

INTERPRETING NATIONALITY IN POSTWAR JAPAN: “DISRESPECTFUL”  
REPRESENTATION OF THE EMPEROR

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**INTERPRETING NATIONALITY IN POSTWAR JAPAN: “DISRESPECTFUL”  
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This dissertation aims to understand the articulation of nationality in postwar Japan by looking at literary texts that theorize the nature of the emperor and “emperor system” (*tennōsei*) as a phenomenon specific to the postwar itself. I analyze texts that comment on the nature of “disrespect” toward the emperor, and in some cases perform that very disrespect, which I argue is ultimately the deconstruction of the emperor system itself. The texts under consideration were written at two points in time: the immediate postwar (around 1946) and the time marked by protests of the renewed U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1960. I consider these points in time as “discursive spaces” that the texts capture by bringing together a constellation of images and forces, and that allow for productive cross-reading of the texts.

Chapter One introduces some of the theoretical premises for the project, and emphasizes my focus on the discursive *representation* of the emperor as opposed to the tendency of scholarship to focus on the individual emperor as historical and political agent. Chapter Two traces the invention of the postwar emperor system to narratives deployed to project the image of a human and sympathetic emperor who at once broke with the past and represented absolute continuity with it. Chapter Three turns to Nakano Shigeharu’s postwar writings on the emperor that show the

contradictions inherent in the “emperor system” itself as well as the role of media and society in reproducing it discursively. The narrator of his text, *Goshaku no Saku*, believes that the only means to liberate the emperor from the emperor system is to take the notion of the “human” emperor to its logical conclusion: “elevate” the emperor to the status of citizen. Chapter Four argues that Sakaguchi Ango’s postwar writing on the emperor leads to very similar conclusions, but frames it as “descent” to humanity. Chapter Five considers the context of 1960 in which the postwar narrative of the peaceful emperor became challenged by remilitarization and the renewed Security Treaty; the image of the emperor was mobilized not to unify opposing views, but rend them apart. I argue that Fukazawa Shichirō’s *Fūryū Mutan* depicts this very disunity. However, reaction to the text *as event* shifted the debate from literary representation of the emperor to the ways that the terrorism circumvents free speech. In Chapter Six, I argue that Mishima capitalizes on this shift and creates a moral equivalence between terrorism and political revolt by defining a notion of militaristic glory as the protection of Japanese culture. In the process, he designs a theory of emperor system that reproduces a foreign fantasy. Chapter Seven argues for the relevance of asking today the same questions raised by the authors.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Jeffrey DuBois grew up in Horseheads, NY, a stone's throw from Ithaca. After high school, he spent one year in northern Japan as part of the International Rotary Youth Exchange program. He completed his B.A. in Comparative Literature and Japanese Studies at the University of Rochester in 2003. After living and working in New York City and then Saitama, Japan, he returned to Upstate New York to pursue his Ph.D. in Asian Studies at Cornell in 2005.

Dedicated to Melissa and Penn, who make it all worthwhile.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 What it's not

This project is not about the emperor of Japan. It is rather about how the image of the emperor is mobilized and represented for the production of nationality in Japan. We have plenty—in fact, too many—books *about* the emperor in English. The problem with these books is that in focusing all their attention on the individual emperor—his movements, second-hand accounts of his conversations, his political acumen, his internal feelings—they are completely incapable of theorizing the “emperor system” (*tennōsei*) and how it is the production of nationality itself. Immersed in the intricate and intimate details of an emperor’s life, the authors of these books “embed” themselves into the imperial palace of their fantasy; they lack the critical distance needed to recognize that the *actual will* of the emperor is completely irrelevant to the *ideology*, not to mention that it is remarkably unspectacular and boring. And yet, the emperor’s words, actions, and intentions become fetishized. Sparing no detail from publication, the authors produce tomes

bound to weigh down the backpack of the undergrad eager to study history through “facts.”<sup>1</sup>

Hirohito’s earliest English-language biography, *Hirohito: Emperor of Japan*, written by Leonard Mosley in 1966<sup>2</sup>, was symptomatic of what was to come. Through a journalistic account of the emperor from boyhood to the present, he portrays an emperor that was exempted from major decisions during World War II, only to heroically exert his executive authority to end the war, thus changing the course of history. In doing so, Mosley retroactively fully validates the decision of the postwar Occupation powers (and Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, SCAP) not to try the emperor for war crimes at the Tokyo Tribunal. The emperor is portrayed as a passive figure during the war, but then an active agent of world history by ending it. Prior to Hirohito’s death, only one biography, David Bergamini’s *Japan’s Imperial Conspiracy*, scrutinized Hirohito’s wartime role, but it was roundly dismissed for its critical depiction.<sup>3</sup>

Even texts that try to trace the emperor’s complicity in political decision-making in order to show that he should have been held accountable for war crimes

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Bix’s biography of Hirohito is 800 pages; Donald Keene’s biography of Emperor Meiji is 922 pages.

<sup>2</sup> Mosley, Leonard. *Hirohito: Emperor of Japan*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Harry Harootunian notes how Bergamini’s book committed a type of “scholarly *lèse majesté*” by proclaiming that the emperor actually had a role in the war. This was exacerbated by Bergamini connecting the “imperial conspiracy” to American scholars at Harvard, who were “subsequently involved in the whitewash” of Hirohito’s involvement. Harootunian, Harry. "Hirohito Redux-Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan by Herbert P. Bix". *Critical Asian Studies*. 33, no. 4, 2001, pg. 613.

end up bolstering the cult of the individual: they turn the emperor into a historical agent. Harry Harootunian, in his review of Herbert Bix's *Hirohito*, recognizes this as a central failure of the text. He says, "Centering Hirohito as the means to grasping Japan's modern formation, as Bix does, affirms the role played by the emperor and reduces the lived history of the nation and the temporality of its modernity to 'imperial time.'"<sup>4</sup> This gets to a basic premise of my dissertation: the emperor is *not an agent* in the formation of nationality. We need a model of scholarship that decenters the emperor and does not get trapped in this "imperial time."

Here are frequently pursued lines of inquiry that take as premise that the emperor's agency matters, but that I will not be asking: Was Hirohito an emperor-organ theorist during the war? Did he sincerely embrace his role as symbol of a democratic order? Was his denial of divinity a non-denial? Was he operating politically during or after the war? Did he hope to be restored to a sovereign head of state at any point in the postwar? Did Akihito really think that students in high schools shouldn't be forced to stand for the singing of *Kimigayo*? Are the current members of the imperial family liberal at heart? The list could go on and on, but each question is irrelevant if what we are trying to get is this: how was (and is) the emperor system produced in the postwar?

The individual emperor is relevant only to the extent that he contributes to the production of the discourse of the postwar emperor system, which it to say,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg. 616.

hardly at all. It is not a question of agency. Assigning historical agency to the emperor works to conceal the real power structures that operate in Japan, such as those economic, political, and educational institutions, and the military role of the U.S. in Japan. Therefore, when I look at the “emperor system,” I want to look at two things: one, how the emperor and emperor system are represented in ways that contribute to the production of nationality in Japan; and two, how writers have exposed the many ways that the emperor system functions to conceal actual power in Japan. In other words, how the emperor system is constructed and how it is deconstructed.

## 1.2 Figurative decapitation

What I would really like to do is to interpretively “cut off the head of the king,” to take the emperor’s agency out of the equation. In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault traces the modern development of the European monarchy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as something that *represented itself as law*, an agency of regulation, prohibition, demarcation, etc. The monarchy, in other words, was constructed as system of law.<sup>5</sup> However, as Foucault explains, the operation of power cannot be explained by reference to law alone. Power is far more complex and operates far beyond the unilateral domination and repression by the state. (In the text Foucault traces the way that power also operates *external to the state and its apparatus* onto bodies by controlling sexuality). However, because the monarchy represents itself as law, it is nearly impossible to think of power outside of that

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<sup>5</sup> Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990, pg. 87.

framework. Law is the “code according to which power presents itself and prescribes that we conceive of it.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it is also what conceals the actual operation of power: “The history of the monarchy went hand in hand with the covering up of the facts and procedures of power by juridico-political discourse.” This is to say that, because the power of the monarchy is primarily represented through legal discourse, the ways that power operates outside of this model are difficult—if not impossible—to represent. We have been trapped within a mode of representation that compels us to conceive of power in terms of law and the agency of the sovereign *even though* new modes for representing power have emerged. Foucault says,

At bottom, despite the difference in epochs and objectives, the representation of power has remained under the spell of monarchy. In political thought and analysis, *we still have not cut off the head of the king*. Hence the importance that the theory of power gives to the problem of right and violence, law and illegality, freedom and will, and especially the state and sovereignty.<sup>7</sup>

Foucault’s understanding of monarchy in Europe, which arose in concurrence with law, and which was represented in and through law, is precisely how monarchy and law formed in Japan during the Meiji Era (1868-1912). For the first time in Japan, the emperor was represented as sovereign, as the practical subject or agent of change, a

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pg. 88.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pg. 88-89. (My italics).

source of power codified into law. During the postwar, however, the monarchy was disconnected from any notion of “sovereignty,” but nevertheless was inscribed into the postwar Constitution; the emperor was made into a symbol. And yet, we still have not cut off the head of the emperor. Scholarship still treats the emperor as a historical agent.<sup>8</sup>

The alternative—the method for cutting of the king’s head—is to perform the type of discourse analysis that we find in Foucault, the incredibly ambitious project of exhaustively reading the literature of more discreet arenas of power’s operation. This is *not* my project; it would be well beyond the scope of this dissertation.

What this project does, instead, is look at writers whose approach to the emperor system takes a close look at how the emperor of the postwar, Hirohito, was represented in the *discursive space* of the given moment. Nakano Shigeharu (Chapter Three) and Sakaguchi Ango (Chapter Four) attempt to seize on the opportunity of the fall of the Japanese Empire to represent the humanity of the emperor by severing him from the very the institution that keeps him captive, the “emperor system.” Depicting Hirohito as human and nothing more is, I believe, a step toward “cutting the head off the king.” I argue that it is a more nuanced form of critique than, for example, the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) could perform in its advocacy of

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<sup>8</sup> For Foucault, to “cut off the head of the king” means to analyze power beyond the framework of the state and its law, which includes the authority of the king. Thinking beyond the agency of the emperor alone is insufficient. However, it is a first step, especially as the emperor of the postwar is defined to represent the *sovereignty of the people*.

“abolishing the emperor system” (*tennōsei haishi*) because the JCP assumed that the emperor of the postwar remained an agent of power as the nation’s wealthiest landlord. Fukazawa Shichirō (Chapter Five) too, who depicts a literal decapitation of the imperial family in the text I discuss, subverts the very centrality of state, law, and king in his presentation. Mishima Yukio (Chapter Six), on the other hand, very consciously and intentionally constructs a version of “emperor system ideology” that attempts to re-center the emperor as the “creative agent” of Japanese culture, a move that conceals actual state power by depoliticizing its representation altogether. However, in that very act, Mishima discloses how the representation of the emperor—a trivial figure of weekly gossip magazines—undermines any such notion.

### 1.3 Discursive spaces

I primarily look at texts written at two points of time: the immediate postwar (around 1946) and the time marked by protests of the renewed U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1960. In choosing two points in time, I am explicitly not attempting to write a genealogy of the representation of the emperor; I rather want to capture a snapshot of each moment by looking at how a constellation of elements and forces combine and make way for the texts under consideration. I characterize these moments as “discursive spaces” in which I can put into dialogue the authors and texts, to read between and across them. My use of “discursive space” comes from two sources: Etō Jun’s book *The Closed Linguistic/Discursive Space: Occupation Censorship and Post-war Japan* (*tozasareta gengo kūkan—senryōgun no kenetsu to*

*senjo nihon*)<sup>9</sup> and Karatani Kōjin's essay "The Discursive Space of Modern Japan: 1970 = Shōwa 45" (*kindai nihon no gensetsu kūkan. 1970 = shōwa 45*)<sup>10</sup>.

To Etō Jun, the linguistic/discursive space (*genjo kūkan*) of the postwar period was "closed" due to the oppressive censorship policies of the Occupation. I want to adopt his notion of "discursive space" while disputing Etō's claim by demonstrating what stinging and subversive critique was possible within that very space. Exhibit A for my claim is the postwar writing of Nakano; Exhibit B is that of Sakaguchi. This is not to apologize or even minimize the anti-democratic nature of the Occupation, but to make the case that, in line with Foucault's teaching, we cannot analyze power as simply the representation of the authority of the state (or occupying power as it were). As I will discuss, the ability to represent the emperor in the discursive space of the early 1960s becomes much more "closed off" than in 1946.

On the other hand, Karatani's notion of "discursive space" (*gensetsu kūkan*) gets closer to my understanding; he measures points in time and does not reproduce a flat, chronological genealogy when conceiving of history. Instead, he attempts to

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<sup>9</sup> Etō, Jun. *Tozasareta genjo kūkan: senryōgun no kenetsu to senjo nihon*. Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1989. Translation: Etō Jun. "The Sealed Linguistic Space: The Occupation Censorship and Post-war Japan," trans. Jay Rubin, part 1, *Hikaku Bungaku Zasshi*, 2, 1984, pg. 1-42; part 2, *Hikaku Bungaku Zasshi*, 3, 1988, pg. 1-23.

<sup>10</sup> In Karatani, Kōjin. *Rekishi to hanpuku*. Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 2004. Translation of the essay: Karatani, Kōjin. Seiji Lippit, trans. "The Discursive Space of Modern Japan." *Japan in the World*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, pg. 288-315.

capture each moment through a convergence or constellation of historical, literary, and cultural events that indicate for him a repetition or recurrence of history. He maps these historical recurrences directly onto the era names corresponding to the period of reign of the Meiji and Shōwa Emperors. In his model, he finds direct parallels between the era dates (*nengō*) of the two periods, such that, for example, the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution (Meiji 22) roughly corresponded the promulgation of the postwar Constitution (Shōwa 21), and the suicide of Nogi Maresuke (Meiji 45) corresponds to the suicide of Mishima Yukio (Shōwa 45). He finds seven such historical recurrences.

What is troubling about Karatani's "discursive space" is that to draw his historical parallels, he chooses a temporality that *reproduces imperial time*: he restores the time of the emperor. (His model also ignores the Taishō Era, a common tactic of imperial histories). I am being a little unfair; he does this to show the importance of thinking in terms of relational structures and demonstrate the very arbitrariness of the Christian calendar and all forms of periodization. His intention is to "make explicit the fact that each nation's 'era/world' is only a communal, illusory space, and that a plurality of worlds (eras/worlds) exist simultaneously, maintaining relations with one another."<sup>11</sup> Yet, can we not think of other temporalities that blast out of both *imperial time* and *Christian time*? In Chapter Five, I argue that Fukazawa articulates one way, but in Chapter Six, I argue that Mishima's notion of continuity

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<sup>11</sup> Karatani, 1993, pg. 290.

(*imperial time*) is perfectly corrupt. This leads me to one more issue with Karatani's "discursive space": while critical of Mishima, Karatani re-centers him in Shōwa history, as its end. Isn't it about time that we interpretively cut off Mishima's head too?

Thus, in borrowing the terminology of "discursive space" from both Etō Jun and Karatani Kōjin, I both acknowledge my indebtedness to them, and take the opportunity to push back against their models and imagine something different. Incidentally, one of the texts that helped me formulate my thoughts on the emperor and "disrespect," Watanabe Naomi's *Introduction to the Literature of "Disrespect" (Fukey bungakuron josetsu)*<sup>12</sup>, adopts Karatani's model wholeheartedly. Just like for Karatani, the "disrespectful" representation of the emperor—and the suppression of it—witnessed similar historical recurrences between Meiji and Shōwa. While his analysis is fascinating, I do not find the calendric coincidences between periods particularly illuminating. Watanabe's text's major contribution to my thinking for this dissertation is how he traces the shift from the prewar and wartime form of "disrespect" codified into the criminal code since the Meiji period as *lèse majesté (fukeizai)* to the postwar manifestation of it, mere "disrespect" (*fukei*). The juridical form of "disrespect," the form regulated by the state until the end of World War II, turned into something that could only be regulated outside of the state apparatus. Returning to Foucault once more, disrespect (*fukei*) of the emperor in the postwar—

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<sup>12</sup> Watanabe, Naomi. *Fukei bungakuron josetsu*. Hihyō Kūkan Sōsho, 17. Tōkyō: Ōta Shuppan, 1999.

and the suppression of this disrespect—provides us with yet another opportunity to “cut the head off the king,” and to draw attention to the ways the power itself can be represented without reference to the law.

#### 1.4 Temporality

In my dissertation, I conceive of temporality not in terms of continuity and tradition, of the inheritance of the past, but rather interruption, discontinuity and the smashing of tradition itself. Walter Benjamin, in his famous essay “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility,”<sup>13</sup> reveals the importance of historical continuity for the idea of tradition, and what new forms of technology do to undermine a durational identity of an object. Tradition points to that which endures uniquely without change through time, is transmitted through time by historical testimony, and endows the object with a historical authenticity or authority. However, for an object, all of this is jeopardized by its technological reproduction:

What withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter’s aura. This process is symptomatic; its significance extends far beyond the realm of art. *It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach*

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<sup>13</sup> Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings. Volume 3*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

*the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced.*

These two processes lead to a massive upheaval in the domain of objects handed down from the past—a shattering of tradition which is the reverse side of the present crisis and renewal of humanity.<sup>14</sup>

To me, Benjamin is not expressing an aesthetic preference for the temporality of interruption over that of continuity: he is being descriptive and analytical.

Technological reproduction has not merely brought the same object closer: it has *changed the object itself*. The aura, which Benjamin defines as the apparition of a distance, is destroyed because of society's desire to "get closer" to things.

Temporally, the transmission, or handing down, from the past is met with a sharp interruption; historical continuity can no longer be explained through the durational identity of a unique object. This has profound implications for the field of perception because the object is no longer viewed as unique. Benjamin's analysis goes beyond interpretations of societal phenomena for the sake of political means; rather, he is developing a theory of perception and cognition in which the way the world is seen and understood has undergone radical change through processes unique to modernity. The mode of production has changed our perception and cognition of objects, which in turn *fundamentally changes the objects themselves*.

It is my conviction that as the modes for representing the emperor changed throughout the twentieth century, so too did the emperor. I do not necessarily agree

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pg. 104. (My italics).

with Benjamin that this necessarily entails a shattering of the aura; we must also ask how the hyper-visible makes the invisible all the more enticing. However, the endurance of an object through time requires that the modes of perception and *representation* also remain fixed. In the absence of this, the object cannot endure. (To me, perception is fundamentally tied to existence). Therefore, as the ways perception and understanding change with new forms of technology and representation—our frame for viewing the world—the object too must change. This is true whether the “object” is the emperor or the work of art.<sup>15</sup> To this extent, it is incredibly important to track transformations in the public representation of the emperor, whether in academic discourse or mass media. All of the texts I analyze track these changes to a degree. The end of the war, too, brought about a change in perception that fundamentally reconstituted perception of the emperor, and Sakaguchi traces this most persuasively. Moreover, just as the emperor does not endure as an identical object through time, I want to understand the “emperor system”—as the representation of the emperor for the production of nationality—itsself in the ways it changes throughout history, as an evolving and changing ideology.

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<sup>15</sup> I believe this is also a reason why philosophers like Watsuji must deny that the emperor is objectifiable; he must instead be an active/practical subject (*shutai*) so as not to be susceptible to change.

## 1.5 Influences

This project came together as an attempt to respond to a number of challenges posed by scholars whose work drew me to the topic. For example, in a *zadankai* (“dialogue”) with Naoki Sakai, Harry Harootunian says, “When I was a student (and I was a product of a Japan studies program in an American university) one of the things I discovered... was that in the various courses in Japan studies, the status of the emperor was never problematized.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, I wanted to problematize the status of the emperor and the “emperor system”; it turns out that it is still in need of much scrutiny. From Naoki Sakai, I learned the necessity of “deconstructing nationality” and finding ways to demonstrate how “nationality’ is continually deconstructing itself”<sup>17</sup> and much more. One way I’ve learned to deconstruct nationality from him is to recognize the United States role in the production of nationality in Japan, and to give recognition to how the postwar emperor system is truly a U.S. invention. Tak Fujitani’s analysis of the invention of the optics of the Meiji Emperor was also central to my thinking on how the emperor system was reinvented in the postwar. My dissertation is an attempt to do precisely that. Brett de Bary’s already close and sensitive readings of Nakano Shigeharu and Sakaguchi Ango drew me back again and again to the texts, and she helped me discover how fruitful their writings could be for tackling many of these challenges. I’ve learned from all of the

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<sup>16</sup> Harootunian, Harry and Naoki Sakai. “Dialogue: Japan Studies and Cultural Studies.” *Positions*, Fall 1999 7(2), pg. 593-64.

<sup>17</sup> Sakai, Naoki. “Nationality and the ‘Mother Tongue.’” *Deconstructing Nationality*. ed. Brett de Bary. Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 2005, pg. 33.

scholars above of the role of Japan studies in the U.S. in reproducing and perpetuating many of the problems identified above, and their writings and methods of teaching are models for how the field can be productively reconfigured and practiced. Therefore, my project has these scholars and their writings in mind throughout, and is but one attempt to develop these ideas together.

## **1.6 Chapter summaries**

In the next chapter, Chapter Two, I explain how the emperor system was fundamentally restructured and reinvented with Japan's defeat in World War II. Unlike the official ideology suggested, the emperor system was not "retained" or "preserved," as this assumes that the postwar system was related to what had come before. The language of its invention, however, was in fact premised on connection with the past, but only to give the illusion of continuity. This required a leap back in time, an erasure of the early Shōwa period, the Taishō period, and most of the Meiji period, and in some cases, all of it. I attempt to show that the postwar narrative of the new emperor system also reconfigured its articulation of the emperor's duality, the "king's two bodies." I trace the debates within the Diet over the fate of Japanese "national body" (*kokutai*) within the new postwar Constitution in order to show the centrality of "respect" or "reverence" for the discourse of the continuous emperor system. This sets up my discussion in the subsequent chapters of how the opposite, *disrespect* of the emperor, was represented during the postwar period.

In Chapter Three, I argue that Nakano Shigeharu, in his *Goshaku no Sake* and other essays, performs a discursive analysis of the emperor system by understanding how it is represented by the government, the media, and even those critical of the emperor. Despite that the postwar emperor system was a complete invention of the Occupation that was then realized through cooperation with the Japanese government and beyond, its strength was its ability to portray itself as continuous with the past, to give the illusion of continuity. The narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* demonstrates that the inability of the Communist Party and others to recognize that the emperor system of pre-defeat had been destroyed resulted in misguided critique; in fact, by critiquing an emperor system *as if it were* continuous with the past, they could not abolish it, but only reproduce it. The narrator's solution is to take the emperor at his word, and radically recognize him as human, to sympathize with him as human and nothing more. This means to strip him of his symbolic function and to extricate—indeed, liberate—him from the “emperor system.” It is also to subject the emperor to scrutiny as someone responsible for war, as a puppeteer during the war and a puppet afterward. Moreover, the text theorizes the nature of “disrespect,” and I conclude that its articulation of disrespect can only be that which threatens the symbolic order.

Chapter Four begins with a comparison of Nakano Shigeharu's and Sakaguchi Ango's conception of the emperor system. The themes and manner of critique in *Goshaku no Sake* resonate with Sakaguchi's “Words Humbly Dedicated to the

Emperor” in two ways especially: they both strip the emperor of any symbolic value by treating him like a human, and both demonstrate how the understanding of the emperor is mediated by his public representation. Sakaguchi’s essay theorizes the nature of “disrespect” as originating in the act of constructing false systems and values itself. He further deconstructs the grounds for legitimating the symbolic emperor system when he compares the emperor to celebrities; “affection” for the emperor is as historically contingent and mutable as “affection” for celebrities. In the second half of Chapter Four, I analyze Sakaguchi’s much more famous *Darakuron*. In that text’s exploration of the fundamental human nature to respond to urges and desire, it shows the very constructed nature and inhumanity of moral systems—especially the emperor system—that portray people as somehow above those urges and as virtuous. I make the case for understanding *daraku* not as depravity or immorality, but *deconstruction itself*.

In Chapter Five, I first trace the shift in the representation of the emperor beyond the postwar period as the effort to remilitarize Japan provides challenges to sustaining the image of a democratic and pacifist emperor. By 1960, Japan has entered into a new discursive space. The emperor is mobilized for competing views, but in a way that promotes divisiveness, not reconciliation. For this reason, I suggest that the practical ramification of this is that the emperor becomes the *symbol of disunity*. I then analyze Fukazawa Shichirō’s controversial story, *Fūryū Mutan*, which I argue captures and problematizes the constellation of events and images of the time

by scrambling them up in the space of a dream. The subversive power of this text is its violation of the rules of proper decorum and of proper representation, which I characterize as a true literary performance of *daraku* as Sakaguchi understood it, a stripping away of morals. I argue that Fukazawa establishes a taboo-free zone that allows readers to cathartically transgress what is deemed sacred. I analyze the critical response to the text, and especially that of Nakano Shigeharu, for the ways the response connects and implicates Fukazawa in the Right-wing terrorism that came after the story's publication. I reject this, and argue that a discursive shift from literary representation of the emperor to the question of terrorism is paralleled by *literary representation of terrorism in the name of the emperor*.

In Chapter Six, I argue that in juxtaposing the coups d'état of the 1930s and Right-wing terrorism of 1960, Mishima establishes a moral equivalence between the two. In doing this, he legitimates terrorism in the name of "culture," effectively erasing history and politics. I argue that this constitutes a backhanded yet active disruption in the discourse on the freedom of speech of the 1960s. I take a detour to explain Kita Ikki's attack on the theory of *kokutai* and his demystified conception of a political emperor. These theories were important for the coup of February 26, 1936, and I argue that because the coup was so central to Mishima's theory of the emperor system, Kita's thought can be productively deployed to dismantle Mishima's theory. Moreover, as "internal critique" to the emperor system, Mishima's text can be read as a lucid and articulate attack on the emperor system itself. I conclude that what his

text discloses, in its anxiety to find one shred of evidence that makes Japan's emperor system different from other nationalities elsewhere, is that in fact it has nothing particular about it at all. I follow this with a brief discussion of Mishima's Orientalism within his essay, "On the Defense of Culture." He formulates a philosophy of Japanese culture that strictly adheres to a foreign fantasy of what it should be. As I argue throughout the chapter, "culture" for Mishima means one thing: *bushido*.

I conclude by connecting these texts to the present moment and showing that many of the critiques and questions raised of the emperor system are still equally as valid today.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### THE RESTRUCTURED EMPEROR SYSTEM OF POSTWAR JAPAN

#### Japan's Two Bodies: The "National Body" Amidst War Defeat

##### 2.1 The embodied voice speaks

In the highly dramatic announcement on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1945 that Japan had surrendered to Allies forces to end World War II, known as the Jewel-Voice Broadcast (*gyokuon hōsō*), the voice of Hirohito, the Showa Emperor, could be heard for the first time by his subjects over broadcast radio as he explained that Japan had accepted the terms of the Potsdam Agreement. "Should we continue to fight," he said in highly elevated and stilted language barely recognizable to the ordinary citizen, "it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization." The war, however, was not completely fought in vain: "We have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable." It was no less than a devastatingly tragic irony of waiting only until after Japan had been firebombed and atomically bombed into near oblivion—that they have suffered the insufferable—to spare Japan from "ultimate collapse and obliteration." And somewhat of an about-face for an ideology that gloried the entire population dying together as brave soldiers with the slogan *ichioku*

*gyokusai*, the “shattering of one hundred million jewels,” before defeat would be accepted. It does raise an important question for conceiving Japan’s identity moving forward: what is lost and what is preserved when a nation undergoes defeat in war?

At the conclusion of this surrender speech, Hirohito provided his interpretation. The official translation reads, “Having been able to safeguard and maintain the structure of the Imperial State, We are always with ye, Our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity.”<sup>18</sup> The “structure of the Imperial State” is in fact a translation of the term *kokutai*, made up of the characters for “nation” and “body,” and the emperor intended to point to Japan’s particular emperor-centered conception of state in which a supposed unbroken line of emperors descended from the gods who created the islands that make up Japan. However, the notion that Japan’s *kokutai* had been preserved was far from self-apparent, as the fate of the emperor, Japan’s constitution, and its political system would soon be in the hands of the Occupation under Douglas MacArthur. Clearly, at a time when Japan’s fate and identity could not have been more fraught and perilous, it was necessary to insist that amidst the heartache and rubble, one thing remained: the essence of Japan, the *kokutai*.

Conservative historians in Japan today claim that this preservation of the *kokutai* (*kokutai goji*) was actually the key condition for Japan’s acceptance of

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<sup>18</sup> Hirohito. “Imperial Rescript on Surrender (Gyokuon Hōsō).” “The World and Japan” Database Project. Web. Accessed 6 November 2011. [http://www.ioc.utokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/docs/19450814.O1E.html]

surrender, asserting that there was no such thing as an “unconditional surrender” (*mujōken kōfuku*) as is widely believed. Indeed, the Japanese government had communicated that they would accept the Potsdam Declaration “with the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler.”<sup>19</sup> However, the U.S. accepted Japan’s surrender and responded to their qualification by rejecting it: “From the moment of surrender the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate the surrender terms.”<sup>20</sup> There is no further evidence to suggest that the emperor would be guaranteed a role in the makeup of postwar Japan—this argument can only be made retrospectively because the emperor was given a role in the end. What such an argument exposes, though, is that preserving the ideology of the emperor system toward the end of World War II was far more important to the government than sparing lives of the people of Japan, not to mention the imperial subjects left behind in Japan’s colonies. The reluctance to surrender until August of 1945 had little to do with the acknowledgement at the upper levels of government that Japan could not possibly emerge victorious from the war; the outcome had been obvious for months. Rather, it was based on hopes for a resolution to war in which the emperor—and the sanctity of the imperial institution—would escape unscathed. The notion that it did is

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<sup>19</sup> Moore, Ray and D. Robinson, ed. “The Constitution of Japan” [CD-ROM]. University of Princeton Press: Princeton, 1998, index number RM025.TEXT2.P2

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, index number RM026.TEXT2.P2.

a complete fantasy.

Hirohiro's surrender speech—his "Imperial Rescript on Surrender"—may have proclaimed that the *kokutai* had been preserved and that the nation would continue on as a unified family. I believe that the very claim that the *kokutai* had been preserved betrayed the fact that it had been shattered; this is what had been waged and lost in war. I see the surrender speech as the first performance of what would become the *postwar emperor system*, a radically different form of "emperor system" than had existed during the war or prior to it. The performance made the body of the emperor manifest, presenting it before the nation in the most tangible and piercing way possible, through simultaneous broadcast throughout the nation for the first time of the emperor's *nikusei*, his natural voice (more literally, "embodied voice"). Perhaps the emperor was brought before the nation in order to convince it that Japan had indeed lost the war, and because it was thought that only the emperor could initiate the long process of healing. Or perhaps it was meant to uphold the illusion that the emperor had retained his authority all along, that the emperor could now take credit for saving Japan, after all. Yet, this mobilization of the body of the emperor, the embodied voice, marked the discursive shift toward representing the emperor as primarily human, as sympathetic and pitiable.

This was by no means denial that the emperor was a "living god" (*arahitogami*), a god made manifest in human form. But the human emperor of the Imperial Rescript on Surrender bore little resemblance to the human emperor

represented prior to Japan's defeat, the military leader on horseback. Therefore, the emperor's performance—the final act of war and first act of peace—already demonstrated an intention to radically restructure what constituted Japan and the emperor's role in it. *Kokutai* in the postwar could not possibly be represented as it had before. I am contesting the notion that any essence of *kokutai* can exist outside its representation, especially if we are to understand *kokutai* as a form of nationality that merely portrays itself as particular and unique to Japan. It is a discursively constructed concept that must be historicized and shown to be contingent.

This claim—that Japan's *kokutai* remained unchanged—was in fact made repeatedly over the course of modern Japanese history as it moved from feudal to capitalist to imperialist state: during the Meiji Restoration of 1868, with the writing and promulgation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (Meiji Constitution, 1889), and during the 1930's effort to "Clarify the Kokutai," to name a few.

In these moments, as well as the postwar understanding of the new status of the emperor, a pattern emerges in which dualities become a primary mode for thinking of both nation and emperor. These dualities, such as finite and transcendent, particular and universal, legal and cultural, form and essence, human and god, modern and ancient allowed thinkers to manipulate definitions of Japan (and its *kokutai*)—often claiming that only one aspect of the duality had been altered—such that a fundamental essence was never at threat.

With the intervention of U.S. Occupation of Japan from 1945, these dualities—which I’ll frame in terms of the multiple bodies of both nation and emperor—were fundamentally restructured so as to give the illusion of continuity. Yet, this did not mean that Japan’s postwar was to be continuous with Japan’s immediate past as aggressor in Asia. Rather, skipping a generation back in time, the postwar was to be continuous with the early Meiji period (1868-1912).

## 2.2 Emperor System as Duality

I’d like to briefly reflect on the nature of these dualities with reference to Ernst Kantorowicz’s highly influential text written in 1957, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*.<sup>21</sup> Beginning by looking at the legal writings of English crown jurists, Kantorowicz traces a genealogy of the theory of kingship that attempts to resolve issues of mortality, impermanence, succession, and the relation of king and subject. The king has two bodies—the Body natural and the Body politic—and these bodies form an indivisible unit. Kantorowicz quotes in his text that “The Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or Old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People.” Hence, this Body natural is mortal, finite, and prone to mistakes and defects. He is mutable and exists in time. On the other hand, to quote again, “The Body politic is a Body that

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<sup>21</sup> Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. [Cited as KTB henceforth]

cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities.” This body represents the “Immutable with Time.” The Body natural was certainly subordinate to the Body politic in this scheme, but was still augmented, or made more perfect and immune from attack, precisely because of the Body politic and the inseparability of the two.

I am by no means the first to discuss *The King’s Two Bodies* in relation to the Japanese emperor. However, the tendency is to apply it very ahistorically to make assertions about Japan’s emperor valid from antiquity to the present. Following scholar Takashi Fujitani, my reason for invoking *The King’s Two Bodies* is not to suggest a universal theory of kingship that includes the Japanese emperor, but rather as a way to think through the dualistic ways that the emperor was represented specifically since Japan’s modernity. In a section of his book *Splendid Monarchy*<sup>22</sup> titled “The Emperor’s Two Bodies,” Fujitani discusses the writings of Suematsu Kenchō who, after studying at Cambridge University in 1881, theorized the Japanese emperor as having a duality with similarities to English notion of the “king’s two bodies.” He also remarks on Origuchi Shinobu’s discussion of the imperial accession ceremony, *Daijōsai*, in which the “imperial spirit” entered a new emperor through the process of a Shinto ritual. For Fujitani’s analysis, it is critical that neither

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<sup>22</sup> Fujitani, T. *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1998.

Suematsu nor Origuchi were objectively describing the dual nature of Japan's emperor that existed throughout time, but rather contributing to the *essentially modern production of the emperor's duality*. To quote Fujitani, "I want to remember and problematize the fabrication of the particularly modern binaries that centered on the monarchy as part of a critique of the modern imperial institution and the modern nation-state."<sup>23</sup>

My objectives are very much in line with Fujitani's statement. Yet, I deal with the aporetic circumstances that produced representation of a dualistic emperor in the postwar (a human that is still considered holy as well as a symbol of peace and democracy). Fujitani's analysis focuses on the construction of the Meiji state and emperor, and the dual representations of the emperor as transcendent god on one hand and modern military leader and political sovereign on the other. Fujitani brilliantly shows how the invention of modern mnemonic sites, rituals, and costumes very carefully crafted the dual image of the Meiji emperor as ancient Shinto priest as well as military leader and sovereign. This duality was literally built into the geographic landscape with Japan's two capital cities of Tokyo (the newer, modern capital where government affairs took place) and Kyoto (symbolizing antiquity and timelessness). The governing elites took great lengths to cultivate the transcendent emperor who stays hidden from public view as he performs Shintō rites, while emphasizing the human side of the military commander immersed in society. To

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 159

quote, “Emperor Meiji was thus emperorship as well as emperor, mystical but palpable, transcending and yet directing, divine but human, and exempt from all human failings but responsible for all national accomplishments.”<sup>24</sup>

With Japan’s defeat in 1945, the dualities of emperor established during Meiji faced major restructuring. After much deliberation and planning, most of which happened well before Japan ever surrendered, MacArthur made the executive decision to spare the emperor from any wartime responsibility whether through inclusion in the war tribunal or abdication. The Occupation officials believed, highly paternalistically, that Japanese people were so attached to their emperor that the nation would have crumbled without such a unifying leader, no matter what his role in the atrocities for which other military leaders were blamed, and that retaining the emperor *as pacifist* would serve U.S.’s strategic interests, even dominance, in Asia affairs.

Even if MacArthur wanted to retain the imperial institution, it still leaves open the question, “Why *this* Emperor? Why Hirohito?” After all, Hirohito was blemished—he would forever be the face of Japan’s most militarized and aggressive past, even given all swift and sustained efforts to write a new narrative for him, performed through a coordinated effort by the Occupation, the government, and the emperor himself, as well as the discursive nexus that reproduced that narrative. Kantorowicz notes that during the English Civil War (1642-51), the fiction of the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 159

“king’s two bodies” provided jurists with the means to essentially pit King Charles I against King Charles I, where, Parliament could, “in the name and by the authority of Charles I, King body politic,” mobilize “the armies which were to fight the same Charles I, king body natural.”<sup>25</sup> Theoretically then, the continuity of the king’s body politic (the eternal and immutable body of the king) allows for the removal of any king in his human, mortal form. Thus, Kantorowicz notes, the Puritans cried out, “We fight the *king* to defend the *King*.”<sup>26</sup> This is precisely what one young Japanese politician, Nakasone Yasuhiro, advocated in 1952 when he recommended that the emperor abdicate so that “the crown prince [could] become emperor” and “the moral foundation of the monarchy firmed up and made eternal.”<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps it was MacArthur’s lack of imagination, or just failure to distinguish the emperorship from the emperor of Hirohito himself—in other words, the failure to imagine that the emperor *as* Body politic was greater and more robust than the Body natural of Hirohito—that led to his insistence that he remain emperor, despite calls from within the imperial family that Hirohito abdicate.<sup>28</sup> If MacArthur’s objective

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<sup>25</sup> KTB, 21

<sup>26</sup> KTB, 18

<sup>27</sup> Bix, Herbert P. “Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan.” JPRI Occasional Paper No. 17, September 2000. University of San Francisco Center for the Pacific Rim. [<http://www.jpri.org/publications/occasionalpapers/op17.html>]

Nakasone was not the only politician to call for the abdication of Hirohito.

<sup>28</sup> Watanabe Osamu. “The Emperor as ‘Symbol’ in Postwar Japan.” *Acta Asiatica*, no. 59, October 1990, pg. 105. Watanabe says that in the immediate postwar, “Konoe and other members including Imperial Princes Takamatsu and Higashikuni tried to save the emperor system by persuading the emperor to abdicate as the only way for him to escape responsibility for war.”

was the stability of the imperial house and institution, then he could have looked back only twenty years, at the death of Taishō Emperor, who was removed from his former role because he was deemed mentally ill and unfit to reign by the time of his death. Is this not precedent for how an infirmed and defective body natural was replaceable and did not threaten the emperorship, the Body politic? We can only speculate futilely whether, counter to MacArthur's scheme, retaining Hirohito—a potential war criminal—on the throne did more damage to the imperial house than it did good. It certainly has been a key element in Japan's postwar inability to reconcile with its past.

At best, retaining Hirohito the man created issues of continuity nearly impossible to sustain through logic. However, the emperor, the Diet, and the Occupation devoted much energy to giving the illusion of continuity by severing the image of the wartime Hirohito from the postwar Hirohito, in essence giving him a new body. Postwar Japan, too, required a completely new body—a completely new *kokutai*—to overcome the logic of interruption, revolution, and utter loss of identity. It is this sleight of hand, this intentional deception, that I believe constitutes a rather mystical transference of identity for Japan and its emperor. Both instances involved a strict disavowal of the immediate past and complete affirmation of Meiji (both Meiji

the emperor, 1852-1912, and the Meiji Period that marks his reign, 1868-1912), such that Meiji represented Japan not at a modern juncture, but Japan as eternity.<sup>29</sup>

The immediate tasks for the Occupied Powers of postwar Japan were to separate Shinto from the state, fearing its potential for rousing ultranationalism, to restructure Japan's political system from a constitutional monarchy into a democracy, to retain the emperor as a symbol of national unity, and *all the while* to give the impression that all of this was done organically by the Japanese people. For example, while a team of young international scholars drafted Japan's pacifist postwar constitution, this was done in secret. Likewise, despite rather sweeping censorship policies and practices, publishing that the Occupation engaged in censorship violated the terms of what was publishable. Moreover, although the conviction of MacArthur and his advisors that the emperor was indispensable for bringing unity to a defeated Japan, polls seemed to indicate quite the contrary—that the emperor was of little concern to a nation starving and struggling to find shelter.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Of course, the ideology was not internally consistent, and despite especially Hirohito's nostalgic affiliation with his grandpa Meiji, others such as Watsuji Tetsurō, who I will discuss below, sought to eradicate the Meiji Era—and *political emperor*—from history altogether.

<sup>30</sup> Dower, John W. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1999, 304.

Therefore, in the face of indifference to the emperor, the Occupation had to in effect make him visible, make him needed.<sup>31</sup>

### 2.3 The Man, the Myth, the... Broom?

Hirohito's "Declaration of Humanity" (*Ningen Sengen*), delivered on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1946 drafted by American advisors but thoroughly revised by Hirohito himself and aides, aimed to irreversibly sever Shinto myths from the emperorship. Importantly, he proclaimed, "The ties between Us and Our people have always stood upon mutual trust and affection. They do not depend upon mere legends and myths. They are not predicated on the false conception that the Emperor is divine, and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world." John Dower describes how the emperor did not actually reject his divinity, manipulating the Japanese version of the text through ambiguous language, what Dower describes as "cutting smoke with scissors." However, Hirohito's intentions are completely irrelevant. What matters is the significance of the speech for the representation of the emperor.

As significant as this "declaration of humanity" (and denial of divinity) was Hirohito's full recitation within the body of the text of the Charter Oath of 1868. A foundational document of the Meiji Restoration, the Charter Oath declared the use of assemblies and open discussion or public opinion, that high and low will unite to

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<sup>31</sup> Despite people like Etō Jun's claim that the postwar constitution was imposed (*oshitsuke kempō*), can we not rather say that it was in fact the emperor that the Occupation imposed on Japan (*oshitsuke tennō*)???

carry out administrative affairs, and that “absurd customs” of the past must be abandoned. In many ways, it can be seen as a declaration of intent to establish a parliament based on wide participation and reject the seclusionist and anti-foreign discourse (*jōi*) while embracing principles of international law. Despite its “democratic” tone, though, it was a document largely aimed at elite landowners and rival anti-imperial forces in an effort to bring them into the fold of the new Meiji State. Hirohito invoked the Charter Oath in the context of postwar reconstruction to rewrite his own narrative based on the supposedly most open, progressive, and democratic documents of the Meiji Era. It further allowed him to bypass and discredit the actual and substantial movements toward liberal democratic reform represented by “Taishō democracy.”<sup>32</sup> This marks the second performance of the new postwar emperor system, an attempt to redefine the *kokutai* to represent a nation in which a human emperor can embody the eternal democratic values of Japan.

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<sup>32</sup> See Harootunian, Harry. "Hirohito Redux-Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan by Herbert P. Bix". *Critical Asian Studies*. 33, no. 4, 2001. pg. 623. The postwar arguments about the compatibility of democracy and the emperor were far closer to Yoshino Sakuzō's *Minponshugi* than anything from Meiji. To him, the emperor belonged to the people (*kokumin no tennō*). Tetsuya Najita quotes him saying in 1914, “Those who argue that democracy is not compatible with the national spirit believe in the anachronistic and erroneous notion that the emperor and the people are mutually exclusive of each other. Najita, Tetsuo. “Some reflections on the political thought of Yoshino Sakuzō.” *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974, pg. 40

Just like his grandfather Meiji, who embarked on his “Great Imperial Tours” to visit the entire territory of Japan and teach the people that they were his subjects<sup>33</sup> (as well as subject them to his gaze), Hirohito traversed Japan, visiting every prefecture except for Okinawa, to collapse the distance between himself and the citizens of Japan, to represent his humanness.

Two important writers, Sakaguchi Ango and Nakano Shigeharu, writing in the immediate postwar, reflect on these tours by Hirohito and his now being a mere human. Sakaguchi is quick to defend newspapers that sarcastically called the emperor a “broom.” They were right, he said, because, “wherever the emperor goes, whether city or country, there is a clean sweep—just like a broom.”<sup>34</sup> To Sakaguchi, there is incredible irony that the emperor conducted these tours to present himself as a human like any other Japanese, and yet, is welcomed like no other Japanese could be. He says, “If His Majesty cannot go into these completely unadorned cities and country towns as just another citizen, what the hell is the point of talking about the emperor *as human being!*” In Nakano’s story “Five Cups of Sake,”<sup>35</sup> the narrator, a middle school principal, recounts witnessing the emperor when he visited his town as part of a tour to celebrate the new constitution. The visit was brief, mechanical,

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<sup>33</sup> See *Splendid Monarchy*, pg 46-55; see also Ruoff, Kenneth J. *The People’s Emperor: Democracy and the Japanese Monarchy, 1945-1995*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2001, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Sakuguchi Ango. “Tennō Heika ni sasaguru kotoba [Dedication to the Emperor His Majesty]” *Sakaguchi Ango Zenshū*. Chikuma Shobō, 1998.

<sup>35</sup> Nakano Shigeharu, trans. Brett de Bary. *Three Works By Nakano Shigeharu*. Cornell East Asia Papers: Ithaca, NY, 1979; Nakano Shigeharu. “Goshaku no Sake.” *Nakano Shigeharu Shu*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1979, pg. 405-424.

contrived, and virtually unceremonious; he was shocked how quickly the nation had moved on, how his town had relative indifference to emperor's visit, and how no mention whatsoever was made of the Constitution. Yet, wasn't it the meticulous construction of the Constitution that was to determine the course Japan would take from that point on?

This Constitution, flimsily sold as an "amendment" to the Meiji Constitution (or the Constitution of the Empire of Japan), sought to establish continuity by retaining some similar forms despite a total restructuring of sovereignty and the role of the emperor. Article 1 states: "The Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power." As with Hirohito's surrender speech, preservation of nationality/national body (*kokutai goji*) was central to this discussion. Whereas earlier discussion of *kokutai* centered around the sovereignty of the emperor, the unbroken line of emperors, and the fact that Japan never been invaded by foreign powers, this type of definition would no longer hold if Japan were to maintain any continuity. In other words, the hitherto attributes of *kokutai* (Japan's nationality/national body) had been completely invalidated with Japan's defeat and the demystification of the emperor. Parliament was left with a conundrum: how could the *kokutai* be maintained *and* still be compatible with a democratic form of government and human emperor?

For the argument, members of the Diet employed a distinction that was not new to discourse among legal scholars, separating Japan into two bodies, the *kokutai* (“national body”) and the *seitai* (“governmental body”). Whereas the first, *kokutai*, refers to everything transcendent and eternal about Japan’s reified essence, *seitai*, on the other hand refers to the political form of government or rule that happens to be in existence at any particular time. It was argued that whether the *seitai* (governmental body) was a constitutional monarchy or a democracy did not matter. What matters for the preservation of the *kokutai* is whether the emperor remains at the center of the nation. Democracy, so government ideologue argued, was now compatible with the *kokutai*, the national body, because, it was claimed, the emperor not only held a central place in the hearts of the Japanese, but that the will of the emperor was indistinguishable from the will of the citizens of Japan. This type of “democracy” in which the hearts and wills of the emperor and citizens were totally aligned was, according to the argument, nothing new. Rather, it had always existed, and Japan was only now “awakened” to its truth. This line of argumentation, though unconvincing to many (including within the Diet), was made by a wide array of influential public figures such as Minister of State Kanamori Tokujirō, the historian Tsuda Sōkichi, and philosopher Watsuji Tetsujirō. Though sophisticated, it was a pure invention of the postwar to legitimize a type of emperor system—whether in cultural or political terms—that had never existed before.

Projecting Japan's new postwar reality into Japan's eternal past, via the Meiji Era or the moment before its inception, involved a glaring omission: the literal body of Japan—its geography—was fundamentally altered from the late 1800s to the postwar. Once an Empire stretching to Taiwan, Korea, Manchukuo and beyond, Japan's postwar body was significantly smaller. In fact, rather than insist that Japan had expanded and shrunk through half a century of imperial exploits, the narrative for continuity—just like for the emperor—had no choice but to disavow its recent past, and eliminate reference to Empire. This is despite the fact that Empire was not simply an accident of the past half century, but rather a central element for the production of nationality in Japan.

Thus, we have multiple tropes for considering the two bodies of Japan: Japan as *kokutai* (national body) versus Japan as *seitai* (governmental body); Japan as the broader territories ruled under the Japanese Empire versus the defeated and retreated version of Japan proper after 1945; and the Japan that is identically mapped onto the dual images of the emperor—Japan as eternal, transcendent, and divine versus Japan as mutable, imperfect, and quotidian. These tropes, however, are ideological and my contention is that they were strategically and intentionally deployed by both Japan *and* the Occupation in the postwar to conveniently write a rosier narrative of the past century that disavowed Japan's immediate past as aggressor in Asia, and allowed for a tenuous continuity between the earlier Meiji period and Japan in the postwar.

