Title

Utopian Visions // Apocalyptic Anxieties: The Politics of Poetics in Postwar Japan

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Publication Date

2025

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Utopian Visions//Apocalyptic Anxieties
The Politics of Poetics
in Postwar Japan

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in History

By

Justin Jack Robert Wilson

2025

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Utopian Visions//Apocalyptic Anxieties:

The Politics of Poetics in Postwar Japan

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Justin Jack Robert Wilson

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2025

Professor William Marotti, Chair

This dissertation examines the cultural politics of poetics in postwar Japan through a focus on the poetry group, *Arechi* (the Waste Land). Comprised of young men who had come of age during the 1940s, the group came together in 1947 to write poetry and prose addressing the experience of wartime destitution and postwar survival. In the aftermath of war and fascism, Arechi participants sought to transform their own inner lives and to actualize the promise of personal and collective emancipation ambiguously offered up by the overlapping histories of the collapse of the Japanese empire and fascism, military occupation by the United States, and an emergent Cold War that raised the specter of global annihilation.

The dissertation is grounded in the description and analysis of poetry, prose, and roundtable discussions from the group's eponymous magazines and collected volumes published from 1947 through 1958. It relies on historical, theoretical, and literary methodologies to conduct close readings of works by what I call the four core members of the group. As I show, Arechi members

each deployed the medium of poetry to make sense of and heal their own psyches by externalizing the forces of militarism and fascist domination that they had internalized. Through historically grounded literary analysis, I argue that the Arechi project amounted to a collective experiment in individual emancipation as a model both for postwar Japan and the twentieth century world.

The dissertation of Justin Jack Robert Wilson is approved.

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2025

Dedicated to the memory of my mother and father, who live on

in my heart. And to my sister, whose love and support have kept me going.

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Acknowledgements:

Not unlike the Arechi project, this dissertation was an individual project that relied upon and benefited from collective care and support. Special thanks are owed to my adviser William Marotti, who offered patient intellectual guidance and emotional support as I progressed helping me to clarify the universalist claims for art and poetry that I was hesitant to make. I also thank Katsuya Hirano, who intervened at critical junctures and whose enthusiasm for the project reinvigorated my own belief in the historical necessity of theoretical investigation. Seiji Lippit's classes in Japanese literature and historiography helped me to situate the project within a broader cultural milieu and his interdisciplinary practice of cultural and intellectual history of literature provided the earliest inspiration for the project. I thank Andrea Goldman for her careful reading and pointed suggestions for revision. My sincere thanks are owed to Noel Shimizu and the Terasaki Center for Japanese studies for ongoing support as I completed the dissertation. Thanks are also due to the Japan Foundation for funding a year of research in Tokyo in 2017.

I have benefitted from teachers and colleagues at Columbia University and UCLA. Courses from and work with Harry Harootunian, Carol Gluck, Kim Brandt, Christopher Hill, and Paul Anderer complicated my study of history and culture. I owe a special thanks to my friends and fellow graduate students at Columbia. Ariel Acosta, Jesse Whiles, and Norihiko Tsuneishi. At UCLA, I benefited from an extremely strong cohort of scholars of Japan and elsewhere – my special thanks go to Dan Abbe, Mariko Takano, Ken Shima, Kevin Richardson, Samuel Keeley, Kelly McCormick, Tanya Barnett, Lindsay King, Toulouse Roy, and John Leisure.

In its most basic form, my passion for the politics of culture and protest emerged out of the friendship and support of bandmates and friends from the San Jose punk and the New York metal scenes. In the bay area, Eric Book, Gabriel Corrales, Nick Lynch, Ben Caprille, Jason Truchon, Richard Gutierrez, remain my oldest friends and brothers. In New York, my bandmates and friends Samuell Bennett, Michael Rekevics, Alexander DeMaria, Caterina Moe Addis, James Pinette, and Lev Weinstein have provided support beyond measure.

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Introduction: A Waste Land of Post Wars

We are madmen grappling on the brink of the abyss, unaware that death has already reconciled us to one another. What sensible man, seeing humanity about to perish, can still put faith in class struggle and revolution? What good is it for an activist in a modern workers' party to know that he is threatened by the bourgeoisie, if he does not realize that he is threatened by death as a man before being threatened by servitude as a worker, if he does not realize that this threat overshadows all others... Let men learn, if there is still time, that the proletariat of the class struggle can only divide them, and that they are already united unawares in the proletariat of fear of the bomb, of terror and death, in the proletariat of the human condition.

– Louis Althusser, "The International of Decent Feelings" 1946

On the basis of his work on Mayakovsky, Jakobson suggested that the crime [of society] was more concretely the murder of poetic language. By "society," he probably meant more than just Russian or Soviet society; there are frequent and more general allusions to the "stability of the unchanging present", to "life, hardened along narrow and rigid models", and to "daily existence". Consequently we have this Platonistic acknowledgment on the eve of Stalinism and fascism: a (any) society may be stabilized only if it excludes poetic language.

On the other hand, but simultaneously, poetic language alone carries on the struggle against such a death, and so harries, exorcises, and invokes it. Jakobson is fascinated by murder and suicide as themes with poets of his generation as weIl as of all time. The question is unavoidable: if we are not on the side of those whom society wastes in order to reproduce itself, where are we?

– Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language* 1969

A Waste Land of Post Wars

From 1947 until the last of them died in the 1990s, members of "The Waste Land" poetry group (hereafter referred to as Arechi) made multiple attempts at mission statements for their collective project.[1] They diversely described poetry as spiritual work; the work of mourning; the rejection of ism; something like reformative self-talk; and so on. But Tamura Ryūichi probably captured the stakes of the project best some twenty-five years after they formally disbanded in 1958. In a short reflection written in 1983 for a hardbound edition of the early issues of the magazine entitled, "Darkest Shibuya Nights," Tamura concluded: "The goal of our republic was to transform spiritual disillusionment into creative power. Or rather, is to transform it still".[2] Consistent with this pronouncement, Arechi's practice of poetry foregrounded the "dark" (*kurai*) aspects of human experience to explore their meanings for social life. In transforming spiritual disillusionment into creative power, Arechi poetry grappled with the experience of daily life in postwar Japan from the perspective of young men who came of age across the 1940s. This work resulted in revelations about the ways that their personal, often traumatic wartime experiences resurfaced in the postwar present.

