Genevieve Hill
JSIS 584
Professor Kenneth Pyle
12/12/2016

Narratives of victimhood and *Sekai*:
Sekai's role in the early development of victim consciousness in postwar Japanese literature

Introduction

The Japanese political magazine *Sekai* (World), a left-wing publication which was founded in December 1945, provided a platform to progressive ideas and literature in the immediate postwar era. As a product of the immediate postwar political climate, the literature included in *Sekai* is unavoidably charged with the political and social issues of the time, while often also being shrouded under the literary guise, as well as under the strictures of the media censorship of the United States Occupation. While a more fully formed victim consciousness among the Japanese people and its explicit expression in literature was to emerge after the end of the United States occupation and its censors were lifted, the historical, political, and social context in which *Sekai* came to be, as well as the nature of *Sekai*'s particular stance and characteristics as a general interest, or opinion magazine (*sōgō zasshi*), fostered the early development of implicit and explicit victimhood and trauma narratives in immediate postwar works.

I. Sociopolitical climate at the time of founding of *Sekai*

Sekai was founded in December 1945, within months of the Japanese surrender to the Allied forces on September 2, 1945. The situation for the Japanese people had become more and more dire in Japan during the final year and final months leading up to the end of World War II. Japanese leadership persisted in continuing the war effort in a desperate last resort tactic, using

the *ketsugō* (decisive battle) strategy despite the fact that military defeat was glaringly imminent, while the Allied powers implemented a naval blockade on resources entering Japan. The ensuing shortages combined with and further restricted the rationing system already in place, resulting in a black market that promoted scarcity in official channels yet further.[1] Whereas in 1941 the average Japanese diet consisted of about 2,000 calories a day, by 1944 the average fell to 1,900 calories per day, sinking yet again to 1,680 calories in 1945. This led 20 to 25 percent of the urban population to suffer from serious nutritional deficiency and vitamin-deficiency related diseases.[2]

The Japanese government's inability to maintain a realistic military outlook nor a healthy population domestically in turn stimulated a feeling of distrust and unrest in Japanese society, to the extent that Japanese government elites feared the possibility of an uprising. Observing the failing national morale, Japanese leaders worried over the possibility of Communist sentiments inspiring social revolution and an overthrowing of the *kokutai* (national polity). In response, under the preexisting Peace Preservation Laws enacted in 1925 to suppress political dissent though socialism and communism[3], the Japanese "Special Higher Police" (*Tokubetsu Kōtō Keisatsu*, hereafter referred to by the abbreviated *Tokkō)* or as more notoriously called, the "Thought Police" (*Shisō Keisatsu*), intensified their hunt for "dangerous thought" and proceeded to arrest those suspected of subversive sympathies. This did little but aggravate the unrest and distrust of the Japanese populace.[4]

---

[1] Richard B. Frank, Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 350.
[2] Ibid., p. 351
[3] James L. McClain Japan, a Modern History. 1st ed. (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton &, 2002), pp. 389-390.
[4] Jeremy Yellen, "The Specter of Revolution: Reconsidering Japan's Decision to Surrender." The International History Review 35, no. 1 (2013): 205-26, p. 206.

Related to this is the phenomenon of *tenkō*, or ideological apostacy. Tsurumi defines *tenkō* as "a conversion which occurs under the pressure of state power," characterized by both compulsion exercised by the state as well as the response of an individual or group.[5] This phenomenon was especially prevalent within progressive authors of the era, particularly those who sympathized with socialist and communist ideals. Under government pressure to conform with the policies of militarism and fascism followed by the Japanese government between 1931 and 1945, intellectuals, including authors, were required to publicly convert and conform to this ideology and therefore show support for it, under threat of punishment, including imprisonment.[6] The most infamous incident regarding *tenkō* in Japanese intellectuals involved Kobayashi Takiji[7], a proletarian author active into the early 1930s. Under suspicion for Communist cooperation, Kobayashi was arrested by the *Tokkō* in March 1930. He was subsequently tortured and held in prison for six months and released, only to be ambushed by the *Tokkō* again in 1933 for further subversive writing. On February 20, 1933, the same day of this ambush, Kobayashi was tortured and killed. The cause of death was reported by newspapers as a heart attack.[8] This incident set a precedent of terror among writers connected to the socialist movement who would subsequently be pressured into public ideological conversion under threat of arrest, torture and death.[9]

In the final months of World War II, Japanese cities proceeded to be systematically decimated by fire bombing, the worst of which occurred in the Tokyo air raid of March 9-10,

---

[5] Shunsuke Tsurumi, An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan, 1931-1945. (London; New York: KPI: Distributed by Routledge & K. Paul, 1986), p. 12.

[6] Ibid., p.120.

[7] Note on transliteration: Except when citing Japanese authors whose books were published in English, Japanese names included in this essay are written in the native order of family name (surname), given name.

[8] Richard H. Mitchell, Janus-faced Justice: Political Criminals in Imperial Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), p. 83.

[9] Van C. Gessel, Japanese Fiction Writers, 1868-1945. Dictionary of Literary Biography; v. 180. (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1997), pp. 95-96.

1945. It was the Japanese capital's greatest disaster, killing up to 100,000 Japanese,[10] destroying 15.8 square miles of the city, including 18 percent of the industrial area and 63 percent of the commercial area, and 261,000 houses, leaving 1.15 million homeless; the damage surpassed even that of the disastrous 1923 Great Kantō earthquake.[11]

The ultimate blow in both the conflict of World War II and in the physical and emotional plight of the Japanese people came in the form of two atomic bombs, dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6th and 9th, 1945. While the numbers are still debated today, the atomic bombs immediately wiped out between 100,00 and 200,000 or more lives in total,[12] and caused innumerable deaths in the months, years, and decades to come due to radiation sickness and related illnesses.