Moreover, postwar Japan's emphasis of the human, "everyman" quality of Emperor Hirohito did not mean that he was reduced to one body, the mortal and imperfect king, the Body natural. Rather, he still had two bodies: that of human and that of Humanity, that of emperor and that of emperorship. He was portrayed both as human (sympathetic and pathetic, pitiable and pitiful) as well as the model, the archetype, of Japan's democratic and pacifist citizen, while his family (especially his son Akihito and his son's wife Michiko) typified the modern nuclear family of Japan's emerging economic middle class.

In the case of Japan, these dualities, the double-bodied natures of both nation and emperor, have been critical to establishing the continuity of Japan through time, and especially as it bridged the divide between everything that came before Japan's loss in World War II and everything that came after. However, two bodies of nation and the two bodies of emperor—are constantly manipulated and constructed to produce the illusion of both continuity and concreteness. Thus, I find it critical to turn to those thinkers who understood the dual nature of nationality, keyed into its artifice, and helped expose its true nature—that nationality is a construct.

In the next two chapters, I will argue that, in their careful critique of the new construct of the emperor in the postwar, the *postwar emperor system*, both Nakano and Sakaguchi seek to explode the narrative of the emperor's two bodies. This is not merely to deny that the emperor is divine, but to separate the human emperor from the emperor who represents "Humanity" and citizen—to separate the emperor from

the “emperor system”—and to reject any notion that democracy can be compatible with even a “symbolic” emperor. As such, their writings demonstrate how such an “emperor system” is performatively produced and reproduced through discourse. Thus, both authors, rather than advocating an explicitly political means for abolishing the emperor system, seek to undermine it by historicizing its very representation, its very discursive production.

#### **2.4 The fate of *kokutai*: in the Diet and out**

Just as preservation of *kokutai* seemed to be a sole concern for the government in the lead up to surrender—more important in fact than sparing the lives of soldiers and citizens—it was central to the debates on the status of postwar Constitution in the Diet as well as the public sphere. The draft assembled by the Occupation was ultimately used, although each party represented within the Diet drafted their own versions. Among them, only the draft by the Communist Party called for an abolition of the emperor system, whereas the others differed on the specific status of the emperor. Rather opportunistically hoping to garner votes, the Socialist Party included in their proposed draft of the constitution the retention of the emperor, with the first clause stating, “Sovereignty shall reside in the State (a corporation which includes the Emperor).”<sup>36</sup> Other drafts, with the hope to make the emperor’s powers more explicit, making him the supreme commander, or the “superintendent,” of sovereignty” (*tōchiken no sōransha*), while at the same time

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<sup>36</sup> Moore, index number RM122.

ensuring that the emperor's status depends on the support of the people.<sup>37</sup> Yet, the heart of the debate over the *kokutai*, and whether it had been preserved or destroyed, occurred after it became clear in early-to-mid 1946 that the Occupation draft would most clearly resemble the final product.

For some, it was a foregone conclusion that the *kokutai* had been maintained because it was considered unchanging and unalterable. This still required significant justification before the members of the Diet. On October 16, 1946, Minister of State Kanamori, an early advocate of the emperor-organ theory (*tennō kikan setsu*), led an impassioned defense of the *kokutai*, attempting to demonstrate how a constitution that placed sovereignty with the people could still retain its *kokutai*. In question was not simply the legal continuity of Japan and its constitution, which was to be an amendment of Article 73 of the Meiji Constitution, but its existential continuity. Kanamori believed that both the legal and existential identities could be preserved:

If the identity of the State is consistent through the past and the future, and if the identity of the fundamental principles of State law is equally provided logically, I think the bringing about of Result B through Process A can be clearly provided legally. Then the question comes to the fore whether the State, in the past and in the present, has undergone a change in its fundamental aspects, that is, whether it has forfeited its identity, and

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<sup>37</sup> Especially the draft proposed by Konoe, who was advised by Sasaki Sōichi. Ibid, index number RM088.

consequently whether it has lost the consistency in the fundamental structure of its law. I conceive of all the issues involved on the premise that the identity is maintained. A revolution, in the sense we ordinarily use, is not taking place in Japan.<sup>38</sup>

It is clear that the identity of the state was not merely a question of legal interpretation for Kanamori, but rather a *fundamentally existential problem*. To deny continuity of the state, in other words, would be for the state to cease to exist, at least as something that endures through time, which was to him unacceptable. In this model, revolution was impossible; continuity of the state was a given, but he was willing to address the legal issues nonetheless. Legal continuity of the state was guaranteed through the process of amending the constitution, he argued. However, the continuity on the level of “fundamental aspects” of the identity of the state was less a question of legality than a question of perception. Some scholars, Kanamori says, conceived of the “location” of sovereignty being transferred from the emperor to the people as a fundamental change in the identity of the state, a radical shift in the *kokutai*. However, because the emperor, too, is a “citizen” under the draft of the constitution, he still retains sovereignty. More important for Kanamori is the fact that the *kokutai* has not changed, but *perception* of it has changed. He says, “The question before us is not whether the *kokutai* has changed or not, but in what sense our

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, index number RM426.AM.SP8.P8

understanding of it has changed.”<sup>39</sup> He is suggesting that sovereignty has actually *always* belonged to the people (including the emperor) because of their relation to the emperor; the emperor’s sovereignty was merely an expression of the people’s consolidated communal will. This rests on the assumption that the emperor has always been, and will always be, the “center of adoration” (*akogare no chūshin*) of the Japanese people; the linkage of the hearts of the people of Japan with the heart of the emperor constitutes the unchangeable character of the State and the continuity of identity for Japan. The postwar constitution and circumstances, so he argues, is able to awaken people to the fact that this intimate relationship with the emperor—this “adoration” and alignment of wills—also entails shared sovereignty. Thus, the *kokutai* has in fact not changed, but people’s perception of it has.

Kanamori’s defense of the *kokutai* within the postwar Constitution, while facing fierce skepticism by Diet members and constitutional scholars alike, not to mention criticism from the newspapers, became the dominant grounds for the official government position that the *kokutai* had not changed.<sup>40</sup> In this sense, it was a powerful vindication and legitimization of the Occupation efforts to restructure Japan, and demonstration of the complicity between U.S. and Japanese ideologues in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, RM426.AM.SP8.P8.

<sup>40</sup> See Appendix VII in the translation of *Kokutai no Hongi*, which includes a passage entitled “Official Position that the *Kokutai* has not changed” from a booklet published by the Imperial Cabinet in November 1946 to coincide with the promulgation of the constitution. *Kokutai no Hongi* (“Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan”). trans. John Owen Guantlett. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1949, Appendix VII.

justifying use of the emperor for their mutual purposes. Regardless, his logic is exceedingly bizarre. Kanamori suggests that, by virtue of the connection between the emperor and the people of Japan, who have always had mutual affection for each other, the identity of the state is unchanging and unchangeable. Yet, he offers little evidence for the claim that the emperor was ever the “center of adoration” of the people. This does not prevent him from saying, “Going back to past history as far as it is known to us, and considering our present frame of mind, to say that the country has been unified with the Emperor as the center of adoration, as I put it, is in the final analysis to say a stern fact.” He merely asserts this to be true. Similar language had also been used in imperial rescripts, notably the “Declaration of Humanity” with the line, “The ties between me and my people have always been formed by mutual trust and affection.” If this were the case, laws such as the Article 74 of the Meiji Criminal Code, which legislated against disrespectful acts against the emperor and imperial house, would have been unnecessary: the emperor would have trusted and loved the people enough to know that they would never disrespect him, and the people would naturally treat the emperor—the center of affection—only with the utmost dignity. To Kanamari, however, the emperor’s rule was never coercive, and the population was obedient purely by choice.<sup>41</sup> He said that certain laws and myths throughout

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<sup>41</sup> Sakai comments on how the claim to a non-violent origin of the nation was a recurring trope in the postwar, by philosophers like Watsuji Tetsurō and historians *in the U.S. and Japan alike*. It appears that Watsuji and Kanamori had similar consultants: “Watsuji claimed that, just as the Japanese people freely and voluntarily chose to continue the institution expressing its totality in the figure of the emperor after the Second World War, the same entity freely and voluntarily started the same

history could have had “potent effects” on people’s obedience, but that overall it was “self-willed.”<sup>42</sup> He does not specify the difference between coercion and “potent effects” (are we to assume they are different?), or explain how it might be possible to obey the emperor freely and independently according to free will and choice when an alternative choice was not made available. Nevertheless, Kanamori connects this supposed “obedience by choice” with the notion that this constituted shared sovereignty with the emperor and people. It should be clear here Kanamori is simply confusing the notion of sovereignty with the concept of the social contract, in which society willfully accepts security offered by the state authority by subjecting themselves to it; obedience by no means entails sovereignty. Despite this mix-up, it does not change the fact that Japanese history has a rich history of coercive military force against its people in order to turn them into “imperial subjects.” Japan’s colonial efforts in Asia of *kōminka*, forced assimilation, is one example, and one analogous to how the government treated “mainland” (*naichi*) Japanese people during the Meiji effort to consolidate politically and standardize language and culture.

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institution at the initial stage of the imperial tradition. That the people could freely and voluntarily choose the emperor system was testified to by the fact that the state was first organized on the basis of unification by religious authority without the use of military coercion. As those who are familiar with the general field of Japanese studies in the United States would probably note, this is a prevailing hypothesis that has been repeatedly stated by some historians of Japan.” Sakai, Naoki. “Return to the West/Return to the East: Watsuji Tetsurō’s Anthropology and Discussions of Authenticity.” *Translation and Subjectivity: On ‘Japan’ and Cultural Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pg. 106-7.

<sup>42</sup> Moore, 1998, Index number RM426.AM.SP8.P18.

Furthermore, for Kanamori to assert that the postwar constitution would awaken people to the notion that they have always possessed something like sovereignty through their connection to the emperor assumes a notion of sovereignty that is fundamentally apolitical. Otherwise, history would have to be rewritten to account for the democratic tendencies of ancient Japan. Could we speak of Heian democracy? Kamakura republicanism? He would also have to account for the periods of history in which the emperor was politically subordinate to the feudal lords, as in, most of Japan's history. Needless to say, Kanamori unproblematically assumes that Japan has had continual identity as state (*kokka*) and nation (*kokumin*) without taking into consideration the historical circumstances that led to the emergence of these forms within the past several hundred years.

Most troublesome about Kanamori's argument, though, is his notion that *kokutai*, which is for him in essence a question of *affect* (affection, *akogare*), can exist *independent of perception*. For him, the *affection toward the emperor* unifies the people of Japan and gives them a sense of belonging to the nation—this is the “unalterable” nature of *kokutai*. Yet, only now (in the early postwar) are people awakening to the nature of this belonging. What this suggests to me is that Kanamori believes that one can have a *feeling of belonging to the nation*—a feeling of *kokutai*—without being aware of it. Can *kokutai* exist on a subconscious level? Is it something one can become awakened to its through cognition?

It's critical here that we understand *kokutai* not as some mystical or peculiar

concept to Japan, even if it was frequently invoked to make the case for Japan's uniqueness. Rather, *kokutai* is "nationality" itself. Naoki Sakai has drawn attention to Fukuzawa Yukichi's understanding of *kokutai*, which for him as a direct translation of the term "nationality" as defined by J.S. Mill. Fukuzawa says, "*Kokutai* refers to the grouping together of a race of people of similar feelings, the creation of a distinction between fellow countrymen and foreigners, the fostering of more cordial and stronger bonds with one's countrymen than with foreigners."<sup>43</sup> These feelings of communality, or community, are based on shared language, history, race, religion or geography. It is what Fukuzawa calls the "sentiment of nationality" or *kokutai no jō*, which Sakai notes is a near exact rendition of Mill's "society of sympathy." Thus, we can understand nationality to be deeply connected to this *affective* aspect of relating oneself to others. For Kanamori and others in the postwar, the emperor is at the core of this affective aspect of nationality that can unite people.

Yet, Kanamori's notion of *awakening* to a new sense of *kokutai*—nationality—is disturbing because it assumes that nationality precedes being cognizant of it: one is Japanese prior to one's understanding of that fact.<sup>44</sup> It exposes that *sentiment* is actually unnecessary because the way one feels, the *sentiment* or *affective* aspect of nationality, actually has nothing to do with understanding. At any point, one may

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<sup>43</sup> Fukuzawa, Yukichi, trans. David Diltworth. *An Outline of the Theory of Civilization*. Sophia University: Tokyo, 1973, pg. 23. (Japanese text referenced online at: [http://project.lib.keio.ac.jp/dg\\_kul/fukuzawa\\_title.php?id=77](http://project.lib.keio.ac.jp/dg_kul/fukuzawa_title.php?id=77))

<sup>44</sup> To be clear, I referring to nationality only in the sense discussed here, not in terms of state citizenship.

“awaken” to discover what it is. This is the logic I’m deducing from Kanamori’s argument: it is not that one is Japanese because one love the emperor; it’s that one is Japanese, and therefore, one loves the emperor. To be Japanese is to love the emperor. One does not have to prove that love because it is a given fact. Therefore, Kanamori need not reference any empirical evidence to demonstrate the love that Japanese people feel toward the emperor; it is the very nature of their existence. Kanamori’s entire argument that the *kokutai* has not changed is based on a tautology: the *kokutai* has not changed with the postwar constitution because the emperor is still the “center of adoration” for the Japanese people, just as he has always been; however, since being Japanese for Kanamori means to love the emperor, his conclusion is embedded in his premise.

Unlike Kanamori, I want to treat “nationality” (*kokutai*) as a fundamentally discursive concept. it has no essence, it is mutable and contingent, and can only be understood as an abstract and *imagined* sense of belonging to a larger community, and measured by how this imagination is represented in texts and performances. It is not something that one can discover through an “awakening” because it does not precede understanding, but follows from it; nationality is constructed within the individual. The Japanese emperor’s relation to nationality was developed and articulated most cogently by Meiji ideologues, but reproduced through a discursive nexus—produced by the media as well as religious, legal, cultural, and educational institutions—that for the first time brought the emperor into widespread visibility to

the greater public, and contributed to a sense or “sentiment” of national imagination that included the emperor. From the beginning of the Meiji Period through the end of the Second World War, however, there was no consensus on the precise relation of the emperor to nation, and contesting camps and factions led to the need to “clarify the *kokutai*” or define its “essential qualities” (*kokutai no hongji*). We should see these efforts as expression of anxiety and *insecurity* over the fact that the *kokutai* was not immediately apparent, not a given. The postwar constitution, therefore, provided an opportune moment for politicians to once again reassert the nature of the *kokutai*. However, this constituted what I understand to be the *invention of the postwar emperor system*. It was a chance for politicians to reject past definitions of *kokutai* and concretize a new definition that would be compatible with the postwar democratic order. That they chose to represent *kokutai* as having essential *democratic* qualities and existing unchanged throughout Japanese history was an arbitrary choice, but an exceedingly convenient one for realizing the demands of the Occupation.

#### **2.4.1 Sasaki: the *kokutai* is gone**

Others were less sympathetic to the new constitution precisely because it would radically alter their understanding of the *kokutai*. Sasaki Kōichi, a constitutional scholar and advisor to Kido Kōichi, rejected the constitution on the grounds that it entailed an outright negation of the *kokutai* as it had been understood up to that point, and yet it need not be that way. The main problem as

he saw it was the complete removal of the political function of the emperor in the new constitution. The *kokutai*, he argues, rests on two points: the emperor “holds the right to govern united in his hands” (i.e. rules as the supreme commander, *tōchiken wo sōran*), and that this right is given solely by his lineage (i.e. Japan’s hereditary monarchy). It was never the case that a secondary requirement, the consent of the people, accompanied the justification based on lineage. Never had the emperor reigned by virtue of the sovereign will of the people.<sup>45</sup> In designating the emperor a symbol, the constitution took away all substance from the emperorship; thus, Sasaki argues that if it is to preserve the *kokutai*, the constitution must give the emperor a *positive political function*. Sasaki also holds that the Meiji Constitution provided provisions for the irresponsibility [having no accountability] of the emperor, and that removing the emperor’s political function could actually make him vulnerable to future laws that might seek to punish him. This is distinct from other arguments (including Watsuji’s below) that sought to eliminate any political function for the emperor specifically in order to keep him immune from bearing responsibility for the war.

For Sakaki, any argument that insists that there is compatibility for the *kokutai* and “emperor system” (*tennōsei*) in the new constitution would gut the terms of any substance (he uses the two terms interchangeably for the most part). Until the new constitution, the emperor system necessarily meant that the emperor

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<sup>45</sup> Moore, index number RM426.PM.SP12

was supreme commander (*sōrانشa*) by virtue of his lineage. He claims that it has always meant that and nothing else. He says,

In my opinion, the “emperor system,” which has formed the distinctive character of the Japanese State, stands abolished in the bill. Where on earth is the reason for abolishing the emperor system? ... In the current discussion on the Constitution, any system of government with the emperor as an organ of the State seems to be held as the emperor system. But if you use the term “emperor system” in that sense, you commit, I believe, a great error. You can, of course, give any definition to a term, as long as the substance is clearly indicated. However, the “emperor system” in the sense in which the system has hitherto been understood is something very different.

Although Sasaki makes the claim that the draft of the postwar constitution (which would be the final version) essentially would abolish the emperor system, he by no means advocates that. He wants the postwar constitution to codify the emperor’s political role as supreme commander, and make the postwar emperor system completely compatible with the Meiji Constitution. However, in arguing that the draft of the new constitution would “abolish the emperor system” as it had been known and defined, he exposes that the postwar emperor system would be pure construct, and manipulation of terms and definitions in order to give the illusion of continuity despite no such substantial continuity.

This to me is the value of looking at the postwar debates on the emperor

system: the very instability in how the terms and definitions were perceived allowed for their constant manipulation to fit any scenario regarding the fate of the emperor. Some, like Sasaki, were concerned with retaining legal and political continuity for the emperor based on precedent, and others showed willingness to invent a new emperor system in complete alignment with the wishes of the Occupation forces and the wishes of Douglas MacArthur. I believe that the debates within the Diet were meant to deflect attention away from the role that SCAP played in the invention of the postwar emperor system. The absence of any mention of SCAP's role is blatant. That the debate moved beyond the Diet in the public sphere of discourse suggests the keen sense of urgency in guaranteeing that new emperor system be perceived as legitimate.

#### **2.4.2 Watsuji's "cultural community"**

This reproduction of the postwar emperor system, therefore, could not be limited to government ideologues; it had to be buttressed and legitimated across spheres and academic disciplines. The philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō is a prime example, and he set out to refute Sasaki's acknowledgment that the postwar constitution would abolish the emperor system and *kokutai* in a rebuttal titled, "Seeking advice from Professor Sasaki on the debate over whether the kokutai has changed." According to Watsuji, Sasaki had divided the *kokutai* into two categories, the political and the spiritual (*seishinteki gainen*). Sasaki's primary reason for arguing that the *kokutai* had changed was based on its political aspect, as sovereignty was

transferred from the monarch to “the people.” For Watsuji, however, this constituted a fundamental confusion for Sasaki: sovereignty has nothing to do with the *kokutai*, and rather is covered by the term *seitai* (governmental body, form of state), which has itself changed many times throughout history.<sup>46</sup> The emperor since Meiji was defined as a supreme commander (*sōransha*), and the new constitution negates the possibility that he could continue as such. But, this is to simply analyze circumstances *since the Meiji Period*.<sup>47</sup> There were many periods of Japanese history in which the emperor was not sovereign, with sovereignty instead held during those periods by feudal rulers. Watsuji accuses Sasaki of shortsightedness, judging his standard of *kokutai* based only on the Meiji Constitution, which Watsuji considers an aberration in the context of the long arc of Japanese history.

It should be noted, here, that Watsuji needs to discount and discredit the transformation of *kokutai* in the Meiji Period because it was precisely during the Meiji Period that the emperorship was designed to have a quintessentially modern function. The emperor system was not defined to conform to the Meiji Constitution; it was invented for its purposes. For Watsuji to give legitimacy to the Meiji developments in the definition of *kokutai*—especially giving the emperor a *political* function—would also be to recognize its modern quality, its historically contingency.

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<sup>46</sup> Watsuji Tetsurō. “*Kokutai henkōron ni tsuite sakaki hakushi wo kou*. [Seeking advice from Professor Sasaki on the debate over whether the *kokutai* has changed]” *Watsuji Tetsurō Zenshū, Vol 14*. Tokyo: Iwanami, 1962, pg. 355

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 359.

Thus, he has to minimize its significance and demonstrate the developments of Meiji had no bearing on the essence of the emperor system.

Watsuji locates the nature of the Japanese emperor in ancient history, in its primitive and traditional origins (*honrai no dentō, genshiteki dentō*). Looking to the etymological sources for an alternative reading for *tennō* (emperor), *sumeramikoto*, he says that the *sumera* is related to the word *suberu*, to unify, that *mikoto* is a polite honorific, and that therefore the name for emperor, *sumeramikoto*, is a word used to “honor the act of unification.”<sup>48</sup> Watsuji claims that the existence of the emperor, through ritual practices and festivals, enabled the people of primitive groups to be conscious of their communality, the “living totality” (*ikita zentaisei*) of their group. From the beginning, the emperor was the symbol of group unity (*shūdan no tōitsu no shōchō*). Eventually the nature of the emperor would go through transformations and “metamorphoses” (Watsuji uses the English word here), and the “nature of the emperor *developed* into being sovereignty of the supreme commander (*tōchiken no sōransha*).” Yet, if separated from that function, the emperor’s essence would still be as the expression of unity (*tōitsu no hyogensha*). He says,

That the emperor is the symbol of the unity of the Japanese nation (*nihon kokumin*) is a fact piercing through Japanese history. The emperor is the expression of the living totality of primitive groups, and politically, is the expression of the “unification into one totality” of the countless lands (*kuni*)

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pg. 363.

that divided the people of Japan (*nihon no piipuru*). This collective, or the totality of the people, is a *subjective* (*shutaiteki*) totality, and cannot be grasped as an object (*taishōteki ni*). This is the precise reason why it can only be expressed as a ‘symbol.’ Perhaps a symbol can be many things, but we as a nation have ceaselessly upheld the tradition of this symbol chosen by our primitive ancestors who followed the natural law of shared humanity (*jinrui tsūyū*). This allows us to perceive the core significance of the emperor.<sup>49</sup>

To Watsuji, then, only the totality can be active subject (*shutai*) or practical agent.<sup>50</sup> Since totality is abstract, it cannot be understood in a concrete form, as an object (*taishō*). Hence, the totality can only be perceived through its expression. The emperor is not the totality itself; if two things are identical, one cannot symbolize the other. The emperor is rather the expression of the totality; only the people *as* totality (or community) can be the active agent, whereas the emperor, as its expression (or symbol), is passive.<sup>51</sup> If legal interpretations have failed to understand this concept of symbol, Watsuji says, refer instead to philosophy, which has long dealt with it.

Watsuji sees the postwar Constitution as not only compatible with this notion

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, pg. 364.

<sup>50</sup> Naoki Sakai discusses at length how Watsuji uses “subject” in the Kantian sense of the term, but ultimately through his usage, evacuated *shutai* of its meaning of “practical agent”: “What is achieved in his use of the term *shutai* is, in fact, a displacement of the practical relation by the epistemic one,” or the subject as *shukan*. Sakai 1997, pg. 145.

<sup>51</sup> Sakai has noted that this insistence on the emperor’s passivity had a direct implication for the emperor in the postwar: he could not be held responsible for the actions of the nation. Sakai 1997, pg. 106.

of the emperor, but actually allowing for an interpretation that brings the emperor close to being able to “rule as a supreme commander.” The first clause of the Constitution of Japan stipulates the emperor’s role as the “symbol of state,” and further, that his position is derived “from the will of the people *with whom resides sovereign power.*” This suggests, Watsuji says, that the emperor is the *symbol of the will of sovereignty*. As an expression of the unity of the people and their will, the emperor is the symbol of sovereignty.

Watsuji, though, is careful to separate “state” (*kokka*) from “nation” (*kokumin*) arguing that the state has not always existed. If “nation” implies “state” for the reader, he suggests substituting in another word like “people” (*jinmin*), or “masses” (*minshū*), as long as the emperor is still the symbol of the unity of the “people” (*piipuru*) of Japan.<sup>52</sup> He insists that this unity has nothing to do with the state, and is not a political unity, but a cultural unity:

The people of Japan formed a single cultural community (*bunka kyōdōtai*) through [shared] language, history, customs, and all cultural activities. The emperor symbolizes the unity of the nation or the masses *as this type of cultural community*. The tradition of respecting the emperor that has always existed throughout Japanese history is the awareness of this unity.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Watsuji, pg. 367.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 367.

Watsuji is certainly correct to historicize the political nature of the Japanese state. However, his assertion that the Japanese nation—and its culture, history, and customs, and hence, its “will”—has always respected the emperor relies on the false assumption that the Japanese nation has always existed as a unified totality. As Sakai says,

Although the totality of the nation cannot be objectified or made visible—that is, brought into cognition without expression—it is predetermined that it exists. It has to be noted that Watsuji was not merely saying that many people existed in the country but that those people living there had already formed a unified whole as a nation with a synthesizing will.<sup>54</sup>

Given Watsuji’s quote above, it should be clear that it was not only predetermined that the nation existed, but that it existed with unified will, unified language, unified history, and unified customs. This leads me to another reason why I believe that Watsuji had to define the Meiji Period as an aberration: the entire national project of Meiji was not the realization some abstract notion of a “general will,” but rather the very creation of nationality itself. In other words, language, history, and customs had to be unified, if not through historical revisionism and ideological convincing, then through coercive practices and compulsory education. A sense of community in Japan had to be created during Meiji because it had never existed before; not in any unified fashion during the Edo Period, and certainly not in any unified fashion in

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<sup>54</sup> Sakai, 1997, pg. 106.

antiquity. Watsuji is careful to conceal the modern and coercive aspects of the formation of nationality by asserting its primitive origins.

Watsuji concludes his essay that rejects Sasaki's argument that the *kokutai* had changed by questioning the value of using the term *kokutai* anymore anyway.<sup>55</sup> That is not because he believed that the *kokutai* had changed; insofar as *kokutai* meant the "symbol of the unification of the Japanese nation," it had not changed, and in fact is consistent with—and an even more accurate representation of—the *kokutai* of antiquity. However, if *kokutai* that refers to the respect for the emperor (*sonnō*) is to be confused with the feudal loyalty of subject to lord, he says, it's not a term worth keeping.

This defense of the compatibility of the emperor's role in the postwar order with the entirety of Japanese history, while more schematic perhaps, differed little from Minister of Kanamori's claim that the emperor constituted the "core of affection" for the "Japanese people." It can be seen as consistent with the overarching official narrative in the postwar that, in its very effort to demonstrate the emperor system's enduring and unchanging nature into the postwar, exposed it as completely historically contingent and discursively constructed. Moreover, this narrative actively sought to characterize the historical and political developments since the beginning of the Meiji Period as aberration, imperfectly lining up with Hirohito's own postwar narrative, which certainly disavowed the emperor system of

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<sup>55</sup> Watsuji, pg. 368.

pre-defeat Showa, essentially a rejection of his former self, but elevated the *democratic ideals of early Meiji as the true eternal kokutai*.

The idea that the Japanese nation had always “revered” the emperor or considered the emperor as their “center of affection” was necessary for postwar ideologues to assert because it was very clearly the case that Emperor Hirohito was *not universally revered and not the center of everyone’s affection*. Therefore, I will now turn my attention to several authors who, in the several years after Japan’s defeat, drew attention to the *disrespect* of the emperor in the immediate postwar by *representing that disrespect and theorizing it*. These writings serve not only as a denunciation of the theories of Watsuji and Kanamori on empirical grounds, but as a deconstruction of the newly invented *postwar emperor system* itself.

## CHAPTER THREE

### NAKANO SHIGEHARU AND THE EMPEROR'S ASCENT TO CITIZEN

#### 3.1 Overview

This chapter and the next are attempts to understand the nature of disrespect toward the emperor in the immediate postwar by reading authors who comment on the disrespect itself: Nakano Shigeharu and Sakaguchi Ango. Their sensitive and nuanced writings demonstrate an immediate grasp of the fundamental changes to the emperor system brought about by war's end, and offer lucid critiques of those who failed to understand the *postwar emperor system in its specificity*. I cross-read Nakano's fictional *Goshaku no Sake* with other non-fiction essays that address the emperor system by Nakano in order to demonstrate that we cannot conflate the narrator of that text with Nakano himself, but also to highlight similarities. The narrator's perspective on the emperor system allows for expression from a completely different vantage point than Nakano, that of an educator deeply concerned with his students' understanding of the emperor system for which he served as collaborator during the war.

As a meditation on the *representation* of the emperor throughout the discursive landscape of the immediate postwar, *Goshaku no Sake* analyzes the role of media and how the ideology of the emperor system is reproduced even—and

especially—by publications like the communist *Akahata* (Red Flag) by hanging on to an anachronistic understanding of the emperor system rather than grasping its new reality; misplaced criticism does not undermine but rather sustains and reproduces it. The text’s representation of *disrespect* itself and the reconfiguration of how the emperor ought to be treated—as human and nothing more—ultimately undermine the symbolic order and expose the constructed nature of the system.

### 3.2 The context: coopting the embodied voice

In May of 1945, two-hundred fifty thousand Japanese protestors descended onto the Imperial Palace grounds to decry the stark food shortages, a protest known as Food May Day.<sup>56</sup> Far from a threat to the body of the emperor—but certainly an attack on the image of the sacred emperor inscribed in the Meiji Constitution—a sign and its carrier, a Communist laborer named Matsushima Matsutarō, became embroiled in what became the “Placard Incident.” The sign read:

詔書	<i>shōsho</i>	Imperial Edict
国体はゴジされたぞ	<i>kokutai wa goji sareta zo</i>	The <i>kokutai</i> is maintained!
朕はタラフク食ってるぞ	<i>chin wa tarafuku kutteiru zo</i>	The royal belly is full!
ナンジ人民飢えて死ね	<i>nanji jinmin uete shine</i>	Die of hunger you people!
ギョメイギョジ	<i>gyomei gyoji</i>	Imperial signature

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<sup>56</sup> Dower, John W. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1999. p. 264.

The placard was satirical in multiple layers, written as if an official document in the first person of the emperor, and with a clever mixture of formal language and slang. *Chin* is the equivalent to the royal “we”, and *nanji* is a pronominal address to subjects of the king. Markedly absent, though, is the word “subjects” (*shin*), which would normally follow *nanji*, replaced with the word for “people” (*jinmin*) instead. *Kutteiru* resembles “chow down” more than “eating,” and the emphatic *zo* is colloquial. The use of katakana in place of kanji, especially for the imperial signature, *gyomei gyoji*, has the additional comedic effect of being out of place. Most stinging is the satirical presentation mocking the imperial rescripts, dictates from the emperor often used for patriotic education, as well as Hirohito’s famous surrender speech broadcast for the entire nation.

Although I have translated “*chin wa tarafuku kutteiru zo*” as “The royal belly is full!” a more literal translation might read, “I’ve gorged myself as fat as a blowfish!” Such distance from the privileged life of luxury that the emperor enjoys to the deprivation of Japanese people suffering from food shortages was nakedly apparent. This contradiction could not be whitewashed simply by stating that “The *kokutai* is maintained!” as had been done by the emperor and politicians. This second line on the placard suggests the great affront people must have felt to be told that the nation-state they had experienced prior to the humiliating defeat had somehow maintained its *kokutai* at the expense of all else. The placard here equates this insistence of maintenance of the *kokutai* with a complete disconnect from the reality

and pain of Japan's citizens. It can be read as a highly stylized way of saying, "I have maintained my throne at your expense," and then stamping it with the official seal.

Matsushima was indicted for *lèse majesté*, but under pressure from the MacArthur and SCAP officials, the court dropped those charges; he was convicted instead of defamation (*meiyo kison*) of the emperor and sentenced to eight months in prison. Fortunately for Matsushima, the promulgation of the Constitution happened to coincide nearly perfectly with his conviction, and a general imperial amnesty meant his immediate release.<sup>57</sup> MacArthur made a statement praising the court's decision to prosecute the case as defamation rather than *lèse majesté*:

The decision of the Japanese prosecutors to drop accusations against men charged with *lèse majesté* is a noteworthy application of the fundamental concept, embodied in the new constitution just adopted by the National Diet, that all men are equal before the law, that no individual in Japan—not even the Emperor—shall be clothed in legal protection denied the common man... In his new role the Emperor will symbolize the repository of state authority—the citizen.<sup>58</sup>

MacArthur did not close the door to prosecution for defamation, saying that "all public officials be protected against unwarranted defamation or vilifications in licentious disregard of the respect to which they as free individuals in a free society

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 267.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Kawagishi, Norikazu. 2007. "The Birth of Judicial Review in Japan." *International Journal of Constitutional Law*. 5, no. 2: 308-331, pg. 328

and as the public representatives of a free people are fully entitled.” In other words, *lèse majesté* did not apply, but defamation did because the emperor’s new position is that of an individual citizen who deserves no special legal protection. In 1947, an appeals court changed course once more and found Matsushima guilty of *lèse majesté*. The case eventually reached the Supreme Court, but was thrown out due to the applicability of the earlier imperial amnesty.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the courts failed to conclusively rule out whether *lèse majesté* could be prosecuted, and hence, if the emperor deserved special legal protection under the current constitution.<sup>60</sup> Yet, since Matsushima’s was the last case in which the issue of *lèse majesté* came before the court, the reluctance to invoke it since has *de facto* made it null.

The significance of “Placard Incident” is that *lèse majesté*, *fukeizai*, had for practical purposes become *fukei*; the “dis-respect crime” had lost its criminality (*zai*) and become mere disrespect. Supposedly, Japan had entered into an era of open

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<sup>59</sup> John Dower perceptively notes that despite the Supreme Court throwing out Matsushima’s appeal and thus avoiding truly confronting the question of *lèse majesté*, the amnesty granted at the proclamation of the constitution was an opportunity to spread the narrative of the emperor’s benevolence: “From the imperial perspective, this was all a splendid way of demonstrating how the emperor’s magnanimity extended even to his most ungrateful subjects.” Consequently it’s exactly that kind of logic—that the emperor could still operate as if the ruler/subject divide persisted, let alone have the dignity to be magnanimous—that Nakano’s narrator explodes in *Goshaku no Sake*. See Dower, John W. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1999.

<sup>60</sup> Legal scholar Norikazu Kawagishi notes that the case’s significance lies in the new system of judicial review that allowed for a plurality of opinions, thus making the judicial process more democratic, as opposed to what he called the “monopoly on value judgments” characteristic of the Meiji constitutional system. Kawagishi, pg. 331.

discourse on the nature of the once untouchable “emperor system.” This, however, was tempered by SCAP censorship policies, which might allow for critical discourse on the emperor system itself, but not if that discourse highlighted the Occupation’s central role in its production. That did not stop Nakano.

### 3.3 The text: *Goshaku no Sake*

Nakano’s short novel *Goshaku no Sake*<sup>61</sup> (Five Cups of Sake) is written in the form of a letter from a middle school principal (I will refer to him throughout as “the narrator”) to a friend from his school days who shared his leftist, if not radical, leanings in their youth. The letter is overtly a reflection on the new constitution and the celebrations that marked its promulgation (November 3, 1946) but it explores subtle thoughts on age, the responsibility of the teacher, and the nature of morality and consciousness in Japan’s new postwar order. The narrator’s mood—colored by the five cups of sake, a government ration to usher in the constitution, that he’s imbibed—is tinged with regret, bitterness, and perhaps a candor reserved for a close friend with whom he can confide. Although he promises no conclusion, the narrator

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<sup>61</sup> Nakano Shigeharu, trans. Brett de Bary. *Three Works By Nakano Shigeharu*. Cornell East Asia Papers: Ithaca, NY, 1979; Nakano Shigeharu. “Goshaku no Sake.” *Nakano Shigeharu Shu*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1979 (referred to below as GNS for simplicity). Reading de Bary’s translation of this text spurred my interest in pursuing further investigation of Nakano, and I am greatly indebted to her labors. In this chapter, I include references to both the translation and the original. I use some of de Bary’s translations with slight alterations, but have also included some of my own. If the translation is by de Bary, I indicate it by referencing her translation first in the footnote (ex. de Bary, pg. 94; GNS, pg. 411), and if mine, the Japanese text is referenced first (ex. GNS, pg. 410; de Bary, pg. 91).

provides sharp observations and reflections that paint a clear picture of his frustration with fellow teachers, students, the government, and most of all, the Communist Party for its failure to be a true moral guide and educator in the postwar. For the narrator, the understanding of the emperor and the emperor system in its new form, as specified in the new constitution, is absolutely central to postwar morality and awareness. Therefore, he ties his encounters with the emperor—whether in debates, postcards, newsreels, or constitution-promoting tours—at all times with the response of those around him who similarly witness the emperor, but represent him differently. The general sentiment of those around him is either total indifference or fierce antipathy. The principal/narrator, on the other hand, views the emperor with sympathy (*dōjō*). This sympathy could be interpreted as a mere reflection of many Japanese people in the immediate postwar who understood the individual emperor as a pawn of greater forces, or for someone who bore a great sense of guilt (not responsibility) for the great loss of Japanese lives during the war, who too was a victim of Japan's war. However, the narrator had something else in mind. He was not sympathetic toward the emperor because of a desire to retain him as monarch or because of a latent allegiance to the emperor or the emperor system. Rather, it is through the radical recognition of the emperor as no more than a human being—thus bringing the awareness of the emperor in line with the meaning of the postwar constitutional emperor and declaration of humanity—that the narrator can establish the conditions for dismantling a wartime ethos that is antithetical to the realization of democracy in the postwar. It is precisely by sympathizing with the

emperor as an *individual* that enables the most stinging critique of the emperor system and those who perpetuate it. *Goshaku no Sake* further demonstrates how the question of the emperor system has as much to do with the consciousness of the Japanese people as it does governmental structure, and that fundamental political and ideological reform is intimately bound to understanding itself.<sup>62</sup>

An influential writer of proletarian literature and left-wing thought during the interwar period, Nakano Shigeharu faced incarceration on and off in the early 1930s under the repressive Peace Preservation Law, eventually (1934) recanting his Communist Party ties in what is known as *tenkō*, “conversion” or “apostasy.”<sup>63</sup> Following Japan’s defeat in 1945, Nakano once again became active in Communist Party politics, which was once again legalized, and debates over the nature of the emperor system. *Goshaku no Sake* was his first literary work in the postwar, and the first work of fiction to depict the emperor in his *present form*.<sup>64</sup> Nakano’s short non-

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<sup>62</sup> This is also stressed by Brett de Bary in her introduction to her translation of *Goshaku no Sake* and two other works: “By proposing an alternative approach of ‘sympathy of the Emperor as a human being,’ the narrator offers a radical critique of the centuries-old tradition of Emperor worship. He demands that the new, democratic consciousness, if it is to be thorough-going, must acknowledge that the Emperor, too, is an individual.” de Bary, Brett. “Introduction.” *Three Works By Nakano Shigeharu*. Cornell East Asia Papers: Ithaca, NY, 1979, pg. 15-16.

<sup>63</sup> Nakano himself became a central figure for understanding the of phenomenon of *tenkō*, and his novel *Mura no ie* (“The House in the Village”) is considered representative of *tenkō* literature. Yoshimoto Takaaki analyzes that work in his *Tenkōron* (“On Tenkō”).

<sup>64</sup> Watanabe, Naomi. *Fukei Bungakuron Jōsetsu*. Hihyō Kūkan Sōsho, 17. Tōkyō: Ōta Shuppan, 1999, pg. 149. Watanabe says, “With the emphasis on a protagonist who attempted to separate the ‘emperor’ from the ‘emperor system,’ for the first time in

fiction essays on the postwar emperor, some of which will be discussed ahead, featured acerbic criticism toward the emperor system, and the “sympathy” that *Goshaku no Sake*’s narrator feels toward the individual emperor was perceived by many as conciliatory or even approving.<sup>65</sup> Literary critic Etō Jun, for example, understood the principal’s sympathy towards the emperor as representative of the ambivalent tendencies within Nakano himself, and further evidence of his internalization of the loyalty to the emperor which came with his *tenkō*. He interpreted the narrator’s sympathy as representing the *honne* (or, the true and unspoken feelings) of Nakano himself.<sup>66</sup> Yet, to read *Goshaku no Sake* as either a channeled voice of Nakano himself or as evidence that Nakano has tempered his scathing and lucid critique is to project the narrative back onto the author rather than to deal with the *representation* of the emperor and emperor system that the text confronts. Hence, we should be wary, as literary critic Watanabe Naomi points out, of the “reactionary tendency to turn Nakano Shigeharu the novelist into

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modern Japan’s literary climate, Nakano vividly detailed the image of the *present* Emperor.”

<sup>65</sup> This stems in large part from the tendency to conflate the voice of the narrator with that of Nakano himself, which brings with it its own host of problems. Scholar Reiko Abe Auestad’s sensitive reading of *Goshaku no Sake* argues against this very trend to equate author and narrator, and I concur. Abe Auestad, Reiko. “Nakano Shigeharu’s ‘Goshaku no Sake.’” *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pg. 79-107.

<sup>66</sup> Eto Jun. *Shōwa no Bunjin*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 1989, pg. 82.

something safe.”<sup>67</sup> Rather, I’ll ask, what is at the root of the narrator’s sympathy and how that can be connected to a new sense of national morality?

The narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* writes his letter as he drinks his last ounces of sake. As a principal, though, with a sense of responsibility, he shies away from joining others at the bar, and instead seems to relish in the agony of drinking alone at home. His first mention of the emperor system, importantly, is rather indirect, but shows how he perceives it as intimately bound to education and morality; his students, who had been turned into idiots during the war, began to think for themselves when engaging in the debate on the emperor system. They demanded the ability to independently form school councils in exercise of their democratic rights, but the teachers, demanding oversight, prevailed in blocking them from doing so. To the narrator, the teachers had failed to give the students “just the right push” they needed to sustain such activism. The teachers did not encourage and allow them to grow, and the student activism that had begun in the early postwar was already stagnating.<sup>68</sup> The narrator, however, lays the most blame at the feet of the Communist Party, which had failed to push the students.

The narrator continues throughout the text to fault the Communist Party for failing to realize the potential for democratic reform in the postwar, not from the perspective of an insider per se, but as an educator who has invested hope in the

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<sup>67</sup> Watanabe, Naomi. *Fukei Bungakuron Jōsetsu*. Hihyō Kūkan Sōsho, 17. Tōkyō: Ōta Shuppan, 1999. pg. 142.

<sup>68</sup> GNS, pg. 410; de Bary, pg. 92-4.

Party to fill the moral vacuum left in the wake of Japan's defeat, and to be the beacon of ethical guidance that could replace the strict educational codes in place since Meiji, typified by the Imperial Rescript on Education. Yet, the narrator's critique of the Party is never unqualified: he credits the Communist Party for inciting the emperor system debates, which, along with the newly formed Communist Youth League, in turn kindled the middle-school students' passion and cleverness ("tick, tick... as if the hands on the face of the watch had started moving again"<sup>69</sup>).

In the narrator's meandering letter, full of reflections on people's attitudes in the new postwar climate, the defining event is significant for its pure lack of climax. The emperor and empress appeared in public for a ceremony meant to celebrate the new constitution. The event, however, bore no sign of its purpose and shocked the narrator not only for its mechanical execution but the vacuous response from those gathered.

When the emperor arrived, not everyone took off their hats, but I took mine off. The emperor stepped up on the platform and doffed his own hat. A cheer went up. Some mechanical pigeons flew into the air. The emperor left. My watch, which read 3:35 when he appeared, read 3:36 when he left. The whole process had taken exactly one minute. But when the ceremony was over, I was stunned by what began to happen... It was as if nothing had changed.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> GNS, pg. 410; de Bary, pg. 91.

<sup>70</sup> de Bary, pg. 94; GNS, pg. 411.

The ceremony was marked by brevity and contrivance.<sup>71</sup> Some people took off their hats, while others did not, signaling the postwar instability over how one greets the emperor—while his legal status was stipulated by the constitution, the ramifications were yet undecided. The mechanical pigeons, a subtle inclusion by Nakano, paralleled both the mechanical movements of the emperor and the artificiality of his role, which had been scripted and choreographed by others.

The way that the ceremony ended reminds the narrator of early morning mobilizations that would take place during the war. They would gather, perform their drills, and disperse as if it had never happened. Likewise, the Emperor arrived, was seen, and once again, the crowd dispersed. Yet, he does not merely connect wartime mobilizations with its news postwar ideological form, and the capacity to compartmentalize and integrate national events into daily life. Rather, he perceives a complete severing of form and content: the celebration to usher in the constitution had no relation to the constitution itself. He heard no one mention even the first

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<sup>71</sup> Takashi Fujitani describes Hirohito's funeral procession in a remarkably similar fashion to this: "Then, at last, we all could see the head of the motorcade coming down the avenue. Many people took down their umbrellas. Some bowed their heads or put their hands together, while others, camera in hand, took pictures. The procession passed quickly, so quickly, in fact, that we could barely catch a glimpse of each car that went by... Then, suddenly, it was over. No sooner had the procession appeared, than it was gone... The people around me and across the avenue appeared dumbfounded for a moment, but they soon understood that there would be no more cars coming." Fujitani realizes that the procession wasn't designed for the spectators, but for the millions watching the live appearance on television. The spectators served the purpose of a "live studio audience" in the made-for-television event. Fujitani, Takashi. "Electronic Pageantry and Japan's 'Symbolic Emperor.'" *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 51. Nov. 1992, pg. 824-850.

syllable, *ken*, of *kenpō* (constitution), and doubted whether even the Emperor and Empress had even uttered the word.

The narrator is deeply invested in the possibilities for democratic reform—even revolution—that the constitution supposedly signifies, and that it could teach. He is willing to “stuff it with meaning until it bursts,” but quickly realizes after observing the artifice of the ceremony and the indifference of the crowd that he was in the vast minority.

As readers, we can wonder what the narrator, who appears so earnest, could have expected. He would have been well-aware of the contradiction and hypocrisies that plagued the postwar occupation and retention of the emperor, and despite that, he maintains faith in the new constitution and people until this highly subjective moment when he bore witness to the apathy of both the emperor and people. Deeply conscious of the irony that the emperor, who two years earlier played the role of military leader, now had the task of promoting a democratic and pacifist constitution, how could the narrator have been surprised in the least? Is not the nature of ceremony itself always artifice? I believe that this is precisely the point: the contrivance of the ceremony, the promotion of the constitution by the emperor, and even the flimsy attempts by SCAP to give the false impression that the constitution was authored by Japanese people and not SCAP authorities, created the perfect grounds for critique. With all of the elements for critique—and thus education—aligned, the failure to capture them productively is the lost opportunity that the

narrator feels so acutely. Moreover, for him, this is not merely a rational critique of the current political order, but fundamentally a question of affect, of *feeling* (*kankaku*).

He imagines two contrasting visions following the dispersed ceremony, that of the people returning to their homes, and that of the Emperor and Empress returning to their palace. Both sides breathe a sigh of relief, but there is a sharp difference in feeling between the relief one feels upon returning home from the hustle and bustle of the daily grind and its dangers and diseases, and the relief one feels when escaping into the secluded world that necessarily is inaccessible to the rest of the people, “where human life stirs not a single echo.”<sup>72</sup> The narrator wants the Community Party to tap into this affective difference—“a feeling on one’s skin”—and to teach the people to feel it. In other words, one cannot accept that the difference separating the emperor and the people has been collapsed by the constitution when at such a basic level, as basic as the sigh of relief upon returning home, a great rift remains and reinforces the hierarchical order of pre-defeat Japan.

The constitution, for the narrator, could be the opportunity to expose this rift, not only because of its content, but also for the circumstances surrounding it, especially the deceptive tactics of its inception and promulgation. This deception was typified by the collusion between the Japanese government and SCAP occupying

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<sup>72</sup> De Bary, 97; GNS, 412.

forces to give the illusion of Japanese agency in forming the postwar order. The narrator bemoans,

So many aspects of our situation are exemplified in the Constitution; it could be used to teach us so many things. The morning it went to the Diet, or perhaps the day before, SCAP announced in the newspapers that the preliminary draft had been written by a Japanese. This is our Constitution, supposedly being created by Japanese, and yet the government has had to beg the foreigners to announce that a preliminary draft was written by a Japanese! Can our people accept the abject position of their government in silence? And why couldn't the Communist Party have been the first to perceive this and to call out to the people?<sup>73</sup>

It is perfectly fitting with the critique of the narrator, and complete validation of his argument, that the Occupation censors—the Civil Censorship Detachment—deleted the all but the first and last sentences of this passage in the original publication of *Goshaku no Sake*.<sup>74</sup> Mention of SCAP here in *Goshaku no Sake* was a bold inclusion by Nakano because the censorship policies of the Occupation forces prohibited both reference to the fact that SCAP contributed to writing the constitution *and* criticism

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<sup>73</sup> De Bary, 97; GNS, 412.

<sup>74</sup> Etō Jun points this out by referring to the work of Isoda Kōichi. Eto Jun. *Shōwa no Bunjin*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 1989, pg. 81-2.

of SCAP for having any role in the creation of the constitution.<sup>75</sup> The text suggests that the narrator himself, who cannot even drink at a bar in fear of being perceived as having committed impropriety, fears censorship if not censure.<sup>76</sup> He worries at the beginning of the letter that he might be purged from his role as educator. At the same time, censorship itself is not made an explicit issue in the text, which ironically would have been censored as mentioning that SCAP could participate in censorship after having liberated Japanese writers from the strict policies of imperial Japan was grounds for censorship.

