial claims.

Mole's decision recalls a similar treatment of the notion of territory and sovereignty observed in a controversy in the late '70s over the media treatment of a cult called Iesu no Hakobune (Jesus' Ark). A group led by Sengoku Takeyoshi attracted a number of young, single women into its ranks and moved from place to place around the country.¹⁸² The group supported itself in part by sending its members to work, for example, as bar hostesses. According to anthropologist Yamaguchi Masao's semiotic study of media reporting of the group, what attracted the members of the cult was a sense that something was missing from modern society.

In this group, a person is bound by faith rather than contract and duty relationships. I think that through this group, people obtained warmth and freedom, which not having been sought in a "structure" was comparatively "human." Many societies and cultures permit the endurance of this kind of mechanism, which seems at a glance to be "anti-cultural," as the system's safety valve. Such a mechanism has impoverished many modern cultures. In such societies, the occurrence of movements that seek voluntary "communitas" are a matter of course, and the hippie movement is one example. In our current society, the "structure" is increasingly becoming a mere shell. Rather than being for humans, rather than providing a purpose in life, it fragments a person's identity. When the tendency to make one follow norms that have become mere shells strengthens, a latent longing for "communitas" strengthens, and, even as a modest motive, the tendency to side with such a group strengthens.¹⁸³

¹⁸² The leader of Hakobune no Iesu shares the same surname as Mole's best friend—Sengoku. While this fact alone cannot be said to affirm a definite connection between Hakobune no Iesu and the shift in Abe's development of the novel, it remains a suggestive coincidence.

¹⁸³ Yamaguchi Masao, "'Iesu no kaobune' no kigōron—masu media to kankei no kōzōsei ni tsuite," *Sekai* 419 (Oct. 1980), 46.

In Yamaguchi's analysis, *hakobune* loses most of its signification as a ship, although it retains the sense of mobility. However, rather than setting out on the open seas created by rising floodwater, this *hakobune* navigates the urban areas of Japan. Rather than taking to the sea, Iesu no Hakobune flows through society in a way that makes it both part of and separate from Japanese society. This *hakobune* is a community traversing a contentless, shell-like society. Rather than being defined in terms of territorial borders, "hakobune" serves as an enclosure around what Yamaguchi identifies as lost—"communitas." Communitas here refers to an alignment between a sense of community and the social system of the community. The members of Iesu no Hakobune have rejected the norms of 1970s Japan in favor of a smaller community bound by its own set of rules, presumably one that reflects their conception of community. The territory that defines the group is conceptual rather than material.

The seemingly arbitrary puzzles call for an act of directed reflection that begins with the end and then proceeds back to the beginning. Mole's endeavor for a new beginning has seemingly failed. He cannot erase his history. In fact, political history in the allegorical form of the Broom Brigade has overrun the means for cleansing his history. Through this paradox, Abe suggests the inescapability of history—a history that is violent. By ending the novel in an apparent aporia, Abe would seem to be unseating hopes for or even expectations of sovereignty. That Abe chooses to portray this failure within the context of the likelihood of nuclear annihilation makes Mole's failure all the more disturbing. At the same time, to do otherwise would have been undermined the gravity of the metanarrative of mutually assured destruction. Despite Baudrillard's conviction that the nuclear stalemate is a zero sum and thus lacks substance, the material existence of nuclear missiles poised in silos throughout the world creates the possibility of their launching. The outcome is then not strictly a failure. From the outset, a resolution, positive or not, is impossible; like a puzzle, for which no answer exists, Mole's quest cannot be fulfilled. He exists within an aporia that derives from an incompatibility between a desire for security and advances in technology.

Although Mole may have not succeeded in his mission, his efforts are not in vain. While he remained solitary in his hopes for “*go-hasan*,” he had resided in a world of hope that was also illusory. His attempts to enact his hopes may not have materialized but through the process of these attempts he achieves a self-awareness that evacuates his name and leaves him transparent. In this sense, Abe abandoned the more optimistic outlook of his earlier conception. The pursuit of awareness becomes cataclysmic in itself; it can only lead to the preclusion of any sense of freedom since freedom is an illusion. As a notion that can only exist within the confines of ignorance, it can never be materialized. For Abe, a globalized world precludes the illusion of sovereignty, making the notion of freedom spectral. It would seem that the process of writing *The Ark Sakura* dialectically worked on Abe to strip away his sense that he or anyone else could achieve freedom, and in this paradoxical realization, freedom somehow emerges.

Conclusion

In favoring the technological term over the spiritual ones, Abe emphasizes that the nature of the apocalypse will occur as a result of technology rather than as moral judgment. However, the term also binds technology to its spiritual impact. Reflecting upon his decision to incorporate the nuclear into the content of *The Ark Sakura*, Abe comments:

One thing has become clear with the arrival of the nuclear. The limits of human interaction, which is related to politics in its broad meaning, were disclosed by the arrival of the nuclear. In contrast to nature, human beings, while jointly possessing an almost limitless power to adapt and the power of technology, which broadens limits one after another, when it comes to dealing with society and politics, which are human institutions, they are really incompetent. I think that isn't the nuclear the mirror that reflects that reality?¹⁸⁴

When Abe references the nuclear here, he is not simply talking about scientific advances that have led to the harvesting of nuclear energy. The nuclear has become a specter for apocalyptic destruction. The spectral character of the nuclear arises from the discrepancy between scientific advances and human institutions.