In an essay first serially published from 1949 to 1950, the group's founder, Ayukawa Nobuo, disclosed a sense of shock and relief at one of their first meetings in 1946 at the discovery that they had all survived, as he had presumed all of his friends were already dead.[3] After return from

[1] I leave Arechi untranslated when referring to the group and their publications to distinguish them from the poem "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot, which is a reference point throughout the dissertation. The magazines were self-published from September 1947 to December 1948. Hardcovers of subsequent work began publication in 1952, originally carried out by their publishing house Arechi Shuppansha.

[2] Tamura Ryūichi. "Ma'ankoku na shibuya no yoru", *Arechi fukkokuban bessatsu kaisetsu* (Nihon kindai bungakkan 1983), 10.

[3] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Gendai shi to wa nanika" *Arechi Shishū 1951*. Edited by Arechi dōjinkai. 8 vols. Vol. 1. (Kokubunsha, 1975), 130-198.

military and professional deployments abroad, the Arechi poets began meeting to write, discuss, and drink sometime in 1946, publishing the first issue of their eponymous magazine in September, 1947. By the time they had passed away, the four core members of the group, Ayukawa Nobuo, Tamura Ryūichi, Kuroda Saburo, and Nakagiri Masao, had become prominent social commentators, translating and writing beyond the parameters of the Arechi project if never exactly moving on from it.[4]

Each issue of the magazine included original poetry as well as discourses on literature, history, and poetics, grounded in the abject realities of daily life in the wartime and early postwar periods. Without it ever being an explicitly stated objective, Arechi publications also sporadically served as spaces of memorialization for like-minded cultural producers within Japan and without. Ayukawa's study of the original imagist poet and anti-modernist philosopher T.E. Hulme and Nakagiri's poem dedicated to the poet Sidney Keyes recounted the intellectual and aesthetic commitments of their forebearers. Though it is surely no coincidence that both died at the fronts (of World War I and World War II respectively), neither of the former merely sought to eulogize the latter, nor to reproduce their ideas divorced from the conditions of life in post-World War II Japan. Rather, as Ayukawa and other members insisted in the programmatic 1948 text "Standpoint of Arechi" published in "Modern Literature" (*kindai bungaku*), the turn to European interwar writing was motivated by the aethereal resonances of the two moments, characterized by disillusionment, distrust, and despair.

By the same token, Arechi poets explained that their reference to Eliot's poem did not

[4] In addition to their own writing, several members of the group became prolific translators of English language novels and poetry compilations.

represent a desire to simply "inherit a literary tradition".[5] Rather, the desolation and angst of their own moment uncannily reprised the intellectual and cultural problematics of Eliot's oeuvre.[6] They went on to suggest that their standpoint might be difficult to grasp for generations of people ten and twenty years older than them, foreshadowing a generational politics that in many ways dominated subsequent political and social struggles in postwar Japan. In an immediate sense, this complaint might have even pointed at the writers and critics of "Modern Literature" itself. [7] But crucially, beyond the Japanese context, it also implied the shape of a world-historical repetition in which an entire generation of young men were sacrificed to wars of conquest for the glory and enrichment of governments and empires that ruled in their name. Arechi discourse thus constructed a transnational genealogy of postwar literary arts as the basis for a critical perspective on the recent war and its aftermath.

Wilfred Owen powerfully captured this sense of generational betrayal in "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young", posthumously published by his friend and fellow poet Siegfried Sassoon two years after Owen's death in 1918:

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,

[5]Ayukawa Nobuo. "Arechi no tachiba", *Shōwa hihyō taikei dai san kan*. Edited by Takeshi Muramatsu (Banchō Shōbo, 1974), 487.

[6] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Arechi no tachiba", 487. Although Arechi poets are often identified as a "school" or "faction" (*Arechi ha*), there was no expectation that they publish exclusively in their group's magazine. Though I have mostly worked from texts that were published there, one can find members' poems and criticism across trans war poetry magazines. For a valuable guide to poetry networks in wartime and postwar, see Wada, Hirofumi. *Sengo shi no poetikusu 1935-1959* (Sekai Shisōsha, 2009).

[7] In their introduction to *Literature Among the Ruins*, Atsuko Ueda, Richi Sakakibara, Michael Bourdaghs, and Hirokazu Toeda argue that the kindai bungaku group tended to ignore the younger generation of artists and critics and exclude them from publication. Their inclusion of "Standpoint of Arechi" thus testifies to the Arechi group's exceptional status within the scene of postwar discourse. *Literature Among the Ruins, 1945-1955: Postwar Japanese Literary Criticism*. Edited by Doug Slaymaker and William M. Tsutsui (Lexington Books, 2018).

But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
and builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him. Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.[8]

Paul Fussell argues that a "'raised', essentially feudal language" coupled to a new sense of irony surged in the 1910s and 1920s across European cultural production, mediating the horrors of impending and active warfare through an idyllic vocabulary of noble combat and courtly love.[9] But here, Owen turns that model on its head, deploying an archaic, biblical parable in order to highlight the merciless, Satanic power of the old man, who "slew" his son and "half the seed of Europe", despite the pleas of onlooking angels. The poem would become prophetic for Owen himself -- another proxy lamb led to slaughter.

For Arechi, first among the sacrificial lambs was Morikawa Yoshinobu, one of the founders of the group's wartime iteration who died of illness during his military dispatch to Burma in 1942. The first poem of the postwar publication was written by Morikawa and posthumously published by Arechi. In "Slope" (*kobai*) Morikawa writes:

The season was already over
While holding high the spirit of our desire
Did time extoll the splendor of its horizons
Crushing our innocence
While lining it with fountains and flowers
Why did it come to this
But look

[8] Wilfred Owen. "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young", DOI: https://poets.org/poem/parable-old-man-and-young

[9] Paul Fussell. *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.