After experiencing the shortages, famine and sickness, social unrest, and government ideological policing in the final months of the war, combined with the violence of the air raids and the dropping of the atomic bombs, the Japanese people undoubtedly felt a spectrum of emotions; some felt oppressed or failed by their government, some plainly shocked and exhausted after the denouement of the long struggle of the war in the Pacific. As Japan began to readjust into the role of a nation occupied by the Allied forces, censorship and attacks on freedom of speech by the Japanese government and the *Tokkō* ended, giving way to a new era ripe for the outspoken mental processing and critique of the events of World War II. From these factors, the postwar Japanese victim consciousness and victim narrative arose.

---

[10] Frank, Downfall, p. 258.
[11] Ibid., pp. 16-17.
[12] Ibid., p. 287.

II. The founding of *Sekai*

Sekai came to be in the dawn of the United States occupation of Japan. Founded in December 1945, with its first issue published in 1946 by Iwanami Shoten, *Sekai* is a monthly publication with a progressive left-wing stance, established under the principles of "'peace and social justice,' 'freedom and equality,' and 'harmony and solidarity with the peoples of East Asia,'" principles which appealed greatly to Japanese of the postwar, who "deeply regretted Japan's role in World War II and were consequently committed to the ideal of unarmed neutrality."[13] [14] According to Dower, the editors of *Sekai* "took care to emphasize that these ideals were to be pursued not because the victors had ordered this to be done, but 'because they are based on the demands of human nature and universal justice.'"[15]

Sekai had a circulation of approximately 60,000 to 70,000 in the 1950s.[16] As a namely political magazine, readership of *Sekai* consisted greatly of progressive intellectuals (*shinpoteki bunkajin*),[17] teachers, students, workers, and academic elites, or at least those who aspired to be so, who were not necessarily seeking escapism such as achieved by reading other types of specialized topic magazines.

As a general interest, or opinion magazine (*sōgō zasshi*), *Sekai* carried information on politics in the postwar and stylistically was not open to adventurous, erotic, or humorous fiction

---

[13] Susumu Odagiri and Nihon Kindai Bungakkan, Nihon Kindai Bungaku Daijiten, v.5 (Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1977), p.226-227.
[14] Kondō Motohiro, "The Rise and Fall of Intellectual Journalism," Japan Echo. 32 (3). June 2005, <http://www.japanecho.com/sum/2005/320312.html> (27 November 2016).
[15] John W. Dower, Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II. 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton &, 1999), p. 187.
[16] Joseph K. Yamagiwa, "Literature and Politics in the Japanese Magazine, Sekai." Pacific Affairs 28, no. 3 (1955): p. 254.
[17] Philip A. Seaton, Japan's Contested War Memories: The 'memory Rifts' in Historical Consciousness of World War II. Routledge Contemporary Japan Series (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 135.

such as was present in other magazines at the time.[18] Whereas, for example, strictly "literary" magazines are typically regarded as a platform for such things as book reviews and critiques, short stories, poems and literary essays, as well as occasional features on art, music, comics, and so forth, general interest magazines were typically seen as a platform for journalism and academic criticism and articles on the topics of politics, economics, society, and culture.[19] Therefore, fiction that was published in *Sekai* was not only presented beside other literature, as it would have been in strictly literary magazines; it was presented alongside opinion writings and political articles, thereby politicizing the literature, to an extent, by proximity. It is worth noting that even in the present, *Sekai* continues to publish essays critical of Japanese war conduct and responsibility by progressive scholars.[20]

In the immediate postwar occupation period, *Sekai*'s authorship consisted of progressive and generally wealthy scholars and respected canon authors, with authors associated with the *Shirakaba-ha* (White Birch School) literary coterie heavily represented, whose writings often emphasized individualism, humanitarianism, and idealism.[21] Dower notes that given Iwanami Shoten's reputation as serious, elite, intellectual publishing, and given their left-wing "backlist of translations" of Marxist and pre-revolutionary Russian authors, "impressive numbers of Japan's most incisive critics and progressive intellectuals were already in Iwanami's stable or soon flocked to it."[22] By association to their progressive, intellectual, left-wing ideals, many of the authors representing *Shirakaba-ha*, as well as other authors published in *Sekai*, had committed *tenkō* previously in their careers. This again contributed to a prevalence of themes of

---

[18] Yamagiwa, "Literature and Politics in the Japanese Magazine, Sekai." p. 262.
[19] Ōsawa Satoshi, Hihyō Media-ron: Senzenki Nihon No Rondan to Bundan (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2015), p. 34.
[20] Seaton, Japan's Contested War Memories, p. 39.
[21] Yamagiwa, "Literature and Politics in the Japanese Magazine, Sekai." p. 262.
[22] Dower, Embracing Defeat, p. 186.

victimization as related to manipulation by the Japanese government and thought policing during wartime as *tenkō* authors drew from their personal experiences. Similarly, subject to the same drafting system as everyone else, several authors featured in *Sekai* and otherwise had been conscripted into various roles during World War II, leading this to this firsthand experience in domestic and international roles in the war being reflected in their works.

It is important to note that under the United States Occupation of Japan, while the Japanese government's censorship was lifted, the occupation administration implemented its own; censorship under the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) forbade criticism of the Allies and their policies, praise of militarism and ultranationalism,[23] the atomic bombings, the occupation and General MacArthur,[24] as well as left-wing thought in general as "the new enemy of democracy."[25] By 1947 SCAP censorship had begun to ease and eventually terminate in 1949, whereupon all but twenty-eight magazines switched from pre-publication surveillance to post-publication surveillance. *Sekai*, however, was not one of them, and continued to be subject to pre-publication censorship until October 1949 when SCAP censorship ended.[26] According to Molasky, "scholars generally agree that the American occupiers permitted more expressive freedom during the early postwar years than did the Japanese officials between 1931 and 1945, but SCAP censors did impose severe restrictions on reports of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki." This censorship and restriction on expression as exercised in publications like *Sekai*, especially concerning what was arguably the most traumatic aspect of the Japanese war experience, unavoidably affected the expression of the victim narrative in immediate postwar literature.