¹⁸⁴ Abe, “Kakujidai” 241.

Somehow “the almost limitless power to adapt” has pertained only to technological advances, while the social and political institutions established by “adaptive” humans have not been modified to incorporate the changes wrought by those advances. In characterizing the nuclear as a mirror, Abe suggests that it is an implement, that the specter of an atomic apocalypse is a tool for reflection. Just as a person needs an implement to view oneself, society does not see the impact of technological advances upon itself without aid. Mirrors provide the means for seeing the unseen. The unseen, nevertheless, is always present. In serving as a tool for reflection, the threat of nuclear destruction provides a means for seeing the unseen, in particular the relationship between technology and human institutions.

Christopher Bolton has suggested that *The Ark Sakura* represents Abe’s fatal encounter with a technology so powerful that it has overcome his literary methods.

One could say that Abe's last fifteen years were dominated by silences, including long gaps between publications and also a novel, *The Ark Sakura*, whose prose style seemed to turn on silence itself. *The Ark Sakura* has been widely misunderstood because the significance of that silence is so ambiguous. But in the context of Abe's interest in dialogue and technology, it can be read as a reversal--a paradoxical attempt to portray the cessation of dialogue, and the silencing of all voices, at the hands of a technology that was no longer just revolutionary but now genuinely apocalyptic.¹⁸⁵

From this reading, it would seem that language has no answer to the devastating power of nuclear weaponry.

However, this assumption depends on interpreting an expected apocalypse as the central plot motive.

If nuclear apocalypse is viewed as frame, the actors who engage in the political maneuvering of mutually assured destruction are brought into view and their motives—the desire for state sovereignty—becomes the subject. Through an allegorical rendering, Abe depicts this desire for state sovereignty in the form of Mole’s desire to create a world in which he can establish a name for himself. In other words, Abe portrays Mole as a seeker of sovereignty over the self. That is to say, apocalypse as frame suggests that the subject of the novel is the viability of the notion of sovereignty rather than the indomitable, inevitable threat of nuclear weaponry.

¹⁸⁵ Bolton 249.

Rather than acquiesce, Abe uses the apocalypse, or rather human response to its threat, to demonstrate that any exercise to establish sovereignty will simply recreate the political maelstrom that resulted in the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That Mole fails to establish the sovereignty he envisions through the euphonia is a foregone conclusion because he is simply reiterating the structures that created the names of Mole and Pig in the first place. Thus when Abe denotes “spatializing time” as an inferior mode of writing he indicates that allegory locks the content of the novel into an intellectual framework just as the notion of sovereignty locks the world into divisions that predicate the necessity of nuclear deterrence.

Rather than capitulate, Abe ends the novel with a depiction of abnegation of the possibility of sovereignty, both in terms of the ark and for Mole himself. In this sense, Mole is treated like a territory who in the last moments of the novel, gives up the notion of himself as bounded. As soon as this happens, he and everything else becomes transparent. In this way, Abe appears to be using the novelistic form to explore alternatives to current modes of thinking. As Marxist sociologist John Holloway, who is attempting to discover a route out of the grip of capitalism, notes in his critique of Michel Foucault’s analysis of power.

There is no movement in the society that Foucault analyses: change from one still photograph to another, but no movement. ... Thus, in Foucault's analysis, there are a whole host of resistances which are integral to power, but there is no possibility of emancipation. The only possibility is an endlessly shifting constellation of power-and-resistance.¹⁸⁶

Foucault’s temporalized perspective encloses his analysis in an intellectual space that reifies the very concept he is intending to dismantle; it erects a conceptual structure from which he cannot escape. His analysis expands understanding of the many aspects of power, and in this way spatializes. However, this spatialization takes place from a singular historical lens that ultimately reproduces the framework it challenges.

Abe’s rejection of allegory and adoption of a dialectical form of realism reflects a commitment to address globalization. This form is not prescriptive, but rather develops a fictional context in a way that spurs reflection

¹⁸⁶ Holloway, John, *Change the World Without Taking Power* (London: Pluto Press, 2002) 40.

on the major issues arising from globalization. As he notes shortly after the publication of *The Ark Sakura* in a brief metaphorical commentary on who has the right to stay aboard a one-person lifeboat:

If we futilely try to find a solution to this unresolvable dilemma, issues of who has the right or the qualifications for survival and of whether a scale that ascertains those rights, those qualifications has been achieved are made quotidian to the extent that they become habitual. ... We, as authors, unite somehow under the battle cry that only continuing to question by agreement the unresolved is the only solution. Because the solution is not a matter of course, even now that I have finished writing (*The Ark Sakura*). I feel that I am still continuing to write it. Rather than a sense of release after having spent seven years writing it, I report that recently when I awake, I raise a battle cry and continue to be overtaken by a compulsion—Good, well I should continue to write.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Abe Kōbō, “Jisaku wo kataru—*Hakobune sakura maru*,” *Abe Kōbō Zenshū* 28 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1997) 9.

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