In these merciless slopes, roots sustain
Flows from hollows
From the shadows of weeds
Many paths begin[10]

In contrast with Owen's parable, Morikawa's "Slope" lacks any clear historical, biblical, or mythical referents, as though innocence is crushed by a rootless empire of time. In spite of an apocalyptic end of seasons and merciless slopes, "roots sustain" and paths open up, or at least, *begin*. It concludes with tragic optimism in the traces of plant life, with hope figured as a weed that can never be finally wiped out. As Morikawa's world without seasons and Tamura's revision from past to present tense mentioned above illustrate, one of the distinguishing features of Arechi poetry is its complex articulation of experiential space-time. Within a single poem, descriptions of survival in postwar Japan connect to memories of war, worlds of symbolic abstraction, experiences of personal loss, and present-day anxieties, which in turn combine with a dense and sometimes opaque constellation of references to other histories, places, literatures, and people.

Subsequent critics in Japan somewhat dismissively characterized Arechi output as "thinking poetry" (*kangaeru shi*).[11] Others complained it was too dark, to which Ayukawa's reply was straightforward and curt, if not simply exasperated: "our lives have been dark".[12] Given the group's origins, the source of Arechi's darkness probably should have been self-evident. Yoshimoto Takaaki argues that the central task of postwar poetry was to address the war's traumatic internalization. [13] Tsuboi Hideto has described Arechi poetry in particular as a kind of

[10] Morikawa Yoshinobu. "Kobai", *Arechi fukkokuban bessatsu kaisetsu*. 12-13.

[11] Sekine Hiroshi, Yamamoto Tarō, Katagiri Yuzuru, Sekiguchi Atsushi, Nakamura Minoru, Shimaoka Shin, and Itō Shōshi. "Arechi no 'kōzai'", Roundtable discussion. *Arechi Shishū 1958* (Arechi Shuppansha, 1958), 221.

[12] Ayukawa. "Gendai shi to wa nanika", 130-198.

[13] Yoshimoto Takaaki. *Sengo shishiron* (Yamada Shobo, 1983).

vicarious experience of death.[14] While it is true that Arechi poetry cannot but evoke fraught questions about wartime loss, the works themselves were always reaching beyond this immediate context, and are to a degree effaced by the frame of mourning. More than howls of grief, Arechi poetry pointedly dispensed with explicit political narration to open up the plurality of meanings, experiences, and identifications that emerged and dispersed throughout life in the 1940s and 1950s. Arechi wagered that by giving language to this fractured and traumatized inner landscape, a different kind of future might reveal itself. Thus, their invocation of Stephen Spender: "In the destructive element immerse. That is the way".[15] They continued:

> What is it that we pursue in the fleeting exertion of writing poetry? We write it even in spite of our own tendency to devalue anything that doesn't result in human salvation as useless…In poetry life and form fuse into a given quantity of the world, and as spiritual work, it makes it possible to bring the experience of all existence into a relationship with language…For us, poetry is the problem of having faith in language, and also a way of enduring 'the wasteland reaction' of distrust, hopelessness, confusion, and illusion…[W]e can only carry forth the themes of 'The Waste land'.[16]

The "waste land reaction" (*Arechi teki hannō*) is adjacent to the discourse of "exhaustion and despair" but not its equivalent, as the former possessed no revanchist resentments in the face of national humiliation.[17] Rather, the negativity of Arechi discourse was all but uniformly directed at the way Japanese society and the government failed to protect its young, as opposed to the reverse. The "Waste Land reaction" is therefore best understood as part of an emergent "structure of

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[14] Tsuboi Hideto. *Koe no shukusai: nihon kindai shi to sensō*, (Nagoya Daigaku Shuppansha, 1997), 293

[15] Technically this phrase belongs to Joseph Conrad's novel *Lord Jim*, but Spender picked it up and deployed it for a different purpose. Though he addressed works of literature and writing from an earlier period, Spender's text was very much in dialogue with the social and political climate of the 1930s, finally proposing the necessity of a fusion of Marxism and psychoanalysis. It's unclear from context whether the Arechi poets were aware of the quote's original connection to Conrad. I explore these colonial echoes in relation to Nakagiri Masao's poem "War" in Chapter 4.

[16] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Arechi no tachiba", 487.

[17] John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 87-112

feeling", in postwar Japan – Raymond William's name for a historical constellation of affects and ideas that attends specific temporal conjunctures.[18] The structure of Arechi feeling concatenated multiple spatial and temporal forms of cultural practice around the global crises of World Wars and the brutality of their lived experience. Yet here again we find artistic practice pushing beyond the bounds of intellectual theorization, as the free verse style of poetry that Arechi practiced had emerged decades earlier in Japan and therefore would not qualify as an "emergent" or even "dominant" form in Williams's terms. Yet Arechi poets revitalized the critical power of free verse by retaining the looseness of its form and rejecting its wartime nationalist content, substituting the metaphors of blooming cherry blossoms, pastoral calm, and fantasies of noble sacrifice with bombed out streets, psychic overload, and antagonistic ghosts of the war dead.

Such formal inversions were not unique to Japanese postwar cultural producers, as anxieties and fears in the twentieth century world of post wars surfaced across the utopian and eschatological imaginary. Contemporaneous with other imperial metropoles these discourses in Japan after World War I summoned the specter of social upheaval, with historical referents loose enough to animate diametrically opposed political projects. But with the advent of the Peace Preservation Law in 1925 and the discursive crackdowns and mass arrests that followed, the Japanese state sought hegemonic control over this imaginary, banning threats to the vacuously figured "national body". To activate the bodies, hearts, and minds of the empire for the project of total war, there was simply no room for indigenous expressions of ambivalence, and the increasingly paranoiac censorship apparatus in Japan sought to excise even more modest attempts to work through social anxieties and fears that might have preceded explicitly political demands.

[18] Raymond Williams. *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977).