---

[23] Dower, Embracing Defeat, p. 180.
[24] Michael S. Molasky, The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory. (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 11.
[25] Dower, Embracing Defeat, p. 435.
[26] Ibid., p. 432.

III. Examination of selected works from *Sekai*[27] [28]

The nature of the early victimhood narrative in *Sekai* under SCAP censorship can begin to be uncovered through close examination of a selection of the works published, their authors, and the materials published alongside each story in its issue of *Sekai* in issues between 1946, *Sekai*'s inaugural year, and 1949, when SCAP pre-publication censors on magazines were lifted.

The first piece of literature published in *Sekai*'s inaugural January 1946 issue was *Haiiro no tsuki* ("A Gray Moon") by Shiga Naoya (1883-1971). Shiga, a leading member of the *Shirakaba-ha*, was a prolific and celebrated writer up into the 1930s before which most of his major works were written. In the postwar, Shiga's works were mostly limited to brief essays of a personal nature or those written for special occasions;[29] the infrequency and brevity of his writings after World War II indicates the weight and significance of this story. In the issue, the story appears alongside such articles titled "Defeat and the World I Hope for," "Women and Freedom," and "Japan, the Enemy Nation."[30]

In *Haiiro no tsuki,* the narrator boards a train in Tokyo, whereupon a young boy who appears on the brink of starvation also boards. Though he is clearly in distress, no one moves to help him; the narrator even unconsciously thrusts the boy away from himself:

---

[27] The volume I am drawing from, Sengo Tanpen Shōsetsu Sen: "Sekai" 1946-1999, is an anthology published in 2000 by Iwanami Shoten, with selections by Japanese literary scholar Kamei Hideo. Accordingly, the works included in the anthology were selected for their perceived historical and/or literary significance in the Japanese literary canon in the context of "*sengo bungaku,*" or postwar literature, and therefore the volume consists mostly of works by authors considered to be significant in the present Japanese literature canon. While beyond the scope of this paper, ideally, a wider scope of the literature published in *Sekai* would need to be examined, instead of selections from a postwar literature anthology.

[28] Note on translation: All translations from *Sekai* are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[29] Gessel, Japanese Fiction Writers, p. 183.

[30] 「敗戦と自分の望む世界」「女性と自由」「敵国日本」Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sekai sōmokuji 1946-1985. (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1985).

> Abruptly, he lost his balance and was thrown lightly against me by the forward motion of the car. Caught unawares, I did something which I could not comprehend afterwards. Almost as if by a reflex action, I thrust the boy away from me with my shoulder. It was an act that was such a betrayal of what I really felt that I was shocked at myself. I was all the more sorry and ashamed because the resistance of the boy's body against mine had been extremely slight. My own weight was down to a hundred and ten in those days. But the boy must have weighed far less than that.[31]

In the final scene, after thrusting the boy away, the boy voices his discontent and apathy in his situation as the narrator laments how he would have done something if he could, though he could not in the end:

> Pressing his forehead to the window, the boy peered out at the darkness. Then, giving it up, he murmured so that I could hardly hear him:
>
> "It makes no difference."
>
> The boy's words, spoken only to himself, stayed with me long afterwards.
>
> The passengers around him didn't concern themselves further with the boy. Probably they thought there was nothing they could do for him. I myself felt that as things were there was nothing I could do either. If I'd had some food with me, I might have given that to him for my own peace of mind.[32]

The narrator gets off the train, leaving the boy behind, and notes that these events took place on October 16, 1945. While the war is over, the after-effects still remain. The starving boy is symbolically representative of the Japanese people, and the country of Japan after the war: starving, helpless, shocked into apathy. The people on the train are symbolically representative of the Japanese people as well: they do not know how to deal with the trauma they themselves, the starving boy, and the nation have all experienced. The narrator even goes so far as to physically reject the boy, and his trauma. As a result, they ultimately do nothing but look on helplessly and with a sense of pity and awkwardness for themselves and the boy, wishing they

---

[31] Shiga Naoya, transl. Lane Dunlop. The Paper Door and Other Stories. (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), p. 172.
[32] Ibid., p.173.

could do something, at least for their own "peace of mind." Here, the starving boy and the comparatively healthy yet still powerless passengers are victims of the state of the nation in the postwar, and of the conditions war brings with it.

In the April 1946 issue of *Sekai*, *Satō* ("Sugar") by Nogami Yaeko (1885–1985) appeared with articles such as "Law and Freedom" and "A Concrete Plan to Rebuild Japanese History."[33] Nogami herself had one of the longest writing careers of any Japanese author, and was associated with progressive, Proletarian literature.

Set during wartime, *Satō* tells the story of the main character, Fusako, who is kind, generous, and well-loved by her friends, but has a habit of always disparaging her husband whenever she can bring it up in conversation. However, it is common knowledge that he is in fact a successful, talented, handsome banker, and this brings about an awkward atmosphere every time she brings it up. They had a child who died of diphtheria at age ten, seven years before the events of the story, which Fusako blames her husband for, groundlessly, spitefully. For her husband's banking work, they relocate to Taiwan, before which she promises to send back sweets, candy, and other things that are scarce in Japan due to shortages and rationing. In the beginning of her time in Taiwan, she follows through on her promise but eventually the packages eventually cease to come. In the end, we discover that a ship she was on was attacked, and that she and her husband have died. The sole survivor from the ship divulges that Fusako spoke of her large amount of luggage, which we are to assume was filled with gifts and hard-to-obtain sweets for her friends in Japan, which led to her taking a boat back to Japan despite the known danger of sea travel during wartime. The scene in which Fusako's close friend, Kazuko, learns of their death is vividly emotional:

---

[33] 「法と自由」「日本史再建の具体的方針」Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sekai sōmokuji 1946-1985.