The narrator continues to act in his neutral arbitrating role as principal, to reveal his thoughts in the safe space of a letter to sympathetic friend, and is so intent on finding fault with the inability of the Communist Party to step into its role of moral leader that it makes one wonder if the narrator wants to deflect his own inability to

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<sup>75</sup> The *Press Code for Japan*, written in September of 1945, stipulated principles of censorship for the occupation. Etō Jun writes about this extensively in his, "Civil Censorship in Occupied Japan." The third category singled out for censorship, below "Criticism of SCAP" and "Criticism of Military Tribunal" is "Criticism of SCAP Writing the Constitution: Any reference to the part played by SCAP in writing the new Japanese Constitution or any criticism of the part played by SCAP in the formation of the Constitution." Etō Jun. "The Civil Censorship in Occupied Japan," *Hikaku Bungaku Zasshi*, 1, 1982, pg. 1-21.

<sup>76</sup> A point that Abe Auestad convincingly makes in her article: "The fear of censorship is an important paratext that creates tensions in the work. It is written into the way the text omits spelling out some of the premises on which the narrator's criticisms are predicated as well as into the title, 'Goshaku no Sake,' which allows the narrator to make critical statements without having to bear responsibility. Is the narrator's tale just meaningless, 'five cups worth of drunken gibberish' as he himself claims? Only by reading history into what is left out of the text can we find a fair answer to this question. Abe Auestad, Reiko. "Nakano Shigeharu's 'Goshaku no Sake.'" *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pg. 85.

do so. On the other hand, he too acts boldly in his role of educator, has every intention of “properly dealing with the problems” at hand, and pushes the students to grasp how an *affective* mode of understanding is essential for attacking the root of the problem: the failure to realize the democratic potential of the present. Thus, within the narrator we can witness tensions pulling him in two directions: he is fearful of reprisal and annoyed by misunderstandings of his students, who are not afraid to ridicule him, while at the same time he embodies the type of perceptive, principled, and moral guidance that he so repeatedly demands of the Communist Party.

The greatest and most consistent insight of the narrator is his delicate separation of what is continuous and what is discontinuous from pre-defeat to post-defeat. This insight covers the Constitution, the emperor, the emperor system, and the symbolic infrastructure that reproduces them; it also includes the recognition of what is continuous and discontinuous among attitudes toward these. The Constitution was to be the most momentous codification of newness and discontinuity from the past, and yet, remnants from pre-defeat completely obstructed a change in perception. For example, the narrator is baffled that the emperor “had the constitution promulgated” by the Privy Council. “What does that mean?” he asks, curious how the emperor, whose authority is stripped by that very constitution, would even pretend to have such power as to authorize a constitution written by the occupying powers. Upon viewing an image in the newspaper of the

ratification of the Constitution, the narrator expresses shock that the event was staged in front of a gold screen, the same gold screen used during the war:

Was that a new gold screen that was standing behind them while they conferred? Or had they taken the old one which was damaged in the bombing and restored it?... If they really wanted to restore the screen, couldn't that have at least transformed it into something entirely new, something to go along with the emperor's change to civilian clothes? Utterly shameless gold screen.<sup>77</sup>

This seemingly inconsequential part of the backdrop is indicative of much larger trend that is the central target of the narrator's critique: the meticulous care involved in giving the illusion of continuity of the emperor system despite its fundamental restructuring, no less a restructuring dictated by the occupying forces, and in particular, the United States. It was a mixed message: Japan's democracy is new, but it is perfectly compatible with the past; it is rupture, but rupture sanctioned by the emperor's revision of the Meiji Constitution.

The priority of the postwar government was to repair all elements related to the *image* of the postwar emperor system. Despite the ostensible democratization of Japan and the restructured role of the emperor and supposed strict separation of state Shinto from governmental affairs, the government's priority was to maintain absolute continuity with the *optics* of wartime Japan in everything but the emperor's

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<sup>77</sup> De Bary, 98; GNS, 412.

business suit. This is why the gold screen is so offensive to the narrator, so shameless. It represented a symbolic disavowal of discontinuity itself.<sup>78</sup> It represented hostility to the new democratic order, and discord with the emperor's wardrobe change. This discord of form and content is the moral issue that needs to be addressed, and the narrator directs his frustration at the Communist Party and their publication, *Akahata*, for not spelling it out. He says that if establishing national morality (*minzoku dōtoku*) is a main objective for the Party, isn't it sabotaging itself?

Nakano Shigeharu himself singles out the emperor as a prime impediment to moral awareness in the postwar. In his short piece entitled "Morality and the Emperor"<sup>79</sup> from February 23<sup>rd</sup> 1946, published in *Akahata*, he bluntly characterizes the emperor himself as counterfeit. I will quote the short text in its entirety:

People demand morality. Even if what they see is painful, they demand one thread of morality that will pierce through every aspect of their lives. They hate when democracy is faked by merely repainting the sign because such fakeness leads to moral decay in their lives. If "might is right and justice its servant" and if a heron<sup>80</sup> tries to pass as a crow, the spiritual basis for the people's sincere effort will lose its support. Imposters deploy every method

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<sup>78</sup> Of course, this is also what made the ridiculous effort to maintain the *kokutai* (*kokutai goji*) so shameless as well—it was nothing more than an attempt to find continuity in its sheer absence.

<sup>79</sup> NSZ, Vol. 12, pg. 42.

<sup>80</sup> *Sagi* (鷺), "heron," puns on *sagi* (詐欺), meaning "fraud." For Nakano in this context, a crow would be something trying to conceal its fraudulent nature.

and excuse so that the voices of the people who demand morality will have to submit to their sheer power.

Yet, among all imposters, no one has displayed as much fakeness as the emperor. Yesterday a god, today a human—no one has exhibited such willingness to play the crow. During the rescript on New Year's Day, he didn't so much as burp in the direction of those who died in war; immediately after impressing his stamp (*hanko*) to require mandatory rice deliveries to the government as well as financial capital relief, he used those same hands to change into a sports jacket and headed out in his royal train to visit the war-ravaged sites. There is no single other person who is as counterfeit. The emperor is the Counterfeiter King. And it's *this* crow that is the source of corruption of the people's morality.

Nakano here responds to what we might call Hirohito's official wardrobe change, the "Declaration of Humanity," in which he stated that "the ties between Us and Our people... are not predicated on the false conception that the Emperor is divine" on January 1, 1946. *Goshaku no Sake*, focused on the Constitution's promulgation during November of the same year, seems to parallel the logic of "Morality and the Emperor" despite its change in voice and style. To Nakano, "repainting the sign"—i.e. changing the appearance of the emperor—is the source of moral decay; to the narrator, restoring the gold screen does the same moral disservice by obstructing awareness of the profound change that is supposed to be taking place. To Nakano,

the hand used to sign into law oppressive levies that burdened the citizenry during war was the same hand used to button-up the postwar emperor's sports jacket that he wore to console those same victims of war; to the narrator, the gold screen that was present in the Diet when Japan declared war was the same gold screen that served as backdrop for the ratification of the postwar pacifist Constitution. The emperor's hand and the gold screen were the same objects as before, but what they signified had flipped; the only marker of change was Hirohito's wardrobe. The continuity of the objects masked the radical rupture with the past.

Nakano deals with the question of "morality" here—just as the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*—to sharply direct his focus to a role of the wartime emperor that was smuggled into the postwar in order to assert continuity in the face of its absence. Maruyama Masao, in his influential 1946 essay "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism," describes how morality during the war was inseparable from the *kokutai*, which included all "internal values of truth, morality, and beauty" as well as scholarship. All of these were to be performed in the loyal service to the nation and emperor, in whom absolute values are embodied because he is "the eternal culmination of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful throughout all ages and in all places."<sup>81</sup> Since morality was embodied in the person of the emperor himself, morality was connected to *proximity* to him and the ability to carry out the affairs of

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<sup>81</sup> Maruyama Masao. "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism." *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics*. Ivan Morris, trans. London: Oxford University Press, 1963, pg. 1-24.

the nation on his behalf, a vertical structure with the emperor at the apex, which for Maruyama meant that military generals were able to carry out grave atrocities because the morality of service to the nation superseded all else. Yet, the vertical chain reached even the bottom of the society; each group within society was ordered in relation to its proximity to the emperor; the lowest group had to pay deference to the group one order of magnitude closer to the emperor, and on and on. Whatever the merits of Maruyama's specific argument, it is enough to demonstrate the interconnectedness between nation, emperor, and morality in the ideology of wartime Japan. In postwar Japan, and especially after the emperor's "Declaration of Humanity" and the promulgation of the Constitution, the premises for this interconnectedness were exploded, and they should no longer have cohered. Yet, they persisted. In the postwar, nation, emperor, and morality were reconstituted and reconnected as if there were continuity between pre- and post-defeat Japan. When Nakano argues, then, of the postwar emperor embodying the antithesis of morality, and the cause of moral decay, he does not mean to pose an alternative, positive formulation for morality, as was clearly the explicit goal of Maruyama as well as the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*. Rather, he is deconstructing morality as it was reconstituted in the early postwar, in the mirror of its wartime model.

Thus, for Nakano, the "Declaration of Humanity" is the perfect ground for deconstructing morality. An emperor who was "moral" would not ignore those who died in war (he "didn't so much as burp in the direction of those who died in war")

and defile their graves by insisting that the reason they went to war—the divine emperor—was never valid.<sup>82</sup> Likewise a “moral” emperor would not disavow the brutal war for which he himself was supreme commander and turnaround overnight to proclaim that he was the moral embodiment of Japan’s democratic order, which, by the way, always existed, if we are to believe the intent of quoting the entire Charter Oath. Needless to say, for Nakano, to treat the postwar symbol emperor as an individual human is to relinquish him of the burden of acting as arbiter of morality.

Fake, imposter, counterfeit, source of morality’s corruption—these are not words reserved for an emperor that Nakano treats sympathetically; “Morality and the Emperor” is bubbling with antipathy. It is also evidence of the danger of equating the voice of the narrator, who is sympathetic toward the emperor, with that of Nakano himself, and why we must reject, following Watanabe, any attempt to turn him into something “safe.”<sup>83</sup> This does not mean, however, that the narrator, who is sympathetic to the emperor, is safe either—quite the contrary. Nakano’s representation of the type of observational analysis performed by the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* equally unveils the counterfeit status of both the postwar emperor and emperor system, and offers profound insight into how they were both

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<sup>82</sup> Mishima Yukio completely agrees on this point, although he does so from a completely different perspective. See especially my discussion of *Eirei no Koe*.

<sup>83</sup> In fact, toward the end of *Goshaku no Sake*, the narrator’s language for the emperor system mirrors the language Nakano had used for the emperor here, demanding the emperor’s liberation from the moral degradation of the emperor system. GNS, 418.

*represented* (by the government) and *perceived* (by the public), giving us one example of how someone might have seen through the artifice. The narrator, a principal, speaks from a perspective that Nakano himself does not inhabit, but that many others in the postwar did, a fact that speaks both to Nakano's sensitivity as a writer and may have made the text resonant with its readers.

Moreover, the representation of the "Declaration of Humanity" in both pieces gives us a clear image of two possible, but very different, readings. In "The Emperor and Morality," the individual emperor had agency in crafting his new image: "Yesterday a god, today a human—no one has exhibited such willingness to play the crow [and to conceal that he is a *sagi*, a heron/fraud]." Later in *Goshaku no Sake*, the narrator cites the "Declaration of Humanity" as most forceful demonstration that the emperor is completely imprisoned and subordinate to the totalitarianism of the emperor system, with no agency: "Has there ever been, anywhere, an individual so violated (*jūrin sareta*) as to be forced to say, 'I am not a god' (*ore ha kami de nai*)?"<sup>84</sup> For Nakano, the emperor is a fraud, and for the narrator, he is a captive and pawn. Both positions are deeply rooted in truth: the emperor was complete captive, especially to Douglas MacArthur and SCAP as well as the Imperial Household Agency, and at the same time, had an active role in *performing* and *narrating* his role. At

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<sup>84</sup> GNS, 414; De Bary, 104. Note that Nakano makes use of the colloquial pronoun *ore* for the emperor's pronouncement that he is not a god. Contrast this with Mishima, who in *Eirei no Koe* rephrases it as "*chin ha ningen de aru.*" See Chapter 6 below.

least, his role as performer was a condition of his imprisonment, and he proved to be a highly obedient captive.

### 3.4 The responsibility of an educator

In his role as educator, the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* seems most concerned with instilling conscience among his students, who, in their newfound vigor in questioning authority have not only embraced the Communist Party (presumably they are members of the Communist Youth League), but use it and *Akahata* to attack their principal, the narrator. This is why the inability of *Akahata* to convey to these students the nature of the *postwar* emperor system—especially as something that they must also perceive at an affective level—is so frustrating to him. Without being able to convey this to students, they behave as mere partisan hacks more likely to form their critique based on affiliation rather than analysis.<sup>85</sup> At an impasse, the narrator does not know how to further push his students, even while knowing what undergirds their misunderstanding:

At the root of their problems, I would like to suggest, is their conception of the emperor and the emperor system. Their inability to distinguish between the individual and the institution. It is because of this distinction that the question of abolishing the emperor system is inseparable from the task of

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<sup>85</sup> It was the same dogmatism that drove the Communist Party to purge Nakano himself from their ranks later on.

establishing a sense of national conscience. To put it another way, what we have to think about is the liberation of the emperor as a human being.<sup>86</sup>

This quote, the central thesis of the narrator's long letter, succinctly encompasses the questions he grapples with throughout, the questions of continuity and discontinuity, morality, the Communist Party's postwar role, and the centrality of the emperor and emperor system. The narrator is frustrated to hear his students speak of the emperor in terms of the value of his land and capital. It demonstrated that they, parroting the reinstated Communist Party of the postwar, treated the postwar emperor system no differently than when the term was coined in the Comintern Theses of 1932, in which the emperor was dubbed Japan's greatest landlord<sup>87</sup>; they treated it anachronistically. And despite yet another narrative that originated in the Meiji Era that clearly delineated separation of the body of the emperor with the body politic as symbolized by the emperor—the narrative of the emperor's two bodies—this analytical framework was lost on them as well.

Polling done in 1946 supports the narrator's observation that many were unable to distinguish between the emperor and the emperor system. Respondents overwhelmingly supported the emperor system, but used "emperor" and "emperor

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<sup>86</sup> De Bary, pg. 100; GNS, pg. 412.

<sup>87</sup> See Beckman, George and Genji Okubo. "Theses on the Situation in Japan and the Tasks of the Communist Party, May 1932." *The Japanese Communist Party 1922-1945*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969, pg. 336; Kominterun. "Nihon ni okeru jōsei to nihon kyōsantō no ninmu ni kansuru teeze." *Gendai no esupuri: tennōsei*. Katsube Mitake, ed. Tokyo: Sanshūsha, 1970, pg. 263-271.

system” nearly synonymously.<sup>88</sup> Yet, these same supporters believed that the military leaders should face responsibility and that the emperor should stay outside of politics, suggesting that they actually did not support the pre-defeat emperor system; in other words, they supported an “emperor system” but not the wartime one. SCAP, very aware of the confusion, invented the postwar emperor system by capitalizing on the inability of others to make the distinction<sup>89</sup>; by retaining the emperor and destroying the *wartime emperor system*, SCAP could reconstitute the *postwar emperor system* any way it pleased and still ensure popular support, which it did in the form of the symbolic emperor system.

More shocking is that while popular sentiment supported the postwar version of the emperor system as invented by SCAP (and approved by their Diet), the Communist Party continued to reject the emperor system based on its prewar and wartime form, completely ignoring that it had already been completely destroyed.

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<sup>88</sup> Takeda Kiyoko. *The Dual Image of the Japanese Emperor*. New York: New York University Press, 1988, pg. 122-3.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, pg. 123. Takeda says: “SCAP authorities, however, did seem to make a distinction [between the emperor and the emperor system]; in their memorandum and directives, they seemed intent on destroying the military, political, and economic make-up of Japan’s emperor system, and not necessarily doing away with the emperor himself. In this regard, SCAP authorities were especially concerned to prohibit government protection of State Shinto, which they saw as nurturing the masses to support policies of ultra-nationalism. During the first four months of the Occupation successive democratic reforms were undertaken which began to transform the emperor into a symbol, divorced from the organizational basis of the pre-war ‘emperor system.’” I would take this further: SCAP did not merely want to preserve the emperor, they wanted to preserve the body of *Hirohito himself*. They could have easily made Hirohito personally responsible for the war and put a regent in his place until his son Akihiko was old enough to take up the throne, but they did not; *only Hirohito* would do.

Therefore, in *Goshaku no Sake*, the Communist Party and the narrator's students want to abolish something that no longer exists; this anachronism is what the narrator sees as the biggest hindrance to conceiving of the postwar order and the emperor's role in it. Furthermore, in failing to acknowledge the nature of the invented and constructed postwar emperor system, the Party's critique was vacuous, misleading, and ultimately, impotent. That is why the narrator wants the Party to rethink its strategy if wants to establish national morality. As he says, "abolishing the emperor system is inseparable from the task of establishing a sense of national conscience," but he doesn't mean the emperor system of pre-defeat. The narrator wants to abolish the postwar emperor system, a system fraught with contradiction because it combines a supposed "human" emperor and a "symbolic" one in which hierarchical and anti-democratic structures are reconstituted. Therefore, to "liberate the emperor as a human being" means to take the "Declaration of Humanity" seriously and to refuse to give him a symbolic role in which he, like his wartime form, is the arbiter and embodiment of truth, morality, and beauty. In essence, the Communist Party's focus on the wartime emperor system—again, opposing something that no longer exists—contributes to the reproduction of the postwar emperor system because, in its misplaced opposition and negation, it is unable to articulate substantive resistance. It reproduces the "system" by insisting that it still exists, preventing radical treatment of the emperor *as* human. This is what the narrator means when he calls for the liberation of the emperor as a human being from the emperor system; it means exposing that SCAP destroyed it once and for all.

This interpretation is critical for understanding the sympathy that the narrator feels for the emperor. He would not feel sympathy for the emperor that mourns the suffering of his subjects—such sympathy would serve to reinforce the emperor as tied to the emperor system, in any form. Nor would his be sympathy for an emperor that symbolizes national unity—that too would bind the emperor to the emperor system. Rather, the narrator is sympathetic to the human emperor that, were he freed, would have no symbolic or moral function. He's sympathetic to a human whose every move is choreographed and line scripted because he sees that as complete imprisonment. In a democratic Japan, the emperor and his family, who supposedly are models for that democracy, are the only ones not liberated. Yet, if that were the case—if any one individual were exempted from democratic freedom—it would cease to be democracy. This, I believe, is why the narrator wants the Communist Party to shed its anachronistic view of the emperor system, and instead demand that the emperor be released from bondage, as it might do for any other oppressed person. *This* is the radical recognition of the emperor as a human being: taking democracy to its logical conclusion in addressing the emperor system.

### **3.5 Representing the representation: Media in *Goshaku no Sake***

The narrator documents a critical juncture in the media's representation of the emperor as human. Mass media had presented images of the Showa Emperor as military leader on his white horse, a legacy of the first mass-media emperor, Meiji, whose dual images of Shinto priest on one hand and generalissimo on the other were

carefully crafted to project the image of an emperor that was both god and man, ancient and modern. Yet, the postwar portrayal of the Showa emperor was intended to collapse the distance between the emperor and his subjects, to be able to see him, with his meek stature and compassionate expression, as an “everyman,” as just another citizen. Other than the narrator’s first encounter with the emperor documented in his letter—the brief, impersonal, and anti-climactic ceremony for the constitution—his “observations” of the emperor, and the inferences he draws from them, are completely mediated by fragmented images, newsreels, essays, and the people around him, a collage. In fact, *Goshaku no Sake* is as much a response to the role of media, and its consumption by the masses, in the production of the postwar emperor system as it is a critique of the government and SCAP. It is no less than a discursive analysis that decenters the object of critique (the emperor), and instead focuses on how the object is presented and represented, and further, how that representation is represented.<sup>90</sup> This is why it is so critical to the narrator that the

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<sup>90</sup> Naoki Sakai has discussed the emergence of the discursive formation that created an international circuit of academic, governmental, and media forces all operating to justify the new narrative of the postwar emperor system: “From the late 1940s onward there gradually emerged a certain bilateral complex of academic and journalistic activities and collective fantasies that worked powerfully to justify and legitimate the postwar emperor system along with U.S. policies toward Japan and East Asia. This bilateral international complex can be summarized as pertaining to a discursive formation, and I would like to call it the *discourse of the postwar emperor system*. This discourse should encompass not merely governmental publications and policies about the emperor and his family, academic justification and the study of the emperor system, information generated by journalism, and images and fantastic scenarios produced by the cinema, radio and television broadcasting, and mass print cultures, but also the practices of direct and indirect censorship in many different contexts and levels of various media.” Sakai, Naoki. “‘You Asians’: On the Historical

Communist Party, as expressed through its publication, *Akahata*, give a representation that reflects the mechanism at work in the construction of the postwar emperor. They have missed the clues in the media, such as the gold screen, which the narrator could have only known about through a printed picture.

While the postwar afforded unprecedented opportunity for mass media to represent of the emperor's humanity, it had already been playing a crucial role in portraying the emperor since the Meiji Period. The narrator vividly recalls a watercolor depiction of a younger Showa Emperor's visit to England on a postcard, carefully describing the scene of the young emperor, a diminutive figure in uniform was surrounded by commanding Brits in classy suits. Looking at the image, he imagines the type of infantilizing comments that the British might have made toward the emperor, who appeared like a lost child among them. Even though it was a sketch without dialogue, it was this *representation* of the emperor that was so clearly conveyed; the narrator, ashamed at how meek the emperor seemed next to the others,<sup>91</sup> covered the postcard with his hands out of a "sense of racial solidarity" (*jinruiteki dōhō kankaku*). There is no doubt that the form of narrator's sympathy

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Role of the West and Asia Binary." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 99 (4). Fall 2000, pg. 803. (my italics). I am arguing that through *Goshaku no Sake*, Nakano critiques both the production of this discourse and ways in which it is consumed and validated. To the narrator, *Akahata* reproduces the discourse by constantly misrecognizing the problem, but recognizes that it is only one factor in the larger discursive complex.

<sup>91</sup> The postcard that the narrator describes here seems to parallel the exact type of diminutive and infantilized emperor represented in the side-by-side photograph of Hirohito and Douglas MacArthur, and surely evoked similar responses of shame and pity. It makes me wonder if Nakano had this very photograph in mind, and intentionally disguised it as the scene in the postcard in order to avoid censorship.

here—which seemingly could be easily absorbed by the family-state ideology—is troubling, but even his refusal to deny this affective response paints a much more nuanced picture.

In the next medium of representation, a small newspaper article, a reporter had asked the public to give thoughts on the Crown Prince (Hirohito) becoming regent after the emperor (Taishō Emperor Yoshihito) became ill and unfit to rule. The narrator couldn't quite understand why a reporter would ask the public to respond to such a matter.

To tell you the truth, this in itself was something quite new to me. Wasn't it just a matter of course that the Crown Prince became Regent when the emperor fell ill? What was the purpose of reporting people's reactions to this? I was given to understand that in Tokyo, unlike the countryside, this is an event.<sup>92</sup>

What seems like mere rambling thoughts of the narrator, and of little relevance to the analysis of the emperor system, is actually quite important; it points to the growth of the *representation* of emperor and the inclusion of the public in forming this representation. The emperor system could not be, and never was, a unilateral application of violence or coercion upon the people, although violence was always at its disposal; rather, it demanded that people respond and shape it reciprocally. Only through this willing and non-coerced participation (whether emotional investment in

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<sup>92</sup> De Bary, 102; GNS, 414.

the form of sympathy or the resolution to die in battle for the emperor<sup>93</sup>) could it truly be legitimated. In the example above, the state did not initiate the call to respond to the emperor's illness and Crown Prince's assumption of the regency. A newspaper reporter sought responses from the public, thus serving a critical function in the production of the emperor system: he called on them to react, asking them to respond emotionally to the status of the emperor.

This example also presages the proliferation of media representation that would come about with the postwar, and uncannily parallels the production of nationalism and reconstitution of emperor system ideology in the nation's participation in the representation of Hirohito's decline and death nearly seventy years after he had assumed regency in 1921.<sup>94</sup> In the article itself, a sailor expressed pity for the empress (*kōgōsama ga o ki no doku desu*), which the narrator understands years later to mean that he felt pity for an individual caught up in the machinery of a political system in which "family" was completely erased. There is no household (*katei*) nor is there family (*kazoku*) for the empress. Nothing more than a pure expression of politics, the individual members of the imperial family have

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<sup>93</sup> See Tanabe Hajime. "Kokka no dōgisei (The ethicality of the state)." *Tanabe Hajime Zenshu*, 8. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1963, 201-220. Such texts attest to the fact that resolution to die for the emperor was not the norm, but had to be justified philosophically. It is also the case that a vast majority of *kamikaze* pilots were coerced into their act.

<sup>94</sup> See especially Sakai, Naoki. "Return to the West/Return to the East: Watsuji Tetsurō's Anthropology and Discussions of Authenticity." Translation and Subjectivity: On 'Japan' and Cultural Nationalism. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pg. 72-5.

neither family nor can they express shame. It's on these grounds that the narrator feels both sympathy (*dōjō*) and pity (*ki no doku*) for them. Rather than embodying democracy in the postwar, they are expressions of totalitarianism in which the individual is negated and sacrificed. When the narrator speaks of liberating the emperor from the emperor system, it is about liberating the body of this emperor, and extricating the symbolic function that his captivity serves.

Photographs of the emperor and his family were instrumental in the postwar representation of an emperor that can evoke sympathy—a human, a father and family man, just another citizen, one of us. The narrator contrasts these representations—new access into the private lives of the emperor and his family—with those of the Meiji Emperor, who refused to be photographed, prompting some painters to portray him in the likeness of Emperor Jimmu and vice versa.<sup>95</sup> He describes photographs published in the *Yomiuri* in which the empress wore modern clothes and the young crown prince (Akihito) mischievously smiled. These types of

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<sup>95</sup> Fujitani Takashi tracks the “spectacular transformation” of the Meiji Emperor, who was completely refashioned to project the image of a strong military leader between 1872 and 1873. In 1872, he was photographed in full court-style *sokutai* clothing without facial hair and looking less than imposing in large flowing garments. By 1873, a photograph captured him in Western-style military uniform, brandishing a sword, and having grown facial hair. Yet, Edoardo Chiossone captures the most imposing, forceful, and dignified image of Meiji in a photographic portrait in 1888. This portrait, which Fujitani calls a “copy of a copy of a representation,” began as a sketch of the emperor himself, which came the model for the seated portrait of the emperor. This drawing was finally photographed, and the image became widely distributed in Japan. As Fujitani notes, “for most people in Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this simulacrum three steps removed was the emperor’s real presence.” Fujitani, 1998, pg. 174-178.

photographs aimed to collapse the distance between the people and their emperor as well as encourage affection for them. Yet, for the narrator, just like the staged ceremony for the constitution, the photographs are evidence that the emperor and his family are forced into compliance down to the pose and smile. They are told, “Look this way! Now, smile!” Rather than feeling affection, he is sympathetic to their complete captivity and suffocation.

The final medium that the narrator describes in his letter is film, in the form of newsreels. After suspecting that his students had misunderstood a newsreel of the emperor’s visit to a school in Chiba, part of his postwar imperial tour (*junkō*),<sup>96</sup> he goes to view the newsreel for himself. The emperor he witnesses is “decent” and “womanly” and has a high-pitched voice. He is uncalculating, awkward, and merely following orders. The narrator describes the earnest attempt of the emperor to communicate with the students at the school in Chiba, but he cannot perform even the simplest task, such as waiting for the answer to the questions that he’s clearly been fed (which alternated between “Did your house burn down?” and “Do you need textbooks?”) before moving on to the next student. He bops along from student to student, taking his hat off and putting it back on, a completely absurd scene (*tonchinkan na bamen*).

The narrator’s students interpreted the newsreel as reactionary, a thinly veiled attempt to instill adoration for the emperor as a god (*tennō wo kami toshite*

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<sup>96</sup> A tactic intended to draw more parallels between the Shōwa and Meiji Emperors.

*agameru hōkō e*) through manipulative editing, particularly because of its inclusion of female students who wept at the sight of the emperor and shouted “banzai.” Like in other episodes that the narrator recounts, his students were utterly incapable of understanding the emperor and emperor system at an *affective* level. Their lack of moral sensitivity (*dōtoku kankaku*) prevented them from understanding logically (*rikutsu*) that those same female students who cried before the emperor might have been their very sisters, or their future girlfriends or wives. The narrator is not suggesting that his students cry at the sight of the emperor, but that they must be sensitive to his ability to provoke tears, and to distinguish that those tears are in response to the postwar emperor, not their anachronistic understanding of the wartime emperor-god. In fact, to the narrator, the entire existence (*zensonzai*) of the emperor ought to be cried over. One ought to shed tears over the state of the postwar emperor, the mechanical human puppet depicted in the newsreel, whose awkwardness and complete inability to act natural in his new clothes—his prescribed role—drew mocking laughter from other theatergoers and scorn from his students. What he identified in his students and theatergoers as moral insensitivity, the narrator sees represented as a general trend in postwar Japan: moral impotence (*dōtoku inpotentsu*).<sup>97</sup>

The narrator seems to oscillate between accusing his students (and now the nation, although his students are the deepest source of his frustration) of

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<sup>97</sup> GNS, 418; de Bary, 109.

misunderstanding the nature of the problem on an intellectual or logical level, on one hand, and of being morally insensitive, on the other. However, intellectual awareness and moral sensitivity, or consciousness and conscientiousness, do not exist independently for the narrator; in fact, they mutually inform one another. The crucial intellectual (or analytical) problem exposed in the text is the persistent failure to identify that a) the emperor system of the postwar is a completely new construct, that b) it is independent of the wartime emperor system, but that c) its postwar form still promotes the illusion of continuity through carefully crafted narratives. The disavowal of some aspects of the wartime emperor system—the emperor’s political role, Empire, “fascism”—are minimized *only* for the purpose of insisting on the continuous and transcendent aspects of the imperial line.

An equally analytical issue is that the emperor as an individual human is distinct from the emperor system (just as the Body natural is distinct from the Body politic in the fiction of the “king’s two bodies”) and that conflation of the two is also an anachronistic interpretation that parallels pre-war and wartime ideologues that called for complete identification of emperor and state. What the invention of the postwar emperor system exposes is that the emperor as individual is independent of the emperor system because the wartime emperor system as such was completely dismantled by SCAP, and yet the individual human emperor was retained; the individual emperor and the emperor system were independent variables. In other words, when Hirohito proclaimed that the “*kokutai* had been maintained” in his

surrender speech, we should interpret it to refer to neither nationality itself nor the imperial institution. The only thing maintained was him, the individual emperor, the body of Hirohito.

Why then is it a question of moral insensitivity and impotence? The failure to sympathize with or pity the emperor as a human being that is suffocated by the system, the failure to treat him with the moral decency that considers a fellow democratic citizen as an equal (if one is to be serious about following through with a democratic revolution), and the failure to demand that he be liberated from captivity meant that the nation missed every opportunity to reach the same conclusion by virtue of their moral sensitivity: that the emperor and the emperor system are distinct. The text is an empirical study of the various forms of media—photographs, postcards, newsreels, articles—that provide every clue necessary to draw the same conclusions as the narrator, but the inability to do so demonstrates a problem of morality, and once again, a problem of education. The Communist Party failed to point this out, and thus failed to act as moral guide in the postwar. If we can include then the various forms of media (print, sound, moving image, etc.) in the systemic production of the representation of the *emperor* in the postwar without problematizing this very representation, then that media only serve to reinforce and reproduce the *emperor system* in its new postwar form, even if the media contain the elements for its deconstruction (mechanical pigeons, the gold screen, the forced smiles in the photographs, the clumsy emperor). Nakano's sensitive portrayal not

only of this collage of representations in the media but also the response from the narrator and those around him—the representation of the representation—give a profoundly rich context to how the emperor system was understood in the postwar and the rapid drive to concretize the position of the emperor within it.<sup>98</sup>

### 3.6 The Puppet and the missing Puppeteer

The genealogy of the narrator's sympathy for the emperor, in his citation of several pre-defeat images, sets up what becomes for him anger directed at the emperor for his own failure to behave in a human and moral manner toward what appears to be a former friend. He gives us two scenes of the Emperor of Manchuria, Pu Yi, a mere puppet ruler of the Japanese Empire. The first, which was part of another newsreel, featured the Shōwa Emperor, who had gone to Tokyo station with his family to greet the arrival of Pu Yi and his wife. With awkward movements and gestures, the emperor had appeared to the narrator as completely "decent," with little concern for vanity and putting on airs of dignity. The narrator could sympathize with this earnest, unassuming, even aloof scholarly attitude that the emperor

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<sup>98</sup> Consequently, published over a decade later, Nakano's *Nashi no Hana* ("Pear Flowers"), 1957-8, is also deeply concerned with how representation is mediated through magazines, photographs, newspapers at the end of the Meiji Era, marking the decline of oral narratives and storytelling. With reference to Walter Benjamin's writing on the storyteller, Miriam Silverberg provides an excellent analysis of this text, which she says, "provides a commentary on the reproduction and commodification of culture as it documents the entrance into village life of the nationwide print culture that had been both a platform and target for Nakano's work during the second half of the 1920s." Silverberg, Miriam. *Changing Song: The Marxist Manifestos of Nakano Shigeharu*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, pg. 16.

displayed. The second scene is of Pu Yi's interrogation at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, which the narrator had read about in a newspaper article. Despite being a puppet, lawyers attacked him, asking whether he believed that being forced to be a puppet at the risk of losing his life if he disobeyed was grounds for evading responsibility. To the narrator, it was a monstrous (*shūkai*) scene. The emperor and the people watched on as the lawyers sadistically attacked Pu Yi, while no one pointed out the contrast between the puppet and the puppeteer, the Emperor of Manchuria and the Emperor of Japan. It becomes clear that the narrator's "sympathy" for the postwar emperor begins to unravel, or can only be considered with significant qualification. He tries to imagine a scene in which the emperor went to visit the "unlucky former emperor," Pu Yi, to ask for forgiveness. Had the emperor done that, the narrator would have been able to forgive him, but he of course had not. While the narrator makes it clear he believes that the emperor system is to blame for the emperor's inability to act in such moral human decency—calling once again to liberate the emperor from the emperor system and its moral corruption—it is clear that the narrator, in his inability to forgive the individual emperor, holds him personally responsible, if not for war crimes themselves, then for the moral insensitivity of keeping silent while Pu Yi and others take the fall. Consistently, *Goshaku no Sake* is structured to withhold final judgment on the emperor's war culpability, but to expose the naked inconsistencies and hypocrisies in prosecuting the war without scrutinizing the role of the emperor, or even asking whether he is the most appropriate symbol for the new democratic order. The Japanese

government and the Occupation that have reconstructed the emperor system are responsible for this moral corruption, but so is the emperor himself, and the narrator lays the blame squarely at the feet of the Communist Party for not guiding the people toward a moral understanding of this:

How can we talk about the “rebirth of the nation” without confronting the task of establishing a sense of national conscience (*dōgi*), national morality (*dōtoku*)? And out of what will a sense of national conscience be born if we cannot deal concretely with the emperor and the emperor system?<sup>99</sup>

To deal with the emperor and emperor system concretely would be to expose them to scrutiny both *in the courts and in public discourse*, and not pretend that they can somehow be cleanly extricated. It would mean, as Nakano writes in his essay “Patriotism and Treason,” that the true moral path does treat the puppets as puppets, but in doing so, also treats the puppeteers as puppeteers.<sup>100</sup>

This is the closest the narrator gets to dealing with the concrete question of the emperor’s war responsibility, but utilizes parallel logic to a text that Nakano

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<sup>99</sup> de Bary, 114; GNS, 418. This issue is also brought up in multiple essays of Nakano. In “Literature and before literature” (*bungaku to bungaku izen no koto*), for example, he makes the issue of Pu Yi and Hirohito, puppet and puppeteer, a question of national morality: “When we as Japanese consider the problem of war as our own problem and as the nation’s problem, where could we find any justice and pride as Japanese if we treat the former emperor of Manchukuo as a coward and idiot while refusing to lay a finger on his originator, the emperor of Japan?” See NSZ, Vol. 12, pg. 139-143.

<sup>100</sup> NSZ, Vol. 12, pg. 141-151.

wrote entitled, “The Emperor and War Crime Responsibility.”<sup>101</sup> That is, he demonstrates that the tribunal’s scrutiny of the various actors involved in the Pacific War provides the most cogent and obvious indictment of the emperor and the emperor system. The scrutiny of Pu Yi, the puppet, pointed directly back to the puppeteer, Hirohito.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, those Japanese high officials who claimed innocence because they were forced pointed directly back to the authority that “forced” them, Hirohito. Nakano begins the essay by mentioning how the Shidehara Cabinet made the announcement that the people bore no responsibility for war crimes, which Nakano believes was made in response to widespread retaliation for the government’s implication that the people *were* responsible, notably with Prince Higashikuni’s call for “mass repentance” (*ichioku sōzange*) of all the people of Japan. The government, too, believed all generals were equally innocent. To quote from “The Emperor and War Crime Responsibility,”

They say that they fought only because they were “at the mercy of fate.” The guys arrested—senior statesmen and people of their ilk—continued to insist that they bore no responsibility, that they were forced into it, and that they were against the war in their “heart of hearts.” Yet, they insisted that they

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<sup>101</sup> NSZ, Vol. 12, pg. 34-5.

<sup>102</sup> Of course, this raises another issue, which was that the postwar emperor Hirohito was also a puppet of the Occupation. See Fujitani Takashi’s analysis of “Reischauer Memo,” and the memo itself, in which Reischauer called on the US to spare the emperor from war responsibility and maintaining him for use as a puppet far more effective than Pu Yi ever was. Fujitani, Takashi, “The Reischauer Memo: Mr. Moto, Hirohito, and Japanese-American Soldiers.” *Critical Asian Studies* 33:3. Routledge, 2001, pg. 379-402

still had not betrayed their principles, and that they did not fear being killed. It was simply that the emperor declared war, and therefore, they absolutely had to follow along because “the emperor’s words have the force of law (*shōshōhikkin* 承諾必謹),” and “the way of the loyal subject is action (*shindō jissen* 臣道実践).” The guys in the Diet said the same thing: they had no responsibility for war crimes. And their reason... they didn’t really give one.

In denying agency for their actions—and each individual convicted as a Class A war criminal had pleaded “not guilty”—they suggested that true guilt and responsibility existed at a higher level of the command, which could only mean the emperor, who had the sole authority to declare war. Deep within their hearts they opposed the war, but their loyalty demanded absolute obedience to the emperor, whose words had the “force of law.”<sup>103</sup> Nakano asks that if the government feels that the people were not guilty, and if the military, cabinet members, and senior statesmen, etc. all bore no responsibility either, where possibly could responsibility be placed? The answer could only be that the emperor bears the most “concentrated and solidified responsibility for war crimes.” Nakano concludes the essay, saying,

It’s interesting that the emperor’s senior statesmen, the emperor’s governmental Cabinet ministers, the emperor’s army generals, and Emperor’s

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<sup>103</sup> In her detailed analysis of the Trial of Nazi bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann, Hannah Arendt discusses how such unquestioned loyalty to a ruler in carrying out affairs of state constitutes the “banality of evil.” Eichmann repeatedly justified his actions by claiming, “the Führer’s words had the force of law.” Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994, pg. 148.

Diet members would all corner the emperor into being the highest ranking culprit of war crimes. They call out for maintaining the emperor system. At the same time, they corner the emperor into being the highest ranking culprit of war crimes.<sup>104</sup>

Just like the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*, Nakano takes the evidence of the tribunal not to prosecute those on trial, but to demonstrate its logical conclusion—the emperor bears the greatest responsibility for war crimes—and to show how the *conspicuous absence* of the emperor at the trial must be problematized. Yet, what distinguishes the voice of Nakano here with that of the narrator is the narrator’s fiercely moral reading of the interrogation of Pu Yi at the trial. It was not merely that the scrutiny of the puppet should have meant the scrutiny of the puppeteer, the emperor, but that the emperor who had greeted Pu Yi without pretense and as a “decent” man not long ago could observe the abuse and humiliation Pu Yi endured at the trial without having the moral human decency to reach out to him, to apologize. The emperor’s behavior is contrary to the spirit of democracy, and this is the moral, sensitive, and sympathetic understanding of the trial and of the nature of the postwar emperor and emperor system that the narrator sees as critical for reaching a postwar conscience.

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<sup>104</sup> NSZ, Vol. 12, pg. 35

### 3.7 Descent/Ascent: the language of democracy

*Goshaku no Sake* demonstrates, perhaps more than anything else, the critical importance of scrutinizing the *representation* of the *present* emperor and emperor system, and that lack of care and precision can trap this representation into targeting an emperor system that had ceased to exist after Japan's defeat. Targeting the wrong emperor system can reproduce its very undemocratic elements and make it impossible to engender the type of national morality necessary for democracy. In this sense, the text is not really *about* the emperor or the emperor system at all. Rather, it is about how the discourse that addresses the emperor is in dire need of reform, and how an opportunity is being missed to raise consciousness at the critical juncture of the early postwar, when so much was in flux.

The narrator draws attention to an article in *Akahata* that aimed to critique the language used to refer to the transition from the role of emperor to citizen, “descent to the status of subject.”<sup>105</sup> The article mocked the idea as ludicrous, as if there were a stairwell separating the “emperor” (*kimi*) from his “subjects.” Rather than make the descent, the article urges the “descendants of the gods” to return the rice and gold they took from the people and to go back to the “Plain of High Heaven.”<sup>106</sup> Despite the satirical and mocking tone of the article that appropriates

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<sup>105</sup> *Shinsekikōka* (臣籍降下), a term also used to refer to the lowered status of the imperial family upon the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution. See *Kōjien: Volume V*, definition.

<sup>106</sup> GNS, 418; de Bary, 115.

the very language of the emperor only to turn it on its head, the narrator objects to the article's failure to fundamentally question the distinction between emperor and subject, let alone the categories themselves. He asks, "Where does the status of 'subject' belong?" To the narrator, such mockery by *Akahata* ignores the actual power (*jissai no chikara*) the emperor exerts. Use of languages such as "descent to the status of subject" must be rejected because in democracy *there are no subjects*. The existence of subjects implies subjugation, and language that smuggles in these defunct semi-feudal categories into the postwar is hostile to the realization of democracy. The people ought not be subjects of the emperor, and neither should the emperor and imperial family be subjects of the people. Rather than employ language that suggests a loss or fall or descent from status, the narrator recommends the opposite: that they be "elevated (*hikiageru*) to the status of full-fledged citizen (*kokumin*)."<sup>107</sup>

The narrator's critique of *Akahata* is rooted in his concern that the Communist Party is perpetuating a hostile attitude—most importantly in the minds of his students—toward the emperor and the emperor's family that treats them as inhuman, failing to see that they themselves do not constitute the emperor system; rather, they are prisoners of it. *Akahata's* hostile attitude is the "opposite of abolishing the emperor system (*tennōsei haishi no gyakuten*)," or, in other words, it

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<sup>107</sup> This trope of "elevation" to the level of critical for the narrator's conception of the role he envisages for the postwar emperor, and as we'll see, Sakaguchi employs very similar logic, but plays with the language of "descent."

is its very reproduction. The narrator worries that, if encouraged, the students' hostile attitude will lead to their "snubbing" the emperor and feeling superior. But, he says, "the truth is that at best the students will be swept up by a democratic emperor and forever look up to him as an object of worship in their hearts."<sup>108</sup> The narrator demonstrates here how easily disdain for the emperor, by reproducing the anachronistic relations that keep him distant from citizens rather than integrating him as a human, can be flipped to its opposite, emperor worship.<sup>109</sup> Treating the emperor sympathetically, but only as a human being separate and distinct from the emperor system, is radical in that it does not recognize the premises on which the emperor system is based. These premises—feudal, antidemocratic, based on hierarchical distinctions between people—are deeply embedded in language, and even those opposed to the emperor system end up reaffirming and replicating them through language. When I say that the narrator is performing a discursive analysis, I refer specifically to this point: that the power of the emperor system is also exercised through and within language, and so, the emperor system cannot be challenged without fundamentally challenging the *representation* of the emperor and emperor system. The narrator calls specifically for a morality that *radically* opposes representation that perpetuates the emperor system by unproblematically adopting

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<sup>108</sup> GNS, 419; de Bary, 117.

<sup>109</sup> Nakano deals with this very question in his essay, "Patriotism and Treason," and the fine line that can separate the two. "We need to look at how the traitors will treat the pride of the Japanese nation [日本民族] and the morality of the Japanese nation. The problem of patriotism in Japan, to the extent that 'emperor' and 'emperor system' are avoided, can flip to the problem of treason."

its language. Instead, he demands freedom for all, including the emperor, and a conscience that cannot allow for the imprisonment of anyone. Thus, “The abolition of the emperor system is a question of practical morality. I want them to think about the fact that the more people turn their noses up to snub the emperor, the longer the emperor system will survive.”<sup>110</sup> This, in essence, is a reformulation of the meaning of “emperor system abolition” (*tennōsei haishi*). Whereas the Communist Party’s version of emperor system abolition includes attack on the emperor and his family, the narrator demonstrates how such attack does no more than reproduce the conditions for the emperor system’s perpetuity. It is the *system* that needs to be attacked, and somewhat counter-intuitively, sympathy for the emperor—because it allows understanding of how the emperor is a tool, a puppet, and a captive of the system—is a much more potent form of attack.

### **3.8 The postwar emperor system as sick mutt**

While the narrator is highly suspicious of his students turning up their noses and snubbing the emperor, this does not mean he advocates sparing the emperor as individual to critique. He is suspicious of *ridicule* of the emperor and how that can flip to affection. On the other hand, substantive critique is necessary. This is demonstrated most effectively with the May Day sign (“The kokutai is maintained! The royal belly is full! Die of hunger you people! Imperial signature”) because it

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<sup>110</sup> GNS, 420; de Bary, 121

accurately reflects the reality that the imperial family made no sacrifices as the nation suffered.

In their critique of the Placard Incident, why did the Communist Party ignore the very words of the sign when it was those words that best critiqued the emperor system? It's insulting (*bujoku*) to call a healthy dog a sick mutt, but there's nothing insulting about calling a sick mutt a sick mutt so long as it's properly handled. But why didn't the Party appeal to the people that it's the *existence of the emperor system* that is defamatory (*meiyo kison*) to the Japanese people? The person who made the sign didn't insult the emperor at all.

By way of analogy, the emperor system of the postwar, especially 1946, was a sick mutt. The point of the quote, however, is not the comparison per se, but rather to critique the Communist Party for its failure to speak directly to the problems of the emperor system; exposing the corrupt nature of the emperor system has nothing to do with the insult itself, and especially nothing to do with an insult directed at a mere individual, the emperor. The language play is precise in its reference to insult: the person who wielded the sign was originally accused of *lèse majesté* (*fukeizai*), an affront to the dignity of the king, but later, due to pressure from SCAP, that legal ruling morphed into defamation (*meiyo kison*) of the individual emperor. Yet, to the

narrator, accurate representation—calling a “sick mutt a sick mutt”<sup>111</sup>—cannot possibly be an insult (*bujoku*). The Communist Party argued that the sign-holder, Matsushima Matsutarō, had the right to hold the sign, but they were silent about the actual contents of the sign, which held the more significant meaning.<sup>112</sup> The narrator flips the language of the court on its head: Matsushima did not defame or insult the emperor, but the existence of the emperor system defamed the people. Yet, how can an *existence* be defamatory? How can the *emperor system* itself, not something uttered by the emperor or the government on the emperor’s behalf, be analogous to a statement that causes harm to the image of the entire population of Japan?

The answer lies in the ontological and discursive nature of the emperor system; with Japan’s defeat, Hirohito’s renunciation of divinity, and the new Constitution, for the emperor to be anything other than a citizen—to continue a performative function with every move scripted, etc.—was an anachronistic application of the technologies that maintained the “emperor system” prior to Japan’s defeat. Additionally, the renewed calls (especially by the Communist Party) to abolish the emperor system (*tennōsei haishi*) without recognizing its new form actively reproduced the discursive nature of the emperor system itself, and thus failed to recognize that the *emperor system as such had ceased to exist*, and that a newly reconstituted form continued to exist by virtue of its discursive reproduction. Therefore, *the emperor system as a discursive or linguistic act is defamatory*; it

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<sup>111</sup> Or calling “a spade a spade,” as it is translated by de Bary, pg. 122.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 158, footnote 15.

injures the reputation of the people, and hinders the possibility for democracy by symbolizing a feudal relation dependent on the hierarchical model that separates between ruler and subject. To call for the abolition of the emperor system alone, then, is nonsensical. The narrator seems to call for the abolition of the type of discursive representation of the emperor system that reproduces it, the type of representation that privileges the emperor over the citizen. This is far more radical than the one-sided call for the mere decapitation of the emperor system because it attempts to deal with the diffuse way that power operates through discursive formations. Only by understanding the emperor *as human*, with the full implications that he could no longer be treated as a relic from the ancient or even recent past, could the nation establish the “national morality” required of a democratic society.