Indeed, Japanese censors targeted the first iteration of Arechi at the end of the 1930s, suspending its publication because of its "dangerously negative" title.[19] Shortly after, many of them were conscripted into military service.

By maintaining a semi-autonomous position from ideological allegiances and political pronouncements, Arechi poets established a critical function for poetry for their postwar. They rejected the notion that poetry could usher in human salvation, and even the notion that it ought to be operationalized in this way. But this was not quite poetry for poetry's sake either. Rather, in their view, poetry's value lay in its construction of a linguistic space that allowed for an open-ended exploration of human existence in a way that very much resembled the minimal coordinates of psychoanalytic practice, as the play of language plays a crucial role in the ordering of reality at the same time that it produces slippages and eruptive potentials within it. Cultural productions and the unconscious always have their own multiplicity of contradictory agendas and, for better and worse, their meanings can never be finally set. Arechi took it as axiomatic and emancipatory that meaning could never finally bet contained. Jacques Ranciere came to more or less the same conclusion in his study of the enlightenment language instructor Jacotot, noting that the practice of communication mediated by the task of translation revealed a kind of transhistorical truth: *everything is in everything*.[20]

Thus, by defining poetry as the "problem of having faith in language" and describing it as a means of enduring a ubiquitous sense of powerlessness and deep seated doubt they called the "waste land reaction", Arechi constructed a mode of expression for the uncontainable affects of

[19] Tamura, Ryūichi. *Dead Languages: Selected Poems 1946-1984*. Translated and with an introduction by Christopher Drake (Katydid Books, 1984), xvii.

[20] Ranciere, Jacques. Ibid, 27.

the mid twentieth century.[21] Borne out of the faith in a universal tendency for human self-inquiry, their project traversed received boundaries of time, space, and discipline, amounting to a negative discourse of human emancipation. Like so much cultural production of the transwar period that had its origins in the period before August 1945 and continued after it, the scope of the Arechi project requires an expansive and flexible method of historical analysis that simultaneously attends to the transference of past meanings and affects onto present realities. I thus propose a further historical passage through that most ahistorical mode of humanistic sciences: psychoanalysis.

Between History and Psychoanalysis – Capitalist Mourning as a "Cold and Cruel Forgetting"

The early postwar period in Japan is characterized by a stark conceptual schema hell bent on labeling the old and the new, with the former typically evoking the so-called "dark valley" (*kurai tani*) of the war and the latter signaling the utopian promises wrought by defeat and occupation. There is no doubt that many of those who called to dispense with the past spoke from a place of a righteous indignation against fascist domination and colonial war. But at the same time, an unequivocal dismissal of the past threatened to undermine these rejections' critical force, opening the door to an incoherent amalgam of "democratization from above" and "victim consciousness" that supplied the shaky foundation for the postwar status quo.

Such obfuscations were well suited for the objectives of the imperial institution and the wartime regime. In the instant of his purportedly bejeweled utterances, Japan's colonizing holy war became well-meaning but misguided, and the "endurance" of defeat offered a path to survival and re-legitimation. Much like in postwar Germany in this respect, the postwar emperor system's ostensible mea culpa operationalized the language of suffering as part of a frantic attempt to

[21] Ayukawa Nobuo. Ibid, 488.

obscure the continuation of the extant social order under the banner of Western democracy (read: anti-Soviet techno-parliamentarism). At the institutional level, the past was subjected to what Adorno called a "cruel and cold forgetting," less a part of the democratic revolution from without than a compromise between allied governments and the "fascist tendencies" within a nominally rehabilitated regime.[22] With General MacArthur and a rogue's gallery of anti-communist hawks at the helm, "democratization and demilitarization", repeatedly took a back seat to imperial real politick. Thus the Occupation's most enduring achievements were probably to return government and industry to the practice of parliamentary proceduralism and bourgeois capitalism and to unite Japanese and American economic and political interests together against the cold war specter, and subsequently, the war on terror.[23]

Historiographical periodization has been bound up in this arrangement. On the surface, the designation "postwar" (*sengo*) may seem to perform a benign categorizing function for the historian but upon deeper consideration it installs a lacuna in social forms, lived experience, and discursive practices that have profound ideological implications for the ways that we understand culture and everyday life. Marilyn Ivy likens the postwar category to a traumatic referent that constricts narratological possibilities by tethering Japan's subsequent history to the war.[24] Similarly, Harry Harootunian has argued that the postwar has come to constitute a form of power

[22] Theodor Adorno. "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in C*ritical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. Translated and edited by Henry W. Pickford (Columbia University Press, 2005).

[23] One may reasonably point to the inauguration of women's voting rights as an authentic democratizing example. But the right to vote in postwar Japan exists within the context of near total LDP domination since the party's consolidation in the mid 1950s -- a system often referred to (sometimes without satirical intent) as a "one party democracy". Moreover, the history of postwar women's suffrage in Japan is directly connected to interwar movements. I am indebted to the ongoing work of Jessie Pena for pointing out to me that women's suffrage must be understood as a transwar phenomenon.

[24] Marilyn Ivy. "What the Writer Found there: David Peace's *Occupied City*," *Boundary 2: An international Journal of Literature and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2024): 39-61.

that obscures the realities of Japanese complicity with American imperialism.[25] In these ways, the apparently value-free designation of postwar performs significant work, neutralizing (if not championing) the uneven eventfulness of one moment in deference to the hyperactivity of a totalized predecessor. All the more so when both moments are stricken of their global dimensions by the frame of national history.