> "Well, I thought you already knew. It seems something terrible has happened."
>
> "There must be some mistake--"
>
> She pressed the receiver to her ear so hard it was painful.
>
> "His bank investigated the matter with Shimonoseki. The ship they were on was taken down, and the two of them have gone missing."
>
> She was irritated by the cruel clarity she heard through the phone only today, which was often so full of static that you could not understand half of what was being said. Furthermore, it was even more upsetting to think why Fusako would have gone by ship instead of airplane in these dangerous times. Kazuko hardened, not feeling even sadness. Tears simply fell. The salty water flowed over her lips and she tasted it with the tip of her tongue. Still grasping it though the speaking had stopped, she put down the receiver with a clank. [34]

At its core, *Satō* tells multiple tales of coping with trauma: the way Fusako copes with the death of her child by blaming the husband, the way she hides her fear and anxiety over current events with jokes, such as her blasé reference to herself as the sensitive term "*tokkōtai,*" (special attack unit; kamikaze unit) when talking about her Taiwan mission for sweets, and with hopeful promises to remain unfulfilled, such bringing back sugar and sweets from Taiwan. These are all ways that Fusako finds to mentally cope with her current situation as a victim of personal tragedy and of war. Fusako is a victim of the tragedy of the death of her child, a victim of her insufferable husband (or so she asserts), and through her own death, Fusako becomes an innocent victim of war. Kazuko as well becomes a victim of tragedy with the loss of her dear friend.

---

[34] 「さようですか、もう御存じかと思ったのですが、どうも、お気の毒なことになったらしい御様子で。」「なにか間違いでも――」痛いほど受話機を耳に押しあてた。「お乗りになった船がやられて、お二人とも行方不明ということが、銀行の方で、下関まで調べにやってわかったということですの。」いつもはじいじい雑音がはいって、半分もわからないことの多い電話が、今日に限って意地わるく明瞭に聞こえたのが腹だたしかった。それはまた、この危険な時節に、なんだって船なんかで帰ったのか、と思う腹だたしさでもあった。和子の胸はむしろ硬ばり、悲しくもなんともなかった。ただ涙が出た。唇に流れこむ塩っぱい水を舌の先で嘗め、話がきれたのにまだ握っていた受話器を、がちゃりと乱暴にかけた。Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sengo Tanpen Shōsetsu Sen: "Sekai" 1946-1999, vol. 1. (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2000), pp. 58-59.

Interestingly, in the scene when Kazuko hears of Fusako's death, the language never mentions exact details of what kind of ship it was, or whose boat in particular sank them. While it was indeed clear enough to readers at the time of publication that it was the United States or at least some Allied power, even so, the use of the indirect verb "*yarareru*" (to suffer damage, to be 'got') versus an explicit one such as "*kōgeki sareru,*" (to be attacked), the lack of subject in the sentence, and the use of the passive tense in the dialog feels significant in the intentional avoidance of naming a victimizer.

Takami Jun's (1907-1965) *Yōkai* ("Ghosts/Monsters") was published in the May 1946 issue of *Sekai*. Takami was the illegitimate son of prefectural governor, and half-brother of famous writer Nagai Kafu. Interested in humanism and Marxism, he was also a Proletarian writer and suspected Communist. He was arrested in 1932 for various activities in support of the left-wing movement, and for connections to the Communist party.[35] He was thereupon forced to publicly revise his beliefs (*tenkō*) by the police. His guilt over committing *tenkō* held strong thematic appearances in his subsequent works, including *Yōkai*. Articles titled "Logic and Mentality of Ultranationalism" and "On the Mission of the Japanese People"[36] appeared in the same issue of *Sekai*, the former of which was surprisingly thematically appropriate in relation to Takami's work.

In *Yōkai,* the younger male protagonist, Ryōsuke, and his mentor, the intellectual Kata, both harbor a level of fascination, even obsession, with supernatural beings of Japanese lore, namely, the *tengu*. Ryōsuke is introduced to Kata by suggestion of his probation officer, indicating his already troubled nature, having been imprisoned before. Throughout the story,

---

[35] Donald Keene, Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1984), p. 873.

[36] 「超国家主義の論理と心理」「日本人の使命について」Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sekai sōmokuji 1946-1985.

Kata and Ryōsuke research *tengu* and their existence; Ryōsuke's growing obsession with *tengu* is catalyzed by his association to Kata and exacerbated by a fragile mental state. Over one of their ongoing debates on the subject of whether or not *tengu* are real, the narrator notes: "While Ryōsuke could only interpret Kata saying that *tengu* exist as groundless, he started to think that compared to the mysterious act of God of those red slips of paper, rather it wouldn't be very strange at all for *tengu* to exist."[37] The red papers refer to the papers which draft summons are delivered on, which are likened to a summons to death. To Ryōsuke, in this world where young men are drafted into war by a simple slip of paper to be human sacrifices to the war effort, it is not so strange to think that supernatural demons may exist, and not so strange to think we humans ourselves, in a way, may be those demons. Following this concept, after a steady decline into mental and physical fragility, in the end of the story, Ryōsuke collapses, is hospitalized, and has a nervous breakdown, himself "becoming" a *tengu*, and attempts to strangle his mentor. Reflecting on Japanese behavior during the war, Takami creates an allegory for Japanese nationalism and militarism during World War II, as his character becomes a victim of similar forces that bewitch people into terrible situations.

Another recurring topic in the story, and in the interests of the two main characters, is the Chinese poet Gao Qi, who was accused of a rebellion conspiracy against the Chinese government after refusing to cooperate with government promotion. Gao Qi's story has similarities to Takami Jun's life in pressure to follow government ideologies (*tenkō*). As Gao Qi and Takami were both victims of government pressure to conform ideologically, Takami may be

---

[37] 天狗はいるのだと加多が言うのを亮介は妄誕としか解しえなかったが、一片の赤い紙の神秘的な不可抗力とくらべると、天狗の実在の方がまだしも奇怪ではないと思えてきた。Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sengo Tanpen Shōsetsu Sen: "Sekai" 1946-1999, p.72.

attempting to justify his choices before and during the war he felt guilt over through his characters interest and discussion of Gao Qi, his life, and his motivations.