The way the new emperor system was implemented exposed it as a corrupt, “sick mutt”; the government claimed that the emperor was a citizen on one hand while constantly privileging (legally and otherwise) him over the citizens on the other. Within the postwar discourse that disseminated the fantasy that the emperor was spiritually united with the people, the May Day sign accurately represented the actual relationship of the emperor to the people: completely out of touch. The emperor was not “with the people” as he had claimed in the surrender speech,<sup>113</sup> and then continued to insist upon afterward.

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<sup>113</sup> From the *Gyokuon hōsō*: “We are always with ye, Our good and loyal subjects” (*chin wa... chūryō naru nanji shinmin no sekisei ni shini shi, tsune ni **nanji shinmin to***)

The May Day sign was threatening—and originally deemed an act of *fuzai*—because it threatened the very representation of the emperor that the government and emperor himself were working so hard to craft, an *image* of a deeply caring individual who mourned the pain of the people of Japan, an *image* of a lovely man who, too, was victim. They hoped that the people would feel sympathy for this type of emperor. In his essay “Patriotism and Treason,” Nakano dissects the vacuity of this discourse by contrasting the emperor with a ruler who actually demonstrated her care for her people, not just said it:

The newspapers wrote that the repatriated Japanese [soldiers] were without home. Those without home are shut out from employment. To be without home is to have no fixed address. It's to be a vagabond. It's improbable that the resume of a vagabond without home and without fixed address would even be looked at. In an announcement made by the emperor-appointed Minister that was reported in the newspapers, the emperor said that he is “with the people” (*tennō wa kokumin to tomo ni aru*). On this point, when it comes to the issue of having a home, it's clear just how the emperor is “with the people.” According to an American newspaper, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands completely liberated her white palace, which was the smallest in Europe, giving it to victims of war. She herself apparently lived in a six-room apartment, offering two of the rooms to victims of air raids. Now, *who* is with

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*tomo ni ari*).

the people, and where does this happen? It's completely understandable that those who use others' money and labor to build large estates and residences and vacation homes, and then refuse to lend or offer them to war victims and returnees, would feel a connection "deep within the heart" with the emperor who is with the people. Hey Wilhelmina, what kind of Dutch are you!? As someone writing from a small nook of an Eastern country with a deep historical connection to yours—even based on this fact alone—I pray for your good health.<sup>114</sup>

The description in *Goshaku no Sake* of the emperor's role in the ceremony for the constitution, in which he and the empress make their one-minute appearance and then retreat into the solitude of their palace, stands in stark contrast to Nakano's perception of Queen Wilhelmina. The emperor could not be more distant from the people, whereas Wilhelmina could not be closer. Nakano continues his critique:

Those that attempt to preserve their own bonds, own capital, own land, and the privileges of rank through male lineage all get together and without hesitation go before others and scream in the National Diet things like [the emperor] "constitutes the base of the citizen's hearts," and "is connected at the heart," and "is the center of affection," and "is the center of the bond at the deepest roots." It's natural to question their moral foundations.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> NSZ, Vol. 12, pg. 148.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 148.

As I discuss in Chapter Two, the central concern for members of the Diet in the debate over the drafts over the constitution was whether the *kokutai* had been maintained. The claim that it had been maintained hinged not on the political role of the emperor, but his trans-historical status in the hearts of the Japanese people. Thus, those like Kanamori Tokujirō argued that the emperor was the people’s “center of affection” (*akogare no chūshin*). In this text, Nakano asks what kind of emperor people like Kanamori love, because they refuse to be specific in their language. They concede that the emperor is just another citizen (*nihon kokumin*), so their love cannot be directed at a divine figure. The logical conclusion from Nakano’s inquiry is thus:

They love the emperor, they have affection for the emperor, which means that what they love is a lump among the citizens who pays no income taxes, does not labor, and eats without earning it—naturally they love the emperor of this specification. And if that’s the case, they won’t admit it.”<sup>116</sup>

What Nakano exposes here is that the individual emperor is erased in the construction of the postwar emperor system. Whether he (or any other emperor) could be the object of love was irrelevant to Kanamori because his concern was the construction of an ideological system that justified the new postwar order put into place by SCAP and the government. Because there was no concrete basis for

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 146.

asserting the “affection” that the people have for the emperor, or the care that the emperor feels for the people, it could only be posited as a theoretical abstraction.

I believe that narrator’s letter in *Goshaku no Sake* is written with these premises in mind, and that they provides the best mode for understanding the nature of the narrator’s sympathy (*dōjō*) for the emperor. His sympathy is only directed at the individual human emperor as someone who is erased by the emperor system. His sympathy is hostile, antithetical, and even threatening to the postwar emperor system as such because it aims to replace something that purports to represent democracy with actual practical democracy: a democracy that cannot stand for even one individual held captive to despotic rule. This type of sympathy (*dōjō*) and pity (*ki no doku*) is the opposite of affection (*akogare*). The failure among many Japanese critics (Etō Jun among others) to see this critical difference is why *Goshaku no Sake* has been seen as Nakano’s apology for his criticism of the emperor. On the contrary, *Goshaku no Sake* presents perhaps his most lucid critique because the narrator demonstrates how the power of the emperor system is operative in discourse, and that *only at the discursive level is deconstruction of the emperor system possible*.

While sympathy is not a question of *affection*, it is a question of *affect*. It is the ability to feel emotion and concern—not derisive callousness—for those oppressed. The narrator sees the supposed objective of the Communist Party, establishment of a sense of national morality, as completely worthy, and in line with

his objectives as principal for his students. However, its writings demonstrate the failure to represent the emperor with moral sensitivity, and the Party ends up strengthening the very system its aim to topple, and sabotaging its role as leader in establishing this national morality.

### 3.9 Conclusion: disrespect the Man, not the man

Ironically, the highest form of respect—treating the emperor like an equal—is the text’s most subversive and disruptive aspect, and thereby it is “disrespectful” to the social order that maintains and reproduces the emperor system. Based on the narrator’s insistence on the moral dimension of distinguishing the emperor from the emperor system, I would like to propose a new way of thinking about the transformation of *fukeizai* from the prewar/wartime legal discourse to the *fukei* of the postwar represented by the taboo against depiction of the emperor, the Chrysanthemum Taboo. In the postwar, the juridical and criminal form of *fukeizai*, *lèse majesté*, ceased to exist by decree. Its postwar remnant, *fukei*—“disrespect” toward the emperor—must operate under the premises that a) the emperor is distinct from the emperor system, b) the postwar emperor system is a completely new invention and construct of the postwar, and that c) *fukei* itself poses absolutely no threat to the human emperor or his family, but that it does threaten the symbolic order built to conceal the violence perpetrated by both Japan and America through construction of a peaceful, democratic, and nonviolent emperor. Postwar *fukei*, then, means *radical respect* for the human who is called emperor (including the respect to

be treated “equally” as a war criminal under the blind eye of justice), but *disrespect* for the bureaucratic, governmental, and even discursive “system” that prohibits makes such “respect” possible. “Disrespect” towards the emperor, if it is to begin to dismantle the emperor system, must always oppose the elements through which power is operative. It must expose fraudulence and corruption in the attempt to reconstitute the emperor system into one that appears peaceful and democratic. Instead, it must *represent* the emperor in the only way compatible with democracy: as a human, not a symbol.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SAKAGUCHI ANGO AND THE EMPEROR'S DESCENT TO PLAIN HUMAN

#### 4.1 Overview

Sakaguchi Ango, who wrote from and of the rubble of a demolished Tokyo in the immediate postwar,<sup>117</sup> eschews easy labeling. His lack of political affiliation and aversion to political forms makes his work no less political, and his famous validation of “falling into decadence” in his *Darakuron* (“Discourse on Decadence”) makes him no less concerned with issues of morality. His writings spread the gamut of styles, freely mixing between them, and disrupting categories and genres themselves, a veritable assault on what constitutes “literature,” let alone “pure literature.”<sup>118</sup> Even the school that he’s frequently placed in, *buraiha* (“libertine”), which opposed rational argumentation and reification of culture and politics in favor of more flesh-based grounds for inquiry, is merely a label to which Sakaguchi does not uniformly conform. What made Sakaguchi so forceful in the immediate postwar was his thorough negations of the values associated with war. As Karatani Kōjin points out, “To a people recently liberated from the repressive moral indoctrination and cult of the Japanese spirit so integral to wartime Japan’s emperor-based fascism, Ango

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<sup>117</sup> He documents this quite vividly in his *Darakuron*, and fictionalizes the base state of life in *Hakuchi*.

<sup>118</sup> Karatani Kōjin. “The Irrational Will to Reason.” *Literary Mischief: Sakaguchi Ango, Culture, and the War*. New York: Lexington Books, 2010, pg. 24.

represented the postwar era's inversion of all that regime held sacred."<sup>119</sup> At every turn, Sakaguchi dismantles systems—social structures, the emperor system, culture, the family—and the illusions and representations that hold them together, as well as the assumptions about the morality of individuals that they entail. This was readily apparent in his 1942 essay, “A Personal View of Culture,” but most famously in his 1946 essays, *Darakuron* (“Discourse on Decadence”) and its continuation, *Zoku-Darakuron*. While these essays have garnered much attention in Japan, and recently in English-language scholarship as well,<sup>120</sup> this is rarely in the context of the emperor system debate. It is another short essay from 1948, “Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor his Majesty” (*tennō heika ni sasaguru kotoba*), that most closely resembles the nuanced analysis of the emperor system we can find in *Goshaku no Sake*. I will begin this chapter by connecting the highly resonant themes of *Goshaku no Sake* and “Words Humbly”—most especially their theorization of the origins of disrespect and demonstration of the media's role in the discursive production of the emperor system. Following that, I will explore the more famous *Darakuron*, a deconstructive text that aims to dismantle the emperor system not through political means but self-interrogation.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, pg. 23.

<sup>120</sup> See especially the work of Robert Steen, Douglas Slaymaker, and James Dorsey, among others. Dorsey, James and Douglas Slaymaker, ed. *Literary Mischief: Sakaguchi Ango, Culture, and the War*. New York: Lexington Books, 2010

## 4.2 Dear Your Majesty

Sakaguchi Ango's short essay from 1948, "Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor his Majesty" (*tennō heika ni sasaguru kotoba*)<sup>121</sup>, is a reflection precisely on the *human* status of the emperor, and the necessity for him to act as mere human and for others to treat him as such. It comes down to a question of *respect*, and the impossibility of *disrespect* if the grounds for proper respect are not in place. Just like the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*, Sakaguchi is concerned with representing the emperor as honestly and accurately as possible, and developing the logical implications of taking seriously the human emperor. Despite not one mention of the words "emperor system," the essay signifies an attempt to liberate the emperor from the emperor system through the exploration of the emperor's humanity.

Sakaguchi, too, examines Matsushima's famous May Day sign (of the Placard Incident) and asks what makes it powerful. As the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* pointed out, the words of the sign were not insulting (*bujoku*) towards the emperor, and by implication did not constitute *lèse majesté*, because of their accurate depiction of an emperor infinitely distant and unable to feel the suffering of the nation. Sakaguchi analyzes what precisely made it controversial and judges its merits as proper satire. To him, it was less crucial that the sign depicted an emperor who ate heartily while the nation starved, but that it employed the language of the

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<sup>121</sup> Sakaguchi Ango. "Tennō Heika ni sasaguru kotoba (Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor)." Sakaguchi Ango Zenshū. Chikuma Shobō, 1998. [http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001095/files/42818\\_26242.html](http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001095/files/42818_26242.html)

emperor—meant to emphasize the distinction between the emperor and all others beneath him—to stress the unbridgeable divide, and to great humorous effect. He says,

There was also a big fuss over whether the placard which read, “I, Your Royal Highness, am eating like a pig,” constituted *lèse majesté*. However, I feel that the cause for the controversy around this placard on May Day was less the fact of the “eating like a pig” part and more for the existence of the bizarre usage of the first person pronoun *chin* (I, Your Royal Highness), and I wrote as much in a newspaper at the time. The satirical effect would be nearly lost if the phrase were just “I (*watashi*) am eating like a pig,” employing the common first-person pronoun, *watashi*. Perhaps if you were satirizing a black marketeer, it might get a couple chuckles from the average citizen. But, if you satirize the emperor with “I am eating like a pig”—after all, black marketeers<sup>122</sup> eat like pigs too—there is no reason that the people would laugh, thinking it odd that Japan’s the oldest family line couldn’t eat like pigs. The effect of the satire lies in the clever usage of the first-person pronoun, *chin*, and nothing else. We have to understand that if the word *chin* were omitted, the strange clothes of the Imperial wardrobe would be replaced with

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<sup>122</sup> The image of the black marketeer is somewhat of a recurring trope in Sakaguchi’s writings that depict the underworld in which he resides. Note especially his *Darakuron*, in which the very soldiers—once the embodiment of bravery and heroism by fighting for the emperor—who returned home alive after the war turn to the black market for survival.

a business suit, and with that, two pieces of ripe fodder for satire would fly out the window.

While this may appear like Sakaguchi merely plays the role of humor critic, analyzing the sign for its ability to induce laughter and its worthiness of being properly called satire, he also exposes the nature of its threat. Use of the first-person pronoun, *chin*, captured the corruption and deceptiveness of the emperor's wardrobe change into a business suit because it highlighted the distance between emperor and the people. The business suit itself was part of the strategic campaign to give the appearance that this distance had been collapsed, but *chin* was a reminder that this new narrative was fundamentally at odds with reality. The use of *chin* on the sign was also a direct reference to the surrender speech of August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945, a speech that made sure to remind the nation that the *kokutai* had been able to be maintained (*chin wa koko ni kokutai wo goji shiete*), and that began with that royal pronoun, *chin*. In pinpointing "*chin*" as the comical and satirical force behind the sign, Sakaguchi demonstrates its threat to the representation of the "benevolence" of the emperor in bringing the war to an end and to the new narrative of an emperor who is one of—and among—the people.

In the essay, Sakaguchi analyzes what commands respect in order to challenge the claim that the May Day sign was disrespectful in the least. Respect requires substance. The fact that the emperor is name without substance, an "empty name" (*kyomei*), makes true respect for others impossible. That the emperor is from

the most enduring family line in Japan, therefore, commands no more respect than all descendants of cave men. Likewise, “refinement” (*kihin*)—so valued among the nobility—is without substance in that it teaches the children of nobility to treat others poorly and leads to nothing productive. “If you wanted to make a business of refinement, the best you could actually do is fraud.” Although I am condensing what is somewhat of a circuitous argument, Sakaguchi’s point is that the emperor is all style, no substance, and thus commands no respect.

While his critique is specific to postwar representation of the emperor, the text can be read as an extension of his “Personal View of Japanese Culture” (*Nihon bunka shikan*), 1942, where he questions the meaning and value of “tradition” (*dentō*) and “national character” (*kokuminsei*) through explorations of sports, fashion, architecture and beyond. The kimono worn by *maiko* performers and dominating presence of sumō wrestlers may exude what Sakaguchi calls the “dignity of tradition” (*dentō no kanroku*), but tradition itself does not constitute anything of value. Throughout the essay, he argues that the people are much less concerned with preserving tradition than they are attending to their personal lives, the “necessities of life” (*seikatsu no hitsuyō*). “Without sufficient substance behind the dignity,” he says, “these traditions will eventually fade away. What matters in the end is neither tradition nor dignity but substance.”<sup>123</sup> The essay, overtly a critique of Bruno Taut’s

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<sup>123</sup> James Dorsey translation. In, Dorsey, James and Douglas Slaymaker, ed. *Literary Mischief: Sakaguchi Ango, Culture, and the War*. New York: Lexington Books, 2010, pg. 143.

overflowing appraisal of traditional Japanese culture and architecture, sets the grounds for Sakaguchi's postwar critique of the emperor system, for which tradition (family lineage) and dignity (refinement) are equally meaningless without being backed up by substance.

This "style" that he critiques in "Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor" points directly to the constructed nature of the image of the emperor and the production of the postwar emperor system. The Imperial Household Agency<sup>124</sup> is the prime instigator of this style as it makes the emperor's outfits, *forces* him to use special elevated language, including the word *chin*, and "weaves together a fictional solemnity out of the substance-less." Despite the postwar effort to define the emperor as one among the people, the Imperial Household Agency is "obsessed with turning the emperor into something greater than other human beings." Yet, as Sakaguchi notes, the effect is the total opposite. Only because they concoct such a

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Sakaguchi Ango. "Nihon bunka shikan [A Personal View of Japanese Culture]" *Sakaguchi Ango*. Chikuma Nihon Bunkaku 009. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2008, pg. 181.  
<sup>124</sup> The Imperial Household Agency (*kunaichō*) manages the affairs of the emperor and the imperial family, and is part of the bureaucratic structure that the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* sees as imprisoning the members of the imperial family as captives to the "emperor system." Although under Japanese Empire (until 1945) it operated independent of the government, its postwar restructuring placed it under the jurisdiction of the prime minister's office. One of its prime postwar functions is to maintain the image of the emperor to ensure that it stays in line with the narrative of the symbolic emperor. Fujitani notes, "Just as importantly, the Agency tightly guards the public images of the Emperor and imperial family, giving rise to the phrase, 'the chrysanthemum curtain.' It plans all imperial outings and controls the content and flow of information about the imperial household to the media." See Fujitani, Takashi. "Imperial Household Agency." *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Japanese Culture*. ed. Sandra Buckley. New York: Routledge, 2002, pg. 210-211.

distinction—and because of the existence of the word *chin*—is satire possible. More perniciously, the existence of the word *chin* can turn a line like “I, Your Royal Highness” into the *Lèse Majesté* Incident (another term for the Placard Incident), turning a joke into a crime.

Just as the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* turns the logic of the accusation of *fukeizai* back onto the government when he says, “it’s the *existence of the emperor system* that is defamatory to the Japanese people? The person who made the sign didn’t insult the emperor at all,” Sakaguchi throws the blame back at those who construct the representation of the emperor. For the narrator, it is not the sign that is defamatory, insulting, or disrespectful. On the contrary, the discursive operation of the emperor system itself is an assault on the Japanese people. For Sakaguchi, the same discursive operation that attempts to control the public representation of the emperor provides the grounds for its critique and satire. The May Day sign itself is not offensive in the least because it merely exposes the emptiness of the representation. More importantly, since this *representation* is used as a complete stand-in for substance, it degrades and demeans those with substance, and to quote, “because ‘emperor’ is just an empty name (*kyomei*), humans themselves cannot be the recipients of true respect.” In other words, the postwar emperor system demands respect from the people of Japan despite having no substance. Such a system invites critique and denies due respect for those with substance.

To Sakaguchi, the attempt to concoct a fictional solemnity (*kakū no igen*) out of something without substance is to “invite derision, satire, and revenge.” Most absurd is the attempt to express this solemnity with the word *chin*, a homophone for a child’s word for penis (the equivalent of “pee-pee”); Sakaguchi recalls that the word afforded him much laughter as a child. On many levels, the May Day sign was appropriate (not disrespectful), satirical, and perhaps most of all, hilarious.

#### 4.3 The sentiment reserved for a celebrity

Sakaguchi too pushes back against the prescribed or assumed *affective* response of people to their emperor, rejecting the notion that the emperor is, and has always been, the people’s “center of affection” (*akogare no chūshin*). He mocks as “exceedingly funny” the idea that when people rejoice as they see the emperor from the side of the road could be an expression of “eternal national sentiment” (*eien naru kokuminteki shinjō*). It’s more a type of hero worship. He notes that hero worship is not merely reserved for emperors and the like, but also for movie stars and Olympic athletes. They, too, have the ability—and perhaps even more so—to inspire jubilation and tears. He says, “This is called ‘popularity’ (*ninki*). Popularity is a fad; it is the preference of an era. Simply put, the emperor is popular. In particular, he is popular in the countryside. He is as popular as Tanaka Kinuyo, and nothing more than that.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Sakaguchi was also highly prophetic to equate emperor and celebrity. Takashi Fujitani mentions that when the wildly popular singer and actress Misora Hibari died

Sakaguchi's nonchalant—even silly—tone belies the sharpness of his critique. In one fowl swoop, he removes the grounds for legitimating the postwar symbolic emperor system: that the emperor is trans-historically and universally (throughout Japan) adored. Sakaguchi argues that the affection or sentiment (*shinjō*) people feel for the emperor is equal to or less than what they feel toward celebrities, that it is completely historically contingent (“the preference of an era”), and moreover, that not all people feel it. This is to say, in comparing the emotional sentiment that people feel toward the emperor with what they feel toward celebrities, Sakaguchi shows that “sentiment” is an empty category of legitimation. In the postwar, after all, the government could no longer claim *a priori* legitimacy for the role of the emperor, such as the unbroken line of emperors (*bansei ikkei*) or divine descent, having to rely exclusively on the *claim* that it aligned with the nation's “sentiment”: what it wished, willed, or felt (yet this could never be put up for a national referendum that might confirm it). Just as any affection people may have felt before the war's end was coincidental to the unbroken lineage, in the postwar scenario, the myth of unbroken lineage was merely a prerequisite for positing the notion that people felt some form of eternal and unbroken *affection* towards their emperors; in other words, affection could only be enduring if the object of affection also endured. Implicitly, Sakaguchi historicizes these narratives while explicitly refuting the validity of the present narrative in the present moment of 1948.

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in 1989, her funeral was called a “*gotaisō*,” a term usually reserved for imperial funerals. Fujitani, Takashi. *Splended Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pg. 241.

Moreover, the *sentiment* that people feel toward the emperor is specific to the postwar. Although a wartime emperor may also well have been “popular,” Sakaguchi limits his analysis specifically to the postwar phenomenon of the emperor’s popularity. People’s feelings toward the emperor are not based on who the emperor was prior to Japan’s defeat, but who he is now that Japan has lost the war, a loser who ought to be pitied, a “defeated emperor”:

And yet, while Tanaka Kinuyo's popularity was earned by her own talent, the emperor's is not this way. It is merely a popularity borne of the defect of an era itself: Japan lost, Japan disappeared, and he himself disappeared, losing everything he was up to that point. But as if reacting desperately to such an annoyance, he said, "I didn't lose" (*ore wa maketteinai zo*) and the emperor was slapped on billboards putting on a bold front. That, and people favor him in sympathy (*dōjō*) for being a defeated emperor—that's about it.

The emperor’s popularity—“a defect of an era”—was circumstantial, and due to Japan’s loss in war, which provided the prime opportunity to completely reinvent the emperor. The Japan and emperor as defined by prewar and wartime ideology ceased to exist. The premises underlying what made him emperor were stripped away. Therefore, for Sakaguchi, there was no salvaging something from the ruins of the past, only total reinvention. Likewise, peoples’ feelings toward the emperor could no longer be directed at the godlike figure and military leader who posed gallantly on horseback; the image was shattered and the objective of the postwar narrative of the

emperor needed to ensure that that very image remain shattered to make room for the image of a democratic, pacifist emperor. The postwar emperor could, under no circumstances, be the military emperor. However, as Sakaguchi keenly observes, the emperor's favorability was not related to his symbolic role in representing a democratic Japan, but rather sympathy and pity for being a defeated emperor (*haiboku no tennō*).

#### **4.4 Respect for humanity**

The narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* criticized the Communist Party for its opposition to the emperor system because this opposition failed to account for how the wartime emperor system had been defeated; in responding to an anachronistic emperor system rather than the present one, it reproduced the conditions for its continuity. If the Communist Party truly wanted to establish a sense of national morality, it would have to represent the emperor from a moral standpoint that *sympathized* with the postwar emperor as a human, not a thing.

Can we, then, distinguish between the sympathy of *Goshaku no Sake* and the sympathy that Sakaguchi discusses here? First of all, the narrator's form of sympathy is designed to eliminate the postwar emperor system by recognizing the emperor as captive and liberating him. At the same time, it recognizes that many people in Japan may also share a form of sympathy for the emperor as well (thought perhaps uncritically), and essentially calls for the Communist Party to harness that sense of sympathy to the explicit end of dismantling the postwar emperor system. The

sympathy that Sakaguchi observes—the sympathy for a defeated emperor—lacks the reflexive and critical element of the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*. Thus, he treats this sympathy with disdain and disgust. Sakaguchi says, “The emperor’s popularity is free of judgment. It’s a kind of religious and fanatical popularity that has a way of being completely identical in nature to the relationship between a pagan sect leader and his followers.” Perhaps the most distinct difference between the narrator’s analysis and Sakaguchi’s here is that the narrator wanted to dismantle the emperor system from a critical perspective *within* the ideology—and herein lies Nakano Shigeharu’s brilliance in being able to represent that positionality—whereas Sakaguchi critiqued it as if from the outside. Despite this, both end up in the same place, affirming the emperor as a human being stripped of his shackles (imprisonment to the emperor system).

Most importantly, however, is that the sympathy that Sakaguchi observes marks absolute discontinuity with the recent past, whether people understand their own feelings toward the emperor as continuous or discontinuous. It is sympathy aimed at specifically the postwar defeated emperor, and yet without the recognition of that emperor as human being. Rather, it is a blind faith by “fanatics.” He notes that agricultural youth groups still continued to bring offerings of rice to the emperor in the postwar, and he conjectured that half of the readers of his very article “will shed tears in the belief that imperial authority remains unabated.” While the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* does not share the same condescending attitude as Sakaguchi in his

characterization of those who weep before the emperor—such as the schoolgirls who cry in his presence—we may speculate that Sakaguchi might have approved of the narrator's form of sympathy toward the emperor: his sympathy is demystified, self-reflexive, and subversive.

We can rephrase the question to ask whether the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* would be critical of Sakaguchi's analysis. Perhaps not: just like the narrator, Sakaguchi demands that the emperor be *represented* and treated as human being, no more, no less. Despite Sakaguchi's condescending tone, especially toward country bumpkins who uncritically accept the emperor, he wants to dismantle the love, affection, and respect directed at something without substance and superhuman (*chōningenteki*), and replace it with the love, affection, and respect directed at something with substance.

If the emperor is a human, he has to be more modest. Imagine if he were to ride on a crowded train just like we do, and suddenly a citizen catches on, and advises, "Come on now, emperor, please have a seat" (*saa saa, tennō, dōzo okake kudasai*). Continuing this type of natural respect (*shizen no sonkei*) is just fine. When the respect given to the emperor by citizens takes this form, Japan ought to become a true democratic state of proper decorum and deep human compassion (*ninjō atsui*).

Sakaguchi's proposal is very simple, yet somewhat unthinkable in a climate that continued to insist on the vast difference between emperor and citizen *in spite of* the

narrative of the human emperor. Respect for the emperor ought to mean treating him decently as a human being, as one might treat one's neighbor or fellow passenger on a train.<sup>126</sup> Perhaps we can find this behavior in the way the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* tipped his hat to the emperor during the ceremony over the new constitution, a gesture of respect and response after the emperor tipped his own hat that involves neither fanatical prostration nor neglect. For both, this is an issue deeply related to national morality and conscience. Those who prostrate themselves on the ground before the emperor have lost touch with their moral principles (*dōgi no konran*). The alternative then to this moral corruption is proper treatment of the emperor. Sakaguchi says, "If the emperor does not become loved and respected according to the decorum with which one treats a *human being*, Japan will cease to have proper culture, decorum, and human compassion."

Just as the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake* imagines an alternate reality in which the emperor has the human decency to embrace Pu Yi and apologize to the injustice, Sakaguchi envisions a day in which the emperor can emerge from his research lab (where he conducts biology experiments) and not be greeted with bows but rather common courtesy and respect. That, for Sakaguchi, would be the indication that humanity had been restored. To the extent that the people of Japan cannot

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<sup>126</sup> Sakaguchi perhaps was not thinking of treating the emperor decently in a short piece from 1946, "Short Essay on the Emperor" (*tennō shoron*) in which he believed the emperor should be stripped naked and be judged through scientific scrutiny. What he meant, however, was much in line with this essay: that the emperor should be judged on the merits of his humanity, not based on any connection to the divine.

transform their treatment of the emperor and continue to act as if the emperor were greater than other human beings, Japan is always at risk being quickly drawn back into war.

Sakaguchi's entire article, "Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor his Majesty," is a reflection on what constitutes meaningful and substantial respect (*sonkei*) toward the emperor in order to deconstruct the meaning of disrespect (*fukei*) in the postwar context, and to reject the possibility that the Placard Incident was an example of *lèse majesté* (*fukeizai*). One cannot "respect" an empty name, a product of a long family line, refinement that inherently disrespects others, or a status that has not been earned or is without talent. The Imperial Household Agency and the emperor himself, in concocting an empty image through wardrobe changes and elevated language, create barriers to accessing the human emperor. Likewise, in an act of mutual complicity, people accept that image and narrative of the superhuman emperor and further interfere with the moral transformation necessary for Japan to have, in Sakaguchi's words, "proper culture, decorum, and human compassion." So long as the emperor acts like and is treated as something greater than a human being, he cannot be the recipient of proper respect. In the same sense, to speak of disrespect (*fukei*) is utterly meaningless. In fact, *fukei* itself is a complete byproduct of the system that prevents the possibility for true respect. In other words, *fukei* is possible only because the government insists upon recreating the postwar emperor as a transcendent being despite the human narrative, specifically

demanding he be treated as a dignified and solemn being whose ridiculous image stands in stark contrast to such description.

At the end of the essay, Sakaguchi asks, “Hey, Your Majesty! Do you think you are above humbly being loved and respected *as a human being?*” If so, he concludes, it will invite two different responses. On the one hand, the faith of those “spiritually possessed by fox spirits” will increase, but on the other hand, he can expect there to be plenty of disrespect in the form of *fukeizai*, with puppets dressed up in business suits waving caps, and people mocking the emperor with his favorite phrase, “Oh, is that so?” (*ah, so*).

For the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*, the existence of the emperor system is defamatory—and thus *disrespectful*—to the people of Japan. For Sakaguchi Ango, the existence of the emperor system is a complete impediment to the realization of proper respect in Japan, not just for the emperor but among people as well. For both, this is a fundamentally moral question, and democracy is contingent upon a radical recognition that the emperor is human and is treated like one.

Sakaguchi’s comparison of the emperor with celebrities like Tanaka Kinuyo, who to him is much more worthy of respect and admiration, speaks to his profound awareness that the emperor could no longer be treated as having the aura of a sacred object in the present media landscape. Through the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*, Nakano Shigeharu traces the feedback loop of media that represents the emperor, the public that consumes that representation, and the media that proceeds

to represent public response to the emperor *as if it were independent of the media's representation of the emperor in the first place*.<sup>127</sup> Likewise, for Sakaguchi, terms like “respect,” “affection,” and “popularity” must be understood within the context of a cultural landscape attracted to celebrity. New forms of public consumption and representation of the emperor meant the stripping away of the emperor’s aura. Both Nakano and Sakaguchi fully understood this over a decade before Matsushita Keiichi coined the term “emperor system of the masses” (*taishū tennōsei*) or Mishima Yukio made similar conclusions about the cheapening of the emperor system two decades later—referring to the “weekly gossips emperor system” (*shūkanshi teki tennōsei*)—in his “In Defense of Culture” (*Bunka Bōeiron*), which I discuss in Chapter Six.

Furthermore, while these texts by Nakano and Sakaguchi may even contain some obvious arguments about how the existence of the postwar emperor system will make realization of democracy in Japan impossible, the texts must be understood in the context of the immediate postwar. Among the populous, there could be no simple abolition of the *mentality* of the wartime emperor system, even if its formal elements had been eliminated by SCAP; in other words, removing the emperor and decapitating the system was not enough. Both authors sought to articulate their resistance to the postwar emperor system by eschewing the failures that *Goshaku no Sake*’s narrator sees in the discourse of the “abolition of the emperor system” (*tennōsei haishi*), and providing an alternative approach: what I’ve been

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<sup>127</sup> Exposing this same circuit seems to be the modus operandi of *The Daily Show* and Jon Stewart today.

characterizing as discourse analysis and the *critique of the representation*.

Furthermore, both Nakano and Sakaguchi's observations of the *representations* of the postwar emperor and emperor system are still equally as valid today as they were in 1946-8, when much was still in flux. These representations of the emperor system, not only as presented by the government but by the media and finally its consumers as well, constitute the discursive nexus of the emperor system that will function to reproduce it unless it can be fully deconstructed, not merely "overthrown" or decapitated. This deconstruction, I believe, is what Sakaguchi proposes with this notion of "falling into decadence."

#### **4.5 *Daraku* as deconstruction**

*Darakuron* ("Discourse on decadence") presents societal systems as a schemes (*karakuri*) that combats human nature, make sure that people are kept in check from acting out their desires, and that aim to preserve an image of dignity or glory or beauty as defined by that framework. These systems concoct moral dictates and prohibitions that aim to combat human instinct and urges, and their practice is essentially deviation from an original state of being simply human. To shed this form of morality as dictated by social systems, then, and act on ones desires or needs—to be human—is to "fall into decadence." "Decadence" (*daraku*) is not depravity or immorality, but rather a refusal to uphold the moral principles dictated by whatever societal construct is in operation. It is *amorality*. Sakaguchi does not espouse decadence for it's own sake ("decadence is, in and of itself, always a trifling,

undesirable thing"<sup>128</sup>) because decadence must only be negational, a “falling away from the ‘wholesome morals’ (*kenzen naru dōgi*).”<sup>129</sup> This purely negational aspect of *Darakuron* and *Zoku-Darakuron* demonstrates Sakaguchi’s deconstructive tendency, and I will argue that for Sakaguchi *daraku* is deconstruction itself. Despite this, I will also argue that Sakaguchi’s text is fraught with tensions that push his thesis in the opposite direction: while he deconstructs the emperor system by exposing its contingency, he does so in a way that also projects it into the eternal past and turns it into a fundamental—albeit arbitrary—feature of the Japanese state; likewise, while he deconstructs the self, and strips away the “false kimonos” that represent the individual as greater than human, he does so in a way that paints a picture of universal humanity.

The first line of *Darakuron*, “The world changed within six months,” is followed by two examples: soldiers go off to war resolved to die as *kamikaze* pilots for their emperor, but the survivors among them return to peddle goods on the black market; soldiers’ widows, asked to stoically remain loyal to their fallen husbands, move on to other romantic relationships. “It’s not people that have changed; they’ve been like this from the very start. What has changed is just the surface of things, the

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<sup>128</sup> Sakaguchi Ango. "Discourse on Decadence: Part I and II" James Dorsey, trans. *Literary Mischief: Sakaguchi Ango, Culture, and the War*. New York: Lexington Books, 2010, pg. 192; Sakaguchi Ango. "Darakuron (Discourse on Decadence)." *Sakaguchi Ango*. Chikuma Nihon Bunkaku 009. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2008, pg. 239.

<sup>129</sup> Dorsey, pg. 192; SA, pg. 239.

world's outer skin (*uwakawa*)."<sup>130</sup> With this, Sakaguchi suggests that people always act on human nature, but that moral codes can give the illusion that they act out of dignity, honor, and nobility. The end of war has not changed how people behave, but the illusion that they live or die by higher precepts has. This illusion—the “outer skin”—is the product of the ideology of the moral principles defined by the emperor system (a term that Sakaguchi repeatedly employs in *Darakuron*) itself. The postwar could not sustain the *image* of glory. Implicit is notion that the value system that grounded these morals and set up technologies to enforced them ceased to exist. After all, the soldiers had to be coerced to die as *kamikaze* pilots, and the war widows were not only prohibited from romantic affairs, but the depiction of such affairs was prohibited (“the wartime regime intended these women to live out the remainder of their lives as chaste as saints, and they refused to permit any writing that might provide their fall into decadence”<sup>131</sup>). Without the government’s coercion of soldiers or the prohibition against widows being “unfaithful” to their deceased husbands—or even *its depiction*—the world could be observed in which humans act based on urges and needs, in other words, humanly.

As in “Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor,” Sakaguchi treats the emperor himself as nothing more than a human being that was represented as an illusion, comparing him to the high, noble values assumed of *kamikaze* pilots and widows of fallen soldiers:

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<sup>130</sup> Dorsey, pg. 175; SA, pg. 213.

<sup>131</sup> Dorsey, pg. 176; SA, pg. 214.

The heroism of the *kamikaze* is really nothing more than an illusion (*genei*); their real history as humans starts the moment they set up shop in the black market. The saintliness of the war widows, too, is but a pipe dream; their true history begins the second they start to dream of another man. The same is true for the emperor. He's an apparition (*genei*) whose true history would only start the moment he becomes an ordinary man (*tada no ningen*).<sup>132</sup>

This is one of the few instances in the essay in which “emperor” appears without being followed by “system.” Written within months of the emperor’s “Declaration of Humanity,” *Darakuron* here dispels the notion that the emperor’s renunciation of divinity turned him into the plain human (*tada no ningen*) that Sakaguchi articulates. In other words, his change of clothes did not constitute a “fall into decadence,” even remotely. In “Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor,” Sakaguchi challenges the people of Japan, including all of those in government and the Imperial Household Agency, to treat the emperor with the respect of an ordinary person and no more. The line quoted above carries that implication: it is critical that the emperor is treated and represented as plainly human, but in comparing the emperor to the pilots and widows, Sakaguchi shows that the emperor too is only as “dignified” as the ideology invents him to be. *Kamikaze* pilots act on their urges and necessities by selling on the black market after the war; widows do when they think of other men; for the emperor to become human, too, would mean acting independently on his

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<sup>132</sup> Dorsey, pg. 182; SA, pg. 225.

desires and needs. Can the emperor not act independently on his urges for the same reason as the pilots and widows, because of coercion and prohibition?

The lessons of the narrator from *Goshaku no Sake* are instructive here: the emperor is captive to the emperor system that dictates his words and movements, and prevents the type of liberation that might allow his “fall into decadence.” The freedom to act on his urges mirrors his historical freedom to exert his own power: he has none. If he had exerted his own power historically, Sakaguchi argues, he would have been exiled to an island or the deep woods.<sup>133</sup> In so far as the emperor is a pure expression of politics, there is nothing human about him. I interpret the text to mean that, for the emperor to become plainly human would require that he act (independently of his own agency) on his human desires and that he is treated and represented as human. Yet, this could only happen if, on the one hand, the ideology that allows him to be represented as noble, dignified, and refined is dismantled, and on the other, the technologies that enforce this representation through coercion and prohibition are destroyed.

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<sup>133</sup> Early Japanologist Basil Hall Chamberlain, in his 1912 essay “The Invention of a New Religion,” also ridicules the notion that emperor-worship has been a historical norm in Japan: “The sober fact is that no nation probably has ever treated its sovereigns more cavalierly than the Japanese have done, from the beginning of authentic history down to within the memory of living men. Emperors have been deposed, emperors have been assassinated; for centuries every succession to the throne was the signal for intrigues and sanguinary broils. Emperors have been exiled; some have been murdered in exile. From the remote island to which he had been relegated one managed to escape, hidden under a load of dried fish.” Chamberlain, Basil Hall. “The Invention of a New Religion.” 1912. *Project Gutenberg Ebook*, web, January 26, 2013. [<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2510/2510.txt>]

While *Darakuron* is very much a call for liberation from those forces, Sakaguchi expresses a deep skepticism about that possibility based on his analysis of the human character and the institutions it builds. What makes humans human is their response to urges and desires in spite of whatever prohibitions and regulations are imposed on them. Correspondingly, institutions deeply understand of these urges and can appeal directly to them. Thus, he sets up an irony: the prohibitions of institutions are against human nature—they are “inhuman” (*hi-ningenteki*) and “anti-human” (*han-jinseiteki*)—but the institutions are founded precisely by directing and manipulating those urges for its own benefit, which makes them “completely human” (*mattaku ningenteki na mono*). This is the nature of *bushidō*, the way of the warrior, and the emperor system operates identically:

There is no innate truth in it [the emperor system], nor is it at all natural. Still, the emperor system represents a long history of innovations based on keen observations, and in this it has a profound significance that we cannot easily dismiss. Analyzing it through self-evident truths and the laws of nature doesn't get to the heart of the matter.<sup>134</sup>

Sakaguchi provides little in terms of method for resistance. He clearly wants to see the elimination of the emperor system, while at the same time admiring its capacity for innovation and adaptation, and acknowledging just how seductive it can be. He goes as far as saying that the emperor is necessary for scheming (*kenbōjussū*) people

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<sup>134</sup> Dorsey, pg. 178; SA, pg. 219-220.

like the Japanese—especially politicians—in order to carry out their schemes and justify (*taigi meibun*) them. Moreover, the emperor system is simply one institution that can easily be replaced by another if it is overturned. As Sakaguchi notes in *Zoku-Darakuron* (“Continuation of the Discourse on Decadence”), “even should we demolish that contrivance (*karakuri*) that is the emperor system and institute some new structure in its place; that, too, would be nothing more than a more highly evolved contrivance.”<sup>135</sup> This cycle of one societal system replacing another, he says, is the fate (*unmei*) of humans, but no system can ever be totalizing or last forever: humans will “fall through the nets” of these systems through their decadence, and when that happens, revenge (*fukushū*) will be enacted upon those systems. With this thought, Sakaguchi displays the conflicting—perhaps even manic or schizophrenic—feelings embedded in his text: deep pessimism and blithe hopefulness.

#### 4.5.1 The emperor as arbitrary

The cyclical nature of these systems demonstrates their arbitrary nature and historical contingency, and as pure construct. Sakaguchi says, “I see the emperor system as another creation of politics, and one that is both quintessentially Japanese and quite original.”<sup>136</sup> While the emperor system might be “quintessentially Japanese” (*kiwamete nihonteki*) and creative or “original” (*dokusōteki*), Sakaguchi does not mean to suggest a particularistic notion of some enduring Japanese

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<sup>135</sup> Dorsey, pg. 194; SA, pg. 243.

<sup>136</sup> Dorsey, pg. 177; SA, pg. 217.

characteristic that made the emperor system inevitable. Rather, it was circumstantial, and the result of development and innovation throughout the course of history. When it was politically useful or expedient, the emperor would be dredged out of obscurity to justify the actions of the governmental power holders. Politicians, upon observing the proclivities of the Japanese people in any specific circumstance, would find political justification for the emperor system based on their sense of smell (*kyūkaku*).

Sakaguchi's strongest indictment of the emperor system its contingency and circumstantial nature is expressed in the following:

There's absolutely no reason that they had to settle on the imperial house; they could very well have gone for the descendants of Confucius, Guatama Buddha, or even Lenin. It's just pure coincidence that they didn't go that route.<sup>137</sup>

With this, Sakaguchi flips the discourse from the Meiji Period that argued for the emperor's central, essential, and natural position within Japanese cultural and political history, a notion inscribed even into the Meiji Constitution with the line "the sacredness of the emperor is inviolable." The emperor system is not essential but coincidental, a whim of historical circumstances; politicians at different times throughout history could have employed any other symbol (or dynastic line, as it

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<sup>137</sup> Dorsey, pg. 177; SA, pg. 217.

were) to ground their ideological framework.<sup>138</sup> Sakaguchi recognizes that arbitrary nature of the emperor system is central to Japan's political structure.

What Sakaguchi does not acknowledge here, or if he does so, only implicitly, is that the political utility of the emperor and the emperor system was also judged in the postwar context based on the "sense of smell" that MacArthur and his advisees had for the response of the Japanese people; their sniffing, consequently, was effective in ways that may have not even anticipated. What the postwar manipulation of the "emperor system" exposes, if nothing else, is its arbitrary and contingent nature, as it was at the complete mercy of the power holders at the time, which happened to be the SCAP occupation forces. In so far as the postwar emperor system, in which an emperor could be defined as human and the symbol for democracy, was a pure expression of political utility (a tool, a puppet) of the occupying forces, we should reconsider Sakaguchi's suggestion that the emperor

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<sup>138</sup> Naoki Sakai has critiqued Watsuji Tetsurō on the grounds that his model, which posits a closed national community represented by the emperor, has to assume an arbitrariness because its continuity lacks empirical grounds: "The sanctity of the state that 'leads' but does not 'dominate' the national community must be designated by the emperor, who supposedly expresses the totality of the nation. Moreover, since the emperor expresses the existence of the substantialized cultural community on which the national community is grounded, we would be led, as long as we adhere to Watsuji's logic, to the thesis that to accept the emperor as the expression of the national totality is to believe *dogmatically and arbitrarily* in its continued existence since antiquity. Thus, the continuity of the national community must be posited beyond all possible contestation based on empirical evidence and would be perceived as some 'spirit' devoid of any institutional stipulations." Sakai, Naoki. "Return to the West/Return to the East: Watsuji Tetsurō's Anthropology and Discussions of Authenticity." *Translation and Subjectivity: On 'Japan' and Cultural Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pg. 112.

system is “quintessentially Japanese” because its postwar form is at best based on international cooperation and complicity.

This gets to a larger problem with Sakaguchi’s representation of the “emperor system” within *Darakuron*. He correctly demonstrates the contingency of the role of the emperor and imperial family throughout history, and exposes how the role was constructed and functioned as a political tool (“the emperor system represents a long history of innovations based on keen observations”); he likewise conceives of emperor’s role as mutable and notes how it had to undergo transformations and adaptations, as well as having ceased to exist at certain points (“just when the emperor system had been forgotten by society at large, it would be dragged out once more”); he notes that if the emperor system—a trick or contrivance (*karakuri*)—were overturned, it would be replaced with another contrivance, another system. This constitutes a substantial and impressive critique of the ideology of the emperor system from Meiji, Taishō, and pre-war and wartime Shōwa Japan, which attempted to equate emperor with the essence of Japan.

However, within this negational model, Sakaguchi posits a new form of continuity: the emperor system itself. Rather than locate the “emperor system” within the specific context of the modern nation-state, and point out how the imperial line was retroactively established and the “emperor” constructed through invented rituals, Sakaguchi focuses on the common features of what he calls the “emperor system” throughout history from antiquity through to the postwar. For

example, he discusses how the Fujiwara clan during the Heian period used the emperor as a political tool in order to resolve disputes over succession; how they also used the authority of imperial proclamations to exert their own will onto the population; or how Hideyoshi during the Sengoku period offered a ceremony to the emperor in order to affirm his own worth. In *Zoku-Darakuron*, he is even more explicit about its continuity. He critiques members of the Diet (of 1946) for their vapid insistence that the imperial household is the embodiment of Japanese virtue and dignity. He says,

While it is true that the emperor system is one element running through all of Japanese history (*nihon rekishi wo tsuranuku hitotsu no seido*), what are called the ‘esteemed virtues’ (*songen*) of the emperor have always been nothing more than a tool in the hands of opportunists.<sup>139</sup>

To Sakaguchi, the fact the members of Diet use this type of language to differentiate the imperial family from everyone else is nothing but the repetition of history; the “emperor system” has *always* operated this way.

However, by elaborating the utility of the emperor by rulers throughout the entirety of Japan’s history, Sakaguchi fails to show how these transformations actually did constitute, to use his language, the demolishing of one contrivance for another. The Meiji Restoration (which, after all, was a “restoration” in name only to assert a fiction of continuity) was a completely new contrivance, and more

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<sup>139</sup> Dorsey, pg. 190; SA, pg. 235.

importantly, so was the postwar, in which one emperor system was demolished and another one put in its place; while the emperor may have been manipulated as a political tool in each circumstance, the wider societal values and moral codes that Sakaguchi urges people to “fall away” from were completely transformed, if not unstably so.

In other words, because of his anachronistic and ahistorical use of the word *tennōsei*—even despite his recognition of its absolute contingency and arbitrariness—he cannot demonstrate that the emperor system of the postwar is a completely new contrivance. He would perhaps argue that it is a further example of the historical innovation or “discovery” of a new use for the emperor. Yet, there is little in the text to suggest that he views the postwar emperor system as fundamentally different from the wartime one, as he does so articulately later in “Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor.” Instead, in *Darakuron*, the emperor system of the postwar is to him a remainder, a remnant.

Sakaguchi comes so close, though, to recognizing the postwar emperor system as something fundamentally new, as a new contrivance or mechanism. After all, in defeat, the annihilation of a certain value system meant that the *kamikaze* pilots could no longer be seen as heroic and that war widows could no longer be seen as faithful. What was this value system if not the emperor system itself? Is it even possible that its postwar form was continuous with a previous form? In “Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor,” Sakaguchi’s conception of temporality is quite

different: Japan's defeat marks a complete ideological break with the past, a point of total discontinuity. Thus, he says, "Japan lost, Japan disappeared, and he himself [the emperor] disappeared, losing everything he was up to that point." The emperor system—indeed, the *kokutai* thought to embody the essence of Japan—had ceased to exist, and so did the very elements that constituted the emperor's identity. In that text, Sakaguchi documents the effort that went into constructing a postwar emperor in a business suit and hat, and with new conditions for demanding respect.

In *Darakuron*, he paints a different picture of continuity: "What has changed is just the surface of things, the world's outer skin." He means that human nature has not changed. Humans still have the same desires, urges, and needs. The defeat of war and the raw humanity that it exposed provided the context for humans to be represented and perceived as acting on those urges, as opposed to upholding an impossible image of saintliness portrayed and enforced by the state during the war. We can ask, then, if the emperor system is continuous for the Sakaguchi of *Darakuron*, how is this the case? I believe that the answer lies in his treatment of the individual emperor. At the end of the essay, he says, "Human's haven't changed; they've just reverted to their original state. Humans fall into decadence. Noble warriors and saintly women fall into decadence."<sup>140</sup> We can infer from this that, in the rapid restructuring of the state, the individual emperor was never afforded the opportunity to fall into decadence, even if the elements that made up his previous

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<sup>140</sup> Dorsey, pg. 182; SA, pg. 217.

identity were shattered. He was whisked from the emperor system that held the individual emperor prisoner during the war to the postwar emperor system that equally imposed restrictions and prohibitions on him. Because the emperor can neither act as someone who responds to urges or needs, nor be represented as one who could, the “emperor system” is essentially remains in place.