In contrast, the core members rejected both revanchism melancholia and progressivist optimist, noting that post-World War II Japan resembled post-World I Europe. Because the national cannon of their home country had failed to resist fascism, Arechi predominantly thought and wrote in dialogue with poets of World War I Europe. Their writings convey an ideological kinship with the sense of exile described by people like Stephen Spender, Paul Valery, W.H. Auden, T.E. Hulme, and of course T.S. Eliot, whose work and historical contexts appeared as touchstones for the group's own critical project, all of whom were deeply impacted by the World Wars. Arechi poets themselves insisted that their unique experience, as those "caught between war and war", resulted in a specific kind of generational worldview.[26] Where any claim for absolute generational distinction grounded in Oedipal rivalry will invariably, like fascism, default into a socialism of the stupid, there is a properly traumatic kernel here that reveals an alternate form of historical eventfulness within the space of repetition. As Adam Bronson points out in his study of the Science of Thought research group, social scientists in early postwar Japan conceptually linked the ostensibly effete cosmopolitan culture of "literary youth" to the failure to resist fascist drift, and even implied that its elite origins in the ideology of "self-cultivation" (*kyōyō*) might have

[25] Harry Harootunian. "'Closing Time': Discordant Temporalities of Japan's Postwar in David Peace's Tokyo Trilogy," *Boundary 2: An international Journal of Literature and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2024): 13-38.

[26] Ayukawa. "Arechi no tachiba", 488.

facilitated its rise.[27] This history is properly tragicomic, as modernity's logic of overcoming, which had infiltrated so much cultural production up until the defeat, persisted in subsequent critique of the very same phenomena.

To erase these continuities in discourse after the defeat risks literalizing early postwar slogans to the point of reification and obstructing the transformative possibilities that might have lay within wartime discourse that persisted through its end. This is perhaps especially true for the history and practice of modern poetry, which is comparatively less boxed in by expectations of narrative structure than more popular media like films, television, and even novels. This is not to say that other media are somehow barred access to poetic experimentation, or that the boundaries between cultural forms congeal in such a way that their distinction is even sustainable in the first place. One can easily imagine poetic language and structural playfulness in all manner of representation (even academic writing). If anything, it is probably the modern form of poetry itself that is the least adaptable, because it is so deeply reliant on the affective lines of flight that disturb the fixity of meaning.[28] For modern poetic form and language invariably foster slips in signification, opening up new associative pathways between the combination of sounds and images that simultaneously produce the sign and overload it. Not for nothing that Freud once claimed the work of psychoanalysis was anticipated by the poets![29]

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[27] Though many of these social scientists were part of Arechi's generation, this kind of moral panic about youth culture was consistent with the content of people like Maruyama Masao and, paradoxically, consistent in form with the thought of Nishida and the Kyoto school who had been their ostensible objects of critique. See Adam Bronson. ibid.

[28] Julia Kristeva describes the tension between affect and structure as one between the 'phenomenological subject of enunciation" and the "*semiotic chora"* which orders the human drives. See Kristeva. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Translated by Thomas Gora, Alice A. Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. (Columbia University Press, 1982) as well as *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Translated by Margaret Waller (Columbia University Press, 1985).

[29] Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* (Wesleyan University Press, 1985).

This is likely part of what Arechi was after when they described poetry as a privileged act that reflected "total existence" through a "complex process of sedimentation" of feeling, thought, and aesthetics. To this must be added the temporal question that so preoccupied them, expressed in their backward glance over their autobiographies and other histories, which were suggestive of a global historical repetition. This layering of times and affects is virtually identical to what Walter Benjamin described as a historical palimpsest, loaded with the weak messianic power of an often-nightmarish past that might be unlocked in the present through a revolutionary redemption. As such, the Arechi standpoint and its study require a properly Benjaminian "tiger leap" into the "dark valley" of an earlier moment in the trans war discourse in Japan, to better understand the historical motion of the transition from war to postwar outside the realm of institutional reform. Thus, each chapter begins with a biographic sketch of its subject, in an effort to consider how the particularities of their war experience might have surfaced in their postwar works.

Between Individual Oeuvre and Group Formations in Arechi

I have organized this dissertation into single-author studies, in contrast with much of the scholarship on Arechi poets in the past thirty years, which has opted for thematic organization and brought multiple voices together around shared themes. Where this strategy legitimizes the collective Arechi project as collective, it does so by emphasizing similarities over differences, perhaps unintentionally repeating the kind of historicist erasure that the Arechi group itself decried. In line with what I have interpreted to be their wishes, each chapter of this dissertation centers the work of a core member across the 1940s and 1950s. Chapter 1 focuses on the poetry and prose of Ayukawa Nobuo (b. 1920-1986), linking his experiences as a soldier and survivor to his critique of nationalism and totalitarianism, encapsulated in the provocative dual condemnation of wartime fascism and postwar communism. Chapter 2 focuses on Tamura Ryūichi (b. 1923-1998) and his

poetic explorations of the temporality of traumatic repetition, as well as his attempts to overcome them through figures of haunting and living death. Chapter 3 turns to Kuroda Saburo's (b. 1919-1980) poetic vision of poetry as a form of self-inquiry in tandem with his writings on semiotics and the challenge to democracy posed by the homogenizing tendencies of capitalist reification. Chapter 4 centers the work of Nakagiri Masao (b. 1919-1983), relating his studies of interwar European liberalism to a pluralistic form of thinking he championed called "waste land consciousness" (*Arechi ishiki*).

Though I have opted for single-author studies in an effort to bring out the singularity of these poets, it must be emphasized that Arechi publications were collaborative at multiple levels. In addition to the shared thematic preoccupation, members divvied up editorial and administrative work, analyzed each other's poems in prose essays, recorded and published group discussions (*zadankai*), and, in at least one instance, consensually shared lines of poetry. As such, I have found it useful to return to a few programmatic texts in which the authors' make claims about the group across the chapters. Though this repetition may prove laborious for readers, I believe it is a necessary outgrowth of the problems of form that inhere to group work in general, as well as the specific way that Arechi conceived of poetry as a collective project of individual emancipation. As the subject of Chapter three, Kuroda Saburo puts it, through poetry: "a person speaks to himself, and speaks to others as he speaks to himself."[30]

A concrete example of how these collective practices of individual autonomy worked may be helpful to introduce the problem. Tamura Ryūichi's "Standing Coffin" (discussed in Chapter two) begins with the line "Do not talk about death", which he borrowed from Nakagiri Masao's

[30] Kuroda Saburo, "Shi to bunka", *Kuroda saburo zenshū dai ni kan*. (Shichōsha, 1989), 79.