Hashimoto-ya ("The Hashimoto Store") by Ibuse Masuji (1898-1993) was included in the November 1946 issue of *Sekai*, alongside articles on the economy, H.G. Wells, Gogol, and three pieces on Miki Kiyoshi, a Japanese philosopher who was heavily influenced by Marxism and existentialism, and was involved in a scandal connecting him by association to the Communist party. As an author, "when most of the *bundan* (literary circle) influence swayed politically from the extreme Left to an equally extreme nationalist Right in the early 1930s, Ibuse remained aloof."[38] After being conscripted as an Imperial Army war correspondent in Singapore to work for both a newspaper and for a school that taught Japanese language and history,[39] his experiences abroad during the war manifested themselves thematically in his literary works. He would go on in 1966 to write *Kuroi ame* ("Black Rain"), arguably the most famous literary work concerning the atomic bomb and Hiroshima.

Prior to the events of the story of *Hashimoto-ya*, the family which runs the Hashimoto store learns that the son of the family, Yōtarō, has died in the war, and funeral ceremonies are held. The family is portrayed as relatively normal and peaceful, and we may suppose they have moved on or at least accepted the death to some extent, as the narrator of the story has no inkling that there is or was a son in the family while staying at the family's inn, until he shows up unannounced on the doorstep. When Yōtarō returns, everything is set into a flurry: as Yōtarō comes and goes without a greeting, the shock of the news of him being alive hits the family, tensions rise, and old skeletons of family drama are stirred out of the closet. Yōtarō's father is arguably the most affected by his return:

---

[38] Gessel, Japanese Fiction Writers, 1868-1945, p. 45.
[39] Keene, Dawn to the West, p. 947.

> The old man was standing by the edge of the pond, his sash sloppily tied, carrying a thick wooden sign. Something looked off about it, so the fisherman asked, "Mister Hashimoto-ya, what's wrong? Are you not feeling well?" He didn't answer, and went staggering up from the bank toward the mountain path. The wooden sign he was carrying had been the grave marker of old man's heir, Yōtarō, who was said to have died in the war. He must have gone to the family's graveyard and pulled it up.[40]

The old man's mental state begins to falter from the shock and pain of his son's return, and his subsequent neglect, reflected in this scene in which he goes so far as to pull up his son's grave in a state of mental disarray. With his failing mental health, so the family business too begins to fall apart as the old man begins deliberately throwing away his money. Yōtarō's wife has also since remarried, and his return inevitably brings forth many complications regarding her new marriage and the children they had before his apparent death in war.

This dynamic portrayed in Hashimoto-ya brings the difficulty of war, of being a soldier, and of acceptance of the effects of war into focus. The family had, to some extent, accepted Yōtarō's death, and Yōtarō's wife had even remarried. Yōtarō's reappearance alive and well should have brought happiness, but it only serves to bring tension, pain, secrecy and mental stress to almost all parties involved. Yōtarō's presence as a symbol for the war begs the question whether facing the past is in fact much harder than simply accepting it. As a soldier, the son is a direct victim of the system of war, and in this, so is his family by connection: they experience the trauma of his death in war, only to ironically relive the trauma over the knowledge of his living.

---

[40] じいさんは帯をだらしなくむすんで、太い木標を肩に担いで池の堤に立っていた。どうも様子がおかしいので「橋本屋さん、どうしたのか、気分でも悪いのか。」ときくと、じいさんは返事もしないでふらふらと堤から降りて山絡をのぼって行ってしまった。担いでいた木標は、じいさんの跡継ぎで戦死したという洋太郎の墓標で、まさしく橋本屋の墓地から抜いて来たものである。Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sengo Tanpen Shōsetsu Sen: "Sekai" 1946-1999, pp. 83-84.

Nakano Shigeharu (1902-1979) whose story *Taiko* ("Drums") appears in the November 1947 issue of *Sekai*, was an author as well as a Communist party politician. As a leading figure in the Proletarian literature movement in the 1930s, he was arrested multiple times for expressing his subversive ideologies and spent two years in prison before being coerced into *tenkō*.[41] In the November 1947 issue, *Taiko* appeared alongside such articles as "The Danger of Nationalist State and its Strengthening" and "The Present State of Soviet Literature."[42]

In *Taiko*, the narrator evacuates to the countryside to escape air raiding and rationing during the war. While walking in the mountains, the narrator hears the sound of drumming and walks toward it, thinking to admonish the people for drumming and producing light in the darkness of the countryside when it could attract the attention of air raid planes. At one point during this walk, he thinks he hears sirens, in a kind of auditory hallucination of post-traumatic stress, indicating his trauma exhibiting itself even while he is still engulfed in the traumatic environment. As he hears the sirens, he recalls:

> *Oooooooo*- I was startled, thinking I'd heard a siren from far, far away. This time it truly was my ears playing tricks on me, but I thought about my home. Most always, I could almost hear the faint, wisplike sound of a faraway siren. At those times, the eldest child would rouse, and in a tiny voice say "Mother…" And as the girl would ask her mother "Where's the baby? Where's the baby?"…about that time the nearby siren began to ring out: *Oooooooo.*— Beside our pillows, we had our kimono piled up in reverse order, and without hesitation we would hurriedly change into them… [43]

---

[41] Keene, Dawn to the West, p.881.

[42] 「国民政府の危機とその強化」「ソヴェート文学の近況」Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sekai sōmokuji 1946-1985.