My concern, like the concern of the narrator from *Goshaku no Sake* in his analysis of the Communist Party’s representation of the emperor, is that in presenting an “emperor system” that traverses though time—Heian, Sengoku, Meiji, postwar, etc.—Sakaguchi inadvertently reproduces the emperor system at the same time that he tears it down and exposes its historical contingency and mutability. He is absolutely right that the emperor’s Declaration of Humanity did nothing to make the emperor into an “ordinary human” (*tada no ningen*), and that the emperor still needed to shed the institutional structures around him for his “true history” to begin, both on a personal level and a national level. But, his picture of the emperor system is one of remarkable adaptability and endurance throughout history, and we are given little clue as to how its postwar form differs from any other iteration.

The heart of the problem is that, in arguing that the emperor system had a continuous and central role as a tool of governing elites, Sakaguchi retrospectively assumes the unity and coherence of the Japanese nation-state based on an emperor-centered historiography (*kōkoku shikan*). He ends up reaffirming the one-to-one ratio of the existence of emperor and Japan as nation-state from antiquity to the present,

naturalizing a view of history that is a completely modern construct. This type of analysis has to ignore that Japan was not integrated and consolidated politically—not to mention culturally or linguistically—until the massive effort to do so during the Meiji period, and with great violence and coercion, not simply ideological obedience. It also has to overlook that the emperor of antiquity was a much more remote and hidden figure confined to the court or cloistered in monasteries (for example, as part of cloistered rule, *insei*, during Heisei); there is little evidence that the ancient emperor had much presence in the thoughts of the people who inhabited the archipelago of Japan.<sup>141</sup> In ancient Japan, there was no shared sense of national belonging, or sentiment, that might have made the emperor the useful tool that he became from the Meiji Era onward. Sakaguchi’s deconstruction of “sentiment” (*shinjō*) in “Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor” is instructive here, as he mocks notion that there could be something like an “eternal national sentiment” (*eien naru kokuminteki shinjō*) toward the emperor. What he fails to recognize in *Darakuron* is

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<sup>141</sup> Fujitani describes how the Meiji government saw the emperor as an effective tool for establishing a sense of nationalism for the first time: “During the Tokugawa period, then, Japan was populated by a people separated from one another regionally, with strong local rather than national ties. Horizontal social cleavages also marked off each social estate from the others, thus precluding the development of a strong sense of shared cultural identity. In addition, *the common people’s knowledge of the emperor, potentially the most powerful symbol, of the Japanese nation, was non-existent, vague, or fused with folk beliefs in deities who might grant worldly benefits but who had little to do with the nation.* Thus the leader of the Meiji regime needed novel and powerful means of channeling the longings of the people for a better world and the inchoate and scattered sense of identity as a people in the direction of modern nationalism.” (My italics). Fujitani, Takashi. *Splended Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1998, pg. 9.

that the absence of “eternal national sentiment” is also the absence of eternal “nationality” required to give people a sense of community and belonging, which simply did not exist in ancient Japan.

#### 4.5.2 To betray and worship

These critiques aside, Sakaguchi examples of past abuse of what he calls the “emperor system” throughout history illustrates penetrating observations about the present. We might even argue that he *is* speaking specifically about the present, and digging in the past for examples that conform to it rather than the other way around. In what is a completely novel argument, Sakaguchi exposes how politicians will both betray the emperor while worshipping him. In *Zoku-Darakuron*, he claims that because the masses would not accept it if the Fujiwara clan members elevated themselves to the status of deities, the Fujiwaras instead chose to prostrate themselves before the emperor and demand that the masses do the same. Thus, in using the emperor as a political tool to induce mass compliance, the Fujiwara clan built its own object of worship.<sup>142</sup> Referring the same phenomenon in Hideyoshi’s mixture of political manipulation and worship, he says, “political scheming may be the work of the devil but that doesn’t mean that these devils themselves don’t worship like children at the feed of the gods they themselves have conjured up.”<sup>143</sup> These examples, however, are Sakaguchi’s set up for his critique of the modern use

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<sup>142</sup> Dorsey, pg. 190; SA, pg. 234.

<sup>143</sup> Dorsey, pg. 178; SA, pg. 219.

of the emperor: politicians use the emperor as a puppet for manipulating the public while they worship that very puppet. In the case of World War II, the military conducted attacks without consulting the emperor himself. Sakaguchi says that “this so-called military blindly worshipped the emperor as, all the while, they ignored him and committed blasphemy (*bōtoku*) against him. What nonsense!”<sup>144</sup>

Nakano Shigeharu, too, pointed out a similar trend during the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, in which all the military leaders asserted their own innocence based on their complete obedience to the orders of the emperor, at once demonstrating that they worshipped him and his words while pinning the blame back on the emperor. The behavior of the military leaders indicates something slightly different for Sakaguchi, but nevertheless points to both their hypocrisy and something essential about their humanity: while the ideology could instantly create deified heroes (*eirei*) of fallen soldiers, the military leaders in their sixties and seventies clung onto life desperately during the trials, betraying their inability to follow the dictate to fight to the death as they commanded so many soldiers to do. In other words, they were willing to die for the emperor until faced with the opportunity, at which point they backed down, even willing to incriminate the emperor. The military leaders did not commit *seppuku*,<sup>145</sup> and instead were dragged into court with the “bits in their mouths.” This life drive, despite all else, is an “unrivaled mystery” (*yuitsu no fushigi*)

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<sup>144</sup> Dorsey, pg. 190; SA, pg. 234.

<sup>145</sup> Although Sakaguchi did not mention the one exception who tried, Tōjō Hideki.

to Sakaguchi.<sup>146</sup> Of course, it is precisely the “life” of human nature—this “enormity of the living organism” (*ikimono no kyodaisa*)—that constantly deconstructs the ideological forces that represent individuals as greater than their own humanity. The military leaders themselves did not understand how their desperate concern to save themselves conflicted with their own emperor worship. The situation exposes this: they were never willing to die for the emperor. They were perfectly willing to send millions of soldiers into battle to die for the emperor, but unwilling to do so themselves. The war tribunal stripped them of that “false kimono.”

This also a model for rethinking Kuno Osamu’s clean distinction between how the ideologues thought of the emperor internally versus how they projected him externally.<sup>147</sup> According to Kuno, drafters of the Meiji Constitution such as Itō Hirobumi legally inscribed a political function for the emperor that was limited by the Diet, what came to be known as the emperor organ theory (*tennō kikan setsu*), and that was thus treated accordingly within the government. This is the “esoteric” (*mikkyō*) view of the emperor because it was kept discrete. However, externally, the emperor was sold to the people as a divine figure with absolute sovereignty. This is the “exoteric” (*kenkyō*) view of the emperor, the image spread widely for public consumption. This duality, the “exoteric” and “esoteric” aspects for understanding of the emperor, was for Kuno characteristic from Meiji until the end of World War II.

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<sup>146</sup> Dorsey, pg. 181; SA, pg. 225.

<sup>147</sup> Kuno Osamu, “The Meiji State, Minponshugi, and Ultrnationalism.” Kazuya Satō, trans. *Authority and the Individual in Japan: Citizen Protest in Historical Perspective*. J. Victor Koschmann, ed. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1978.

Although this distinction was made well after the writing of *Darakuron*, Sakaguchi would clearly see such distinction impossible to sustain because the governmental power holders that manipulate the emperor and the ideology—thus undermining the authority of the emperor and betraying him—are also vulnerable to the very ideology of their creation. In fact, the lack of consensus on what constituted the “exoteric” and “esoteric” views (to borrow Kuno’s idiosyncratic language) of the emperor, and whether the emperor should be considered absolute sovereign under the constitution or whether just an organ, was the basis for the 1930s movement to clarify the *kokutai* (*kokutai meichō undō*). There was no clear delineation; the political power holders (in particular the military) could at once, perhaps due to ideology’s tendency to allow for cognitive dissonance, manipulate, use, and betray the emperor while worshipping him and carrying out their actions in his name. What Sakaguchi shows, which Kuno’s model cannot, is that the emperor system could never have been merely one way for the power holders and another for the public; they are seduced by the very ideology that they spread; they worship the emperor while they promote emperor worship as a means for keeping the populace obedient and docile.

#### **4.5.3 Significance of surrender**

Sakaguchi’s invokes the surrender of August 15, 1945 in his *Zoku-Darakuron* to demonstrate how the military and government were not alone in their “use” of the emperor system; it too becomes a tool of the people, a “mechanism by which we

delude ourselves.” Even though people desperately wanted the war to end, Sakaguchi says, they could not admit it, instead behaving out of a sense of what they thought was proper or correct (*taigi meibun*). Rather than lay down their “bamboo spears,” they waited for some justification. Unaware of how they deceived themselves, the people used the emperor to give the authority to surrender.

Last year, on August 15 the war was ended in the emperor’s name. People claim that it was he who saved us. The historical evidence, in fact, supports this claim: history has always turned to the emperor as a creative solution in such times of crises. The military intuitively understood his usefulness as a trump card, and we citizens instinctively waited for them to play it. So, the catastrophic final scene that was August 15 was really a collaborative effort between the military and the masses.

We were called upon to obey His Majesty’s order, told “to bear the unendurable, to bear the unbearable.” The standard narration then tells us that the masses wept but, because it was at the command of none other than his Imperial Majesty himself, they bore the unbearable and conceded defeat.

It’s all lies! Lies! Lies!<sup>148</sup>

The people did not need the emperor to tell them to “bear the unbearable” (*shinobigataki wo shinonde*) as he had done in his surrender speech: they had already bore the unbearable. They already been weeping for the suffering that they had been

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<sup>148</sup> Dorsey, pg. 191; SA, pg. 236.

enduring. Sakaguchi implies that the disconnect between people's raw feelings and emotions and the ideology that dictates how they are to feel—in this case, they “feel” when it is at the command of the emperor—should expose the fallacy, hypocrisy, and emptiness of the ideology itself. The surrender should have been the opportunity to recognize this. In another essay from 1946, “Short Essay on the Emperor,” Sakaguchi continues to dwell on the hypocrisy of the surrender and questions the necessity for the emperor's role in it. He says, “Japanese people refuse to admit—even in their hearts—that ending the war needed no ‘justification,’ and yet ‘justification’ (*taigi meibun*) is used in the sense that it was the emperor that saved us.”<sup>149</sup> Japan's loss was the perfect opportunity to deny and throw skepticism onto this “traditional totalizing power.” However, the failure to do so—and instead to reassert the need for the emperor—was no more than “pure deception.” People wanted the war to end, but instead of responding to this desire by acknowledging that very fact (or offering some form of resistance, such as the laying down of weapons), the Japanese people, according to Sakaguchi, allowed the emperor to decide the terms of the end of war *and to let him decide how they were to respond to it*, when they were to weep. This is what constitutes the “emperor system” for Sakaguchi: the willingness to participate in the ideology of the emperor and the willingness to be deceived, even when it glaringly runs counter to basic instincts and urges, to human nature.

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<sup>149</sup> Sakaguchi Ango. “Tennō Shoron [Short Essay on the Emperor]” Sakaguchi Ango Zenshū. Chikuma Shobō, 1998.  
[http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001095/files/42891\\_21292.html](http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001095/files/42891_21292.html)

Sakaguchi recognizes that it is so tempting to fall prey to false idols and constructs and systems. We build up systems as we tear them down. In “Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor,” Sakaguchi notes how ridiculous people find worshippers of Jiko, a religious group that had claimed descent from the emperor. However, these same people who criticize those worshippers are fanatics of the cult of the emperor. They are able to recognize fanatical worship in others, but cannot recognize that there is absolutely no difference between that form of worship, and their worship of the emperor. In *Darakuron*, Sakaguchi likewise recalls a story of Miyamoto Musashi, who caught himself unknowingly praying as he passed shrines dedicated to Hachiman, and felt deep regret over this weakness. He says, “Like him, we automatically fall to worshipping some pretty ridiculous things and simply aren’t aware of it.”<sup>150</sup> This weakness of falling prey so easily to objects of veneration and the systems that create them reveals that Sakaguchi does not merely want to combat or overthrow the “emperor system”; he wants to combat the tendencies within the individual that make them vulnerable to it. *Darakuron*, then, is equally a call for deep introspection, looking into one’s heart, and being aware of the illusions of our own creation. The emperor system is one of those creations, and in a sense, continues only because it is constantly being rebuilt and reconfigured in each individual who participates. Thus, the emperor system and the moral values it pedals must be deconstructed, and so too must the self that is always ready and waiting to construct emperor systems of its own. Deconstruction of the emperor system—historicizing it

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<sup>150</sup> Dorsey, pg. 178; SA, pg.

as contingent and functional as opposed to eternal and transcendental—is also deconstruction of the self (especially as a social creature). Likewise, deconstruction of the self is also the *method* for the deconstruction of the emperor system.

For Sakaguchi, understanding is deeply connected with *affective* response to the world. To resist the temptation of social and moral systems is to be honest about urges and desires and to recognize when they operate in ways that interfere with basic human affect. It is to express feelings, act on urges; this, simply, is what it means to fall into decadence. It is not hedonism or pure evil. It is stripping away of the conventions that dictate what constitutes proper behavior. At the beginning of *Darakuron*, Sakaguchi speaks of how the world has not change, but just its “outer skin.” A layer of skin had been removed to reveal something more honest, more authentic: a reflection of the real, raw humanity of the individual. By the end of *Zoku-Darakuron*, he returns to that symbol of enduring Japanese “culture” that he dissects in “A Personal View of Japanese Culture,” the kimono: “The conventions of polite society, the taboos on romance, the rules dictating the places of duty and emotion—we should strip ourselves of these fraudulent kimonos (*nise no kimono*) and stand with our naked hearts fully exposed.”<sup>151</sup> As fake kimonos, taboos and morality disguise true emotion. Shedding them, and looking deeply at one’s naked self—in other words, understanding one’s own emotions and instincts through introspection

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<sup>151</sup> Dorsey, pg. 191; SA, pg. 237.

and interrogation—is the “first condition for restoring the human being (*ningen*)” and the “true birth of humanity (*jinsei*).”

For Sakaguchi, here, we can see the connection between affect, morality, understanding, and truth. They are inextricably linked in his model. Extricating oneself from the “wholesome morals (*kenzen naru dōtoku*)” of the emperor system is to “stand naked on the vast plain of truth.” Moreover, this scrutiny that attempts to get at truth is, as I’ve mentioned, is to examine oneself naked, and to equally examine the symbols stripped of their illusory qualities. This is precisely what Sakaguchi means in his “Short Essay on the Emperor” when he says that the emperor must be stripped naked and viewed scientifically (*kagaku no mae ni*). By this he means objectively, clearly, and unadorned by values and morals such as “tradition,” “refinement,” and “dignity.” More importantly, he means outside of the realm of politics. He says,

Even if the emperor is stripped naked to be viewed scientifically as an ordinary human (*tada no ningen*) and it is determined that the emperor system is still necessary for the lives of the Japanese people, it would be fine to create an emperor system that deals with that necessity.<sup>152</sup>

Individuals must be “stripped naked” so that their humanity can be interrogated; in the same way, the emperor must be “stripped naked” so that his may too be

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<sup>152</sup> Sakaguchi Ango. "Tennō Shoron [Short Essay on the Emperor]" *Sakaguchi Ango Zenshū*. Chikuma Shobō, 1998.  
[http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001095/files/42891\\_21292.html](http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001095/files/42891_21292.html)

interrogated. If the emperor system were deemed necessary—and through *Darakuron* we can understand that as meaning if it honestly and authentically were compatible with the urges and desires of the Japanese people—it could be reconfigured to reflect that. We can also read this as a focus on the individual who exists alone, independence of the external dictates that construct that individual; it is a forceful rejection of the type of communalist identification broadly ascribed to the mass participation in “total war” and theorized by thinkers such as Watsuji Tetsurō.<sup>153</sup>

That both the people of Japan and the emperor must be stripped naked to expose their “plain” humanity suggests a parity or parallel treatment of people and emperor that refuses to elevate one over the other. We can perhaps call it Sakaguchi’s demystified and completely humanized version *isshi dōjin*, treating everyone under his gaze equally and impartially. He carefully refuses to use the language of, for example, the Communist Party as represented in *Goshaku no Sake*, when they respond to talk of the emperor as having undergone the “descent to the status of subject (*shinsekikōka*)” by demanding that the emperor go back to the “High Plain of Heaven.” As the narrator explains, this language only reproduces the differences between the emperor and “subjects,” essentially reifying a postwar version of the emperor system, rather than attempting to dismantle the postwar

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<sup>153</sup> See especially, Sakai, Naoki. “Return to the West/Return to the East: Watsuji Tetsurō’s Anthropology and Discussions of Authenticity.” *Translation and Subjectivity: On ‘Japan’ and Cultural Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pg. 72-116.

emperor system by recognizing the humanity of the emperor. Instead, the narrator calls for the *elevation* of the emperor to the status of full-fledged citizen. Thus, for *Goshaku no Sake*, if in the postwar people have been elevated to the status of democratic citizens, so too must the emperor. In *Darakuron*, if the people can be shown in their humanity to have *fallen into decadence*, so must the emperor fall. The *ascent* to humanity of *Goshaku no Sake* is matched with the *descent* to humanity of *Darakuron*.

For both Nakano Shigeharu and Sakaguchi Ango, the emperor system stands in the way of the realization of a new form of consciousness or morality, what Sakaguchi calls the “proper opening up of the human and humanity.”<sup>154</sup> While the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*, and even the Sakaguchi of “Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor,” give us an alternative means for representing and treating the emperor in order to undermine the emperor system—namely with the respect and dignity that every human deserves—the Sakaguchi of *Darakuron* is more vague, ambiguous, even ambivalent. As a commentary on the human condition as much as it is a commentary on the emperor system or moral systems in general, *Darakuron* gives expression to Sakaguchi’s experience and feeling in the postwar, the attraction and awe of war and the preservation of beauty. For example, he considers the suicide of his young niece in aesthetic terms, as the preservation and eternalization

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<sup>154</sup> Dorsey, pg. 192; SA, pg. 237

of youth and beauty, which is of course directly analogous to the deification of the pure spirits of the fallen soldiers enshrined in Yasukuni Jinja.

His deeply subjective reflections amid the war-torn remains of Tokyo seem conflicting and contradictory with his analysis, seeming at times to uphold the very virtues that he tears down when they are part of an institutionalized system of moral codes and regulations. However, rather than interpret this as self-contradictory, though it may be, I prefer to read it as a demonstration of Sakaguchi's own humanity; he too is weak and has a sense of awe toward the very images that then become coopted by the emperor system. In *Darakuron*, he is catching himself in the act of unknowingly praying to false gods, just Miyamoto Musashi did. But this is the messiness of humanity; *Darakuron* depicts and performs its contradictions. This is what must be embraced and interrogated if the "false kimonos," the illusions, the virtues of tradition are to be shed. For Sakaguchi, to "fall into decadence" is to expose oneself to the contradictions that accompany feelings, instincts, and urges. Any form of salvation must be found by going first through the gates of hell, or at least what pervading morality would deem "hell."

*Darakuron* is less about conceiving an alternative system to the current ones than purely dismantling the ones that exist. It's a fierce recognition that even with defeat, the values of the emperor system—not so much as a political system but as something that dictates moral virtues—still held power over the individual, and still upheld the illusion of the unity of "Japan" and the illusion of what is meant to be

“Japanese.” Sakaguchi’s task for people in the postwar is to disavow themselves of what constitutes Japan, Japanese, and the self, not through pedantic moralizing but self-reflection and interrogation, understanding one’s urges and needs without the interference of “wholesome moral.” Thus, in *Zoku-Darakuron*, he says, “Citizens of Japan, I call upon you to bring about the fall of Japan and its people! Japan and its people must fall into decadence!”<sup>155</sup> This is no less than a deconstruction of nationality itself, and recognition that the emperor system is central to the production of Japan as nation.

As deconstruction, he does not—and cannot—describe what lies on the other side of this “fall into decadence.” However, this is the point: *Darakuron* cannot affirm anything, it can only negate. He says, “let all morals dissipate (*dōgi taihai*), let confusion reign (*konran seyo*).” This is no affirmation of a life of “depravity” or “decadence” per se because these are only values relative to the pervading morality, not values in and of themselves. *Daraku* removes the scaffolding of the values that construct nation, emperor system, Japan, Japanese, the self such that one is left to construct a world of one’s own making, alone. Therefore, I would like to propose “deconstruction” a more suitable translation of *daraku*.

On the one hand, *Darakuron* and *Zoku-Darakuron* are fundamentally postwar texts. The illusory values so critical to the wartime regime and ideology were torn asunder, rendered incoherent. In the postwar, people could act on their urges and

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<sup>155</sup> Dorsey, pg. 192; SA, pg. 237

needs, and most importantly, be represented as doing so, not represented as continuing to embody ideal types of virtue, not represented as noble, saintly, heroic, or whatever else. On the other hand, Sakaguchi's ahistorical representation of the "emperor system" as something that has always been present in Japan—even while acknowledging its historical contingency and mutability—makes it less specific to the postwar, and thereby, less capable of dealing with the remarkable new and changing ways in which the emperor system itself was being reconstituted. His reference to the military leaders' role in the War Crimes Tribunal and the emperor's surrender speech do illustrate how defeat and the postwar unveiled the strange tendency to worship the images of our own creation as we betray them, and for the people of Japan to be complicit in the reproduction of the emperor system by allowing it to dictate when to feel and how to think. However, he could have easily found examples during the war to illustrate the same point.

Furthermore, in claiming that humans always act on their urges and needs—and that they equally always construct false gods—Sakaguchi also universalizes the human condition and "humanity." This is critical for his argument about the absolute contingency of socially constructed values and institution, which change from one mechanism or device or trick (*karakuri*) to another: the human condition remains unchanged underneath these institutions and values, even though appearances may suggest otherwise. To quote again, "What has changed is just the surface of things, the world's outer skin." In universalizing humanity, though, *Darakuron* makes it

difficult to speak directly to the specific conditions of postwar Japan and the opportunities for negating the postwar reconstruction of the emperor system when so much was unstable and in flux. If *Darakuron* can deconstruct the emperor system, nation, Japan, and Japanese people, shouldn't it also be able to deconstruct "humanity," or at least recognize it too as a construct that arose under certain historical conditions? At times it seems that an "ordinary human" (*tada no ningen*) for Sakaguchi is not someone that simply responds to urges and needs, but someone that stands outside of history, as a basic biological unit. At other times, "ordinary human" seems like an implicit assault against the emperor's "Declaration of Humanity" because it merely paid lip service to the notion of being human without changing any of the values and virtues of the emperor system, a mere *noblesse oblige* to conform to his newly concocted role as symbolic repository of the citizen.

Therefore, we can observe a strange series of tensions within the text: the emperor system is contingent and can be deconstructed as such, and yet, it has proved remarkably resilient and adaptable *throughout Japanese history*, suggesting that it has overcome this very contingency; the moral self that follows societal dictates must be deconstructed so that the "real" self—the self that responds directly to urges and needs—can emerge, and yet what also emerges is a picture of a universal humanity. Because Sakaguchi oscillates between registers of analytical and personal narrative, however intertwined they may be, it is difficult to know just where he comes down: as a harsh critic of the *present* emperor system or of any

moral system of codes and regulations that could exist anytime and anywhere. In this vein, Nakano's *Goshaku no Sake* and Sakaguchi's 1948 "Words Humbly Dedicated to the Emperor" are more explicit in their specific targeting of the problems with the postwar emperor system, dismantling it through a type of discourse analysis *of the present*. At the same time, those very tensions are what make *Darakuron* so fascinating.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FUKAZAWA, LAUGHTER, AND THE BLACKOUT

#### **The emperor as symbol of disunity**

##### **5.1 Remilitarization: peddling back the pacifist narrative**

The question of the emperor system remained unresolved after the postwar period, which ended in 1952. While the joint invention of the postwar emperor system by the U.S. and Japanese governments had a period of nearly seven years to become concretized through ideology, aided by a discursive nexus that reinforced the narrative of the symbolic emperor who embodied pacifism and democracy, the end of the Occupation left open the possibility of constitutional reform and a further reconfigured postwar emperor system. Some conservative elements of Japanese society were still eager to return the emperor to his former glory as supreme commander as he had been during the age of Japanese Empire, and the U.S., which of course had no interest in a restored political emperor, was eager to undo changes put in place by the constitution of their own drafting, notably the pacifist promise of Article Nine. In other words, the terms of the Occupation's purported "withdrawal" (they in fact never left) rather than merely codifying the legal, political, and ideological framework set up during the Occupation, also worked to undermine them.

The San Francisco Peace Treaty, signed on September 8, 1951 by forty-eight countries, promised to return independence to Japan once the Occupation left on April 28, 1952. Article Eleven of the Treaty stipulated that Japan must accept the terms of the Tokyo Tribunal, thereby further bolstering the legitimacy of the decision to exonerate the emperor and members of the imperial family. The U.S. and Japan also signed the mutual Security Treaty at San Francisco (on the same day, September 8, 1951) that would allow the U.S. to retain a military presence in East Asia by keeping its bases in Japan. Meanwhile, the outbreak of the Korean War and the establishment of the National Police Reserve—U.S. troop deployment to Korea left a defensive vacuum in Japan—meant that by the time of the Occupation’s withdrawal, remilitarization of Japan itself was underway, and would continue through a series of developments during the 1950s. The Police Reserves would become officially known as the Self-Defense Forces (referred to herein as the *Jieitai*) in 1954.

The Left consistently opposed both the continued military presence of the U.S. in Japan after the Occupation ended as well as the remilitarization of Japan. Only two days after the Occupation had left (or should I say, regrouped), May Day riots with over one millions participants took place throughout the country to reject such remilitarization and U.S. bases, as well as poor economic conditions and the seizure of Okinawa.<sup>156</sup> Just as protestors in May of 1946 had descended upon the Imperial Palace grounds for the “Food May Day” rally, protesters on May 1, 1952 marched

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<sup>156</sup> Dower, John W. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1999, pg. 553-4.

from Meiji Shrine to the Imperial Palace in what would become “Bloody May Day.” Police used tear gas and opened fire on the crowd, killing several and injuring hundreds.

Two days later, on May 3, 1952, five years after the new constitution officially went into effect, a celebration took place at the Imperial Plaza both to honor the constitution and independence. However, reminiscent of the description in *Goshaku no Sake* of the anticlimactic and poorly attended attempt at drumming up enthusiasm for the constitution upon its ratification, attendance was low and the emperor’s message was brief.<sup>157</sup> In both circumstances, the outward expression of dissatisfaction, as witness by the riots, far dwarfed any outward expression of celebration and euphoria for the emperor and Japan’s postwar order.

I mention this context to argue that we cannot think of the postwar emperor system outside the context of both democratization and remilitarization. Despite the concerted effort to portray an emperor who would be on the vanguard of Japan’s peaceful and democratic future, the postwar emperor is equally as tied to the discourse of remilitarization and a conservative desire to return to the days of Japan’s imperial glory. This conceals, of course, that the U.S. role in postwar Japan was very similar to what Japanese Empire had been. Nevertheless, the emperor could be used to symbolize peace and war, demilitarization and remilitarization, depending on which unstable image one chose to accept. Yet, isn’t this very description

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid, pg. 555.

completely compatible with Watsuji's notion of an emperor who expresses the unity of the nation, who stands above politics precisely because he unites all competing political factions under one umbrella of the nation? Could not anti-war factions pick the postwar emperor as their symbol while the pro-war factions pick the wartime emperor as theirs? Was the emperor a symbol of the integration and unification of these conflicting and irreconcilable views? An object of absolute nothingness (*mu*)?

Absolutely not. While such an argument would be (and was) convenient to explain away discord in postwar Japan, it assumes that the emperor could express all views, when he was only being mobilized to express a select few. And among those few, he expressed them problematically; for example, while the emperor was clearly redesigned to represent the democratic will of the Japanese nation, many of those who most strongly embraced democracy—and the constitution that guaranteed it—rejected the antidemocratic nature of the existence of the imperial family.

## **5.2 Symbol of disunity**

There was an outside that the emperor could not express as symbol: the view of anyone who was critical of the emperor system itself, or those who were actively excluded from being symbolized by the emperor, such as minorities. The emperor, who had been mobilized as a symbol of multi-ethnic integration during the age of Japanese Empire, turned into the symbol of pure-blooded ethnic homogeneity, another invention of the postwar. Moreover, the symbol could not symbolize the abolition of the symbol that was necessarily included in the abolition of the symbolic

emperor system, *shōchō tennōsei haishi*. Therefore, I find it more productive to understand the postwar emperor not as the symbol of unity, but rather the *symbol of disunity*, the symbol of conflict, strife, racism, sexism, partisanship and polemicism, of U.S.-Japan mutual complicity, and the symbol of the inability for postwar Japan to reconcile with its past, and thus future.<sup>158</sup> *In actual practice*, the emperor was far from the symbol that could unify the nation as defined by official doctrine, or as conceived by philosophers as the object of absolutely “nothingness” (*mu*). Instead, the emperor was invoked and upheld as means for tearing down opposition.

This is how I understand the development of the emperor system throughout the 1950s, a time in which democratic consciousness and movements grew not merely alongside remilitarization and consolidated power by a single political party (not to mention the reestablishment of the *zaibatsu* in their postwar manifestation), but in response to it. The forceful drive by Kishi Nobusuke, but one of many revived Class-A War criminals, to revise the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (Ampo), gut Article Nine, and bolster police power was met with unprecedented public backlash and protests. Ultimately, he was successful in forcing through the Ampo Security Treaty before resigning due to the toxicity of nearly everything he represented. Kishi’s brand of politics—which has not changed since then, especially with his grandson Abe Shinzō now in office yet again—demonstrates a deep-set desire to return to the

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<sup>158</sup> This is essentially the *international* meaning of the postwar emperor, whose democratic façade is widely interpreted as the whitewashing of Japanese war crimes in East Asia.

emperor system of the militarized police state of prewar Japan with one major addition: U.S. security and cooperation. Importantly, though, when opposition grew to push back against Kishi's new model, Kishi responded with violence legitimated in the name of the emperor and "security," which came to a head in June of 1960.

Opposition to Ampo and remilitarization, with support from a wide range of groups from the Socialist and Communist parties to labor groups, groups advocating the rights of women and minorities, student groups and beyond, grew to include around sixteen million people nationwide.<sup>159</sup> In anticipation of the growing protests and due to the insufficient number of police to respond, Kishi sought the help of right-wing groups, and with the influential Kodama Yoshio as broker, mobilized them as part of his countermeasure strategy for suppressing anti-Ampo demonstrators.<sup>160</sup> A massive protest that encircled the Diet building on June 15 led to clashes with police and right-wing youth, who attacked the citizen groups. Protesters eventually made their way into the Diet compound where police unleashed tear gas and clubs. A student leader from Tokyo University, Kamba Michiko, was trampled and killed, becoming a symbol of the effects of state violence.

In the wake of the ratification of a revised Ampo treaty, which marked a significant blow to the opposition movement, candidates running for office in the

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<sup>159</sup> Sakaki-Uemura, Wesley. "Ampo struggle." *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Japanese Culture*. ed. Sandra Buckley. New York: Routledge, 2002, pg. 19-20.

<sup>160</sup> Yoshimi Shunya, Tessa Morris-Suzuki. *Tennō to Amerika*. Tokyo: Shūeisha Shinsho, 2010, pg. 141.

lower house of the Diet waged an election campaign in anticipation of the November ballots. During a nationally televised campaign debate on October 12, 1960, vocal critic of Ampo and Chairman of the Socialist Party, Asanuma Inejirō, was assassinated by the Right-wing youth, Yamaguchi Otoya. Yamaguchi hanged himself in a juvenile penitentiary, scribbling “Service for my country seven lives over. Long live His Majesty the Emperor” (*shichishō hōkoku, tennō heika banzai*) in toothpaste on the wall.<sup>161</sup> Following his death, he would become a martyr for the cause of anti-Left activism in Japan.

Meanwhile, on October 9, theaters debuted a bold film by Japanese New Wave director Ōshima Nagisa, *Nihon no yoru to kiri* (Night and Fog in Japan). The film depicted the student protest movements surrounding both Ampo treaties of 1952 and 1960, highlighting the differences between radical factions. The film opens with a wedding between Nozawa, a member of the Zengakuren in its earlier form (which protested the Ampo of 1952) with its close affiliation with the Communist Party, and Reiko, a member of the newer Zengakuren (which protested the Ampo of 1960) that attempted to break away from the Communist Party. This wedding serves as an allegory for the troubles between Old and New Left movements, a “reconciliation of factions on an institutional basis, without any resolution of the issues.”<sup>162</sup> In its rejection of a unified subject, the film challenged—both politically and artistically as a

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<sup>161</sup> Ōe, Kenzaburō, Luk van Haute, trans. *Two Novels: J, Seventeen*. New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, 1996. pg. vii

<sup>162</sup> Turim, Maureen. *The Films of Oshima Nagisa: Images of a Japanese Iconoclast*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, pg. 55.

film—the humanism and Old-Left Communism of the student protest movement and *its representation*.<sup>163</sup> On October 13, one day after Asanuma's assassination, *Night and Fog in Japan* was pulled from theaters by its production company, Shōchiku, in what may have been a political maneuver to avoid controversy at a sensitive moment. To Ōshima such censorship was political oppression akin to massacre:

I really think that what killed *Night and Fog in Japan* is the same thing that killed Kamba Michiko and Asanuma Inejirō, and I protest with unrelenting anger. What is it? It is everyone and everything that is displeased when the people try to effect reform from their side, to carve out new conditions for themselves. The enormous strength shown by the people in the fight against the security treaties terrifies and intimidates them, ultimately sending them into a frenzy. I swear before the three skeletons of those who were massacred by the power of that frenzy that my film is the weapon of the people's struggle.<sup>164</sup>

Ōshima draws attention to the fact that political oppression is not the unilateral violence of the state, although this violence was present, forceful, and undeniable. Right-wing violence against the movement also constituted political oppression, as

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<sup>163</sup> Desser, David. *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988, pg. 24.

<sup>164</sup> Ōshima Nagisa. "In Protest against the Massacre of Night and Fog in Japan." *Cinema, Censorship, and the State: The Writings of Nagisa Oshima, 1956-1978*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991, pg. 57. Originally published in *Film Criticism*, Dec. 1960.

did the willingness of the film studio, Shōchiku, to censor a political work. While not necessarily deriving from the state, the ideological mindset that actively suppressed opposition through physical violence or *representative violence*—determining what can and cannot be said through compliance and censorship—worked in concert and complicity with the state. That right-wing violence and self-censorship can act in the capacity of *arm of the state* to suppress dissident expression alone demonstrates the ever-present possibility for the development of fascistic oppression akin to what the Japanese state imposed unilaterally through its Peace Preservation Laws.

### 5.3 Consummating the marriage to new media

While the content of *Night and Fog in Japan* is political and aesthetically subversive, it is somewhat bizarre that a film that focused more on the sectarian conflicts within the student movement itself, and not political oppression by the state, would have been deemed worthy of censorship at all. On the other hand, the portrayal of marriage, however allegorical, came at a time when the institution of marriage itself was being questioned as an instrument of patriarchal oppression<sup>165</sup> *and* when the imperial family enjoyed reinvigorated interest thanks to a shift to the

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<sup>165</sup> Such questioning of marriage has a long history in Japan, for example, Miyamoto Yukiko's *Nobuko*, written in 1925. In the postwar, there was gaining consciousness that marriage could serve as an oppressive tool to relegate women to the home. During the 1950s, a coalition of labor and women's rights during the 1950s, demanded of unionization and the right to work after marriage. Workers from the Ōmi Silk Reeling Company as well as nurses and hospital workers in Tokyo, had notable success, with rights granted in 1959 and 1960. Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan From Tokugawa Times to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, pg. 275.

next generation: the Crown Prince, the young Akihito, needed a bride. For years, the Imperial Household Agency had been on a hunt to find a match suitable for Akihito, although perhaps the standard of “suitability” was conceived in relation more to the imperial household than the young prince. His engagement in 1958 to Shoda Michiko, the daughter of an executive of Nisshin Flour Company with a Catholic school education, was widely popular because it was perceived as a “love match” between Akihito and a commoner (however elite her background), a veritable modernization of the values of the imperial family.

The “Mitchii boom” in the media, which obsessed over every detail of the match—from discussions of “modern love” to the implications of someone from outside the court performing the intricate duties of (wifely) palace rituals—culminated with the royal wedding on April 10, 1959, broadcast to the nation on live television. The broadcast was unprecedented, reaching a viewership of fifteen million, which put the imperial family at the center of a shared experience that *produced the ability to imagine oneself as belonging to the nation.*<sup>166</sup> It marked not

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<sup>166</sup> NHK confirms this production of nationality while documenting the statistics of the Royal Wedding coverage on their website in a section subtitled, “Sharing the experience”: “In 1959, the betrothal of the Crown Prince to Shoda Michiko, a commoner, sparked the so-called “Michi boom,” and generated an eagerness to watch the royal wedding that significantly accelerated the spread of TV in Japan. Coverage on the wedding day was Japan’s largest-ever live relay, mobilizing a total of 100 cameras and 1,000 personnel from both NHK and commercial broadcasting companies. Around 15 million Japanese are said to have watched the royal wedding, *making this the first occasion on which the entire nation was able to share an experience through television.*”(my italics). NHK, “Discovering TV’s Potential: 50s.” 50

only changing perceptions of the imperial family, but the role of new media in the dissemination of information.<sup>167</sup> As Aaron Gerow notes, the event bolstered ownership of televisions and provided an opportunity to improve perception of the medium “by wedding itself to the nation.”<sup>168</sup> This representation of the imperial family, perhaps a welcome diversion for the Imperial House Agency from the politically fraught figure of Hirohito, was contemporaneous with growth of the protest movement over Ampo; new modes of understanding were inseparable from new modes of representation. Television was as important for disseminating the apolitical representation of the imperial family as it was for debating Japan’s rapid remilitarization, and allowing the nation to witness the violence of, for example, Asamuna’s assassination, before its eyes in live time. Meanwhile, Ōshima Nagima,

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*Years of NHK Television*. Published April, 2003. Accessed May 20, 2013.

[[http://www.nhk.or.jp/digitalmuseum/nhk50years\\_en/history/p07/](http://www.nhk.or.jp/digitalmuseum/nhk50years_en/history/p07/)]

<sup>167</sup> For Matsushita Keiichi, the “love match” of Akihito to a “commoner” transformed the image of the emperor system away from that of political authority—something to be feared—to something domestic and accessible, to be “loved” (*keiai sareru, akogare*). Just as Sakaguchi had compared the emperor to celebrity, Matsushita saw the imperial family becoming “stars” (*sutaa-ka sareta kōshitsu*). His famous essay, “Taishū tennōsei-ron” [Emperor System of the Masses] was published in 1959, but given that this transformation in the perception of the emperor system was clearly already recognized in the late 1940s by Nakano and Sakaguchi, as I have discussed, he was not the first to have this thought. Moreover, although Matsushita’s intent was to critique the emperor system, his analysis also confirms and reproduces a central tenet of the postwar narrative, promoted by Kanamori especially, that the emperor *was* in fact the center of affection for the Japanese people (*kokumin no akogare no chūshin*). I find it more productive to demonstrate the very divisiveness created by the emperor system in postwar discourse. See, Matsushita Keiichi, “Taishū tennōsei-ron” [Emperor System of the Masses]. *Tennōsei Ronshū*. ed. Kamishima Jiro and Kuno Osamu. Tokyo: Sanichi shobō, 1974, pg. 282-290

<sup>168</sup> Gerow, Aaron. “Japanese Film and Television.” *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*. Theodore Bestor, ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011, pg. 222.

who was turning film into a radical and revolutionary mode of political expression, protested the censorship of *Night and Fog in Japan* not merely for its suppression of political content, but for the active “massacre” of the medium itself.

This complex web of events and their representations in 1959 and 1960—protests, revolution, remilitarization, assassinations, weddings, censorship, new media—created a discursive space in desperate need of critical reflection and theorization, or at least, problematization. In taking these very elements, juxtaposing and inverting them, I believe that Fukazawa Shichirō’s work, *Fūryū Mutan*, forces a reconsideration of both temporality and the symbolic nature of the postwar emperor system. In doing so, he transgressed the most potent of taboos: representation of the *present* emperor system and imperial family. He offended and delighted readers, often both at the same time, and produced his own *violence of representation* by depicting the very objects (and symbols) that were supposed to be off limits.

#### **5.4 *Fūryū Mutan*: No room for symbols**

Furthermore, I want to look at *Fūryū Mutan*, published in *Chūō Kōron* in its December 1960 edition, in which he depicts the beheading of the Imperial Family in a dream, as an attempt to break out of the realm of the symbolic, as a demonstration of what cannot be integrated and sublated into the emperor system through the expression of the emperor. In this sense, I interpret it as a challenge to Watsuji’s notion that the emperor symbolically expresses the unity of the nation. The response *Fūryū Mutan* engendered reveals the cleavages in Japanese society as well as the

fascistic tendencies that wished to punish Fukazawa *as if* 1960s Japan still operated as it did in the 1920s and 1930s under the Peace Preservation Laws. In comparison with the texts discussed to this point, I want to argue that *Fūryū Mutan* performed the very *daraku* that Sakaguchi advocated at every level, violating rules of decorum and of proper *representation*. Far from advocating, encouraging, provoking, or glorifying violence against the emperor and the imperial family, Fukazawa delimited what constituted *representative violence* in the discursive space of 1960.

#### 5.4.1 Brief outline of *Fūryū Mutan*

I will start my reading of *Fūryū Mutan* by treating it textually, and not begin with the actual violence that followed its publication.<sup>169</sup> It is written as a first-person narrative (I will use “*Watashi*” to indicate the narrator) of a chaotic dream sequence bookended by a description of a “broken” watch. The watch only operates when on his wrist, stopping when it’s not. The watch is thus “awake” when he’s awake, asleep when he’s asleep, making him feel close to it. *Watashi* takes his watch, on the advice

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<sup>169</sup> This is unlike John Whittier Treat, who provides an interesting and important analysis of the text, but also sets up his interpretation by describing the assassination that would follow in the wake of its publication. In fact, he interprets the events surrounding the text as part of its “carnavalesque” nature. While certainly important in the overall context of the period, we cannot judge the work merely because of what ensued after its publication, including the critical response to it. Readings that do this also tend to make Fukazawa responsible for the inability to depict the person of the emperor in literature after 1960. See: Treat, John Whittier. “Beheaded Emperors and the Absent Figure in Contemporary Japanese Literature.” *PMLA*, Vol. 109, No. 1 (Jan., 1994), pg. 100-115. Watanabe Naomi points out how responses to *Fūryū Mutan* suppressed the text by focusing on the event. Watanabe, Naomi. *Fukei bungakuron josetsu*. Hihyō Kūkan Sōsho, 17. Tōkyō: Ōta Shuppan, 1999, pg. 186.

of his nephew, to a watchmaker to have it examined. It turns out that it is in fact a very fine watch in working order, something given to a friend by an American who had to leave Japan in haste.<sup>170</sup> That night, he returns home late and goes to bed.

Watashi enters into his dream: he is on a packed commuter train near Shibuya when he hears news that violence has broken out in center Tokyo. When he gets off the train to transfer to a bus, he hears that actually a revolution is taking place. Someone in line tells him, “It's not revolution, but the overthrowing of the government to make a better Japan.” Watashi is bothered by the word “Japan,” a nasty country, he says. “Well, that’s what we’ll call it for now,” the man says in response.

All sides are heavily armed, he’s told, because the international community—Korea, America, and the Soviet Union—have contributed boats and machine guns to “put it to the devil Japan.”<sup>171</sup> The soldiers from the *Jieitai*, too, are on the side of the people, but no one had “decided” to take sides. “It just is that way,” he is told. Some buses head to Ginza to join the *Jieitai* fight “reactionary elements” (*handō bunshi*), but Watashi takes the bus to the Imperial Palace, which has been occupied. A packed car with a flag that says “Women’s Independence” drives by, and a reporter announces that they’re on their way to take pictures of the massacre of “Mitchii.” He takes the bus through the Sakurada Gate and all the way to the front of the Imperial

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<sup>170</sup> Fuzakawa Shichirō. *Fūryū Mutan* [Story of a Dream of Courtly Elegance]. Chūō Kōron, 75.13, 1960, pg. 329.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 331.

Palace. The grounds had been set up like a festival, with stalls selling Oden, ramen, candy, and toys.

The Crown Prince and Michiko are on their backs, awaiting their execution with, what Watashi surmises, is his own ax. When the ax comes down on their necks, their heads roll like the sound of metal, (*sutten korokoro karakara*—we might translate it as “clangity clang”). Afterward, their headless bodies lay nicely (*gyōgi yoku*), the Crown Prince in tuxedo, Michiko in a splendid kimono.

Watashi encounters an “old gentleman” (*rōshinshi*), a long-time employee of the Imperial Palace, who informs him that Emperor Hirohito and Empress Nagako have also been killed, and they proceed through to crowd toward them. The beheaded emperor was in a suit, the Empress in a blouse and skirt with a tag that said “Made in England.” He spots a card with illegible handwriting that resembles crawling worms. The old gentleman tells him that it is the emperor’s death poem (*jisei no on-uta*). As he searches and finds the death poem of the Empress as well, the crowd parts, making way for the Dowager Empress Shōken (the wife of Meiji who died in 1914), which Watashi does not find strange. She has a refined countenance and is dressed elegantly, also in an English-made dress, and has a serpentine black neck.

A confrontation ensues between the Watashi and the Dowager Empress. He calls her a “shitty old hag” (*kuso tare baa*), which she matches by calling Watashi a “shitty brat” (*kuzo kozō*) in a regional dialect. Watashi assaults her, twisting her arms,

putting her into a full nelson. Meanwhile, the old gentleman continues to recite the death poem and interpret them with Watashi, who cannot engage too deeply in interpretation for fear of releasing the Dowager Empress. The old gentleman emphasizes the intentional ambiguity and indirectness (*tōmawashi*) of the death poem, which prompts Watashi to ask whether the point of *waka* poetry isn't merely to confuse with riddles (*nazo nazo*). The Empress Dowager then shouts that Watashi (and the rest of the protesters) are only alive thanks to the Imperial Family and the Emperor who saved the nation by ending the war, to which Watashi retorts that the Imperial Family, conversely, live off the people's earnings, like blood-sucking vampires.<sup>172</sup> Watashi experiences a brief moment of sympathy with her when noticing her bald spot, a vulnerability that he shares.

A marching band comes through, and sacred symbols of the Imperial House like the medals given for cultural achievement (*bunka kunshō*, the Order of Cultural Merit) and the three Imperial Regalia, which resemble souvenir shop toys (a child's mirror, a jewel that belongs on a toy ring, a wooden sword), are tossed onto the ground. The old gentlemen recites the death poems of the Crown Prince and Princess, and Watashi provides a rather profane interpretation which the gentleman rejects for a reading that suggests that the poems contain more subtlety, depth, and refinement (*omomuki no aru*).

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<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 336.

Festival entertainment booths for comics and performances go up, and a military parade comes through with music featuring tubas, trumpets, and *taiko* drums. It is a celebration that marks the end of the battle in Ginza (in which the *Jieitai* joined the people to defeat reactionaries). Fireworks light the sky in rapid succession. Feeling a sense that he had left nothing in this world, Watashi composes his own death poem, which the old gentleman points out was ripped off from *Manyōshū*. At that, Watashi shoots himself in the head and visualizes his brain matter as maggots crawling around.

Watashi is woken by his nephew, who heard him screaming some *haiku*, which Watashi concludes must have been his own original death poem.<sup>173</sup> He was actually still dreaming. Then, he wakes up completely, and his watch, which reads 2am (only ten minutes after he had set it down), is in sync with the other clocks. He hugs the watch, thinking, “It stayed awake while I was dreaming!”

#### 5.4.2 Exceeding the bounds of proper representation

The force of this work is its unlikely pairing and inverting of the familiar images of the time. Everything is present: the new royal couple, protestors, the *Jieitai*, foreign intervention, the emperor, the death poem, the media, tension, conflict, revolution, assassination, and celebration. In the carnivalesque space of the

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<sup>173</sup> John Treat points out how this, too, was also a plagiarized poem that was originally written by Bashō and used in school curriculum: *Natsugusa ya tsuwamono-dono no yume no ato* (Summer grasses! All that remains after the dreams of warriors.) Treat, pg. 112, footnote 7.

dream, all hierarchies are overturned, royalty interact with the masses, decorum is abandoned, the sacred is profaned, and history and teleology are irrelevant.

Authorship and authenticity are discarded. Time and space are collapsed to reveal the hidden tensions that are inexpressible because physical boundaries and societal rules otherwise prevent such encounter in “reality.”

It is mistaken to reject *Fūryū Mutan* as merely contrarian, disrespectful, or a case of anything goes. It does not have a political message or point per se, mocking and parodying all sides. However, because Fukazawa was unwilling to honor boundaries of “appropriate” representation within the short story form, his text offered a new perspective for conceiving of the emperor system.