poem “Thanatopsis” (Chapter four). Both poems were published in the 1952 hardbound *Arechi* collection. At first, each poem seems to address an antagonistic interlocutor who we can imagine has said something trivializing death. But from this single point of departure, the two poems take distinct directions. “Standing Coffin” speaks from the perspective of a returning repressed of undead, lumpen proletarians, homeless, insane, and poisoned. It ends with ferocious contempt: “hang my corpse in civilization/and let it rot.”[31] In this way a new relationship to death, as something beyond language, is figured as a condition of possibility for social revolution against an inauthentic world that compulsively denies mortal finitude. By contrast, “Thanatopsis” concludes with a kind of ritual proxy death that invites a sense of tranquility and love by dissolving the listener’s body into the body of the earth: “Lie down in the mud/And the rotting leaves of Zenmai/Puff out your cheeks/Drain your blood/And with your whole body receive rain/Receive compassion.”[32] Death still cannot be spoken of or, strictly speaking, experienced, but its proxy reenactment holds out the prospect for understanding and compassion rather than revolt and revenge.

Regardless of Arechi’s intent, the injunction against talking about death satirically overlaps with Emperor Hirohito’s ridiculous order at war’s end to “avoid emotional outbursts that might engender needless complications”. Whatever the imperial institution had in mind with this declaration, surely discussion of all the life lost during Japan’s imperial adventures and its war with the United States caused anxiety, as any mention of this simple fact risked derailing the project of national reconstruction, just as the state censors could not eliminate foreign influence from the

[31]Tamura, Ryūichi. “Rikkan,” in *Yon sen no hi to yoru* (Sōgensha, 1956), 71-80.

[32] Nakagiri, Masao. *“*Thanatopsis” in *Nakagiri masao zenshi* (Shichōsha, 1990), 22.

discussion of Japanese identity and tradition during the war.[33] Nakagiri and Tamura's poetic outbursts reveal that the injunction: "do not talk about death," performs a contradiction. Even when constrained by fascistic visions of immortality one cannot, strictly speaking, *not* talk about death. To not talk about death, one must talk about it. The command contains its own negation.

This collaboration between selves and others performs the dual work of what Freud described as *acting out* and *working through*. As acting out, "do not talk about death" instantiates an enigmatic unconscious desire to repress the subject object dyad and the irretrievable loss of polymorphous perversity introduced by the name of the father. As working through, the collective repetition and interpretation of the utterance holds out the possibility of transforming social relations by placing emphasis on the absolute alterity of death over endless collective life under fascism and modernity writ large. Taken to its limit, this form of communal activity instantiates what Jean Luc Nancy calls the inoperative community, defined by the "unworking of work that is social, economic, technical, and institutional".[34]

I have for the most part followed the conventional order for Japanese language names: surname followed by first name (i.e. Ayukawa Nobuo). Occasionally I use the reverse, in conformity with extant precedents (i.e. Naoki Sakai). All long vowels are marked with a macron, as in the case of Tamura Ryūichi. It is to the work of the Arechi group's founder, Ayukawa Nobuo, that we will now turn. Thus, the Arechi participants collectively fostered each other's individual autonomy, in the process unworking pernicious forms of national subjection through poetic constructions of everyday life in Japan's trans war.

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[34] Jean Luc Nancy. *The Inoperative Community*. Translated by Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

As We Vanished From this World: Debts to the Dead in the Work of Ayukawa Nobuo (Chapter 1)

Introduction: Reclaiming the Dead

In this chapter, we explore the poetic consciousness of Ayukawa Nobuo (b. 1920-1986). The son of a wartime nationalist newspaper publisher, Ayukawa's origins provided the means to a privileged life of the mind as well as what might best be described as a sense of intergenerational war responsibility. He attended the elite preparatory school for Waseda University, where he subsequently enrolled. By the 1930s, he had already become active in poetry circles, publishing in magazines like "The New Country" (*shinryōdo*) and "Vou", where he would first meet several of the poets that would later form the postwar iteration of Arechi. In 1939 he co-founded the wartime iteration of the group with his friend Morikawa Yoshinobu. It was across the pages of these magazines that Ayukawa and his cohort first began to reflect on the state of literature and poetry in Japan, refracted through questions of culture and politics that they encountered in the writings of European interwar modernists like Stephen Spender, W.H. Auden, and T.S. Eliot.

The desolation of these interwar texts likely took on more concrete meaning for Ayukawa as his world began to fall apart in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Ayukawa was conscripted for military service in May of 1943 after failing his required military instruction at Waseda University, after which he was dispatched to Sumatra. By his own account, Ayukawa made a mediocre soldier, and a year later, in 1944, his deployment ended with a medical discharge after becoming critically ill.[35] He returned to Tokyo by hospital ship and nearly died during transit. He spent the remainder of the war in recovery and celebrated its end. In 1946, Tamura Ryūichi, Kuroda Saburo, and Nakagiri Masao approached him about reactivating Arechi with an entirely new membership. Ayukawa agreed.

[35] Biographical information cited in Ayukawa Nobuo. *America and Other Poems*. Translated by Shogo Oketani and Leza Lowitz (Los Angeles: Kaya Press, 2007).

Echoes of what is recounted above will appear in the poetry and prose discussed below. And perhaps more than any other member of Arechi, Ayukawa's work invites biographical interpretation. He rendered deceased friends like Morikawa the subjects of his poems with the abbreviation "M". He made frequent (and infuriatingly loose) use of quotation marks, suggesting the recollection of real conversations. He referenced specific times and places from his past. One could feasibly search out the biographical kernels of his poetry and interpret Ayukawa's poetics as a portrait of a man living across epochs of imperial death and resurrection. But the task taken up here is less figuring out Ayukawa through his poetics than thinking about a discourse of mourning, abjection, and hope that pervaded the wartime and postwar political unconscious, to which his work gave acute and critical expression. And for these purposes, more productive questions arise from the investigation of poetry as a specific literary form. By way of illustration, let's quickly consider a passage from Ayukawa's "Man on a Bridge."[36]

> No one is looking
> A procession of drowned men whose hands and feet are bound by kelp,
> Their eyes dimly turning toward the water's surface —
> You saw it all.