[43] 「ウウウーというずっとずっと遠いサイレンが聞えたように思ってわたしははっとした。それは今度はほんとに空耳だったがわたしは家のことを思った。ほとんどいつでも、ずっとずっと遠いサイレンが細く細くまず聞えて来るのだった。すると「おかあちゃん...」と小さい声でいって上の子供が起きた。彼女は「赤ちゃんは? 赤ちゃんは?」と母親に訊きながら——その頃になってウウウと近くのサイレンが鳴り出した——枕元に

In this scene, the author, and the narrator, attempts to process the trauma, fear, and sense of victimization inflicted upon the narrator and these children by the air raiding through the main character's recollection and its vivid, persistent nature.

In a following scene, when the main character discovers the source of the drumming, he peeks in to see the drummers in an argument over a young man playing the song they are rehearsing incorrectly. The drummer being criticized, Tarō, then breaks down over the futility of it all against the impending inevitability of his death. The narrator then comes to the realization that the drummer is of draftable age and prays for his safety: "I prayed for Tarō not to be killed in the war."[44] The drummers, and particularly Tarō, are young and facing death, and are simply trying to distract themselves from their present situation. Nevertheless, they are all victim to the system of war, the draft, rationing, and air raiding. Once again, in these contexts, the victimizer is notably more of a condition, or a force of nature, rather than an explicitly nameable entity.

In the October 1948 issue of *Sekai*, Umezaki Haruo's *Akai rakuda* ("Red Camel") appeared with the politically loaded articles titled "Why Asia Changed" and "Recent Chinese Communist Policies."[45] Umezaki Haruo (1915–1965) was conscripted as a non-commissioned officer in Sakurajima, southern Kyushu toward the end of World War II,[46] and did not begin

---

逆順序で積んである着物にまつくらな中で急いで着かえるのだった……」Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sengo Tanpen Shōsetsu Sen: "Sekai" 1946-1999, p. 106. (Translation by Benjamin DeTora)

[44] 「わたしは太郎が戦死しないように祈った。」Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sengo Tanpen Shōsetsu Sen: "Sekai" 1946-1999, p. 111.

[45] 「アジアは何故変わったか」「最近の中共土地政策」Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sekai sōmokuji 1946-1985.

[46] Keene, Dawn to the West, p. 945.

publishing significantly until after the war.[47] Accordingly, it seems only natural that his postwar writings would be imbued with his experiences during the war, such as we see in *Akai rakuda*.

Akai rakuda is a disarmingly simple narrative set amongst soldiers in the South Pacific in the end of World War II, which focuses on two officers: the narrator, and a man named Futami. In explaining his entry into the armed forces, the narrator broaches the topic of accepting death as he is recruited to be a soldier, noting: "It's not like I entered the navy because I wanted to. I just knew either way I would die like some expendable thing, so I didn't really care much."[48] Here the narrator expresses his apathy and resignation to dying an insignificant death among other myriad soldiers for the war's cause. In contrast to this apathy, Futami, who is notoriously not cut out for being in the military, exerts great effort to prove himself as a good and useful soldier. While he can seemingly do nothing but fail, he continues to put forth this great effort despite harsh ridicule from his military cohorts until and even after the war ends. Unable to cope with a release from the wartime world of a soldier, Futami commits suicide by slitting his own throat. There is a stark, ironic contrast between the narrator's apathetic acceptance of impending military death, from which he escapes, and Futami the failed soldier's self-inflicted death in the face of release from war.

The work also deals heavily with the human sense of existential usefulness as soldiers, human interaction, and mob mentality in the soldiers that torment Futami for his ineptitude. While Futami's background is never discussed, and the reader can only guess what drove him as far as suicide, what we do learn about him is his inability to conform as a soldier and his desire

---

[47] Erik R. Lofgren, "Democratizing Illnesses: Umezaki Haruo, Censorship, and Subversion." Comparative Literature 52, no. 2 (2000): 157-78, p. 158.

[48] 「しかしおれは何も好きで海軍に入った訳でもないし、どのみち消耗品として死なねばならぬことは判っていたんだから、あまり気にもしなかった。」 Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sengo Tanpen Shōsetsu Sen: "Sekai" 1946-1999, p. 176.

to write stories. Here again in the narrative there is an absence of a concrete American or Allied enemy. Futami and the narrator fall victim to the system of war into which they were forced, and victim to the toxic masculinity in the culture of the IJA soldiers who harassed Futami, culminating in, in the narrator's case, apathy toward self-worth and death, and in Futami's case, suicide.

Lastly, Sata Ineko's *Aru hitori no tsuma* ("A Certain Wife") was published in the January 1949 issue of *Sekai*, in the last year of US occupation censorship, with articles such as "The Fight for Peace."[49] Sata Ineko (1904–1998) was a Proletarian writer with connections to the Japanese Communist Party. She was arrested in 1932 on the accusation of violating the Peace Preservation law, but was released the following day.[50] During the war, she also traveled to Manchukuo as a guest of the local newspaper, as well as to a number of Japanese territories such as China, Malaya, and Sumatra, touring with other writers.[51]

Aru hitori no tsuma is the story of a relatively well-off married couple, in which the husband is a higher-up in a factory that had been repurposing metal for the war effort. Set after the war ends, the communists that had been arrested under the Japanese government thought policing are released from jail, and the main character, Yasuko, who used to be an activist in her youth, decides to attempt to go back to her political roots. Yasuko and Toshiko, her friend, then form a women's association, perhaps in part hoping to ride the momentum of recent gains in women's suffrage and legalization of the Japanese Communist Party, while their husbands run for political office. While the female characters may have expected women's new political freedoms to be embraced and celebrated, such as through their women's association, Toshiko's

---

[49] 「平和のためのたたかい」 Iwanami Shoten, Sekai sōmokuji 1946-1985.
[50] Keene, Dawn to the West, p. 1153.
[51] Ibid., p. 1154.

husband threatens to throw her out and separate her children from her when she suggests a Communist-oriented politicization of the women's association. Likewise, Yasuko's husband's attitude toward the organization is snide and unsupportive.