If there is not an overt political message in the juxtaposition and inversion of images, what does the text disclose? First of all, there is a lurking and constant presence of the foreign powers, even if the reason for their presence is unexplained and unresolved. Watashi’s watch—which set up a warped temporality *outside the dream itself*, suggesting that the return to reality is not quite so—originated with an American woman who had to leave Japan, but was made in Switzerland. The distorted time-measuring of his watch was confirmed by the “authentic” time of his nephew’s Westminster clock.<sup>174</sup> During the protest, Watashi is told that “every nation” (*kaku kuni*) is contributing to destroy Japan by providing weapons, and Korea, the Soviet Union, and the United States—unlikely allies during the Cold War era—are

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<sup>174</sup> Fukazawa, pg. 329.

mentioned specifically.<sup>175</sup> Every member of the Imperial Family except for the newly anointed Princess Michiko is dressed in Western clothes made in England, an otherwise unexceptional fact had Watashi not made a point of looking at every clothing label.

What are we to make of the very intentional inclusion of the foreign? Why would America provide weapons to protesters for the purpose of overthrowing the Japanese government when the actual protests struggled against Ampo, the mutually-assured protection of both countries? I believe that the inclusion of the foreign in *Fūryū Mutan* specifically highlights the colonial relationship at the center of the debates over Ampo, disclosing the absurdity of speaking of Japan's "independence." The "made in England" labels on the clothing of the Imperial Family are also a keen reminder that the postwar emperor system was a collaborative invention with foreign powers; that the labels were British as opposed to American is immaterial, as objects are freely swapped and mixed in dreams. Also, the narrative of the new, "modernized," and democratic emperorship was contingent on the "everyman" nature of the emperor, performed through mere wardrobe change. The fact that only Michiko wore a refined kimono points to the Imperial Family's costume change in reserve: as a "commoner" brought into the sacred realm of the Imperial Palace, she had to perform "Japaneseness" in a way that, ironically, the Imperial Family was now exempt, and overcompensate for her deficiency for not being born

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid, pg.

into the family. It makes we wonder if, despite the initial reluctance of Hirohito and the Imperial Household Agency to accept that Michiko could be a befitting bride to Akihito, they didn't come to see the domestication of an outsider to the Imperial Family as a way to sustain its existence by having her submissively *perform* the role.<sup>176</sup>

### 5.4.3 Disruptive temporality

The time of the text is also foreign, both because of the foreign-made watch and the disjointed and interrupted time that the watch (and the dream) produces. It is a “colonial time” that breaks with the temporality of “imperial time” in which the nation of Japan is measured by the unbroken and continuous reign of emperors, and counted by eras (*nengō*) defined by the one-to-one relationship of emperor to era (*issei ichigen*).<sup>177</sup> Imperial time is further interrupted by the execution of emperor as well as the first in line to inherit the throne, the Crown Prince Akihito, severing the continuous reign of emperors. That a bus is able drive through the Sakurada Gate, up past the Nijūbashi Bridge, and directly to the square of the Imperial Palace is pure violation of imperial space as well. As a sacred space, the access to which is tightly controlled and monitored, it is fitting for the carnivalesque inversions that the text performs.

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<sup>176</sup> Of course, it's well known that the demands of this performance have, on multiple occasions, driven Michiko to depression and even aphasia.

<sup>177</sup> It should be noted that this method of naming imperial reigns is an invention of the Meiji period, and retrospectively applied to time periods that preceded it.

Yet, the alternative to “imperial time” is not “revolutionary time” because the temporality of revolution assumes progress and development through stages until a climactic break point is reached; revolutionary temporality assumes a historical teleology. The interrupted and collapsed time of *Fūryū Mutan* eschews such history or purpose. There was no development that culminated with the events of the text, no past history to explain the state of the present, let alone a historical agent. Watashi, perplexed that the military is fighting on the side of the protestors, asks a woman, “When was all of this decided?” She responds, “It’s not a question of anyone deciding. It just is that way.”<sup>178</sup> Her day had started as any normal day, with the quotidian humdrum of her commute, but now that a revolution was underway, she was participating. The events are just happening, without reason or meaning.

Revolution, in fact, is constantly parodied and subverted within the text. It’s never quite clear if what is occurring is mere violence, war, or revolution. Watashi asks, “Is it revolution? Is it the Left (*sayoku* 左欲)?” However, rather than use the *kanji* for Left-wing (*sayoku* 左翼), Fukazawa creates a pun, replacing “wing” with “desire,” which could yield a reading such as “Is it revolution, the *desire* of the Left?” It is also hardly clear what, if anything, is being overthrown. The Imperial Family is so trivialized that their decapitations have no particular significance. All of the fighting occurs at a slight distance from the Imperial Palace, in Ginza, but even there, the enemy is only described as “reactionary elements” whereas the protestors are

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 331

backed by Japan's *Jieitai* and with the help of foreign arms. The events bear no resemblance to the democratic movement to oppose the Ampo and Kishi's police state; there is no sharp delineation of friend and enemy; there are no demands made by the protestors. In fact, Watashi is so busy discussing the death poems of the Imperial Family and fighting with the Dowager Empress that the "revolution" is inconsequential, a part of the scenery.

The author Takeda Taijun rejects the many critics who saw the texts as "not taking a position on the revolution." He notes the pervasive anxiety of Watashi, who operates in a strange temporality established by his watch and dream state, and the very instability of events and images within it. Since the logic of the text operates according to a distorted sense of space and time, to critique it as if operated according to the logic of historical progress (empty, homogeneous time) is mistaken. He says,

There is a detachment from the type of formal logic required for the analysis of the revolution—or comparative revolutions of different countries—in which history is fated to move toward a certain direction. Space is interrupted. In a Dali painting,<sup>179</sup> pocket watches are drawn in an exhaustedly warped state, like paper drenched with water. Time in this work, too, like the exhaustedly warped pocket watches, is not a continuation of the "punctual time" of the continuous everyday. The freedom within a dream after all is

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<sup>179</sup> The Persistence of Memory, 1931

liberation from the space and time of the everyday, and from within that, there could be no discourse capable of analyzing revolutionary history.

Rather, *revolutionary history is unanalyzable*, and the real value of the dream is its ability to leap over that type of method. Dreamers dream at a depth unknown to scholarly activities or the particularities of history, and therefore to critique it from those angles misses the mark.<sup>180</sup>

The text is *unanalyzable as critique* precisely because it is not critique, and therefore cannot be forced to conform to its standard or “take a position” on the politics of the day. Many critics were not quite sure what to make of it, and at a loss, attempted to understand it not as text but as event. As I’ll show later, Nakano Shigeharu’s own uneasiness over the text is related to its subversion of proper method of resistance to the state, which in turn, he believes can play into the hands of state violence.

#### **5.4.4 Dirty mouths: the language of the text**

The only “critique” of the emperor system is expressed in the vulgar and brutish argument and brawl between Watashi and the Dowager Empress, brought back from the dead to articulate the distain of the Imperial Family for the people. That too, however, is a caricature of a critique, and more an expression of raw sentiment instead.

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<sup>180</sup> Takeda Taijun. “Yume to genjitsu [Dreams and reality].” *Bessatsu Shinhyō: Fukuzawa Shichirō no sekai*.7.2, 1974, pg. 216-219. Originally published in *Gunzō*, Shōwa 36 (1961), Feb.

**Dowager Empress:** “Who do you Shits think is responsible for ensuring your very lives? It’s thanks to us that you’re alive!”

**Watashi:** “What the hell, you shitty old hag! You have no proof of that. You vampires have sucked us dry of our money, and you dare say we owe *you* thanks? More like thanks for nothing.”

**Dowager Empress:** “What the hell to you, shitty brat! Have you forgotten August 15<sup>th</sup>? It’s thanks to *our very own dear* Hirohito that the unconditional surrender was made, saving your lives.”

**Watashi:** “The reason *your* fucking son ended the war, and saved anyone’s life, was that he was told by others to surrender and then to claim that he was tricked by those around him. You going to tell me who the hell it was?”<sup>181</sup>

The point of the confrontation between Watashi and the Empress Dowager is not so much that they repeat the common postwar theme that the Hirohito magnanimously saved the nation through surrender, and the equally-as-common trope that the Imperial Family owe their extravagant and cloistered existence to the people whose taxes support them, but rather the depiction of the type of interaction that could never take place. No one would ever dare disrespect the members of Imperial Family *to their faces* with such vulgarity, and no one from the Imperial Family—whose designated postwar role is to personify humility, elegance, and refined language—

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid, pg. 336.

could ever utter such debauched language. Such indiscretion could only happen—and certainly did all the time—in the private sphere. In public, however, it's an impossible encounter. In depicting the impossible itself, Fukazawa gives cathartic expression to a desire typically not allowed to enter the field of representation: the desire to *publically* transgress. It is a desire constantly kept in check by the very moral or ideological constructs that Sakaguchi Ango recognizes as taking the humanity out of the human being.

Throughout *Fūryū Mutan*, this vulgar language is juxtaposed with the elevated and oblique language of the imperial death poems, the ancient language of *waka*. The poems serve to buttress the Imperial Family's status as the arbiter of aristocratic elegance and linguistic grace. The performance of the *waka* is a ritual, like others done by the emperor, intended to fuse the image of the Imperial Household with the language of antiquity, such that both the Japanese language and emperor could serve the metonymic function of representing a timeless and unchanging Japan, where "Japan," "Japanese language," and "*tennō* (or *kokutai*)" could be used interchangeably. Yet, Fukazawa constantly undermines the privileged position of representation through the *waka* death poems. The old gentleman, the officially sanctioned interpreter of the poems by virtue of his long tenure with the Imperial Household Agency, gives readings that are equally as obtuse as the original poem, while Watashi undermines the supposed profundity of each poem through vulgar interpretation that, in a sense, domesticates it by making it relatable and

understandable, devoid of its mystique and privileged status.<sup>182</sup> He questions whether the point of *waka* itself is to be intentionally confusing and enigmatic, a puzzle (*nazo nazo*) that one has to work to crack. Of course, the old gentleman rejects any such notion, but fails to show how it could not be the case.<sup>183</sup>

In another instance, the old gentleman reads Akihito's and Michiko's death poems together, interpreting them as if one poem in complete harmony, just like the young couple. To him, the seasonal imagery and colors— clichéd tropes each with specific connotations—are perfectly offset to complement the other, and suggest a poignant reconciliation with their premature deaths. Watashi interrupts him mid-sentence, struck by his own sudden understanding of the poem:

I got it! He says something and she responds one way. Then she says something and he responds another way. It means that couples will stubbornly fight with one another, but when they are on their deathbeds, they can look back and understand those fights to be romantic expressions.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> John Treat's essay covers in detail the readings of these poems, which make repetition of them here unnecessary. He discusses how ceremonies such as the New Year's poetry parties, the *utakai-hajime*, invite the masses to submit entries of their own *waka* compositions in an attempt to collapse the difference between emperor and people. "*Waka*, through its conservative unity of aesthetics that define Japanese national identity, is the privileged instrument by which social and political difference among individual Japanese is purportedly dissolved." Treat, pg. 106. However, to me, such a ceremony only functions to secure the authoritative role of the Imperial Household in designating what constitutes Japaneseness.

<sup>183</sup> Fukazawa, pg. 335.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 337.

Watashi's interpretation relies solely on the structure of reading two poems in counterpoint, deducing that it is like a quarrel, but a quarrel that can be reconciled at the time of death as an expression of romance. This interpretation strips the poems of their symbolic content, completely ignoring the signifiers at the center of the old gentleman's interpretation—a butterfly, yellow flowers, autumn maple foliage, etc—in favor of an analysis based on the structural act of reading two poems together. Therefore, Watashi not only challenges the officially-sanctioned interpretation by bringing the death poems into the domestic space of a fight (*kenka*) between couples; removing the symbolic content of the poems also deprives the Imperial Household of its power to represent.<sup>185</sup> To reject the symbolic import of the poems is to extract them from the tradition and legacy of poetic meaning—a legacy that takes into account symbolic usage since the *Manyōshū*—that authorizes what constitutes proper interpretation. In this sense, Watashi's reading enacts an *interpretative violence* upon the poems that undermines the value of the symbol as well as the power to symbolize.<sup>186</sup>

The text thus parodies the notion that the event of the deaths of the Imperial Family could have any “meaning.” Meaning would have to be constructed through language, but the very unity of this language is subverted through such interpretative

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<sup>185</sup> Treat notes that the manipulation of the death poems by Watashi functions to “trespass into one of the unresolved paradoxes of the emperor in postwar Japan: his official status as both reified symbol and reigning symbolist.” Treat, pg. 106.

<sup>186</sup> In the flattened space of the dream, Watashi gives equal weight to interpreting his own use of the phrase “shitty old hag” (*kusottare baa*, literally “shit-dripping hag”) as he gives interpretation of the death poems.

violence; the elevated language of *waka* inhabits the same space as the indelicate language of the Empress Dowager. The decapitations are given no greater meaning or significance within the text. They are a spectacle for the crowds to witness, and for a journalist to photograph for the consumption of her magazine's Michiko-obsessed readership; the deaths merely happen and have no cause or explanation. There is no trial and conviction, no suggestion that the executions are punishment for war crimes or the responsibility of the emperor for the war itself—if the beheadings were about retribution or bearing responsibility for the past, surely the focus would have been on Hirohito himself, not the imperial family in general, and especially not the outsider, the new Crown Princess Michiko. The sound of the heads rolling (*sutten korokoro karakara*) suggests that they are made of metal, but that only points to what we already know: the function of the emperor is little more than that of a robot or machine; every movement is predetermined, every utterance scripted.

Only the old gentleman, who appears absolutely unconcerned with the actual deaths that took place, is focused on salvaging the remnants of symbolic imperial authority through his interpretations of the poems. Likewise, he runs around picking up Order of Cultural Merit medals (*bunka kunshō*)—he had been awarded one for being a go-between (*nakōdo*) for the royal couple—because they were being thrown out. He says its “such a waste” (*mottainai*) to see them strewn about. However, even this act of reclaiming the discarded artifacts of the emperor system is hardly a

desperate attempt to reestablish symbolic order—the time for that has clearly passed.

The Imperial Regalia (the sword, mirror, and jewel)—those enduring physical objects that have accompanied the supposed unbroken line of emperors down to the present since their divine origin—have no symbolic power either. Their use-value does not even warrant resale at a pawnshop.<sup>187</sup> Instead, they have been reduced to toys that could be found at a souvenir shop or penny-candy store, perhaps something that could be purchased at one of the festival stands that had set up shop on the palace grounds; the sword looked like it was made from a chunk of wood, the mirror looked like it belonged to a child, and the jewel was more fitting for a toy ring. They are mere tchotchkes. The Imperial Regalia, in coordination with the Japanese language of antiquity and the continuous imperial line, are all deprived of their symbolic function.

#### **5.4.5 The space for laughter**

Of course, nothing in Watashi's dream space is privileged. It is a space of unfettered connections, where nothing is sacred and therefore nothing can be transgressed. It is a taboo-free zone. With such a setup—and perhaps only with such a setup—Fukazawa allows the reader to imagine a world in which Japan's reigning symbols have no currency. In fact, this is precisely what makes *Fūryū Mutan* so subversive: it gives expression to what many people may have been thinking but

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<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 337.

could not articulate in public, or perhaps even to themselves. Even though people may know that the emperor system is pure construct, they re-inscribe and reproduce it by carefully abiding by its boundaries, giving respect to its symbols and symbolizers. The symbolic capacity of the emperor system—its ideological power—is only maintained to the degree that the public agrees to adhere to what it deems sacred, giving the *impression* that it is sacred. For Fukazawa to *represent* the Imperial Family, the Palace grounds, the Imperial Regalia, the imperial death poems, and even the protest movement itself, as anything other than sacred thus is in pure violation of the prohibition. In other words, Fukazawa establishes Watashi's taboo-free zone in order to break through the taboo-dense space of present Japan; to represent the unrepresentable, to give expression to the impossible. This representation gives way to catharsis in that it allows the reader to confront any secret desire to perform such transgression and violate the taboo imposed on society not by any legal code (*fukeizai* had lost its legal foundation) but through self-regulation and restraint. This desire, needless to say, is not the desire to kill the king, but to openly acknowledge that the emperor is not sacred.

In this sense, *Fūryū Mutan* fights the very tendency to suppress one's feelings or desires because of how one *ought* to feel. Takeda Taijun, who describes shaking with laughter while reading of the Dowager Empress and Watashi hurling abuse at one another, writes:

I could not stop laughing. It's quite a delightful piece. It felt mean-spirited towards the victims within the work. It never occurred to me to injure such characters in literature, and never imagined it would be delightful. Yet, it was funny, so what could I do (*shikata ga nai*)? *Even if I'm told that I'm not supposed to find it funny, it's not as if I can deceive my own true feelings.*<sup>188</sup>

This seemed to be a very common reaction. Many of the writers who engaged in the debate over the text (*'Fūryū Mutan' ronsō*) described their insuppressible and uproarious laughter (*gera gera waratta*), even when critical of it (Hirano Ken is a prime example) or despite feeling a little unnerved as well. Yoshimoto Takaaki, who was in stitches laughing at it, considered the text to be a case of "high-class *rakugo*," and that Fukazawa is less a writer than a storyteller (*kōshakushi*), a *manzai* artist, or *rakugo* performer.<sup>189</sup> Yet, it's interesting that Takeda should describe the tendency to laugh despite the fact that it's not supposed to be funny. It speaks to the subjective and internal forces that stand in the way of overcoming the social dictates of what constitutes proper representation. Takeda laughed in spite of his better judgment, but in doing so, was able to objectify and thus expose the ideological forces that are in operation within him. His laughter itself in this sense is transgressive.

Yet, this very type of laughter that was troubling to others. The poet Hasegawa Ryūsei, for example, was astonished that so many writers could express

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<sup>188</sup> Takeda, pg. 216.

<sup>189</sup> Yoshimoto Takaaki. "Fukazawa wo kodoku sasete oite nanno 'genron no jiyū' ya zo." *Bessatsu Shinhyō: Fukuzawa Shichirō no sekai*.7.2, 1974, pg. 238.

the extent of their laughter upon reading *Fūryū Mutan*. He says, “Of course readers are free to laugh when reading a text, and they are free to find laughable elements within the text. But, there is something lamentable hidden behind the laughter of these authors, *something irresponsible*.”<sup>190</sup> Hasegawa detects a type of “homicidal thought” (*satsujin kannen*) behind the laughter and that is archetypal of Fukazawa’s aesthetics, characterized by the vengeance of the isolated masses with no alternative and the brutality of those with no faith in solidarity. The laughter of the writers indicates a type of nonchalant attitude in the writers who, rather than being concerned of the deeply rooted homicidal tendencies within Japan (and that Hasegawa says are especially present within the lower classes), just shrug it off with their “tranquilizing laughter.” He says,

We can only surmise that there is a quiet but cowardly homicidal thought—a half-baked and easygoing homicidal thought—that exists within the laughter of each writers who claims, “Oh, it’s so funny!” and “It’s ingenious,” whether they agree or disagree.<sup>191</sup>

Hasegawa believes that *Fūryū Mutan* serves as a valuable “litmus test” for public intellectuals and writers (*bunkajin*) in general, not only as an indication of whether they harbor “homicidal thoughts” but also as a test of loyalty to see how they would

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<sup>190</sup> Hasegawa Ryūsei. “‘Fūryū Mutan’ wo dou miru ka.” *Bessatsu Shinhyō: Fukuzawa Shichirō no sekai*.7.2, 1974, pg. 232-236. Originally published in *Nihon Dokusho Shimbun*, Shōwa 36 (1961), Feb. 13.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 234

connect their personal “hate thought” (*zōo kannen*) to class-based hate.<sup>192</sup> I find this argument wholly unconvincing and bizarre; it is much more telling that Hasegawa could convert his discomfort with the *reaction* to the story into a blanket psychoanalysis of the homicidal tendencies of the writers who partook in the debate following the publication of *Fūryū Mutan*. How could laughter, or the expression of one’s laughter, ever be “irresponsible” as he says? His assessment is troubling for numerous reasons. First of all, Hasegawa exhibits the typical tendency to reduce the text to the killing of the imperial family without taking into consideration the entirety of the piece and its parodic dismantling of the symbolic authority of the emperor system. Second, if there were a suppressed desire within Japanese society to kill the king (or simply to commit murder—Hasegawa does not distinguish the two), especially among lower-class society, he fails to show why it would be problematic to give literary expression to such dark thoughts. Third, despite the fact that the real names of the Imperial Family were used, the characters in the text were clearly no more than puppets from a puppet theater, as Yoshimoto Takaaki pointed out, barely resembling actual humans.<sup>193</sup> Fourth, Hasegawa’s desire to suppress the laughter of intellectuals and writers is the identical compulsion that Takeda Taijun recognized

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid, pg. 235. Fukazawa himself claims that he expected the Crown Prince himself to laugh: “If my own neck were described as clanking off (*sutten kororin to ochita*), I would have thought, ‘how silly, how funny!’ without any uneasiness. I thought the Crown Prince, too, would have laughed uproariously while reading it. But then afterward, everyone admonished me and made me feel like I did the inexcusable.” Quoted in Saka Kōji “‘Fūryū Mutan’ Jiken.” *Bessatsu Shinhyō: Fukuzawa Shichirō no sekai*.7.2, 1974, pg. 206.

<sup>193</sup> Yoshimoto, pg. 239.

within himself, a compulsion that was completely overridden and decimated *by laughter*. In that moment, Takeda's laughter was an expression of the *unknowing* of any compulsion to restrain himself.<sup>194</sup>

I believe that Hasegawa's criticism is less about any "homicidal thought" within the literary community than about the fact that the literary community gave vindication for a text that violated the basic decorum of how the Imperial Family may be represented and what is appropriate to publish. However, Fukazawa's breach of etiquette went well beyond representation of the Imperial Family because it even parodied the protest movement and revolution itself. In its absolute refusal to elevate any person, concept, or literary mode to a sacred level, Fukazawa performed a *representative daraku* with his *Fūryū Mutan*. It's critical to first read it as a text that responded to the present moment, and that enacted a *representative violence* on the reigning symbols, rather than interpret the text retrospectively based on what transpired after the text's publication. Other than parody and satire itself, the text had no point; it was not a political critique, which is why many who were steeped in

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<sup>194</sup> To George Bataille, a burst of emotion, such as uncontrollable laughter or crying, can capture consciousness of the moment, which is always slipping away, but in doing so, it cancels knowledge, which can only unfold over time, through duration. "Consciousness of the moment is not truly such, is not sovereign, except in *unknowing*. Only by canceling, or at least neutralizing, every operation of knowledge within ourselves are we in the moment, without fleeing it. This is possible in the grip of strong emotions that shut off, interrupt or override the flow of thought. This is the case if we weep, if we sob, if we laugh till we gasp. It's not so much that the burst of laughter or tears stops thought. It's really the *object* of the laughter, or the *object* of the tears, that suppressed thought, that takes all knowledge away from us." Bataille, George. *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*. New York: Zone Books, 1991, pg. 203.

the opposition movement treated it hostilely. For Sakaguchi Ango, to fall into *daraku* means to strip away the veneer—the “false kimonos”—that stand in the way of acting on one’s urges and needs. It is to listen to oneself, to be introspective, and to act in accordance with inner dictates, not what society or ideology deems correct. In this sense, it is fundamentally apolitical. To perform *daraku*, hence, it to undo ideological constructs without the consequences in mind, to “let all morals dissipate (*dōgi taihai*), let confusion reign (*konran seyo*).” This is precisely what Fukazawa does in his *Fūryū Mutan* so boldly and, dare I say, elegantly. Takeda’s laughter is the pure expression of this very *daraku* because no abstract notion of value or sacredness could suppress it; his laughter is the sound of morals dissipating. On the other hand, Hasegawa’s claim that the laughter of the critics (*bunkajin*) was *irresponsible* is the re-inscription of that very morality, the conservative tendency to uphold ideological constructs when at threat.

### 5.5 Nakano’s reaction

It is in this tendency to judge *Fūryū Mutan* not by its content but instead by its aftermath, not by its subversive ability but its political expression, that we can begin to see greater cleavages between the Nakano’s and Sakaguchi’s critique of the emperor system. Unfortunately, by the time of the text’s publication, Sakaguchi had been dead over a decade and thus could not take part in the debate over it. Nakano’s critique, though, is one of the most important to respond to *Fūryū Mutan*. In many ways, it is an incredibly lucid and insightful critique of state violence, and the ability

of the state to transform violence in any form into a mode for suppressing political movements that challenge state power. On the other hand, it fails as a piece of literary, which implicitly holds Fukazawa responsible for any political fallout.

Understandably, Nakano could not separate his understanding of the violence within *Fūryū Mutan* from the violent suppression of the anti-Ampo movement and the assassination of Asanuma. His essay, “Is terrorism against the Right permissible?” (*teroru ha uyoku ni taishite ha yurusareru ka*) starts from the standpoint of politics. The general elections had taken place in November of 1960, only one month after Asanuma had been assassinated and one month before the *Fūryū Mutan* was published. The problem at hand was terrorism.

In the wake of Asanuma’s assassination, electoral politics forced the discussion of political terrorism and its eradication. However, Nakano observes, the primacy of “terrorism” itself got lost in the debates, which spoke only of “violence” generally. The problem, as he sees it, was Right-wing terrorism, but the debates further muddled that specificity by equally rejecting both Left-wing and Right-wing violence. He says, “In the form of negating violence in general, they let *terrorism* slip through the cracks. It played right into the hands of the reactionary camp that dispatched the terrorist.”<sup>195</sup> Even though legislation was brought to the floor of the

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<sup>195</sup> Nakano Shigeharu. *Nakano Shigeharu Zenshū*, Vol. 14. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1979, pg. 577

Diet to address violence, the problem of Right-wing terrorism was left completely unresolved.

At a meeting of intellectuals after the election, Nakano had an argument with a college student who advocated violence against the Right. Nakano quotes the student as saying, "It is only proper to enact terrorism against the conservative reactionaries that intimidate with force. An eye for an eye, tooth for tooth. If Kishi is on his way to sign a bill and is killed, you can prevent the signing of the bill. Or at least you can delay its enactment."<sup>196</sup> Yet, to Nakano, this desire to enact revenge on the Right through terror was a naïve ignorance of history, practical politics, and actual power relations; the college student knew nothing of Ampo, the specifics of the treaties (1951, 1960), the history of the opposition movement, or the way that power can use violence. "He paid no attention to the extent to which violence is directly mobilized in the name 'security,' or even worse, the degree to which physical and mental violence is deployed."

The basic problem, as Nakano sees it, is that Right-wing terrorism is the same as state violence. It is equivalent to joining forces with the state. The state does not fear political violence because it provides an opportunity to retaliate against labor and the mass action of the people. In fact, the state has effectively set up a trap, and all it has to do is wait for the people to take the bait. It waits for violence from the Left so that it can suppress the entire movement, which does have actual power. To

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid, pg. 579.

give the state exactly what it wants—to fall into its trap by enacting terror against the right—is to threaten the power that the opposition movement has and to bring shame to the growth of that power and to history itself.<sup>197</sup> Therefore, “Terrorism must be shut down, but not because it comes from the Right. It must be shut down because it’s the inevitable political method of the anti-revolutionary course. Terror itself must be shut down.”

With this, Nakano stages his entrance into his discussion of *Fūryū Mutan*. While acknowledging that the text is not about terrorism, he finds three issues that need to be fleshed out:

First, there is a problem of the relationship between the freedom to dream and the freedom to make that dream public. Second, there is the kind of problem following from the first, of a novel that uses actual names (being a *roman à clef*), the problem of defamation and the violation of human rights.

Third, there is a problem with the literary image of “revolution.”

It should be clear immediately from Nakano’s three issues that he has little intention of providing a *literary analysis* of the text, but rather wants to interpret it via the lens of what followed. This is not inherently problematic, but it leads to a misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the text itself.

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid, pg. 580.

Nakano first tackles the second issue, the question of defamation. Within the media, there had been much discussion of whether Fukazawa could be tried on *lèse majesté* (*fukeizai*) charges despite that it had been invalidated during the Occupation era. Of course, nothing would come of that. Nakano had even read a newspaper article suggesting that the Prime Minister would sue *on behalf of the emperor* on the charge of defamation (*meiyo kison*). However, he notes, defamation is only borne of the injured party suing, and the emperor refuses to do that, which could suggest two things: either the emperor is too weak and powerless, or that he's so powerful that he's above defamation, "an infinite existence that appears as a zero."<sup>198</sup> This, he mentions in passing, could become a constitutional issue of the nature of the "symbol," but unfortunately does not pursue the thought further. I say it is unfortunate because it is specifically the nature of the symbol and the power to represent that *Fūryū Mutan* problematizes through its parody, but Nakano fails to engage it at that level.

Returning to problem number one, Nakano states that everyone has the freedom to dream, a freedom that cannot be taken away by incarceration or anything else. "However," he says, "if I make a dream public, other issues can arise." The "issue" that Nakano proceeds to discuss is the representation of revolution within Watashi's dream as something not fixed, moving from "riot" to "revolution" to "not a revolution." In other words, the dream is problematic for the image of

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 581.

revolution. However, in using the phrase “make a dream public” (*yume wo kōhyō suru*), Nakano discloses that he is not referring to Watashi but to Fukazawa himself. Yet, it was never Fukazawa’s dream. And it is not Watashi that makes the dream public; Fukazawa merely depicts the dream of a fictional character. This is an unfortunate conflation of author and protagonist that, ironically, Nakano would criticize the newspapers (Asahi and Yomiuri) for doing towards the end of his essay. To me, the whole question of the “freedom to make a dream public” is no different than the question of “freedom of speech.” In other words, to problemize the first is necessarily to question the value of that latter. For Nakano and others to disguise it as a *literary problem* (i.e. the problem of the representation of revolution) is to conceal the question that they really want to ask: should it have been censored?

For Nakano, the fundamental problem of the text is the third, the literary image of revolution, and I believe this is at the root of his distaste for *Fūryū Mutan*. To Nakano, Fukazawa’s depiction of the revolution is “symptomatic” (*kuse*) of the way the revolution is fantasized to be riotous, chaotic, violent, and destructive. Fukazawa is not alone in this fantasy (*kūsō*): “the habit of assuming that the revolution is approaching because there is chaos means that *there remains a problem of the weakness of our image of revolution as a problem in general.*”<sup>199</sup> We should recall here that Nakano sees the power of the opposition movement (the revolutionary movement) as growing, but also vulnerable, and always at risk of being

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<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 581.

annihilated by state violence if the state is given the chance. For Nakano, the revolution must be based on practical issues of *justice* and *responsibility*. A true revolution would hold the emperor responsible *in court*.

In that sense, Nakano is critical not only of Fukazawa, but of those critics and respondents who portrayed the decapitation of the imperial family within *Fūryū Mutan* as an execution (*shokei*). It cannot be an execution because that would entail conviction in a trial, which is absent in the text. There can be no revolution without a trial, a “serious” trial in which the defendant has a lawyer and rights. However, to present an image of a revolution that skips over the trial, opting instead for immediate use of the “halberd” (*masakiri*), is to bring disgrace and shame to that image. Nakano feels that Fukazawa wants to avoid taking responsibility for spreading that image. He says,

I’m not trying to attack Fukazawa based on that point. It’s just that, to take a serious trial that would accompany a revolution—for example, even now the question of the emperor’s war responsibility remains—and turn it into a fake mob lynching because someone saw it in a dream, does not constitute criticism. I just want to say that this author’s great defect is that he tied literature to actual history and actual human beings. It’s conceivable that the

emperor will be punished. But, that is not something that can happen in a dream.<sup>200</sup>

I believe we can detect in this statement Nakano's fundamental misreading of *Fūryū Mutan*: he wants to understand it as *political criticism*. Yet, as I argued earlier, the text's value is not in its political agenda, but its subversion of the authority to designate symbols. The dream space was established to tear down the hegemony of signs and symbols, to create a zone in which taboos do not exist, and to treat neither the emperor nor the revolution as sacred. The temporality of the dream is the active negation of both *imperial time* and *revolutionary time*; there is no room for history, justice, or teleology. He takes *actual history* and distorts it into something unrecognizable and, ultimately, impossible. Fukazawa is actively juxtaposing and shuffling around history, images, events, literary styles that are symbolically charged in order to expose their constructed nature.

Nakano criticizes the college student (who advocated terrorism against the Right) for being clueless about the history of the movement and about the specificities of the Ampo treaties, and for not understanding what was politically at stake.<sup>201</sup> However, in holding Fukazawa's representation of the revolution to the same standards—demanding that it depict a revolution based on *justice* by convicting

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid, pg. 582.

<sup>201</sup> In this sense, perhaps we can see the same tendency in Nakano himself as the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*, who seemed most concerned with teaching his students about the true nature of the emperor system despite their desire to merely critique it and advocate its abolition.

the emperor in court—Nakano overlooks *Fūryū Mutan*'s ability to undermine the symbolic authority of the state. Instead, despite his repeated insistence that he does not want to specifically attack Fukazawa given that there is a *problem with the image of revolution in general* in Japan, Nakano clearly believes that Fukazawa has planted a seed for state retaliation against the revolutionary movement, that he bears responsibility for what might ensue. For me, the most revealing passage in Nakano's essay is this: "*Fūryū Mutan* is not about terrorism. And yet, I worry if there isn't a belief in there, casting its shadow in the background, that can forgive terrorism against the Right."<sup>202</sup>

Just like in the immediate postwar, Nakano is concerned primarily with the *humanistic representation* of the emperor, and the importance of representing his humanity as a mode for holding him accountable in a democratic society that operates according to the rule of law, not one in which anyone is exempted—including the emperor—from accountability. His demand during the anti-Ampo struggle, too, seems to be that the most accurate representation of the actual conditions of things—the unaccountability of the emperor, the violence of the state—is the most powerful way to “establish a sense of national conscience,” to quote the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*. Clearly, Fukazawa does not have such lofty expectations. He is the embodiment of literary *daraku*, writing against prohibition without obsessing over the consequences.

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 581-2

I do not mean to diminish Nakano's critique of state violence. He is absolutely correct in his observation that Right-wing terrorism acts as an arm of the state, and that the state can easily absorb violence that originates from the Left (or popular movements or labor movements in general) by using it as pretext to suppress it.<sup>203</sup> In this sense, his essay is highly reminiscent of another essay he wrote at in 1936, following the rebellion of February 26 (*ni-niroku jiken*), entitled "Impressions From But One Citizen" (*ichi shimin toshite no kansō*),<sup>204</sup> in which he shows that both the *event* and the *reaction to it* (the demand for more security) would result in the full-scale strengthening of Japan's police state. He asks at the end, "whether this was a rebellion against the government and the regular army, or whether it was a rebellion against the people." Therefore, at all times, Nakano is primarily concerned with political *method* and what constitutes effective resistance, always on guard to avoid the traps set by the state. Political *method* is deeply tied to *representation* for him.

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<sup>203</sup> I feel compelled to mention here that John Treat misrepresents Nakano's reaction to *Fūryū Mutan*. He writes, "old-line leftists such as Nakano Shigeharu lambasted it for a parodic flippancy no doubt antithetical to the premises of the intellectual arguments commonly advanced in attacking the emperor system." Treat, pg. 103-4. Consequently, he also mischaracterizes Nakano's *Goshaku no Sake* when citing it as an example of a work of fiction critical of the emperor prior to *Fūryū Mutan* that did not "unleash the fury" that the latter did. He says, "Nakano's narrator is conveniently inebriated when he scorns the emperor; *and all the works are concerned with the unreconstructed emperor of wartime—not postwar—Japan*, a distinction that perhaps exempted these authors from the discipline dispensed to Fukazawa." (my italics) First of all, *Goshaku no Sake* was censored, having passages excised. Second of all, and much more importantly, *Goshaku no Sake* is fundamentally about the postwar emperor system and how it must not be mistaken for the wartime one at the risk of eviscerating any potential for resistance. I hope to have demonstrated that within this dissertation.

<sup>204</sup> Nakano Shigeharu. Nakano Shigeharu Zenshū, Volume 10, pg. 430-2

But, Fukazawa's assault on the dominant taboos and modes of polite representation are incompatible with this model—it is unconcerned with method, and for Nakano to judge it as if it were is a blatant misreading, intentional or not. Perhaps we can understand Fukazawa's attitude as a type of aloofness to politics. On the other hand, it does not make the text less valuable. In its ability to provoke debate alone, I believe *Fūryū Mutan* delimited what could and could not be expressed at the time, performing a *representative violence* by transgressing that very boundary. In the response it engendered from the critics and the media, which ranged from revulsion to ambivalence to delight, *it exposed the very toxicity of the emperor serving as symbol*; it was a reminder that the practical ramifications of restructuring the emperor system in postwar Japan was that the emperor ended up *serving as symbol of disunity*.

Given that the U.S. was instrumental in the construction of the postwar emperor system, and now was instrumental in eroding the very constitution that codified it through the renewed and revised Security Treaty—effectively demanding a remilitarized and further occupied Japan with a pacifist emperor that symbolized this contradiction—we must concede that the U.S. had a major role to play in fostering this disunity. *Fūryū Mutan* actually depicts this all too clearly: the U.S. (and other foreign powers) has joined forces with the people to overthrow the emperor by supplying weapons. The U.S., too, takes part in the beheading of the Imperial Family.

Among the responses to the text that I have read, only Ōoka Shōhei's connects the foreign presence within the text with the creation of the "symbolic" emperor during the Occupation: "The fact that the ambiguous title of the emperor as a symbol within the Constitution remains is a form of state authority connected to the Occupation. It wasn't a temporary phenomenon of Japan's defeat; it continues today."<sup>205</sup> To Ōoka, the ambiguous status of the emperor established during the Occupation was still unresolved. He does not pursue this further, but what's clear from his reading is that Fukazawa has not only challenged the status of the symbolic emperor system, but also the U.S. role *then* and then U.S. role *now* in its production, or for that matter, its destruction.

Of course, I do not mean to suggest that the U.S. had any interest in dismantling the symbolic emperor system itself. It could still be an incredibly productive tool for projecting a democratic and pacifist façade for Japan while Japan was being converted into a strengthened police state and a series of military bases for U.S. strategic interest. However, through its insistence on Japan's remilitarized state and bolder Security Treaty, the U.S. contributed to the *crisis of representation* for the symbolic emperor system. I believe the reason that *Fūryū Mutan* is so disruptive, and why few writers analyzed and interpreted the *actual text itself*, is that it specifically problematizes this crisis of representation.

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<sup>205</sup> Ōoka Shōhei. "Yandeiru no ha dare ka? [Just *who* is the sick one?]" Bessatsu Shinhyō: Fukuzawa Shichirō no sekai.7.2 1974, pg. 221.

The ideological strength of the symbolic emperor system was contingent upon holding onto the authority to represent the nation, to suturing any cleavages or differences within the nation by appearing transcendent and above politics. However, Japan was at clearly at war with itself when it came to how the emperor and Japan should be represented. *Fūryū Mutan* depicts this in its full chaotic glory. The notion that U.S. should have a role in the disintegration of the representative power of the emperor was troublesome because it highlighted the colonial relationship between Japan and the U.S., and because the U.S. too had a stake in ensuring that the postwar emperor system was not challenged. It was central to the notion that both Japan and the U.S. could exist separately as distinct entities, what Naoki Sakai calls the “schema of co-figuration.” This is why the text was challenging for one prominent Area Studies specialist, Edward Seidensticker, who betrays in the following quote the desire to withhold the text from American readership because of the anxiety of what an emperor-less Japan would mean:

How dare the refined Chūō Kōron publish such a vulgar (*akushumi*) novel! I don't think of it as distinct from a political novel, but for it to kill off a living person is deeply disturbing. When I speak to other foreigners in Japan, they are mostly in agreement with me that the problem is its repercussions within Japan, namely, where public opinion on the Imperial Household will go from here. The question of where the Imperial Household should be headed is an interesting one. I bet that if *Fūryū Mutan* were translated [into English], there

would be quite the reaction in America, which thinks that the destruction of the Imperial Household would mean that Japan has gone Communist (*akka sareta*).<sup>206</sup>

Yet, Seidensticker makes no mention that the U.S. is represented within the text as an actor in the overthrow of the emperor. Instead, he reveals what the emperor really signified for the U.S.: security against the threat of Communism. Was it not the deep-seated anxiety over Communism in China (and then Korean and beyond) that compelled the U.S. to maintain bases throughout Japan in the first place? The critic Usui Yoshimi writes that it was “fear (*kyōfushin*) about the revolution”—a line cited over and over by other critics—that made Fukazawa write the story.<sup>207</sup> I completely disagree. Quite the contrary, the story exposed the anxiety (and thus fragility) of all sides: Japan and the U.S. feared the rise of the Communism and labor, while the protest movement feared the government’s capacity to violently suppress it (as Nakano articulated). In exposing—not causing—this widespread anxiety, *Fūryū Mutan* helps shed light on the nature of the crises overwhelming Japan at the time, both the crisis of actual violence and the crisis of representation.

## 5.6 Aftermath

I have withheld until now the events with which the story is always connected because I want to be absolutely explicit that *neither Fukazawa Shichirō nor Fūryū*

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<sup>206</sup> Saka, pg. 207.

<sup>207</sup> Usui Yoshimi. “Fukazawa Shichiō no ‘Fūryū Mutan.’” *Bessatsu Shinhyō: Fukuzawa Shichirō no sekai*. 7.2 1974, pg. 209.

*Mutan* are to blame for the failure to represent the emperor in literature from that point on. The most important event for the legacy for *Fūryū Mutan* is referred to as the Shimanaka Incident, which involved an assassination attempt on Shimanaka Hōji, the president of publishing company Chūō Kōron. The company had published the text in its journal of the same name, *Chūō Kōron*. On February 1, 1961, the assailant, Komori Kazutaka, had gone to Shimanaka's house with the intent to kill Shimanaka, who was not there. Forcing himself into the house, however, he drew his sword and injured Shimanaka's wife and killed their maid. Komori, who was seventeen, had been dispatched by a well-known Right-wing organization, Aikokutō, although he had resigned the day before his assault. Chūō Kōron, which had proclaimed its right to publish the text and defend the freedom of speech prior to the incident, issued the following apology by Shimanaka Hōji himself:

It has been judged that Fukuzawa Shichirō's *Fūryū Mutan* is an inappropriate piece for publication and that I am culpable for its publication as director. I would like to deeply express my sincerest apologies to the Imperial Family and readers in general for the devastating nuisance we have caused. I consider this the origin of what incited a case of bloodshed, and for that, I would like to further express my sincerest apologies for its disruption to society.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Quoted in Nakamura Tomoko, *"Fūryū Mutan" jikengo—henshūsha no jibunshi* [After the "Fūryū Mutan" Incident—the Personal History of an Editor] Tokyo:

Whatever the pressures the Right put on the editing company, including the direct threat of continued violence, this apology set a precedent of publically declaring the text and its publication to be the *cause* of the Shimanaka Incident, or at least accepting responsibility for its occurrence. Watanabe Naomi has pointed out that, had a case of defamation been waged, such an apology would have even been used in court for *proof of the author's guilt*.<sup>209</sup> Not only that, but it completely validated the tactics of the Right in its retaliation against improper representation of the emperor.<sup>210</sup> John Treat, too, implicates Fukazawa when suggesting that his rhetoric had “unforeseen dramatic consequences not just for the Shimanaka Household but also for the freedom of Japanese writers,”<sup>211</sup> and, “Just as Plato feared, the poet does make fun of the gods, and Japanese writers have paid the penalty.”<sup>212</sup> Likewise, as discussed above, in gleaning the sense that *Fūryū Mutan* contained a sentiment that could forgive violence against the Right (and thus spark action that would mobilize

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Tabatake Shoten, 1976, pg. 34. This text extensively documents what happened behind the scenes in the wake of the publication of the text, such as secret meetings between editors of *Chūō Kōron* and the influential Right-wing thug of Dai-Nippon Aikokutō, Akao Bin, and other various pressures on the editors, like the demand that Fukazawa be exiled to a foreign land. Nakamura speaks of her frustration and loneliness in resisting even the other editors as they buckled to external demands (see pg. 44).

<sup>209</sup> Watanabe, 1999, pg. 188.

<sup>210</sup> Yoshimi Shunya says, “The graveness of the *Fūryū Mutan* Incident is not merely the problem of the intensification of Right-wing terrorism at the time of Ampo, but that this type of violence encouraged the trend of self-censorship and self-imposed restraint within the media; in other words, terrorism became an incredibly effective for bringing about the suppression of speech. Kishi’s policy for accepting Right-wing violence was the background that led to such suppression of speech.” Yoshimi, 2010, pg. 142.

<sup>211</sup> Treat, pg. 102.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 110.

state force against the opposition movement), even Nakano Shigeharu implies a type of guilt for the author, despite the repeated claims that does not mean to do so.

However, I want to argue that it was exactly the opposite; it was not the text itself, but the response to it, both by critics and by *Chūō Kōron*, and the persistent self-restraint and self-censorship of writers themselves that is responsible for postwar inability to represent the emperor critically. In the overwhelming focus on the fact that the text used *actual names*, serious analysis of the text was largely absent, replaced instead by discourse on the problems of defamation, terrorism, and freedom of speech.

### 5.7 The literary shift to terrorism

This also needs to be considered in the context of the publication of Ōe Kenzaburō's *Sebunchin*, a story in two parts that depicted the radicalization of a Right-wing youth who is pushed to violent acts and culminates in his suicide in prison while sexually fantasizing over the emperor. The text was modeled directly after the youth who assassinated Asanuma in October of 1960, Yamaguchi Otoya, and released in the literary magazine *Bungakukai* (published by Bungei Shunjū) in January and February of 1961, the months following the publication of *Fūryū Mutan*. Akao Bin, president of the Right-wing organization Aikokutō, accused Bungei Shunjū of defamation (Yamaguchi Otoya, too, had originally been a member of Aikokutō), and the publishing company issued their own apology on January 30. It expressed their deepest apologies, saying that even though the piece was fictional, they “candidly

recognize the nuisance it had caused to Mr. Yamaguchi, Bōkyō Teishintai [“Attack Corp for Communist Prevention], Zen-Ajia Hankyō Seinen Renmei [“All-Asia Anti-Communist Youth Alliance”], and all related groups.”<sup>213</sup> This apology specified is purported “injured parties” among Right-wing groups unlike the one by Chūō Kōron, which, on top of apologizing to the imperial family, ambiguously expressed its regret for disrupting *society*, making it hard to tell just who was the perpetrator of the incident of bloodshed.<sup>214</sup>

Therefore, both publishing companies demonstrated their absolute surrender to Right-wing pressure through these apologies *within the span of two weeks*, a discursive move that essentially concretized the force of the Chrysanthemum Taboo. These apologies and the ensuing debates served to foreclose any further substantial discussion about the texts themselves. In other words, the circumstances were debated, but at the costs of dealing with the question of what it meant to give *literary representation of the emperor*. Watanabe Naomi summarizes the context of this “peripheral reaction” to both *Fūryū Mutan* and *Sebunchin* in three points: First, literary analysis of the texts themselves was transferred to the opposition of “terrorism and the freedom of expression,” which effectively nullified the question of “emperor and novel”; second, even progressive authors with no direct connection to either text were involved in the “blackout” (*anten*) of literary representation of the emperor in the name of personal protection, for fear of provoking violence; third,

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<sup>213</sup> Nakamura Tomoko, pg. 45.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 45.

terrorism became infinitely “creepier” by targeting not the authors themselves but rather third parties, a point made by Takeuchi Yoshimi.<sup>215</sup>

It seems only too ironic that Nakano Shigeharu contributed to this transference of textual analysis to the question of terrorism and freedom of speech. It was his narrator in *Goshaku no Sake* that critiqued the Communist Party for only coming to the defense of Matsushima of the 1946 Placard Incident on the grounds of “freedom of speech” while they ignored the contents of the placard itself: “In their critique of the Placard Incident, why did the Communist Party ignore the very words of the sign when it was those words that best critiqued the emperor system?” However, even though Nakano was critical of *Fūryū Mutan*, he still grappled with the emperor system in his literary work, having recently depicted the complicated mixture of late Meiji images—the death of the Meiji Emperor, the execution of Kōtoku Shūsui, the “absent presence” of the Taishō Emperor—from the perspective of a child in his 1957-8 novel *Nashi no Hana* (“Pear Flowers”).<sup>216</sup> The “blackout” of representation of the emperor that followed cannot be pinned on Nakano; it was the

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<sup>215</sup> Watanabe, 1999, pg. 187-190.

<sup>216</sup> In an extended scene from *Nashi no Hana*, set at the end of the Meiji Era, the Crown Prince (who would become the Taishō Emperor) visits the hometown of Ryōhei, the child protagonist, on rickshaw. Ryōhei and his classmates were to be given warning of the approaching procession by three pistol shots, but after hearing the shots, could not make it to the scene quickly enough. It was a missed opportunity for encounter, what Miriam Silverberg calls a “absent presence” that points to the “central irony of Taishō political history, the truth that while the ideology and structures constructed to buttress the position of the Emperor were firmly in place by the time of the demise of the first Emperor, his successor could not in any way actively support the system.” Silverberg, Miriam. *Changing Song: The Marxist Manifestos of Nakano Shigeharu*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, pg. 22.

result a wide convergence of events including the apologies by Chūō Kōron and Bungei Shunjū, the debate *as a whole*, the response by the media and public, and immediate fear of violence.