We glean from the surrounding stanzas that the speaker is Ayukawa, and "You" is Morikawa, "M". With these points established, it would be reasonable (and to a degree, correct) to argue that Ayukawa wrote "Man on a Bridge" to perform the work of mourning owed to a murdered friend. What is absent from such an interpretation, of course, is the problem of poetry. Within Ayukawa's poetic idiom, subject positions are no less mediated than any other aspect of the world. As such,

[36] All translations of Ayukawa's poetry and prose are mine. Thanks are due to Motoko Jumonji for her assistance with my translations. I have also consulted the very fine extant translations of Shogo Oketani and Leza Lowitz. see Ayukawa Nobuo. *America and Other Poems*. Translated by Shogo Oketani and Leza Lowitz (Los Angeles: Kaya Press 2007). Line breaks and spacing appear in the original.

first and second person can refer to specific figures at the same moment that they do the work of summoning, imploring, and interpellating the reader.

Now that we've loosened our collars a bit, let's reconsider the stanza: The speaker of the stanza is alone, separated from the social world and thus unable to bear witness to the reality of the war, even though he is the only one left alive. In contrast the hypostasized social reality is radically *unreal*, figured as a "procession of drowned men" looking hopelessly up toward the world of the living from the other side of a translucent, refractive barrier. If the *real* is inherently social, then it is also contingent, mediated, and (in the case of wartime Japan) monstrous and undead. Finally, "you" authentically witnesses everything, both the speaker's isolation and the suffering mass of drowned men that observe him. Why can "you see it all?" Is it the gift of omniscience granted to the dead man, Morikawa? But as a dead man he also knows nothing. Does it then belong to us? Both? Neither? Indeed! This is to say that Ayukawa's poetry is overdetermined by personal, formal, and social contexts that coexist in constant and dramatic tension with each other. So, we can maintain that "I" is Ayukawa and that "you" and "M" are Morikawa so long as we recognize that they are other people as well, and that those people may include "us."[37]

At the same time that this blurring of subject positions decouples Ayukawa's poetic works from biography and empiricism, it shoulders us with other debts. Morikawa is no longer Ayukawa's dead, nor merely is he a literary abstraction – *the dead*. He is now our dead as well. And in order to pay our debt, we must attempt to make sense of Ayukawa's poetics within their interacting historical contexts of the wartime past and the postwar present. To do this without falling into reductive historicism, we can make a productive detour through the problem of remembrance as

[37] On the transtemporal work of ideological interpellation see Louis Althusser. *On The Reproduction of Capitalism*. Translated by G.M. Goshgarian (New York: Verso 2014).

Theodor Adorno conceived it in "The Meaning of Working through the Past." Adorno warned that if the past could not be adequately addressed because its truth was obscured by the objective conditions of extant society, then the real work of mourning could not be done, the victims "be cheated out of the single remaining thing that our powerlessness can offer them: remembrance," and the threat of fascism would inevitably persist.[38] Remembering the unwilling war dead requires us to analytically deconstruct what Adorno called "the nexus of deception" that transforms the death of the powerless into noble civic sacrifice.[39] In this instance, making sense of Ayukawa's poetics and maintaining the full weight of their critical power therefore requires us to sift through the overlapping narratives of postwar, cold war, and national history that subsume them. It is to that dismal nexus that we must now turn.

The Japanese-American Ideology: Total War as Cultural Exchange

Among the cruelest ironies of the postwar is that the American projections of the communist threat in Japan served to legitimize the retention of the emperor system – the lattice of social, cultural, and political institutions that had plunged the country into colonial war in the first place. Despite the diversity of political inclinations and personal intentions within the staff of the Occupation, the decision to reform the wartime regime rather than overthrow it revealed fascism's instrumental value in the struggle against communism, as well as an underlying ideology of elitist orientalism, as the State Department's so-called "Japan crowd" had been hobnobbing with conservative politicians and aristocrats in the Japanese government since the early 1930s.[40]

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[38] Theodor Adorno. "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," C*ritical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. Translated by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 98.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Takemae Eiji. *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation and its Legacy*. Translated by Robert Rickerts and Sebastian Swann (Continuum, 2002).

Even after the outbreak of war with the United States, a liaison from the state department, Eugene H. Dooman, insisted that the emperor was an essential piece of any plan to reform postwar Japanese society because he functioned as "a living manifestation of the racial continuity of the Japanese people", an idea that subsequently made its way into the postwar constitution.[41] The important point here is that Dooman's conclusion that it was necessary to maintain the mythological imperial line for postwar democracy preceded the end of the war. It therefore tells us as much about the racialized presuppositions and conservative networks of the ascendant American empire than it does about any analysis of conditions on the ground in postwar Japan. Dooman's position was echoed consistently in the 1940s in response to more radical proposals for the dismantling of the emperor system and institutional and economic reform from in and outside of Japan.[42] Against all evidence to the contrary, the "Japan crowd" insisted that disbanding the military and purging the most noxious forms of colonial racism from public life (without addressing the jingoistic institutions that authorized them) would be sufficient to bring Japanese society into conformity with what would become the postwar American economic order.[43]

In practice, the Occupation's faith in imperial rectitude and fetishistic longing for the abstracted conception of ethnic tradition was tantamount to what Tosaka Jun attempted to unmask in the 1930s as the Japanese form of fascism, "Japanism" (*nihonshugi*).[44] At the same time, the American fascination with Japan's allegedly traditional character paradoxically legitimated both

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[41] Ibid., 203.

[42] For a description of popular anti-emperor rhetoric and its discursive function within the drafting of the postwar Japanese constitution, see chapter 2 of William Marotti. *Money, Trains, and Guillotines: Art and Revolution in 1960s Japan* (Duke University Press, 2013).

[43] Takemae Eiji. Ibid.