The story highlights the struggle between freedom and family, as well as politics, the dualities of personality and life, frustrations with faux feminist freedom, and female repression in the face of newfound rights. In the dawn of the new era, the women in the story are faced with the disappointment that the renewal of administration does not turn out to be all they had hoped for, while the men in the story continue to have the upper hand. Reflecting on the historical context at the time it was published, Sata may have been attempting to express her own frustration with the transition period of the US occupation, or reflect on her own struggles with being a political activist in the 1930s. Like Sata, Yasuko and Toshiko are victims of the complications of wartime and occupation, the story then reflecting the transition pains between administrations after the war.

In these selected works that appeared in the immediate postwar issues of *Sekai*, victimhood as related to World War II is approached and explored by way of a number of topics: the effects of shortage and famine, the aftereffects of the war and the struggle to cope with them, the experiences of the draft and of soldiers, innocent characters being victim to attack from an enemy who shall not be named, the loss of beloved friends, infectious and harmful ideologies, government pressure to conform, and the system of war in general into which so many were forced. Whether drawing from personal experience or simply processing the state of the world around them, authors synthesized a rich, complicated narrative of victimhood in the first years of the Occupation without ever uttering the name of a concrete enemy, nor the atomic bombs. The trauma of World War II displays itself in these works more broadly, in the trauma of all effects

of the war, instead including more amorphous enemies such as the failures and deceptions that stemmed from the Japanese government.

Conclusions

In this study, I have attempted to illustrate the prevalence and nature of the victimhood narrative as presented in a selection of works by canon authors published in *Sekai* during the Occupation. Themes of war, trauma, and victimhood by no means monopolized every work of Japanese literature in the immediate postwar, nor did these themes monopolize literature published in *Sekai*; many postwar works barely ever mention war or what it entailed. However, the implicit narrative of victimhood and victim consciousness, however closely related to wartime or not, was a prevalent theme in postwar literature. This is reflected in the literary works published in *Sekai* during the occupation period.

Indeed, victim consciousness as represented in occupation-period literature featured in *Sekai* leans more toward the implicit rather than explicit: the victim narrative never comes out and accuses a victimizer. The conflicts of World War II are mentioned only in passing, or as an environmental factor rather than an active source of victimization. Even in narratives explicitly taking place during wartime, such as Umezaki Haruo's *Akai rakuda*, enemy soldiers and opposing powers are never mentioned, only the effect of the war itself has on the characters who fall victim to it. This agrees with Orr's assertion that in Japanese literature "the role of victimizer was assigned to the military, to the militarist state, or to the vaguely defined entity called simply "the system.'"[52] There is a distinct lack of anti-Allied powers and anti-American narrative.

---

[52] James Joseph Orr, The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), p. 3.

The enforcement of censorship by SCAP in the years of the United States occupation of Japan, especially in regard to censoring magazines with left-wing sympathies such as *Sekai*, undeniably had part in shaping, and perhaps "warping," this narrative. Braw agrees with this sentiment in her book stating that "What censorship could do, and did, was to keep certain items out of the public mind and media for a certain time."[53] Sherif too posits that "Eto Jun and others argued that the Allied Occupation resulted in a 'closed linguistic space' that warped Japanese literature and writing."[54] However, while censorship forbade the critique of the occupation and Allied powers, praise of Japanese ultranationalism and militarism, and discussion of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and while it did keep these items out of the public mind to some extent, writers whose works were published in *Sekai* nevertheless found ways to process and manifest their postwar experience through alternative victim narratives, as can be seen in the previously discussed selections. Even if censorship stifled what may have become a more outspoken and explicit narrative of victimization in the years immediately following the trauma of World War II, *Sekai*'s persistent stance as a progressive, left-wing political magazine allowed implicit victimhood narratives to nevertheless be steeped in the undeniable political aura of the rest of the pieces published in each issue. While the victimizer remained formless and somewhat vague, the sense of victimhood portrayed by each author remained irreversibly politicized. In this, *Sekai* therefore provided an outlet for canon author's writings in a political context, and despite the censorship enforced by SCAP, and gave way to victimhood narrative not necessarily of simply the bomb or the Allied powers, but also of the Japanese government, its ideologies, and of war in general.

---

[53] Monica Braw, The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Occupied Japan. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), p. 81.
[54] Ann Sherif, Japan's Cold War: Media, Literature, and the Law. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 207.

According to Orbaugh, "For better or worse, the stories that were written during that seven-year period [the years of the U.S. Occupation] have laid the foundation [...] for the literature that has succeeded them."[55] The development of the victimhood narrative against an invisible victimizer as exhibited in the narratives of *Sekai* under the pressure of Occupation-era censorship continued to persist into the postwar Japanese literature of subsequent decades. For example, Orr's aforementioned statement that the victimizer in Japanese literature applied to broader, vaguer demons applies as well to the three well-known post-1952 works he examines in his book: Tsuboi Sakae's *Nijūshi no hitomi* ("Twenty-Four Eyes"), published in late 1952, Gomikawa Junpei's *Ningen no jōken* ("The Human Condition"), published between 1956 to 1958, and Ibuse Masuji's *Kuroi ame* ("Black Rain"), serialized from January 1965 until September 1966. These post-occupation works not only expressed this particular presentation of the victimhood narrative, but also earned wide audiences as both books and films.[56] While the ensuing legacy of victim consciousness in Japanese literature as a whole remains outside the scope of this study, the fact that the nature and expression victim consciousness in the postwar continues to be a thriving topic of study in the field of modern Japanese literature and cinema is indicative to its prevalence.

Furthermore, in a broader sense, victimhood narratives, no matter how vaguely the oppressor is presented, provide authors and readers with an invaluable outlet by which one can process their trauma. In the selections from *Sekai*, there were numerous cases of authors who filtered their personal experiences of trauma in the war into their stories, whose release in literature extends to the reader. Furthermore, the very act of publishing this literature validates

---

[55] Orbaugh, Sharalyn, Japanese Fiction of the Allied Occupation: Vision, Embodiment, Identity (Brill's Japanese Studies Library; v. 26. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), p. 483.
[56] James Joseph Orr, The Victim as Hero, p.106.

the victim consciousness in its physical presentation, preserving and representing the experience, and allowing the propagation of said consciousness into the future.