The fear of violence—the *terror* unleashed by Right-wing groups—was certainly real. Fuzakawa himself fled to Hokkaidō for safety due to a great number of death threats. Ōe, too, for his writing of *Sebunchin*, was the target of Right-wing threats, rocks thrown at his study, loudspeakers blasting outside his house, and late-night phone calls.<sup>217</sup> Even Mishima Yukio was put on guard for an unsubstantiated but widely spread rumor that he had recommended the publication of *Fūryū Mutan* to Chūō Kōron. John Nathan, in his biography of Mishima, reports that Mishima patrolled his own garden with a sword, and was eventually assigned a police officer for personal protection during February and March of 1961.<sup>218</sup>

How can we understand the impact of the threat of violence, the fear of retaliation for the representation of the emperor? Is there a *qualitative difference* between the feeling of terror when it originates from the Right or when it originates from the state? The state had made an example of Kōtoku Shūsui through execution 1911, and it made an example of Kobayashi Takiji when policed tortured him to

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<sup>217</sup> Miyoshi, Masao. "Introduction." *Two Novels: Seventeen and J*. New York: Fox Trot Books, 1996, pg. vii. Ōe has not reissued the second part of *Sebunchin*, *Seiji Shonen Shisu* ("A Political Youth Dies"), or allowed for its translation due to fear of Right-wing violence.

<sup>218</sup> Nathan, John. *Mishima*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1973, pg. 185-8. Apparently, Mishima's brother Chiyuki considers Mishima's fear of the Right from this period to have set the foundation for his "swing to the Right." (pg. 187)

death in 1933,<sup>219</sup> but did the Shimanaka Incident and the related threats carry the same weight? It might be understandable that Fuzakawa and Ōe might exercise restraint in the face of immediate threat, but what does it mean that, as Watanabe Naomi points out, authors who had no connection to *Fūryū Mutan* or *Sebunchin* would be covered into silence? Was the “blackout” that followed not mere silence, but as an *active sacralization* of the emperor?

In thinking about these questions, we ought not minimize the *randomness* and *uneven application* of terror. Certainly, no one could have expected the backlash that the authors or publishers would face for publishing the texts.<sup>220</sup> It was rather curious that texts without an overtly political agenda<sup>221</sup> would be targeted over writings that did, of which many, especially from the Communist Party, advocated abolition of the emperor system. However, the aspect of *randomness*, the possibility that terror could be inflicted from anywhere at anytime, combined with the government failure to substantially curb Right-wing terror—and in fact its mobilization and cultivation of that terrorism—must have been at play. It is telling

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<sup>219</sup> Silverberg reports that Nakano Shigeharu, who was in prison at the time, was a dear friend of Kobayashi and was incredibly shaken by his death. (Silverberg, pg. 196)

<sup>220</sup> To quote Hashikawa Bunzō, writing in 1961, “Last year’s terrorism revealed an effectiveness that no one anticipated, which makes you think, to borrow the words of a certain Right-wing personality, ‘Who knew it would go that far (*masaka sore hodo ni ha*)!?’” Hashikawa Bunzō. “Uyoku terorizumu to dokusen no imeeji [Right-wing terror and the image of monopolies]. *Hashikawa Bunzō Chōsakushū*, 1. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1985, pg. 259-60.

<sup>221</sup> Even *Sebunchin*, which tries to understand the psychological nature of emperor worship through the development of a young Right-wing terrorist, is a story about alienation and expresses a deep ambivalence about the character himself.

that only one year after the Shimanaka Incident, Chūō Kōron decided *independently* to halt the publication of a special edition of *Shisō no Kagaku* (“The Science of Thought”) on the emperor system, planned for January 1962 release, because the trial over the Shimanaka Incident was still ongoing, and therefore, tensions were high.<sup>222</sup> Writers were left to guess what might provoke retaliation; their restraint was largely improvisatory.

Yet, just as Watanabe recognizes a discursive shift away from “emperor and novel” and towards “terrorism and the freedom of expression,” I believe we can witness a literary shift as well that provides a clue to how the emperor system was actually subsumed within the discourse of terrorism; *representation of the emperor became representation of terrorism performed in the name of the emperor*. This was already true of *Sebunchin*, but clearly such a pathological depiction of a sexually perverse Right-wing youth would not be tolerated by the Right, as Ōe learned through direct threats to his safety. It was also true Mishima Yukio’s *Yūkoku* (“Patriotism”), published in January 1961, within the same three-month window in which *Sebunchin* and *Fūryū Mutan* were also published, which makes an implicit connection to Yamaguchi Otoyō’s assassination of Asanuma and subsequent suicide in prison. The text depicts the double suicide of a husband and wife following the events of the failed coup of February 26, 1936. While this may not seem at face value to be a representation of terrorism at all, I believe it is a glorification of just that,

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<sup>222</sup> Nakamura Tomoko, pg. 122.

terrorism performed in the name of the emperor. Mishima, in this and other works, establishes a categorical equivalence between Right-wing terrorism in contemporary Japan—so long as it ends in suicide—and the coups d'état of the 1930s. In the next chapter, I will attempt to make this connection much clearer, and show how Mishima co-opted the literary representation of the emperor during the 1960s. Paradoxically, his mobilization of these events for his writing actually provided a damning critique of the individual of Emperor Hirohito at the same that it exalted the *concept* of emperor by tying it, once again, to culture.

## CHAPTER SIX

## MISHIMA'S EMPEROR OF TERROR

6.1 *Yūkoku*: bringing the coup to the present

In many ways, Fukazawa's *Fūryū Mutan*, Ōe's *Sebunchin*, and Mishima's *Yūkoku* seems like variations on a single theme,<sup>223</sup> an attempt to make sense the present moment. The first two reconfigure contemporary characters, events, and imagery more directly, and the third only obliquely. Yet, like *Fūryū Mutan*, *Yūkoku* stages the death of a young couple married less than a year; like *Sebunchin*, the characters unquestioningly take their own lives for a higher cause, mixing death with eroticism; and like both, *Yūkoku* depicts a country divided, where Japanese people are pitted against each other. I certainly do not mean to overstate their similarities, but do believe that the virtually concurrent publication of the stories and their novel approaches to getting at the nature of the emperor system is nothing less than remarkable and fundamentally a product of the time of their writing.

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<sup>223</sup> Susan Napier compares *Sebunchin* and *Yūkoku* in her book on Mishima and Ōe. Unlike Napier, however, I read *Yūkoku* as a veiled commentary *on the present* and as an indictment of Hirohito, not merely a stage for Mishima's universal themes of sex and violence relative to the emperor. Napier, Susan. *Escape from the Wasteland: Romanticism and Realism in the Fiction of Mishima Yukio and Oe Kenzaburo*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

The entirety of *Yūkoku*<sup>224</sup> takes place on February 28, 1936 in the apartment of a Lieutenant of the Imperial Army in Yotsuya, near the site of the coup d'état that began two days earlier, February 26 (from herein, the 2.26 Incident), the 11<sup>th</sup> year of Shōwa. The coup had been the culmination of a movement within the Imperial Army to wrest power out of the hands of bureaucrats and nobility (*kizoku*) who they believed subverted the emperor's authority by acting unilaterally, thus betraying the emperor's prerogative. Around fourteen hundred young officers among the *Kōdōha*, the "Imperial Way Faction," banded together to overthrow those officials who impeded direct connection of the people to their emperor, which they called the *Shōwa Ishin* or Shōwa Restoration, echoing the language of the Meiji Restoration. The coup successfully assassinated a number of high-ranking government operatives (although an attempt to kill Prime Minister Okada Keisuke failed), and an infuriated young Emperor Hirohito ordered a swift suppression of the uprising and labeled the coup as a rebellion (*hanran*).<sup>225</sup> Consequently, seventeen participants in the coup were sentenced to death. The iconoclastic ultranationalist Kita Ikki, though having no

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<sup>224</sup> Mishima Yukio. "Yūkoku." *Eirei no Koe, orijinaru-ban*. Tokyo: Kawade Bunko, 2005. This is a reprint of the compilation of texts released together in 1966, including *Eirei no Koe, Yūkoku, Tōka no Kiku*, and the essay "2/26 Incident and Me." I will quote from this translation: Mishima Yukio, "Patriotism." trans. Geoffrey W. Sargent. *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories*. New York: New Directions: 1966.

<sup>225</sup> Many historians claim that the direct order from the emperor to suppress the coup was one of two times in which Hirohito exercised his imperial authority, the other being the decision to end the war. Much historiography has been based on this premise, but it is only part of the standard postwar narrative that hopes to a) not overstate his "responsibility" by implicating him in other war crimes, b) demonstrate that he actually did have a modicum of authority by providing two examples, and c) paint him as a decisive strategist who knows when to act in the best interest of the state. As such, it is a highly problematic narrative.

direct connection to the coup, was executed as well for the crime of being ringleader of an insurrection, through perhaps his only real crime was writing the influential *Outline Plan for the Reorganization of Japan* (*Nihon Kaizō Hōan Taikō*, 1923). This *Reorganization Plan* opens with the call for the emperor and Japanese people to carry out a coup d'état in which they suspend the constitution, dissolve both houses of the Diet and bring the country under martial law. This book constituted a major source of inspiration for the young activist officers. Hirohito's rejection of the coup was a shock to the soldiers who had taken part; he had exhibited the capacity to betray his most ardent and loyal followers in the name of state security, and to protect the bureaucratic dominance of the government through imperial prerogative.

In *Yūkoku*, the dramatic suppression of the rebellion—Imperial Army soldiers fighting against the Imperial Army soldiers—takes place outside while Lieutenant Takeyama and his wife Reiko take their own lives inside the apartment. Takeyama's closest comrades had taken part in the coup, but had not informed Takeyama of their plot. He speculates that they did not want to implicate him out of consideration for his new marriage to Reiko. Reiko, listening closely to news from the radio upon the outbreak of violence, hears the very names of Takeyama's colleagues listed as among the rebels, a guarantee that they would be put to death. What was seen as an

uprising (*kekki*) in order to restore the country (*ishin*) was now being defiled as a rebellion (*hanran*).<sup>226</sup>

As a lieutenant, Takeyama would be obligated to follow the emperor's orders, which meant he would face an irreconcilable dilemma: attack his own comrades or disobey the emperor. He says, "There may be an Imperial ordinance sent down tomorrow. They'll be posted as rebels, I imagine. I shall be in command of a unit with orders to attack them... I can't do it. It's impossible to do a thing like that."<sup>227</sup> He resolves, with Reiko's complete acceptance, to disembowel himself through *seppuku* and for his wife to join him; they will soon be able to join Takeyama's comrades in the other world.

Takeyama and Reiko's *seppuku* is thus premised on the refusal to take part in the suppression of the rebellion, an active rejection of the emperor's command. The text, therefore, cannot be read as an unguarded glorification of the emperor<sup>228</sup>; in betraying the rebels, who sought to unite directly with their emperor, the emperor

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<sup>226</sup> "Patriotism," pg. 98; "Yūkoku," pg. 81

<sup>227</sup> "Patriotism," pg. 99; "Yūkoku," pg. 82

<sup>228</sup> My suspicion that one reason that *Yūkoku* is often read this way is its immediate—and perhaps no unintentional—evocation of the suicide of General Nogi Maresuke and his wife on the day after the Meiji Emperor's funeral on September 13, 1912. However, as Carol Gluck has demonstrated through her readings of newspapers at the time, there was deep ambivalence about this ("The emperor's death had briefly united national sentiment; Nogi's suicide rent it apart"), as some commentators critiqued his anachronistic attempt at *junshi*, death for one's lord, or mocked it as "theatrical bushidō." Gluck, Carol. *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985, pg. 221-227. If Nogi's suicide was considered anachronistic in 1912, it was even more so in 1936, 1960, and 1970.

implicitly brought shame to the throne. Mishima's depiction of Takeyama and Reiko was an attempt to portray a noble and righteous alternative to suppression of the uprising. Hence, the death note left by Takeyama does not mention the emperor, but rather the army: "Love Live the Imperial Forces (*tengun banzai*)!" It may be a resolution to die for the *concept* of emperor that it a metonym for Japan or Japanese culture, but it is certainly not a resolution to die for *this* emperor, Hirohito.

Mishima attempts to depict the purist and most loyal sentiment of patriotism, and thus cannot be bothered with overt critique of the emperor; their deaths spare them of that need. They are pillars of loyalty and honor, resolved to die according to the dictates of the Imperial Rescript on Education, harmoniously as husband and wife.<sup>229</sup> Despite the implicit critique of the individual emperor for his suppression of the soldiers, *Yūkoku* is a complete affirmation of the *emperor system* itself, and the validation of aligning oneself with its moral teachings. The exaggerated representation of the purity of the couple is in fact a complete construct of the heroic soldiers and their loyal wives that Sakaguchi had already deconstructed in his *Darakuron*; people were actually never were that way, just *represented as such*, and defeat exposed that very fact. Mishima, however, wants to reconstruct the very possibility of a moment in which such purity was possible. This moment of pure loyalty to the state is combined in the text with heightened erotic titillation; the

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<sup>229</sup> As such, for the time in which it was published, 1961, its depiction of the subservient wife prepared to follow her husband to death is highly misogynistic.

anticipatory resolution towards death becomes the ground for the most sensuous of bodily pleasures.

The lieutenant was confident there had been no impurity in that joy they had experienced when resolving upon death. They had both sensed at that moment—though not, of course, in any clear and conscious way—that those permissible pleasures which they shared in private were once more beneath the protection of Righteousness (*taigi*) and Divine Power (*shini*), and of a complete and unassailable morality. On looking into each other's eyes and discovering there an honorable death, they had felt themselves safe once more behind the steel walls which none could destroy, encased in an impenetrable armor of Beauty (*bi*) and Truth (*seigi*). Thus, so far from seeing any inconsistency or conflict between the urges of his flesh and the sincerity of his patriotism, the lieutenant was even able to regard the two as parts of the same thing.<sup>230</sup>

The “unassailable morality” is thus confirmed and elevated by the transcendent sensation of exquisite pleasure and the excruciating pain of what would come next, the *seppuku*; sexual pleasure and patriotism have become one and the same thing. Of course, that all of this happens within the apartment and not on the battlefield is irrelevant because only the *resolution to die* and the *self-confirmation* of the sincerity matter; in other words, it only matters how that resolution is represented to the

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<sup>230</sup> “Patriotism,” pg. 102; “Yūkoku,” pg. 87

individual. Takeyama later has a brief fantasy of dying alone on the battlefield as his wife watched on. The couple “discovered” (*miidashita*) that their deaths were indeed honorable by looking into each other’s eyes. Mishima is thus unconcerned with the politicality of the act, but the aesthetics of it, as if politics were separable from art.

## 6.2 Relativizing terrorism

Mishima would later express his own anger that Hirohito did not allow the young officers from the 2.26 Incident the dignity of taking their own lives through *seppuku*. In my interpretation of *Yūkoku*, this representation of an “honorable death” by Takeyama—who would not be deprived of the opportunity to take his own life by the emperor because he was never embroiled in the actual event—is Mishima’s first attempt to reclaim the dignity that was stolen from those *Kōdōha* soldiers who had failed in their coup. It is his first attempt to represent their purity of heart and the sincerity of their actions. By extension, but in the exact same sense, it is an attempt to grapple with, and ultimately validate, the assassination by Yamaguchi Otoya of Asanuma Inejirō, a terrorist act that occurred off the battlefield, as it were. To me, it is no coincidence, and of no little significance, that both Ōe and Mishima chose to depict the merging of patriotism and sexuality, emperor worship and eroticism, at the exact same time. Consequently, it is what makes both of their representations of the emperor system so problematic.

As I mentioned at the end of the last chapter, Mishima establishes a categorical and moral equivalence between the Right-wing terrorism of

contemporary Japan and the coups d'état of the 1930s. *Yūkoku* is but his first step. Not until the character of Isao in his 1969 book *Runaway Horses* would Mishima depict a young aspiring terrorist in the likeness of Yamaguchi Otoya, or for that matter the protagonist of *Sebunchin*.<sup>231</sup> The book in effect displaces an idealized version of Yamaguchi onto the 1930s, where Isao plots a coup in the spirit of Mishima's revisionist conception of the 2.26 Incident. In doing so, he renders invisible the historical figures, Yamaguchi and the young soldiers of the 2.26 Incident. Mishima makes the most explicit connection between them in an extended "teach-in" with college students that took place at Hitotsubashi University in 1968.

There, he and the students engaged in a lengthy discussion about the nature of "assassination" (*ansatsu*) that ranges in discussion from Robert Kennedy to Russian terrorists to the pacifism of Quakers. To Mishima, a political act is the one-on-one confrontation between two individuals in which each individual is involved with complete body and mind. When such a collision occurs, there can be no distinction based on rank or class, which is why such politics constitutes the basic principle behind democracy itself. Democracy is premised on the possibility for the collision of individuals and their political opinions, represented by each individual having one vote. That such collision can be settled through assassination is, to

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<sup>231</sup> Masao Miyoshi points out how Isao is so reminiscent of Ōe's protagonist in *Sebunchin* that it can only be an instance of "Mishima's heavy borrowing, if not outright plagiarism, of the younger writer's earlier work." Miyoshi, Masao. "Introduction." *Two Novels: Seventeen and J*. New York: Fox Trot Books, 1996, pg. xv. Susan Napier sees Isao as being of the same "active hero" type as Takeyama from *Yūkoku*. Napier, pg. 164.

Mishima, unfortunate and even accidental, but it is embedded in the concept of democracy; assassination is an essential element (*tsukimono*) of democracy.<sup>232</sup> He opposes this form of politics with Communism or totalitarianism, which simply purges anyone that gets in the way, and disallows the possibility for the one-on-one collision.

Moreover, in Mishima's definition of "pure" assassination, one must also have the resolution to die—to wage one's entire human being (*ningen no zenshin wo kakeru*)—and must follow the act by committing suicide. Predictably, he works *bushido*, the way of the warrior, into his logic, saying, "The Japanese tradition that the assassin must kill himself after the act is the way of the samurai." If the assassin does not kill himself, it is not interesting (*omoshirokunai*), not manly (*otokorashikunai*).<sup>233</sup> Assassination, therefore, is the one-on-one confrontation of individuals in which the assassin is resolved to die; it is an essential element of democracy and yet rooted in Japan's warrior code.<sup>234</sup> To Mishima, when it takes this form it is both manly and beautiful (*biteki*). One student (Student I) pushes him on his

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<sup>232</sup> Mishima Yukio. "Gakusei to no tiichi in (Teach-in with college students)." *Bunka Bōeiron*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2006, pg. 196-7.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 193-4.

<sup>234</sup> In its own bizarre way, Mishima seems to be mirroring the logic of Hirohito's *Ningen Sengen*, which was an effort to find an indigenous source of democracy within Japan's "tradition." During the speech, this of course meant the beginning of the Meiji Period. Mishima sees something universal in the ethico-politico confrontation of one individual against another, so he ties it to democracy, and then shows how that form of democracy has its origin in the code of the warrior. It makes me wonder whether he convinced a single student during the teach-in. Frankly, I really hoped to find a comparison of Saigo Takamori and Benjamin Franklin within the transcript, but had no such luck.

aestheticization of such killing and suicide, saying what matters is not the beauty of it, but the ramification that someone actually dies, that a life is lost. Yet, for Mishima, this student and others attack him from the basic standpoint of naïve pacifism, not taking into account violence that occurs in the world. To him, it is not about accepting or rejecting assassination because it necessarily occurs; instead, the task is to discern among the assassinations that take place which ones possess a purity of human political thought and a purity of human action.<sup>235</sup> Eventually, one of the students asks Mishima about the Asanuma Incident and Yamaguchi Otoya, to which he responds:

That was magnificent (*rippa*). The wrong kind of assassination is what Komori of the Shimanaka Incident did—it's absolutely unforgivable to include women and children. What makes the 2.26 Incident so wonderful is that it didn't include women and children—truly beautiful (*migoto*). The worst thing you could do is include women and children. Yamaguchi Otoya, Asanuma's killer, is exceedingly magnificent. It's because he took his own life afterward, you see! He's perfectly in line with Japanese tradition.<sup>236</sup>

Yamaguchi's assassination of Asanuma was magnificent because it accorded with Japanese tradition; he took his own life and did not involve women and children. This is Mishima's standard for discerning the "beauty" and "purity" of assassination. It is

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid, pg. 222.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid, pg. 205-6.

immaterial here that he uses the word “assassination” and not “terrorism” because he never draws the distinction. In fact, he recognizes the same spirit of *bushido* among Russian terrorists, who too took their own lives as part of their act, the only instance of such spirit in the West.<sup>237</sup> As I will discuss, Mishima even refers to the young soldiers of the 2.26 Incident as terrorists elsewhere, and argues that, in order to protect Japanese culture, the *emperor can side with terrorists* to reform the state.

Amidst the serious discussions of the impact of Right-wing violence and terrorism on the freedom of speech following the Shimanaka Incident, Mishima poses this alternative, which he would take most of the 1960s to articulate in different forms. He takes the type of violence that contributed to the “blackout” of representation of the emperor and reconfigures it as something to be judged only in aesthetic terms, not for its repercussions but some vague notion of an ahistorical essence. In this sense, we cannot merely understand Mishima’s revisionist representation of 2.26 as glorification of what he interprets as the “pure” spirits of the soldiers who carried out the coup; it is also a glorification of Yamaguchi Otoyō and a deceptive yet *active disruption* of the discourse of freedom of speech that marked the beginning of the 1960s. He took the focus on terrorism’s threat to free speech and shifted it to the literary representation of terrorism within his own writings. In doing so, he refused to confront the specific consequences of Right-wing terrorism on freedom of speech and the power to represent, and even integrated it

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<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 194.

into his conception of “Japanese culture.” To add to the violent Right’s state support and sanction, they now had a spokesperson (whether Mishima would accept such a role or not). Nakano was wrong; it wasn’t Fukazawa that legitimated violence against the Right, it was Mishima that legitimated Right-wing violence by framing it as the “defense of culture.”

### 6.3 Pretending to like democracy

Curiously, however, the concept of freedom of speech itself is integral to Mishima’s formulation of the emperor system. As Mishima would elucidate in *Bunka Bōeiron*, he believes that freedom of speech itself is important only as a practical political matter, the best choice for democracy. Yet, it must be in the service of protecting the “cultural totality” (*bunka zentaisei*). In fact, for him, freedom of speech is the “unimpeachable guarantor” of the temporal and spatial continuity that are fundamental requirements for this cultural totality. In that sense, freedom of speech is subordinate to, yet necessary for, culture. Whereas culture is an absolute value, freedom of speech is not absolute; it is a technical (*gijutsuteki*) political concept founded on relativism that has only the flimsiest of ethical roots. It is essentially non-ethical. Moreover, Mishima sees freedom of speech itself as permitting the corruption of culture in contemporary Japan and thereby threatening its cultural totality: “freedom of speech forces us to lose the creative and traditional character and hierarchy of culture, where only the *surface* (*hyōmen*) of culture's

totality is maintained and the solidity of the totality is lost.”<sup>238</sup> The solution for Mishima is to move away from the relative values of politics and towards a cultural community that endures through space and time, a concept that contains both the absolute ethical value and the indiscriminating comprehensiveness of culture. “This,” he says, “is where the *emperor as cultural concept* enters the stage.”<sup>239</sup>

Mishima is playing a strange game, acting as defender of the freedom of speech and liberal democracy while at the same time attempting to point out its shortcoming, namely that it cannot sufficiently ensure Japan’s cultural community, and in fact, can undermine it. Therefore, *within this democratic model*, something else is necessary and the emperor system is central to it, but not in its current form. Towards the end of his teach-in at Hitotsubashi University, he begins to summarize the point he wants to convey by saying,

The state form of democracy that we have today has to protect parliamentarism because it protects the freedom of speech. But protecting free speech is insufficient; it also must protect *our* tradition and *our* historical continuity. To that end, the emperor system as it is now is troubling and so,

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<sup>238</sup> Mishima Yukio. “Bunka Bōeiron.” *Bunka Bōeiron*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2006, pg. 64.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 66.

rather than consider it as a political concept, we must restore the emperor as the cultural concept of historical antiquity.<sup>240</sup>

On the one hand, Mishima is arguing against the concept of the emperor as a political figure that was established during the Meiji Era. On the other hand, he rejects the *surface* and superficial role played by the imperial family in the postwar, even though making the emperor into a symbol of national unity can be seen, to a large degree, as precisely an effort to turn the emperor into a cultural concept. However, despite all his talk of the “comprehensiveness” and “totality” of culture, what he really means when he says culture is something very specific, and not even very historically old: by “culture,” he means *bushido*, and more specifically, *bushido* within the Japanese military, which the emperor consecrates by bestowing military honors.

Mishima’s theory of the emperor as a cultural concept (*bunka gainen toshite no tennō*) hybridizes two thinkers, Kita Ikki and Watsuji Tetsurō, the former for his theory of revolution and the latter, for his notion that the emperor is the expression of the unity of Japan’s cultural community. This theory is fully articulated in his 1968 essay, *Bunka Bōeiron*, and while Watsuji is heavily quoted within the text, Kita’s presence is largely spectral. Perhaps we can understand Kita’s spectral presence as perfectly parallel to his role in the 2.26 Incident; he was a prime intellectual influence on the young soldiers, but was completely uninvolved in the coup itself.

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<sup>240</sup> Mishima Yukio. “Gakusei to no tiichi in (Teach-in with college students).” *Bunka Bōeiron*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2006, pg. 223.

Nevertheless, Kita and the 2.26 Incident become central to Mishima's emperor system theory during the 1960s. As I will argue, Mishima selectively adopts Kita for his purposes and implicates him in his own version of 2.26; despite the effort to extricate Kita from the event, Kita's thought returns to haunt it. Thus, I'm interested in how Kita's thought can be used to undermine Mishima's.

Like the state did to Kita's body, Mishima executes Kita's thought; to Mishima, he was guilty of conceiving of the emperor system in purely political terms. In short, Mishima adopts Kita's notion that the emperor can be a force for revolution, but extracts such a notion from Kita's political grounds for doing so, a strict adherence to the emperor's political capacity to suspend the constitution as an organ of state. To make this argument, I will elaborate on Kita Ikki's thought and return to Mishima's postwar appropriation of him and the event he inspired.

#### **6.4 Kita Ikki's anti-kokutairon**

While Kita's text, *Outline Plan for the Reorganization of Japan* (1919), was considered the bible of the 2.26 Incident, it was firmly rooted in his theory of the emperor system written much earlier. Published in 1906 when Kita Ikki was 23 years old, "Theory of Kokutai and Pure Socialism" (*Kokutairon oyobi Junsei Shakaishugi*) sought to completely redefine the *kokutai* as completely heterogeneous to the official versions premised on the logic of restoration, loyalty and mythology.<sup>241</sup> The

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<sup>241</sup> Kita Ikki. "Kokutai-ron Oyobi Junsei Shakai Shugi." *Kita Ikki Shisō Shūsei*. Tokyo: Shoshi Shinsui, 2005.

prime targets of critique were the influential scholars Hozumi Yatsuka and Ariga Nagao, whose works interpreted the constitution to give absolute authority to the emperor, the locus of sovereignty (*shuken no shozai*), and relied on the ahistorical notion of *bansei ikkei*, the unbroken imperial line which supposedly reached back to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu of the Kiki myths, and the enduring loyalty (*chu*) towards the imperial institution.

For Kita, the Meiji Restoration was a democratic revolution that legally guaranteed equality among the people. The Meiji Restoration-Revolution (*Meiji Ishin-kakumei*), as he called it, was the most important change since the Taika reforms because it overthrew the patriarchal state (*kachōkoku*) and replaced it with a people's state (*kōmin-kokka*). It was neither a return to the past (*ōsei fukkō*) nor an installation of monarchy because, for the first time, the emperor was put on equal ground with the citizens, an achievement only possible with enlightenment ideals promoted by the People's Rights Movement and awareness of the exploitation they had suffered. Despite the achievement of legal equality initiating the process of transforming serfs to equal citizenry, further revolution was required to actualize his true socialist ideal. However, according to a view of history evolving through stages, the *Meiji Ishin-Kakumei* had forever changed the *kokutai* for Kita. Until that point, the *kokutai* had been patriarchal in form; the state was considered thing-like (*bukkaku*), to be owned by—and serve the profits of—nobility. But now, the state had a human character (*jinkaku*) that served the people as a whole democratically, a *kōmin kokka*

("citizen-state" or "people's state"). Now, with the *kokutai* of the people's state, a new governmental structure, or *seitai*, was possible. The *seitai* transformed from being aristocratic in form to democratic, which he calls the democratic governmental structure (*minshūteki seitai*). However, since these new *kokutai* and *seitai* had only been realized legally, Kita demands that the economic conditions, still class-based, be brought in line with the other Meiji ideals through an economic restoration-revolution (*ishin-kakumei*) that would nationalize all land and capital, including the holdings of the imperial family.

For Kita, in the new people's state (*kōmin-kokka*), sovereignty lay neither with the ruler nor the people, but with the state, which he equates with society itself. The state, as sovereign, is an organic body (*kokka yūkitai*) made up of individual elements that exist in space. As such, the emperor is merely one organ (*kikan*) that acts in concert with the people, represented by the Diet. This solidly puts Kita Ikki in the camp of emperor-organ theorists (*tennō kikan setsu-sha*), who would later feel the brunt of persistent attacks for violating the *kokutai*. However, Kita also maintains critique of the leading emperor-organ theorist, Minobe Tatsukichi. Minobe's flaw, in Kita's eyes, is not his characterization the emperor as an organ, which he is, but rather labeling the emperor to be the highest organ. Kita offers no such privileged status for the emperor.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid, pg 394.

Kita argues that official *kokutai* ideologues were incapable of accounting for historical change because their notion of sovereignty relied merely on the continuous rule of the emperor. Rather than grasp history dynamically or evolutionarily, they repeated the static notion of the unbroken line of emperors (*bansei ikkei*), constantly falling into their own tautological trap:

It is continually thought that the Japanese people have an unbroken line of emperors, and so in the West the *kokutai* and *seitai* evolve along with his historical evolution, but only in Japan do the Japanese people sit in the lotus position outside of the law of evolution, not evolving. Therefore, when debating the nature of our *kokutai* and trying to determine where the location of sovereignty lies, the Constitutional scholars make this interpretation: the consistency of our *kokutai* consists of the unbroken line of emperors, and therefore, sovereignty resides within the emperor. But this is not interpretation. It is the same as saying, sovereignty resides in the unbroken chains of emperors and therefore sovereignty resides in the emperor.<sup>243</sup>

Hozumi and Ariga seemed to argue that *kokutai* was determined historically, yet this only applied to other countries, and they act as if Japan underwent no change over time; their entire concept of temporality is “backward” or “retrogressive” (*gyakushinteki*). Moreover, their doctrine relies on the notion that loyalty exists as a

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<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, pg 376.

constant through history, ignoring the long history of rebellion and revolt. The point of the *Meiji Ishin-Kakumei* to Kita was to cast off the fetters that dictated to serfs to landowners the meaning of “loyalty.”

By employing the unbroken line of emperors (*bansei-ikkei*) as an inviolable law, the *kokutai* ideologues were doing no more than stifling debate, and would characterize any discourse that did not conform to theirs as a violation of the *kokutai*. Kita compares their use of *kokutai* to the portable shrines, *mikoshi*, carried by warrior monks, which they would designate as sacred and inviolable. The emperor *and* ideology of *kokutai* were untouchable. Kita is unambiguous:

Enshrining the emperor in the portable shrine of *kokutai-ron*, monks scream foul if anyone dares to touch, claiming disrespect (*fukei*). But, this is not true emperor; it is rather a clay figure fabricated by the indulgent superstitions of the monks... Simply, (the emperor of *kokutai-ron*) is not His Majesty the Emperor of Great Japan of the Constitution, but rather a clay figure fabricated by provincial simpletons through ignorance of the state’s essence and legal principle, made from Shinto superstition, slave morality, and a delusory interpretation of history.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid, pg. 363

Thus, as a polemical weapon, *kokutai* theorists would greet dissent or even rational argumentation with accusations of disrespecting the emperor, *fukei*.<sup>245</sup> Yet, as Kita indicates in the quote above, designating the *kokutai* and emperor as sacred and off-limits to critique is akin to fanatical idol worship. The emperor of such an ideology was no more than a construct, completely detached from the reality that the emperor had a purely political function in a fundamentally modern state institution.

Kita's attack on *kokutai* theory was powerful, and posed serious challenges to ideologues like Hozumi Yatsuka, who pushed for a radical version of absolute monarchism. Despite his iconoclasm, he was an articulate defendant of Japan's constitutional monarchy. And despite his rhetoric of revolution, he was a staunch statist whose enthusiastic support for growing the organic body of the state through expansionist imperial policies put him at great odds with other young anarchists and socialists of the time. His project in many ways can be read as justification for Japan's expansionism; it extolled the virtues of multiethnic empire, not unlike many other political theorists of Japanese imperialism. Moreover, Kita's populist appeal and pushback against the peddlers of Shinto myths perhaps made his call to action years later all the more attractive; his nationalism had a strong basis in enlightenment modernism like that of, for example, Fukuzawa Yukichi, not blind faith.

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<sup>245</sup> Prior to writing "Theory of Kokutai and Pure Socialism," Kita himself had been accused of *fukei* as a young writer in his hometown of Sado, an island of the shores of Niigata prefecture. After the publication of this book as well, Kato Takaaki (who later penned the most repressive law against critique directed at the emperor and *kokutai*, the Peace Preservation Law) ensured its ban through accusations of *fukei*.

Disillusioned with Japan's foreign policy, especially in regards to the Twenty-One Demands made on China, and the backlash it created there, Kita's *Outline Plan for the Reorganization of Japan (Nihon Kaizō Hōan Taikō)*, published first in 1919, stipulated terms for the redistribution of wealth, and rights of workers, women (though not suffrage, yet) and Koreans in the colony, among other things. Largely building on his conception of *kokutai* established in his first book, the *Reorganization Plan* calls on the emperor, as representation of the democratic will of the people, to take command of the state by putting it under martial law. He compares the emperor to an imaginative leader such as Napoleon or Lenin. The text begins:

The emperor in concert with all people of Japan will exercise imperial authority, and in order to determine the basis for national reorganization, will suspend the constitution for three years, dissolve both houses, and implement martial law (*kaigenrei*) throughout the nation.<sup>246</sup>

He calls for a coup d'état carried out by both emperor and his people in which the government expels nobility and aristocracy (*kizoku*) that remained from feudal times and that interfered with direct imperial rule, and hence, the expression of the will of the people. The emperor, in other words, was a force for revolution that could bring about equality in Japan by expelling its true feudal remnants, the nobility.

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<sup>246</sup> Kita Ikki, "Nihon Kaizo Hōan Taikō." *Kita Ikki Shisō Shūsei*. Tokyo: Shoshi Shinsui, 2005, pg 690.

Kita attempts to clarify the true significance of the “Peoples’ Emperor” (*kokumin no tennō*) who serves as the political center of the democratic state (*kōmin kokka*).<sup>247</sup> The present configuration of the imperial court had lost touch with its original intention (at the outset of the *Meiji Ishin-Kakumei*) by employing medieval customs and adding remnants of European courts. Thus, it must be purified back to the original modernizing spirit of Meiji. Kita says, “This purification is necessary once again because when the state undergoes fundamental reorganization, the construction of the imperial court alone cannot be left in its ramshackle state (literally, “leaning pillars, crumbling walls,” 傾柱壞壁).”<sup>248</sup> In other words, the emperor system as Kita saw it in 1919 had already abandoned the modernizing principles of the Meiji Revolution, degenerating into an institution premised on existing outside a modern temporality, *completely anachronistic*.

Kita’s aims to dismantle the “backwards/retrogressive” (*gyakushinteki*) concept of the emperor system, and replace it with a fully modern structure that has only a coincidental connection to the past. Kita’s theory of history as evolutionary (*shinkateki*) meant that history only moved in one direction, forward. But, the ideological strength of the emperor system as defined by *kokutai-ron* scholars—Kita’s enemies—rested in its ability to claim primacy through inheritance of a static past,

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<sup>247</sup> This notion of the “people’s emperor” (*kokumin no tennō*) became a common trope of the democratic postwar Japan, but it was articulated much earlier, as is evident in Kita’s writing and that of the People’s Rights Movement that preceded him.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 693

whether ritualistically or through imperial regalia; it worked precisely by *concealing* its modern/modernizing exploits in the aura of sanctity/tradition and inviolability.<sup>249</sup> To *kokutai-ron* scholars, the modern imperial project was indistinguishable from other empires unless its modern elements were disguised. Therefore, the particularity of imperial continuity had to be maintained absolutely. What puts Kita Ikki at odds with state ideologues is keen understanding of the absolutely modern nature of the emperor system, his piercing critique of *kokutai* ideology, and his faith in the revolutionary potential of the emperor when directly united with the people of Japan.

Kita's *Reorganization Plan* was highly influential among youth activists at the time of its writing in 1919, and continued to have influence until the 2.26 Incident of 1936 even as Kita himself became increasingly distant from political activism.

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<sup>249</sup> Kuno Osamu credits Kita Ikki with trying to disclose how ideologues concealed this modern nature of the emperor system by outwardly promoting the view that the emperor is an absolute sovereign (the "exoteric," *kenkyō*, interpretation) while secretly adhering to a constitutional monarchy in which the emperor's powers is kept in check by the other branches of government (the "esoteric," *mikkyō* interpretation). In other words, Kita wanted to destroy the "exoteric" view and take the "esoteric" view of the emperor system to the public, to popularize the emperor system *as modern*, not conceal it. He says, "Kita argued for an *undisguised* theory of state sovereignty with the emperor as an organ of the state. As the esoteric theory, this was already officially accepted as self-evident. Kita's uniqueness lay in his effort to spread that theory among the masses who had been educated in the exoteric theory. He sought to entirely discredit the exoteric theory as 'iconism.' By establishing the esoteric theory among the people in place of the exoteric, Kita sought to make the emperor the symbol of national unity from below rather than of bureaucratic rule from above." Kuno Osamu, "The Meiji State, Minponshugi, and Ultrationalism." Kazuya Satō, trans. *Authority and the Individual in Japan: Citizen Protest in Historical Perspective*. J. Victor Koschmann, ed. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1978, pg. 76.

Employing the language of socialism and communism, Kita's revolutionary principle is that the emperor could be harnessed as a force for revolution to overthrow the nobility within the government, who consisted of wealthy land-owners and landlords. Such language was particularly powerful for soldiers within the Imperial Army who were mobilized from the impoverished countryside. It offered hope to restore the revolutionary possibilities of Meiji through their own renewal and restoration, the *Showa Ishin*. The young officers of 2.26 were said to carry copies of the text during the coup.

The coup that began on February 26, 1936 and lasted for several days did not bring about the lost connection between the young officers and emperor that they had desired. Rather, as I mentioned above, Hirohito denounced the coup as a rebellion, and while his official response sounded rather sympathetic, the officers were charged with rebellion and seventeen put to death, including Kita, who bore no direct relation to the events.

### **6.5 Mishima's (ab)use of Kita**

When Mishima uses the coup d'état of February 26, 1936 for his own theory of the emperor system, however, he has to evacuate it of its premises, and pick and choose what of Kita's system is attractive while discarding the rest. First and most importantly, Mishima adopts the principle that the emperor can be a force for revolution. As I will show, Mishima sees the 2.26 coup—the *Showa Ishin*—as an opportunity for the emperor to side with the revolution that Hirohito utterly refused

to do, opting instead for protection of the elite power holders. However, Mishima discards Kita's concept of history as evolutionary, and subsumes revolution within his concept of uninterrupted, continuous time. Mishima's entire concept of emperor as a cultural concept is contingent upon temporal continuity and "tradition," and as such, is at odds with revolutionary time, history as interruption. Second, but relatedly, Mishima has to deny the modern function of the emperor system; to him, it is timeless. Of course, his disavowal of the modern aspect of the emperor system is identical to that of the *kokutai-ron* ideologues that Kita critiques. Simply put, Mishima's conception, in Kita's language, is "retrogressive" (*gyakushinteki*) and anachronistic. Third, as Noguchi Takehiko has convincingly argued, Mishima was not only hostile to Kita's emperor-organ theory, but worked hard to scrub out any of Kita's influence when depicting the participants of the coup.<sup>250</sup> Forth, in a most curious move, Mishima shared Kita's rejection of the state's protection of private financial capital.<sup>251</sup> This is strange considering Mishima's incredible elitism<sup>252</sup> and his,

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<sup>250</sup> Noguchi Takehiko. "Mishima Yukio and Kita Ikki: The Aesthetics and Politics of Ultrationalism in Japan." trans. Teruko Craig. *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Summer 1984, pg. 451.

<sup>251</sup> This is most apparent in his disgust over the Peace Preservation Law's juridical combination of "kokutai" and private property. He interprets this as an affront to the emperor, as *fukei*. The protagonist of *Runaway Horses*, the terrorist Isao, has among his objectives the overthrow of the *zaibatsu*.

<sup>252</sup> Masao Miyoshi discusses how Mishima's tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility* aims to nostalgically depict the elite of a bygone era: "The elegant aristocratic life of pre-WWI Japan that this volume depicts is a romantic simulation, oblivious to the dire poverty of the majority of people as well as to the bottom-line shabbiness of Japan's upper classes at the time... for Mishima these were the halcyon days from which every sequence has been only a decline: the characters are young, rich, and beautiful, and they even choose to die young." Miyoshi, Masao. *Off Center: Power*

as Noguchi puts it, “indifference to the poverty of the farming villages” that can be directly linked to the coups d’état of the early 1930s.<sup>253</sup>

Mishima never claimed to adhere to Kita’s worldview or principles, and in fact denied that Kita influenced his thought. However, Mishima’s conception of the emperor as cultural concept and his literary representation of emperor system ideology is completely indebted to the emperor’s revolutionary potential, a notion conceived and articulated by Kita. In this sense, Kita is a constant specter that looms over a large body of Mishima’s writing in the 1960s, haunting it despite Mishima’s attempt to distance himself from Kita’s influence. Thus, measuring how Mishima’s thought holds up to Kita’s is useful for demonstrating what an absurd fantasy Mishima had concocted.

During the 1960s, a subset of Mishima Yukio’s writings paid great, even obsessive, consideration to the coup of Feb. 26, 1936 (from hereon, 2.26 Incident), including what he dubbed the “2.26 trilogy,” comprised of *Eirei no Koe* (Voices of the Heroic Dead), *Tōka no Kiku* (Tenth Day Chrysanthemum), and *Yūkoku* (Patriotism), as well as numerous essays that deal with the subject, including one called “The 2.26 Incident and Me,” and both direct and oblique references scattered throughout his tetralogy, *Hōjō no Umi* (The Sea of Fertility). Mishima along with his own military society, Tatenokai, staged a performative coup on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1970, capped by

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*and Culture Relations Between Japan and the United States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, pg. 160.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 439.

Mishima's own suicide at the Ichigaya base station in Tokyo. Mishima's texts and performances are further demonstration of what Gavin Walker calls Mishima's "autofiction" in relation to Mishima's purported autobiography, *Sun and Steel*, the creation of a completely closed loop of self-referentiality between Mishima's texts and the author himself that puts the critic in a bind, only able to interpret Mishima's writing as a reflection of Mishima the person (as biography), and vice versa.<sup>254</sup> In this sense, we may be better off conceiving of Mishima, as Masao Miyoshi instructs, not as writer or thinker but as a "presence" or an "event."<sup>255</sup> I am personally not concerned about reconstructing or even psychoanalyzing Mishima, nor am I interested in determining if he or his writing is fascistic or whatever. Rather, I want to shed light on his theory of the emperor system, and ask whether it is useful for understanding the discursive space in which he was writing. I take as a premise that his theory is fraudulent due to its sheer disregard of logic, history, and politics, but I do not care whether that was his ironic intention or sheer playfulness. Either way, I believe it is still important to demonstrate *what* of his text is problematic and *why*.

In his "The 2.26 Incident and Me," Mishima assumes that the young activist soldiers felt unease with Kita's version of *kokutai*:

Kita Ikki thoroughly captured the hearts of youth through a cyclone of passionate negations, negation piled on negation—this is easy to imagine.

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<sup>254</sup> Walker, Gavin. "The Double Scission of Mishima Yukio: Limits and Anxieties in the Autofictional Machine". *Positions*. 18, no. 1, 2010, pg. 145-169.

<sup>255</sup> Miyoshi, 1991, pg. 149.

However, the officers who carried out the 2.26 Incident felt something incompatible with Kita's view of *kokutai* alone... The tragedy of the 2.26 Incident lies in its compromise, continually adopting Kita Ikki in method while using *kokutai* as a concept. This is the true cause of their failure, but at the same time, the true beauty of their failure. Within their inconsistency and self-contradictions, they ultimately could not defile the supreme beauty within themselves. Had they defiled that—well, they probably achieved this to a degree—they would have killed themselves for the sanctity of their purity. This purity (*seiketsu*) is the *kokutai* that they believed in.<sup>256</sup>

Mishima astutely recognized the attraction of Kita's negational politics of nationalism, and saw both the failure and yet beauty of the attempted coup to be the synthesis of incompatible versions of *kokutai*. This criticism is tempered by Mishima's own aesthetics of destruction and synthesis of irony, distance, and sincerity in the packaging of his own *kokutai-ron*. If Kita's interpretation of *kokutai* was not sufficient to Mishima for the success of the young soldiers, Mishima gives little clue as to what alternative might have not brought the repudiation of the emperor. However, he provides a tentative solution by purging *kokutai* of its political affiliation and defining it in relation to subjective experience—which is to say, he conceals the very politicality of *kokutai* by making it an issue of aesthetics and individual subjectification. He says,

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<sup>256</sup> Mishima Yukio. "Ni Ni-roku Jiken to Watashi." *Eirei no Koe: Originaru-ban*. Tokyo: Kawade Bunko, 2005, pg. 254.

What is *kokutai*? I've encountered several of the debates on *kokutai* over time and have found the vagueness hard to penetrate. While understanding that Kita Ikki has his own reasons for his refutation of the *kokutai* discourse, I on the other hand was interested by the paradoxical phenomenon that "*kokutai*" itself exists in everyone's heart shining so clearly and brightly. In each of the hearts of one-hundred million citizens there is a *kokutai*, and there are one-hundred million types of *kokutai*. Soldiers have their own military *kokutai*, which we call the spirit of the soldier, and the "*kokutai*" of the officers who incited the 2.26 Incident was the pure cultivation of this spirit of the soldier. And, the unbroken line of emperors is not at the same time the combination of all the gods, but rather The Emperor His Majesty's single figure appearing as one-hundred million distinct figures: the multitude in one, one in the multiple... However, it was clear and distinct to every beholder.

Yet, if you felt that someone was responsible for obscuring such a clear and bright thing, it would be completely natural to instantly grab a sword and attack him in an effort to defend such clarity and purity. To the officers of the 2.26 Incident, the problem of the prerogative of the supreme commander was the core of *kokutai* as seen from the spirit of the soldier (*gunjin seishin*), and they believed that killing those who (they thought) infringed on that command was the means for realizing the Imperial Heart (*Oomikokoro*). Not only did they fail to realize the Imperial Heart, but gave a fine exculpation to

those infringers, and had to suffer the disgrace of being labeled a "rebel army."

Separate from a literary interest, deep within me there flows an undercurrent that wants to comfort these ghosts of the true heroes who had control over me, to vindicate their honor, and attempt to rehabilitate them. Yet, while trying to draw the line back to them, I would only get snagged by the emperor's "Declaration of Humanity" (*Ningen Sengen*).<sup>257</sup>

Certainly Mishima's understanding of *kokutai* as the brilliant light glowing from each individual's heart is, like Kita's understanding, heterogeneous to the *kokutai-ron* ideologues whose emperor-centered vision squarely placed the locus of sovereignty within the emperor. However, it is exactly the *affective* nature of nationality that he keenly understands, and it's this type of penetration, what Takeuchi Yoshimi calls "the emperor-system that extends to every tree and every blade of grass" (*ichimoku issō nu yadoru tennōsei*), that Mishima hopes to revive through his 2.26 texts. Mishima connects the decay of this *kokutai* with the failure of Hirohito to answer to the voices of the young soldiers who lead the 1936 attempted coup.

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid, pg. 255-266.

## 6.6 Coopting the voices of the dead

Mishima's *Eirei no Koe*<sup>258</sup> ("Voices of the Heroic Dead," 1966) is an attempt to redeem those accused of rebellion at 2.26, referring to them instead with the title normally reserved for fallen soldiers consecrated at Yasukuni Shrine, *eirei* ("deified spirits of the fallen"). The novella portrays the voices of the young soldiers executed for their coup as well as kamikaze pilots, who, through a blind youth named Kawasaki acting as medium, air their grievances through séance. They explain their reason for attempting the "restoration" of the direct connection of the emperor not in terms of their plight—suffering from poverty and starvation—but rather the need to rescue the emperor. He was imprisoned by "ugly beasts," a captive who was pure and lonely. Their task was to topple those beasts and save the emperor. Only by rescuing the emperor could they save the people from their abject misery and give soldiers the confidence to proudly defend their country with no anxiety about the future.<sup>259</sup> However, in demanding the suppression of the coup and designating them as rebels, the emperor had condemned them to die like slaves. Their voices, like a "chorus of dogs," bemoan the betrayal of the emperor, saying,

The *kokutai*, which tried to make us manifest as its true figure, has already been trampled upon, and Japan, without its *kokutai*, is out there floating like buoy or jetsam of the heart.... Thirty years ago we incited a righteous army

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<sup>258</sup> Mishima Yukio. "Eirei no Koe." *Eirei no Koe, orijinaru-ban*. Tokyo: Kawade Bunko, 2005.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 32.

and were murdered after suffering the disrepute of being called a rebel army.  
 You must not forget us.<sup>260</sup>

Each angry declaration is followed by a poem that ends with the question, “Why did the emperor become a human?” (*sumerogi ha hito to naritamaishi*) The emperor appears to accost them for wounding the *kokutai* through their treacherous and treasonous act, and will not even honor their dignity by ordering them to kill themselves. Through Kawasaki the medium, a soldier expresses his anger and hatred towards the emperor for this, saying, “When asked if he’d order us to take our own lives, the emperor replies, ‘If you’re going to kill yourselves, go ahead and do it on your own. I’ll give you no such order.’”<sup>261</sup> By labeling the soldiers as traitors, the emperor deprives them the possibility that their deaths are vindicated through sacrifice for the state, and by further refusing to order them to kill themselves, he forestalled their chances to die honorably at their own hands.<sup>262</sup> As I mentioned above, in *Yūkoku*, Takeyama’s *seppuku* is a chance to restore the dignity and honor of suicide that had been stripped from the young soldiers of the coup. In *Eirei no Koe*, the emperor refused to answer to the call for direct imperial rule by the soldiers, and in Mishima’s words, “shamefully defiled us as traitors” and “destroyed our great

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid, pg. 25.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid, pg. 40.