While *Sekai* was by no means the only magazine publishing significant works by canon authors during the Occupation, as one of the most popular political magazine in the postwar, *Sekai* played an important role in the years of the United States occupation in the development of the victimhood narrative. Given the sociopolitical climate in which it was conceived, and through its persistence in its progressive, left-wing stance despite the strictures and pressures of Occupation censorship, *Sekai* contributed to the development and fostering of victim consciousness in the literature of the canon authors whose works appeared in its pages. This early development not only served to provide a creative outlet to authors and readers in which to process the trauma of war, but also was the predecessor of a persistent victim consciousness in subsequent Japanese literature.

Bibliographic Essay

The base source for this study was volume one of Iwanami Shoten's 2000 anthology series Sengo Tanpen Shōsetsu Sen: "Sekai" 1946-1999 (戦後短篇小説選—『世界』1946-1999), with selections by Japanese literary scholar Kamei Hideo. As noted in the footnotes, the works included in the anthology were selected for their perceived historical and/or literary significance in the Japanese literary canon in the context of "*sengo bungaku*," or postwar literature, and therefore the volume consists mostly of works by authors considered to be significant in the present Japanese literature canon. While it is an excellent volume as a source in this study, the works by each author included in the anthology (and in *Sekai*) generally did not become one of the authors' enduringly well-known works. Accordingly, the volume is of interest to those who are interested in studying this time period, and the nature of literature published in *Sekai* and other publications of the time, but perhaps not of interest to those simply wanting to sample the short stories of canon authors. While beyond the scope of this paper, ideally, I would have liked to examine a wider scope of the literature published in each individual issue of *Sekai* (and other publications) between 1946 and 1949, instead of selections from a postwar literature anthology. Likewise, I ideally would have liked to spend time examining the opinion articles pieces published in each issue more deeply.

When researching the backgrounds of the authors, Keene's Dawn to the West and Gessel's Japanese Fiction Writers, 1868-1945 were particularly helpful, although the latter was somewhat lacking in scope and did not include a number of the authors I was to cover. In retrospect, I would have liked Keene's to have been the first resource I had come across, as it also included extensive relevant writing on *tenkō*, the *Shirakaba-ha*, and other subjects related to this paper.

On the topic of victim consciousness in Japanese literature and culture, I found Orr's book The Victim as Hero in which he covers the history and development of Japanese victim conscious across several different mediums particularly useful. On censorship and publication in the occupation era, Dower's modern classic Embracing Defeat proved to be an invaluable resource, as well as Seaton's Japan's Contested War Memories. While both did a fine job of including *Sekai* in their histories, I found a lack of a definitive history of *Sekai* in either English or Japanese (outside of an entry in the Nihon Kindai Bungaku Daijiten); I plan to look further into this, or else consider it a potential direction for my own research and writing in the future.

Lastly, thank you to the guidance of Professor Pyle's specific recommendations as well as the readings in his Hiroshima and Nagasaki seminar for directing me to numerous other useful sources cited in this essay, including Frank's Downfall, Yellen's "The Specter of Revolution," and Tsurumi's An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan.

Bibliography

Braw, Monica, The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Occupied Japan. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1991).

Dower, John W., Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II. 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton &, 1999).

Frank, Richard B., Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire. (New York: Random House, 1999).

Gessel, Van C., Japanese Fiction Writers, 1868-1945. Dictionary of Literary Biography; v. 180. (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1997).

Iwanami Shoten Henshūbu, Sekai sōmokuji 1946-1985. (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1985).

----, Sengo Tanpen Shōsetsu Sen: "Sekai" 1946-1999, vol. 1. (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2000).

Keene, Donald, Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1984).

Kondō, Motohiro, "The Rise and Fall of Intellectual Journalism," Japan Echo. 32 (3). June 2005, <http://www.japanecho.com/sum/2005/320312.html> (27 November 2016).

Lofgren, Erik R. "Democratizing Illnesses: Umezaki Haruo, Censorship, and Subversion." Comparative Literature 52, no. 2 (2000): 157-78.

McClain, James L. Japan, a Modern History. 1st ed. (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton &, 2002).

Mitchell, Richard H., Janus-faced Justice: Political Criminals in Imperial Japan. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992).

Molasky, Michael S., The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory. (London; New York: Routledge, 1999).

Orr, James Joseph, The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

Odagiri, Susumu and Nihon Kindai Bungakkan, Nihon Kindai Bungaku Daijiten, v.5 (Tōkyō: Kōdansha, 1977).

Orbaugh, Sharalyn, Japanese Fiction of the Allied Occupation: Vision, Embodiment, Identity (Brill's Japanese Studies Library; v. 26. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006).

Ōsawa, Satoshi, Hihyō Media-ron: Senzenki Nihon No Rondan to Bundan (Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2015).

Seaton, Philip A., Japan's Contested War Memories: The 'Memory Rifts' in Historical Consciousness of World War II. Routledge Contemporary Japan Series (London; New York: Routledge, 2007).

Sherif, Ann, Japan's Cold War: Media, Literature, and the Law. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

Shiga, Naoya, transl. Lane Dunlop. The Paper Door and Other Stories. (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987).

Tsurumi, Shunsuke, An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan, 1931-1945. (London; New York: KPI: Distributed by Routledge & K. Paul, 1986).

Yamagiwa, Joseph K., "Literature and Politics in the Japanese Magazine, Sekai." Pacific Affairs 28, no. 3 (1955): p. 254-68.

Yellen, Jeremy, "The Specter of Revolution: Reconsidering Japan's Decision to Surrender." The International History Review 35, no. 1 (2013): 205-26.