<sup>262</sup> This resonates with Agamben’s discussion *homo sacer*, the “sacred man” who can be killed but not sacrificed, and whose determination can only be made by the decision of the sovereign. Hirohito refused to dignify their deaths by allowing them to be sacrificial, which Mishima intends to reverse.

obligation to the imperial land,” thereby allowing the soldiers to die but not to be sacrificed.

Invoking the Christ-like image of betrayed individuals who attempted to actualize the *kokutai* of their hearts, with reference to the crucifix,<sup>263</sup> Mishima envisions a redemption in which the soldiers’ deaths become sacrifice for the state, at which point their restless purgatory-like suspension can end. Yet, for Mishima’s soldiers, Hirohito’s postwar “Declaration of Humanity” constitutes further betrayal of the cause for which sacrifice is possible. The spirits of kamikaze pilots, destined to wander restlessly throughout the islands of Japan, lament that only “one year after we had turned our bodies into bullets and were forced to target enemy battle ships for the sake of this divine emperor,” the emperor had to declare, “I am a human (*chin ha ningen de aru*).”<sup>264</sup> Through their deaths, they, and all soldiers who had died for the Empire, had been deified and immortalized as *eirei*. But, they could only be divine if the emperor too is divine, and his renunciation of divinity invalidated their divinity as well; it made their deaths worthless. Therefore, they cry through the medium, “His Majesty must be a god. From the highest stone of the gods, His Majesty must shine down on us. This is the source of our immortality, the source of the glory of our deaths, the single thread that connects us to our history.”<sup>265</sup> The novella ends with the seething anger of the heroic spirits overwhelming the medium, Kawasaki. They

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid, pg. 41.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid, pg. 65

<sup>265</sup> Ibid, pg. 55.

finally moan the line, “Why did the emperor become a human?” three times, and Kawasaki collapses and dies.

According to the text of *Eirei no Koe*, there were two times when the emperor ought most to have expressed his divinity, at the time of the 2.26 Incident and at Japan’s defeat. In both those times, though, the emperor missed his chance and instead became merely human.<sup>266</sup> This corresponds exactly to the two moments that Hirohito is said to have exercised imperial prerogative, the two times he is said to have been essentially political, and hence, bear political responsibility. Thus, in this instance, the emperor’s humanity is also tied to his political responsibility and accountability; implicitly, the emperor can only be irresponsible if he is divine. Insisting on his humanity is not only to bear political responsibility, but also to admit that he was wrong.

Mishima, in representing the desire for the emperor to validate the action and spirit of the rebels of the 2.26 Incident, firmly establishes his ideal for the emperor system: it must be transcendent and embrace the beauty and purity of the spirit of *kokutai* within the soldiers. The failure to do so—Hirohito’s failure—is to cause the decay of the emperor system itself, and to invalidate and bring shame to the war and those who died in the emperor’s name. Interestingly, Mishima’s own articulation of the decay of the emperor system also offers a fairly substantial critique. In fact, the 2.26 Incident and Hirohito’s “Declaration of Humanity” did

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<sup>266</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 66.

expose that when tested, the emperor was much more willing to save himself as individual than to save the emperor system or its principles. Yasumaru Yoshi, thus, refers to *Eirei no Koe* as, “in a sense, an internal critique (*naizaiteki hihan*) of the emperor system.”<sup>267</sup> For all of the failings of Mishima’s concept of the emperor system, I believe it is also important to ask what it can contribute to the critique of the emperor system in general. In other words, it is important to read Mishima against Mishima as well.

Mishima’s antipathy directed at Hirohito (whether sincere or contrived) is unguarded. He disrespects the emperor as individual, but only en route to expressing his supreme loyalty for the divine nation of Japan as embodied by the emperor as concept. Elsewhere, Mishima has also said that he is revolted by the Showa emperor as an individual and that he would like to kill the emperor in the imperial garden before committing *seppuku* himself.<sup>268</sup> For Mishima, the concern is not with the emperor as individual, but the eternal line of emperors that alone secures continuity for Japan, the emperor system, *tennōsei*; as he said when defining the *kokutai* above, it is the multitude in one, the one in the multitude. When the emperor became human, he severed the divine line that ensured continuity from emperor to emperor. Moreover, it is not mere continuity of the imperial institution and its loyalists that Mishima wants to rescue, but his own sense of continuity. He confesses in his essay,

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<sup>267</sup> Yasumaru Yoshio. *Kindai tennōzō no keitai* (Formation of the image of the modern emperor). Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007, pg. 305.

<sup>268</sup> See Matsumoto Tōtu, Satō Hideaki. *Mishima Yukio Jiten*. Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2000.

“The 2.26 Incident and Me,” his own sense of loss in the rupture of pre- and post-defeat, and why he sought to suture the past by understanding its continuity:

The history of Showa, due to defeat, is perfectly divided into before and after this defeat, and for me who has continued to live through this period, there was a strong urge to search out a grounds for personal continuity and grounds for logical consistency. It had nothing to do with being a writer. It was a raw, natural urge. At that point, what really would snag me up was less the new constitution that established the emperor as a "symbol," and more the emperor's own "Declaration of Humanity." My suspicion chased me back to the 2.26 Incident like a single shadow that I followed until the point where I had to write *Eirei no Koe*. As a result of digging deep into my own aesthetics, I needed to know where, at the base, the bedrock of the emperor system lurked. It is not something that can be forever avoided.<sup>269</sup>

His words suggest a nostalgic sense of loss for the Japanese Empire, a the strong desire to rehabilitate the spirit *kokutai* he had projected onto the soldiers who incited the 2.26 coup; he wanted to redeem the emperor system from the defilement it suffered under the Hirohito. Because the 2.26 Incident is the “bedrock” of his theory of the emperor system, it is important to notice how Mishima systematically excises Kita Ikki, the coup’s inspiration, from his representation of it.

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<sup>269</sup> Mishima Yukio. “Ni Ni-roku Jiken to Watashi.” *Eirei no Koe: Originaru-ban*. Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2005, pg. 257

### 6.7 *Bunka Bōeiron*: a “retrogressive” theory of time

In his essay *Bunka Bōeiron* (On the Defense of Culture, 1968)<sup>270</sup>, Mishima addresses the notion of the emperor system *not* as the manifestation of an individual emperor, but rather the unbroken chain of emperors that serves to symbolize culture and Japan itself as tradition. He, like the narrator of *Goshaku no Sake*, very clearly could distinguish between the emperor as individual and the emperor as institution, between the “emperor’s two bodies” as it were. To Mishima, culture is not a thing, an object to be passed down and preserved. Japan has distinguished itself among nations for this fact. Unlike elsewhere, Japan does not distinguish between original and copy, and transmission of technique instead guarantees authenticity. He gives the example of Ise Jingu, torn down and rebuilt every twenty years as embodying this type of authenticity. Mishima refers to this type of temporal transmission—through preservation and destruction—to be Japan’s cultural concept. And, it is none other than the emperor that is the ultimate embodiment of it.

The distinctive character of this type of concept of culture is that the emperor of antiquity *is the exact same* emperor of each generation; the relationship of each emperor to Amaterasu is not that of copy to original because they are one and the same. This is the distinctive character of the emperor system.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Mishima Yukio. “Bunka Bōeiron.” *Bunka Bōeiron*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2006, pg. 33-80. Originally published in the July 1968 edition of *Chūō Kōron*.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 44.

Accordingly, Japan has an “emperor as cultural concept” (*bunka gainen toshite no tennō*), and Mishima contrasts this with the “emperor as a political concept” (*seiji gainen toshite no tennō*). If the emperor as cultural concept represents the unity, totality and continuity of Japan and its people, then the emperor as political concept would have already failed on those grounds; the war defeat completely redefined the political status of the emperor. History for Mishima must be read culturally, and the unity of people and emperor can only be conceived in cultural terms because politics necessarily implies change. He says,

The essence of the continuity of cultural life—and its total affirmation—is *incompatible with the concept of dialectical development or progress*. This is because Japanese culture, this creative subject (*kōzō shutai*), transcends the limitations of historical conditions—sometimes hiding, sometimes bursting out (incidentally, I am not referring to a cultural history that enumerates its artifacts)—and forms the unified cultural history of a constant national spirit (*kokumin seishin*).<sup>272</sup>

This is the heart of Mishima’s conception of temporality. History and politics operate according to a temporal scheme—either dialectical in the case of historical materialism or progressive in the case of modernization theory, presumably his two targets—that is not compatible with culture. Culture is pure continuity, impervious to change. As such, it is not quantifiable; he is *not* a cultural preservationist that collects

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<sup>272</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 45.

and “enumerates” artifacts in cultural storehouses and museums. To do so would be to make culture finite and susceptible to time. Due to historical circumstances, it may become invisible, may hide, and at other times may “burst out” into full visibility; its *appearance*, though, has no effect of on its existence. To Mishima, culture—Japanese culture—simply constantly and continuously exists. It cannot be articulated in terms of objects or that which is *objectifiable*, either; culture must be absolute continuity of *spirit*.

Mishima runs into logical trouble, though, by conceiving this totality of continuous culture as *subject* or *agent* (*shutai*). *Shutai*, as practical agent, itself implies the ability to create and change history, which Mishima even suggests through the term “creativity” (*kōzō*), or poesis. However, if culture is continuous, and outside temporality of progress and dialectical movement (including violent interruption), such change initiated by the practical and creative agent—even as a cultural totality—is not possible. His articulation of culture totality as a *living agent* is largely an adoption and adaptation of Watsuji’s philosophy, and runs into many of the same problems that Watsuji does, most importantly the false assumption that the consciousness of Japan as a *national community* existed since antiquity, outside of its *fundamentally modern production*. Like Watsuji, Mishima wants to deny the political nature of the emperor, and has to portray the emperor’s modern political function since the Meiji Era as an aberration and perversion of emperor’s cultural signification. Watsuji’s separation of state and nation, which correspond respectively

to politics and culture, is crucial for Mishima, and he quotes from Watsuji's postwar debate with Sasaki Kōichi (see the end of Chapter Two).<sup>273</sup> In following Watsuji, Mishima is eager to distance himself from restorationists of the postwar who were eager to return sovereignty directly to the emperor as head of state, as supreme commander (*sōransha*).

At the point where Mishima employs Watsuji to extract politics from his own theory of emperor system, though, he smuggles politics back by insisting on the emperor's revolutionary potential. This is where his theory of temporarily completely falls apart. First, I will explain Mishima's position: If corrupt elements defile the relationship between emperor and people, the emperor can work in concert with the people (much like in Kita's vision) to restore their direct connection through military action. Mishima assiduously avoids reference to political or historical circumstances that may lie behind any desire to seek the emperor's assistance, shifting focus to the aesthetic value of elegance (*miyabi*), the embodiment of courtly grace. He says,

*'Miyabi'* is the culture glory of the court, and the longing towards it, but in a time of emergency, the form of terrorism was even considered *'miyabi.'* In other words, the emperor as cultural concept was not simply on the side of state power and order; he also extended his hand to the side of disorder. If state power forced the separation of country and people, the emperor that is cultural concept would be utilized as the *revolutionary principle* that attempts

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<sup>273</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 66-67.

to restore (*kaifuku*) the ‘inseparability of the country and people.’ Responding to the imperial wishes of Emperor Komei, the righteous warriors of the Sakuradamon Incident carried out a ‘ray of elegance’ (*hitosuji no miyabi*), and to the extent that the cultural form was not violated, the coup on behalf of the emperor should have received approval, but the Showa emperor system that adhered to the form of western constitutional monarchy had lost the power to understand the ‘*miyabi*’ of the 2.26 incident.<sup>274</sup>

To Mishima, the emperor perverted his status by acting in a *political*, not *cultural*, capacity; the Showa Emperor had failed to see the beauty of the coup, and failed to actualize the revolutionary potential of the emperor as cultural concept. His reference to the Sakuradamon Incident of 1860, in which loyalists from Mito assassinated a powerful advisor to the shogunate, Ii Naosuke, is meant to illuminate a time when the emperor still had a firm grasp of *miyabi*, which would become lost by the beginning of the Meiji Era, less than a decade later; to Mishima, the essence of the emperor as cultural concept had never made itself manifest in modern Japanese history.<sup>275</sup>

Whereas Kita Ikki’s completely modern theory that saw the emperor and people working together as organs to install a reorganized political structure (remember the very legalistic language of his *Reorganization Plan*), Mishima viewed

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid, pg. 74-5.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, pg. 73.

the incident inspired by Kita's book as failure of the emperor to carry out the proper transmission of timeless courtly elegance. For Kita, precisely those antiquated and anachronistic practices of the court ritual made up the "decrepit state" that his Reorganization sought to rectify, but for Mishima, the severing of those very antiquated practices led to the tragic failure; to him, 2.26 was a merely a stage play in which the lights were turned off on the actors. However, by stripping the attempted coup of its politic core and aestheticizing politics—a trend of fascism that Walter Benjamin articulated in his "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility"—Mishima in effect conceals the very political nature of individual subjectification through aesthetic attachment to the nation-state. Whereas Kita's wants to expose the modern nature of the emperor system, Mishima tries to hide it, to sweep it back under the rug.

However, Mishima fails to demonstrate how a revolutionary emperor does not also become implicated in the *revolutionary or dialectical temporality* that he firmly denounced above. As we learn from Walter Benjamin, the understanding of history from the standpoint of revolution (that of "materialist historiography") blasts open the continuum of history based on progressive time, or "empty, homogeneous" time. Revolutionary temporality thus resists history based on the chronological development through time in which violence is flattened and concealed by the constant and steady accumulation of facts and details, where time is measured evenly and progressively. In distinction to this, the materialist can thus reach back

into the past to find configurations (what he calls “monads”) that can be sublated—simultaneously destroyed and preserved—for the revolutionary potential of the time of now.<sup>276</sup> Mishima’s conception of cultural temporality does not even reach the level of empty, homogeneous time; there is only renewal of the same, and no accounting for difference; the original and the copy are the same. Thus, when Mishima discusses the destruction and rebuilding of the Ise Shrine<sup>277</sup>—his favorite analogue for the emperor as cultural concept—this has nothing to do with sublation; it is not destroyed and preserved at the same time, *only preserved* as a replica of the same. Since cultural continuity for him is absolute, his understanding of the temporality of revolution must be radically heterogeneous to either Benjamin’s or Kita’s. Revolution for Mishima can only mean the preservation of culture, the most corrupt and impoverished definition of revolution possible. Far from the Kita’s progressive or evolutionary history (*shinkateki*), Mishima’s is retrogressive (*gyakushinteki* 逆進), or, to pun on the term, traitorous (*gyakushinteki* 逆臣的).

## 6.8 Culture as the militant defense of culture

Despite the utter incongruity of including revolution—a temporality of rupture and interruption—within his conception of the emperor as cultural concept, it points to what Mishima really has in mind: *the militant defense of “culture” is culture itself*. This militancy can be terroristic, revolutionary, or otherwise. It is no

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<sup>276</sup> Benjamin, Walter. “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books, 1968, pg. 253-264.

<sup>277</sup> Mishima Yukio. “Bunka Bōeiron,” pg. 44.

coincidence that Mishima uses the most militant terminology for “defense,” *bōei*, a term used mostly in connection to armed forces. Mishima concludes his text with his solution for restoring the emperor as cultural concept and returning the emperor to the center of the national cultural community (*kokumin no bunka kyōdōtai*): the emperor must be able to bestow military honors. He calls this the revival of the “imperial privilege of giving honors” (*eiyo taiken*). He summarizes his position during his teach-in:

The imperial privilege of giving honors is not merely about the Order of Cultural Merit or honors to civilians in general, but about the *Jieitai* being recognized by the nation through military honors (*gunteki eiyo*); this must be a system in which the emperor is directly the supreme commander (*sōran*) of the *Jieitai*. If that doesn’t happen, democracy in Japan cannot become a truly indigenous democracy. This is the form I’m insisting on.<sup>278</sup>

Mishima would rather see the emperor as arbiter of what constitutes military honor or glory much more than he would like to see the emperor as arbiter of poetic refinement as evidenced by his judging of *utakai hajime*, etc. Furthermore, he is careful to insist that this would not revive the emperor as a political concept. The emperor would not be a political sovereign or head of state (*genshu*). Yet, he would become the supreme commander (*sōran*) of the *Jietai*. It is incredibly hard to see

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<sup>278</sup> Mishima Yukio. “Gakusei to no tiichi in (Teach-in with college students).” *Bunka Bōeiron*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 2006, pg. 223.

how Mishima could designate the emperor an apolitical “supreme commander” (*sōran*) with any logical consistency. Watsuji’s own articulation of the emperor as expression of the unity of Japan’s cultural community, the centerpiece of Mishima’s argument, had to adamantly reject the notion that the emperor throughout history was even a “supreme commander.” It was merely an aberration that began with Meiji and ended at Japan’s defeat in 1945. However, for Mishima, it is crucial; it is what makes Japan’s democracy distinct from other democracies. This is what is at stake: whether Japan’s democracy is “indigenous” or not. Mishima, through such analysis, expresses the true nature of nationality and Japan’s emperor system: *it is identical everywhere*. His entire treatise on the emperor as cultural concept is a mere reflection of the deep anxiety that just maybe Japan’s postwar emperor system has *nothing to distinguish it from other forms of nationality*.

Mishima finds one tiny example of something distinctive within Japanese culture that he believes can rescue the emperor system from this undifferentiation: the purported ability for the emperor to discern the elegance (*miyabi*) of a violent confrontation, and in particular, one that ends in *seppuku*. Throughout *Bunka Bōeiron*, he refuses to define culture because it means only *bushido*. Supposedly, in Mishima’s fantasy, the emperor would designate and bestow military honors in complete alignment and affirmation of traditional Japanese culture; this would be the exercise of imperial prerogative, and the expression of the totality of the cultural community.

With one final reconfiguration of the postwar debate on the emperor system, Mishima alters the phrasing of both Kanamori Tokujirō and Watsuji. For Watsuji, the emperor was the expression of the totality of cultural community precisely because he was always respected throughout history. He devotes an entire book to the attempt demonstrate that the “Japanese nation” has always possessed “reverence for the emperor” (*sonnō*). Likewise, Kanamori repeatedly articulates that the emperor is the “center of affection” (*akogare no chūshin*) of the Japanese nation. Yet, for Mishima, the emperor is the “center of honor” (*tennō ha eiyo no chūshin*).

### 6.9 Mishima’s Orientalism

*Bunka Bōeiron* is rather spectacular in its ability to amalgamate and assimilate various theories of the emperor system into Mishima’s own theory. As I have argued, he adopted Kita Ikki’s notion of the revolutionary potential of the emperor while ignoring the implications of such an incompatible temporality, and excised any political influence from the event of 2.26, including and especially the emperor-organ theory; he used Watsuji’s thought while sneaking politics back into it by having the emperor be a “supreme commander,” even though such a role included no sovereignty or responsibility; and he took Kanamori’s notion of “affection” and turned it into “honor.”

In his reading of Robert Bellah's 1965 essay, "Japan's Cultural Identity: Some Reflections on the Work of Watsuji Tetsuro,"<sup>279</sup> Naoki Sakai shows how incredibly useful Watsuji's thought could be within American and European scholarship for confirming and fulfilling Orientalistic fantasies about Japan, opposing Japan's "tradition" and "particularism" to the United State's supposed "modernity" and "universalism." Bellah's essay, a highly favorable reading of the mostly the same text quoted by Mishima in *Bunka Bōeiron* (Watsuji's response to Sasaki), according to Sakai, "accomplished its mission" of ideological warfare during the Cold War era by "accommodating the work of Watsuji Tetsurō within the general framework of national character study, as well as promoting Watsuji as a representative thinker of modern Japan who 'western' readers could appreciate within the typical Orientalist framework."<sup>280</sup> I believe that Mishima's use Watsuji in *Bunka Bōeiron*, only three years after Bellah's essay was published, served the *exact same function*. It is careful to craft a nativist, culturalist Japan and its "indigenous democracy" in the image of foreign desire; it is not inconceivable that Mishima himself had read Bellah's essay.

However, in terms of fulfilling the other's Orientalist fantasy of Japan within *Bunka Bōeiron*, use of Watsuji pales in comparison two other texts that backdrop Mishima's work: Nitobe Inazō's *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, 1900, and Ruth

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<sup>279</sup> Bellah, Robert H. "Japan's Cultural Identity: Some Reflections on the Work of Watsuji Tetsuro." *Journal of Asian Studies*, 24:4, 1965.

<sup>280</sup> Sakai, Naoki. "Imperial Nationalism and the Comparative Perspective." *Positions* 17:1, 2009, pg. 171.

Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 1946.<sup>281</sup> These two texts, both written in English, were aimed at presenting an idealized and essential conception of a timeless Japanese culture to a non-Japanese, "Western" audience, and asserting an image of Japanese masculinity that is alternative to that of the "Western" male.

Nitobe begins his *Bushido* with the following:

Chivalry is a flower no less indigenous to the soil of Japan than its emblem, the cherry blossom; nor is it a dried-up specimen of an antique virtue preserved in the herbarium of our history. It is still a living object of power and beauty among us; and if it assumes no tangible shape or form, it not the less scents the moral atmosphere, and makes us aware that we are still under its potent spell.<sup>282</sup>

This quote includes nearly every element contained within Mishima's "emperor as a cultural concept"; is it indigenous, living, and not tangible; it is not a dried-up and preserved specimen, exactly how Mishima critiqued the decay of Japanese culture turning into dead objects on museum shelves, preservationist; most importantly, the indigenous *warrior* is paired with the indigenous *flower*. Nitobe's image of Japanese culture, *bushido*, as sold to a foreign audience, furthermore, corresponds perfectly to Ruth Benedict's 1946 study, which only confirms Nitobe's formulation. The two texts, one by a Japanese author and the other by an American *but both directed at the*

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<sup>281</sup> Yamamoto Tsunetomo's *Hagakure* is an important third, but his reasons for employing it are the same as his use of *Bushido*.

<sup>282</sup> Nitobe Inazo. *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1998.

“west,” function within *Bunka Bōeiron* to mutually reinforce Japan’s unique cultural essence. In this sense, Mishima’s text is itself fundamentally Orientalist in its premise and execution.

*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*<sup>283</sup> was an anthropological study of national behavioral types commissioned in 1944 and largely based on interviews with second and third generation Japanese-Americans.<sup>284</sup> It sought to “answer a multitude of questions about our enemy, Japan,” and explain “the Japanese” as perfect embodiments of contradiction itself; any explanation of the “cultivation of chrysanthemums” must be complemented by explanation of the “cult of the sword.” She says,

The Japanese are, to the highest degree, both aggressive and unaggressive, both militaristic and aesthetic, both insolent and polite, rigid and adaptable, submissive and resentful of being pushed around, loyal and treacherous, brave and timid, conservative and hospitable to new ways.<sup>285</sup>

Mishima accepts Benedict’s thesis completely without question. Japanese culture was for him the perfect synthesis of such opposites. This duality of the “chrysanthemum and sword” (*kiku to katana*) is the form that pierces through all things Japanese

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<sup>283</sup> Benedict, Ruth. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. New York: Meridian, 1946.

<sup>284</sup> She states, “The fact that our two nations were at war inevitably meant, however a serious disadvantage. It meant that I had to forego the most important technique of the cultural anthropologist: the field trip.” Pg. 5.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 2. It should not take a leap of the imagination to realize that, had Ruth Benedict looked for those “contradictory” qualities internal to any nation, she could have easily found them.

(*nihonteki na mono*), from Tale of Genji to contemporary novels, the Manyōshū to waka, the Buddha at Chusonji to modern sculpture, flower arranging, tea, kendo, judo, from kabuki to yakuza and *chambara* movies, from Zen to military strategy.<sup>286</sup> However, to Mishima, it was the Occupation that severed the chrysanthemum from the sword; it kept everything it deemed “safe”—flower arrangement, tea ceremonies—while stripping Japan of any hint of violence, even banning *chambara* sword-fight films and “vengeance” in Kabuki plays.<sup>287</sup> This severing of this “eternal linkage,” Mishima says, has turned Japanese culture into something feminine and emotionally slovenly. Thus, the task is to reunite the “chrysanthemum and the sword” in order to restore the integrity of Japan’s cultural community.

Mishima wants no less than to restore the Japan of Ruth Benedict’s fantasy. It is a perfect example of Sakai’s notion of the “schema of co-figuring,” a never-ending circuit that constructs difference between nations, and that is deeply tied to knowledge production within the Area Studies model; in 1975, Ivan Morris would attempt to confirm Mishima’s central thesis—that Japanese culture is the *resolution of death in battle*—in his *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan*, projecting the same image of desire back to Japan by connecting the death of legendary Yamato Takeru with the *kamikaze* pilots of World World II, giving the impression that *bushido*, the code of the warrior, is an eternal characteristic of

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<sup>286</sup> Mishima Yukio. “Bunka Bōei,” pg. 42.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 36.

Japanese culture.<sup>288</sup> Of course, this can only be done retrospectively. Neither Mishima nor Morris account for the fact that even Yamamoto Tsunetomo's *Hagakure*, a product of the Edo Period, did not describe a systematic code already in place, but rather, prescribed an ideal based on the philosophy of one retainer that applied *only to the samurai class*, a book that would only gain currency in the modern era for the purpose of this retrospective construction of a Japan that had never existed. *Bushido* was merely a modern invention, primarily by Nitobe, to project an image of nationality that he perceived Japan to lack in comparison to European nations, an image that applied not only to warriors but culture as totality. Precisely because *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* was able to depict a national culture within Japan that made it different from—and thus measurable against—an idealized perception of “Western” nationality, it became wildly popular within Japan after it was translated from the English into Japanese.

In 1912, Basil Hall Chamberlain, professor at the Imperial University of Tokyo, treats both “Mikado-worship” and *bushido* as parts of a systematic attempt to invent a new religion in Japan.<sup>289</sup> To him, *bushido* was so modern that it had never shown up

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<sup>288</sup> Morris, Ivan. *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan*. New York: Meridian, 1975. He begins the book by saying, “Mishima Yukio once suggested to me that my admiration of Japanese Court culture and the tranquil world of Genji might have obscured the harsher, more tragic side of his country. By concentrating my studies in recent years on men of action, whose brief lives were marked by struggle and turmoil, I have perhaps redressed the balance, and it is to Mishima's memory that I dedicate this book.” Pg. xi.

<sup>289</sup> Fujitani cites Chamberlain's essay at the beginning of his *Splendid Monarchy* as well. Chamberlain, Basil Hall. “The Invention of a New Religion.” 1912. *Project*

in the writings of any major Japanologist because “Bushido was unknown until a decade or two ago!” The term itself had not even appeared in either native or foreign dictionaries prior to 1900. In what can only be a direct attack on Nitobe, he says, “Chivalrous individuals of course existed in Japan, as in all countries at every period; but Bushido, as an institution or a code of rules, has never existed. The accounts given of it have been fabricated out of whole cloth, *chiefly for foreign consumption.*” [my italics] Mishima’s conception of Japanese culture—and Mishima desperately sought global recognition through the Nobel Prize for literature—was primarily intended for a foreign audience, which could, in turn, confirm and validate as truth his fantasy. In this sense, Ivan Morris played a necessary role in sustaining the bilateral continuum. We can imagine an endless game of volleyball in which the objective is merely to keep the ball (“Japanese culture”) in air as long as possible; Nitobe serves to Benedict, who returns to Watsuji, who dives and punts the ball over the net to Bellah, who spikes it to Mishima, who taps it back to Morris. It is critical, therefore, to find a referee who can call the game for what it is: foul play. As a practical issue, it is most important to teach against Mishima *and* Morris in colleges and universities in the U.S., Japan, and anywhere that serves as site of complicity in

the reproduction of the emperor system as something “unique” and “particular” to Japan.<sup>290</sup>

Mishima’s Orientalism is neatly summarized in a conversation between Ōe Kenzaburō and Kazuo Ishigoro. Ishigoro says, “My suspicion is that the image of Mishima in the West confirms certain stereotypical images of Japanese people for the West,” to which Ōe replies,

Mishima’s entire life, certainly including his death by *seppuku*, was a kind of performance designed to present the image of an archetypal Japanese... It was the superficial image of a Japanese as seen from a European view, a fantasy. Mishima acted out that image just as it was.<sup>291</sup>

He continues by saying that Said conceived of “orientalism” to refer to Europeans’ false views of Asia, but that Mishima thought that those same views held by European were truth: “He said that your image of me is me.” Therefore, if we are to make a distinction between foreign essentialist views of Japan and Japanese essentialist view of Japan (a fraught distinction, nonetheless), we can refer to Mishima in the same way that Sakai refers to Watsuji, as an “Orientalist native.”

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<sup>290</sup> As Masao Miyoshi does points out that there is “more or less unanimous rejection of Mishima in Japan.” Miyoshi, Masao. *Off Center*, pg. 150. However, the symbolic emperor system does not seem to have disappeared.

<sup>291</sup> Ishigoro, Kazuo and Ōe Kenzaburō. “The Novelist in Today’s World.” *Japan in the World*. ed. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, pg. 150. Masao Miyoshi also quotes similar parts of this exchange in *Off-Center*, pg. 151.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 Relevance to today

The greatest testament to the effectiveness of the invention of the postwar emperor system is that, despite its transformations and further reinventions since 1945, it remains intact in a form much like how it was conceived. In fact, the greater the temporal distance from its origin, the greater its capacity to conceal its invented nature, and to seem natural. The postwar Constitution is still unrevised, having already lasted over ten years longer than its predecessor, the Constitution of the Empire of Japan. The most contentious part of the Constitution, Article Nine (which renounces the sovereign right to wage war), has been at constant threat of revision by the Liberal Democratic Party, which believes that Japan should be a “normal country” with a “normal” military. However, popular support for Article Nine has not yet relented to their efforts.<sup>292</sup>

Strange paradoxes are at play within the different positions. For example, arguments by the LDP (and the Right in general) are often premised on the rejection of the “imposed” nature of the Constitution on Japan by the Occupation; and yet,

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<sup>292</sup> As the LDP is has just won a majority of seats in the upper house of the Diet (as of late July, 2013), their coalition with other conservative parties may give PM Abe Shinzō the votes he needs for constitutional revision.

their arguments are perfectly in line with the perpetual continuity of the mutual Security Treaty, which continues to be renewed every ten years, thus sustaining the U.S. military presence in Japan. In other words, their desire for revision is actually a rejection of the U.S. in rhetoric alone; it could not be more complicitous with U.S. empire, and complete compliance with U.S. wishes since the 1950s that Japan change course from pacifist to militant.<sup>293</sup> Those that support Article Nine are caught in another paradox altogether: their demand that Japan forever renounce war conceals the power that operates behind the façade of “pacifism”; it, too, is compatible with the U.S. occupation of Japan. Unfortunately, those that do call for pacifism and unilateral reject the “emperor system” and U.S. empire, such as Okinawan activists, are largely marginalized by mainstream modes of representation.

The fact is that emperor system is stuck in the exact place it was in 1960. It embodies the tensions of democratization and remilitarization and everything in between: in practice (not theory), the emperor is the symbol of disunity. The invention of the postwar emperor system aimed to resolve all such tensions, but there has been no such reconciliation. The tensions continue as tension, as irreconcilable differences. I believe that the *postwar emperor system* has been the greatest obstruction to reconciliation because it has not allowed Japan or the U.S. to honestly face the mutually lived past.

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<sup>293</sup> Actually Japan has been a militant police state since the 1950s, but the language of the Constitution has not allowed it to be represented at such.

This is why it is so important to turn back to writers like Nakano Shigeharu and Sakaguchi Ango, who recognized in the immediate postwar how the 1946 invention of the emperor system *already* hindered the ability to honestly confront the recent past. They recognized how easily the “human” emperor was being sacralized into a new object of worship that fit a democratic model. In demonstrating the true nature of the postwar emperor system—that it was a complete invention that disavowed its wartime past in order to conceal it—they exposed it as contingent and arbitrary. To them, a true human emperor would be treated just like everyone else: no special treatment, no symbolic status, no being held captive, and at the same time, no free pass from bearing responsibility for the war. Even more, they recognized how representation of the emperor within the media and academic and political spheres reproduced the emperor system in ways that the government could never have done alone. In that sense, their writings were ahead of their times, predictive of what was to come.

Every aspect of the emperor system that they problematized continues to this day. Nakano’s narrator in *Goshaku no Sake* points to how the emperor system kept the entire imperial family imprisoned; as a pure expression of politics, their lines are scripted, their moves choreographed, their images controlled. The current state of affairs is even more insidious; the bodies of the wives of heirs to the crown are enslaved to the pressures to reproduce male heirs. The mental health of Masako, the wife of Crown Prince Naruhito, should be evidence enough. Her mental fragility for

the pressures of royal wifely responsibilities, and inability to produce a male heir (she's given birth to one female child, Aiko), is compounded by mass media tracking the saga in real-time, reporting on Masako's mental state and even Aiko's acting out in school. There seems to be a media obsession over the details of the lives of the imperial family, and yet, little scrutiny of the institution itself. Even the birth of a male heir in 2006 by the wife of Prince Akishino, Princess Kiko, served to foreclose growing debate over the outdated nature of primogeniture. The imperial family "symbolizes" modern democracy while literally "embodying" the male takeover of female reproductive organs in order to sustain it.

This type of over-exposure but lack of critical reflection is intimately tied to what Nakano's narrator recognizes as the inability to separate the emperor from the emperor system, the inability to separate the individual from the institution. My suspicion is that the further we are from World War II, the weaker the sense in Japan that an "emperor system" continues to exist. However, many fail to realize that insofar as people continue to treat the emperor, imperial family, the imperial palace, the imperial regalia, and all related objects as sacred and untouchable, they reproduce a sense of nationality by imagining a collective relation to them. In other words, as we focus on the all-too-human lives of the individuals of the imperial family *without questioning the entire structure of representation that sustains their captivity*, they cease to be individuals themselves. As we learn from Sakaguchi, they

can only start to be individuals—can only start to be human—if we deconstruct the multitude of ways they are discursively reproduced.

## 7.2 New expressions of collectivity

Nakano also points us to the fiction of collective guilt or “mass repentance” (*ichioku zange*), and how it was deployed as a means for the government to deflect personal responsibility away from the military leaders (and, of course, the emperor himself) and onto the nation as a whole. This notion of collective guilt must be considered as the flipside of another narrative that coexists with it: collective victimhood.<sup>294</sup> In actuality, for the production of nationality, it is immaterial whether people are depicted as victim or victimizer, guilty or innocent, as long as the “collectivity” is not questioned. As Takahashi Tetsuya has pointed out, there is little room for the voices of those who are systematically excluded from victimhood, such as the non-citizen/non-national who died during the war.<sup>295</sup> I believe such narratives of collectivity have found more recent articulation in the form of self-restraint (*jishuku*). Used to describe the collective effort by businesses and agencies to

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<sup>294</sup> Incidentally, America contributed greatly to this discourse through what can only be the greatest unrecognized war crime of all time, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, not to mention the devastatingly comprehensive aerial firebomb attacks on most major cities. For more on victimhood, and the identification of even victims of those bombings, *hibakusha*, with Hirohito himself, see: Takahashi, Tetsuya. “The Emperor Showa Standing at Ground Zero: on the (Re-)Configuration of National Memory of the Japanese People.” Japan Forum, 15. 2003, pg. 3-14.

<sup>295</sup> On this note, the efforts at the Hiroshima Peace Museums to remember those minorities who died in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must be applauded.

demonstrate their deference to Emperor Hirohito as he lie on his deathbed in 1989, *jishuku* refers to a supposed internalized and “collective” sense of mourning expressed by the voluntary suspension of pleasure, celebration, and even profit. However, there was nothing sincere or natural about it, as the media, businesses, and other institutions scrambled to determine what constituted the proper code of decorum. It was a prime example of the type of censorship that cannot be represented by law. Companies dictated the rules to their employees under the guise of “loyalty to the emperor,” but as Watanabe Osamu has pointed out, it was merely an opportunity to enforce discipline and allegiance to the company itself: “It had nothing to do with loyalty to the *tennō* and everything to do with loyalty to the firm.”<sup>296</sup>

*Jishuku* was revived as a term again only recently after the triple disaster of tsunami, earthquake, and nuclear meltdown that began on March 11, 2011. “Self-restraint” meant solidarity for the victims, and a refusal to celebrate during the tragedy; it also meant conservation of energy. Yet, we must also interrogate *who* proscribed such behavior, and *what* fault it concealed. We can connect it to the internalization of collective guilt for the lifestyle and consumerist behavior that required heavy electrical usage to warrant nuclear energy, thus concealing the

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<sup>296</sup> Watanabe Osamu (1989): The sociology of *Jishuku* and *Kichō*: the death of the Shōwa Tennō as a reflection of the structure of contemporary Japanese society, *Japan Forum*, 1:2, 1989, pg. 275-289.

corrupt relationship and lack of transparency between government and big energy. It also provided another opportunity for Akihito and Michiko to be “among the people”; they “shared the pain” with displaced victims of Fukushima by visiting shelters. We need new attempts to connect these representations of the emperor—the very reproduction of the emperor system—with the historical significance of “self-restraint” as a call for collective self-censorship on anything deemed “disrespectful” toward the dying emperor. To me, *jishuku* is none other than a renewed prohibition on “disrespectful” representation of the emperor, *fukei*.

### **7.3 Chrysanthemum Taboo in the Red, White, and Blue**

We must also remember that the U.S. complicity in the production of the emperor system goes far beyond the unilateral decision by Douglas MacArthur to protect Hirohito from any war accountability. Japan studies experts in America, too, have chronically engaged in their own *jishuku*, their own self-restraint, when it comes to critical—and perhaps more importantly, theoretical—analyses of the emperor system. In fact, the sole focus in U.S. scholarship on the emperor *as individual* has blinded the recognition that something ideological might be at play. I will give one concrete example of the complicity of Japan experts to censor critical representations of the emperor system:

In February of 1989, one month after the death of Hirohito, PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) aired a BBC documentary called “Hirohito: Behind the Myth.” The documentary was a strong indictment of Hirohito for the personal involvement

in planning the attack on Pearl Harbor among other things. A handful of Japan scholars had called for the film to be cancelled.<sup>297</sup> Edwin Reischauer called it “nonsense,” claiming, “No emperor of Japan had any real power for many hundreds of years. It’s bad taste and so incorrect that it shouldn’t be shown”; John Toland referred to the film as “Japanese-bashing”; Carol Gluck called it “biased, irresponsible, and wrongheaded,” but, according to the article, she “stopped short of calling for its cancellation.”<sup>298</sup>

Several weeks later, Norma Field published an editorial in the New York Times on the “dismaying... spectacle of Japan experts lobbying against the broadcast” of the documentary.<sup>299</sup> To Field, it was not a question about the emperor’s war responsibility or even the accuracy of the film; “The issue is whether crucial questions on Japan’s role in World War II are to be permitted free and open debate. It is astonishing to have to make the point that no group of experts is entitled to veto power over public access to the materials for historical inquiry.” It was a time for debate, and Japan experts in America were functioning to suppress it.

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<sup>297</sup> Honan, William H. “A Program on Hirohito’s War Guilt Denounced.” New York Times, February 6, 1989. [<http://www.nytimes.com/1989/02/06/arts/a-program-on-hirohito-s-war-guilt-is-denounced.html>]

<sup>298</sup> Ibid. For full disclosure, I was unable to get a copy of the film through interlibrary loan or PBS websites or otherwise, which attests to the fact that the complaint were effective. However, I cannot judge the film on its merits. It is still troubling to me that Gluck was among the scholars denouncing the film.

<sup>299</sup> Field, Norma. “On Eve of Funeral, Hirohito War Role Needs Airing.” New York Times, February 23, 1989.

Sadly, this speaks to a larger trend; censorship in the U.S. has come more in the form of self-restraint than it has in active suppression. Therefore, we must probe into the similarities between the “blackout” of representation of the emperor that has been ongoing (in evolving ways) since the early 1960s within Japan, and the parallel movements within the United States. We need to return to Fukazawa Shichirō’s *Fūryū Mutan*, and ask why mention of it—and the heated debates (*ronsō*) surrounding it as text and event—are all but absent today. We might also ask: how has Right-wing terrorism in Japan been enabled by the silence of U.S. Japan scholars on the emperor? What is at stake for the Japan expert in the U.S. in protecting the emperor? Is there *still* fear now that an emperor-less Japan would mean, as Seidensticker worried, a communist Japan? Is there a latent belief that, in some way, the emperor system itself sustains the existence and relevance of the field?

The problem is that, within English-language scholarship, there has been almost no attention to the debate of the emperor system (*tennōsei-ron*). There are few notable exceptions, but the overwhelming focus on biography has shifted attention away from question of the formation of nationality and ideology, and the debates that have gone on since the postwar period. While this dissertation has not focused on those debates *per se*, I do take as my object the “postwar emperor system” and its representation in literature as one way to enter into them. Unlike many of scholars of “emperor system ideology,” I’m not interested in diagnosing Japan’s fascism by limiting discussion to what occurred as a gradual build-up from the

mid-Meiji period, culminating with the “fascist period” of 1937-1945, even though I have no intention of denying that Japan was fascist by some vague notion that there is a distinction between “ultranationalism” and “fascism” either.

#### **7.4 *Tennōsei* theory**

The debate over the emperor system in Japan, while certainly needing to see the light of day in U.S. scholarship, is not without its problems. Some scholars have attempted to anthropologically trace the origins of the Japanese emperor to its nativist (and ancient) origins among marginalized groups within Japan, thus hiding the *fundamentally modern formation* of the Meiji Emperor, reinforcing the myth of its “authentic” particularly, and projecting an ahistorical notion of “Japan” into antiquity. Yamaguchi Masao, for example, writes of a parallel structure between the emperor class and the excluded (untouchable) class; both classes are nomadic and exist largely outside of society. By no coincidence, both classes descend from the *marebito*, deity-strangers. Yamaguchi also hopes to demonstrate that throughout Japanese history, the “dual structure of Japanese emperorship”—the emperor as head of state, on one hand, and chief performer of rituals—been constant, that the “system remained virtually intact even after the Meiji Restoration.”<sup>300</sup>

I’m most troubled, however, by Yamaguchi’s tendency—which is persistent within “emperor system” discourse—to frame the emperor system as duality. I have

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<sup>300</sup> Yamaguchi Masao. “The Dual Structure of Japanese Emperorship.” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Supplement: An Anthropological Profile of Japan (Aug. - Oct., 1987), pg. S5-S11.

mentioned Kuno Osamu's division of "exoteric" (*kenkyō*) and "esoteric" (*mikkyō*), in which the former refers to the way that the government bureaucrats conceived of the emperor internally as limited in power, and the latter refers to how they promoted his image publically, as absolute and inviolable. In her book, *The Dual-Image of the Japanese Emperor*, Takeda Kiyoko sees a duality developing over time: it started (importing Kuno's theory) as Itō Hirobumi's constitutional theory that the emperor was a limited monarch to the politicians but a transcendent sovereign to the people. Then, she says, Watsuji grasped the duality as a central figure of a political system versus as symbol of cultural identity.<sup>301</sup> Finally, Mishima also interpreted the emperor as a cultural force with "two contradictory, yet coexisting elements: 'gentility' and 'terrorism,' or in other terms, 'sacred' and 'profane,' or 'peaceful spirit' (*nigimitama*) and 'violent spirit' (*aramitama*)."<sup>302</sup> Likewise, historian Stephen Large notes the concurrent "impulses" for portraying the emperor into the 1960s "as a popular and democratic constitutional monarch close to the people" and "as a venerable neonationalist icon of state authority and control."<sup>303</sup> The emperor was, "like Janus, depicted with two faces, one looking forward and one looking backward."

Even Takeuchi Yoshimi, who tried to locate the possibility for "resistance" (*teikō*) to the emperor system through art, ends up theorizing its dualistic nature of

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<sup>301</sup> Takeda Kiyoko. *The Dual-Image of the Japanese Emperor*. New York: NYU Press, 1988.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 3.

<sup>303</sup> Large, Stephen. *Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan: A Political Biography*. New York: Routledge, 1992, pg. 162.

embodying “violence” and “benevolence.” In his famous essay, “Power and Art” (*kenryoku to geijutsu*), he too makes reference to Kuno’s division of “exoteric” and “esoteric” as the equivalence of “façade” (*tatema*) and “true feelings” (*honne*). To him, the Communist Party to him was destined to fail because it only grasped half of the equation of the emperor system, only the violent half. In doing so, the Party treated it like a thing. He says,

Within the emperor system, violence and its flipside, “benevolence” (*jinji*), are present at the same time. It won’t merely beat you on the head—it will pet your head gently with the other hand. It’s impossible to grasp the essence of the emperor system without probing into the fiction of this benevolence.<sup>304</sup>

Even though I am very sympathetic to Takeuchi’s analysis in the essay, its proximity to Mishima’s conception of the dualistic emperor, and even more, its resemblance to Ruth Benedict’s *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, is deeply troubling. I worry that to speak of the emperor system’s dualistic “essence” is to project into it eternity, and to make it a constant presence in a timeless Japan. Duality alone is not sufficient for explaining the very arbitrariness of the emperor system in its *present* form.

As I argued in Chapter Two, there was an ideological dimension to the depiction of the postwar emperor in dualistic terms: the emperor was depicted as having “two bodies” in the postwar too, but only to give the illusion of continuity.

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<sup>304</sup> Takeuchi Yoshimi. “Kenryoku to Geijutsu.” *Kōza gendai geijutsu*. Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1958, pg. 32.

The bodies were new, but the dual-bodied nature of the postwar emperor system was not. My worry is that the tendency within the discourse of the “emperor system debates” reproduces the image of the “emperor’s two bodies” even as it attempts to expose it as fiction.

Theorization of “emperor system” need not develop according to a trajectory that always maintains these dualities, these “two bodies.” In that sense, I agree with Fujitani when he says, “It is impossible to respond to the question ‘what is *tennōsei*?’ because there is no such unchanging thing.”<sup>305</sup> As important as it is to historicize the emperor system itself, we also need to historicize the debate over the emperor system and engage with it in new ways. Unfortunately, in the U.S. there is almost no engagement whatsoever. Therefore, one way is to bring it to the U.S.

How can we break out of the model that wants to conceive of the emperor system as duality? How can we rethink theories of the emperor system without reproducing it? My fear is that to speak of dualities is to fall into Watsuji’s philosophical trap; you must concede that the emperor (system) is that which unifies all opposing views, and reconciles all conflict. One alternative is to stress that the emperor system only works in the opposite direction: the emperor is the symbol of disunity.

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<sup>305</sup> Fujitani, Takashi. "Electronic Pageantry and Japan's 'Symbolic Emperor.'" *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 51. Nov. 1992, pg. 828.

This is most certainly the case in Japan, where the emperor is one among many reference points for tearing down the opposition. However, one need only look beyond the “love match” between the U.S. and Japan, the “bi-lateral narcissism” that excludes other Asians from the conversation,<sup>306</sup> to realize the emperor’s contentious existence today in the world. Responding to Japan’s nationalistic chest-thumping over the disputed islands of Takeshima/Dokto last year, South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak brought up the emperor: “Although (the emperor) wants to visit South Korea, I have told Japan he can only do so if he visits (the graves of) those who died in independence movements (against Japan) and apologizes to them from his heart.”<sup>307</sup>

## 7.5 Let’s own it

I have one final proposal: since, as Mishima shows us so beautifully by example, the emperor system is a co-production of the U.S. and Japan, and the writers and scholars and media from both countries who support it through ceaseless reproduction. Therefore, rather than continue the cycle of co-figuring nationality by insisting that Japan’s emperor system is indigeneous and particular, I think that the U.S. needs to take ownership. It’s not Japan’s emperor system; it’s ours. We share it.

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<sup>306</sup> Harootunian, Harry and Naoki Sakai. “Dialogue: Japan Studies and Cultural Studies.” *positions*, Fall 1999 7(2), pg. 605.

<sup>307</sup> Hakoda Tetsuya. “South Korean president turns up Japan heat: Emperor must apologize.” *Asahi Shinbun*, August 12, 2012.  
[[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean\\_peninsula/AJ201208150066](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean_peninsula/AJ201208150066)]

It's almost shocking that the U.S. has not repeated its emperor system production throughout the world every time it undertakes regime change in different countries given its proven effectiveness in Japan. Instead, in Iraq for but one example, the U.S. carried out a form of "emperor system abolition" by beheading Saddam Hussein. I propose that we refer to U.S. attempts to support corrupt regimes throughout the world as "maintaining the *kokutai*" or "emperor system" and its attempts to overthrow them as "emperor system abolition." Such efforts are truly the closest to what we can call U.S. "tradition," so they may as well be recognized as such.

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