[44] Tosaka Jun. *Nihon Ideorogiiron* (Iwanami Shoten, 1977).

the merciless American bombing campaigns on Japanese civilians and the protection of the imperial endowment, as waging honorable war against a traditional society meant showing mercy to its traditions rather than its civilians. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this logic has been the subsequent American defense of the fabled decision to spare the historic shrines and palaces in Kyoto an atomic bomb.[45] In 1947, a year after he published a monstrous elegy to nuclear power, tellingly titled "The Bomb and Opportunity", Secretary of War for the Roosevelt administration, Henry L. Stimson obfuscated the ethical question of nuclear bombing entirely. In "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb" he explained, "I struck off the list of suggested targets (for the atomic bombs) the city of Kyoto. Although it was a target of considerable military importance, it had been the ancient capital of Japan and was a shrine of Japanese art and culture."[46] Thus the nuclear annihilation and poisoning of hundreds of thousands of people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki came to stand in as anecdotal evidence of American reverence for Japan's rich ethnocultural heritage. And like a perverse Derridean supplement, "shorn of determinacy" and war responsibility, the imperial institution remained to valorize that very same decision.[47] As the medieval imperial capital (the ancient capital was Nara), sparing Kyoto was in a sense tantamount to sparing the emperor's second homeland, in logical accord with the Dooman conclusion discussed above.

[45] I first studied the atomic bombs through the form of a mock debate in a high school U.S. History class. The discussion emphasized the American projections of three million US casualties in the event of a land war on Honshu and pitted this against the body counts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The American impulse to cow the Soviets was also acknowledged. But nowhere in this lesson were students informed of the prior communications between the allies and the Japanese government over surrender terms, which could have at the very least spared Nagasaki.

[46] Henry L. Stimson. "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," in Hiroaki, Sato "Stimson's Love of Kyoto Saved it from A Bomb," *Japan Times*, December 4, 2015. DOI: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/12/04/commentary/japancommentary/stimsons-love-kyoto-saved-bomb/#.XFx_6s9KjOQ

[47] William Marotti. Ibid., 62.

Such bad faith was similarly epidemic in the Japanese public sphere from the moment of the emperor's surrender. In the so-called "jewel voiced broadcast", the emperor Hirohito performed a similarly monstrous eulogy for the Japanese empire, occulting and euphemizing the mechanized colonial massacre of millions in China and Southeast Asia as a last stand against Western imperialism. Similarly, the bitter pill of surrender to the United States became part of a greater plan for universal peace. As such, the allied occupation's intertwined objectives of demilitarization and democratization could not be disentangled from the preparations for another nuclear war. And the reform of the wartime regime was simultaneously its salvation.

It was against this revamp of wartime Japanism that Ayukawa Nobuo spoke out in favor of an open-ended exploration of the traumatic wartime event that remained roiling in the postwar political unconscious. For him, the urgent task was to slow down the process of postwar reconstruction in order to work through the experiences and effects of war and totalitarianism rather than incessantly act them out. In 1949, in the face of a Left anti-colonial nationalism inspired by and constituent of cold war tensions, Ayukawa Nobuo argued in "What is Contemporary Poetry", that it was "still too soon to have a homeland".[48] To him, the opportunities offered by defeat could only be realized through a critical engagement with the feudal sentiments, state-ism, and patriotism that persisted in Japanese society. Of particular note to him was the postwar communists' attempt to harness these sentiments rather than resist them as they had during the interwar period. Ayukawa pointed to a new term in the communist lexicon: "quisling" (*baikokudo*).[49] To him, the language of national treason and collaboration represented a nationalist

[48] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Gendai shi to wa nanika", *Arechi Shishū 1951* (Kokubunsha, 1973), 153.

[49] Ibid., 150.

shift that undercut communism's ethical project of universal liberation and opened the door for the resurgence of wartime ideology.

It is undoubtedly true that the revived Japanese Communist Party had attempted to change its image along nationalist lines. In its early postwar strategy, the JCP had hitched its wagon to a pan-Asian solidarity that recalled the wartime program for East Asian co-prosperity, directed against what the contemporaneous activist and historian Ishimoda Shō once called American "enslavement".[50] This shift in rhetoric reflected and refracted the problem often referred to Japanese "victim's consciousness" of the postwar period.[51] By charging the emperor system with fascist collaboration against the Japanese people, the postwar communist perspective displaced the inherent tribalism and racism of Japanese national identity and the emperor as the locus of its meaning. As such, the party's discourse of Japanese anti-colonial nationalism against American domination depended upon the forgetting of the Japanese population's collaboration with and even embrace of the wartime regime.

In its critical reading of turns of phrase and ideology, Ayukawa's critique of the postwar forgetting bore more than a passing resemblance to the program of psychoanalytic interpretation and national reeducation program that Adorno proposed for the denazification of postwar Germany. In diagnosing the fascistic potentials of the sense of powerlessness that persisted in the minds and hearts of people immiserated by the late capitalist mode of production, Adorno claimed that Germans experienced the very notion of democracy as a painful reminder of what they would never have and therefore felt compelled to negate it through recourse to more familiar social forms

[50] For discussion of the JCP's rebranding as the "lovable communist party", see John Dower. *Embracing Defeat*, 1999. For the formulation of the postwar US-Japan alliance as American enslavement, see Ishimoda Shō. "Minzoku kaihō to rekishigaku", *Ishimoda shō chosakushū*, (Iwanami Shoten, 1988).

[51] John Dower. Ibid.

like ethnic nationalism and racism over and against the democratic ideals of freedom and equality. "Because reality does not deliver the autonomy or, ultimately, the potential happiness that the concept of democracy actually promises, people remain indifferent to democracy, if they do not in fact secretly detest it".[52] Internalizing and living the promise of democracy would require the German people to pierce through the veil of reification and to begin to transform the extant objective conditions of society. "To see through the nexus of deception, they would need to make precisely that painful intellectual effort that the organization of everyday life...prevents. The necessity of such adaptation, of identification with the given, the status quo, with power as such, creates the potential for totalitarianism".[53] In the absence of such a reckoning in postwar Japan, Ayukawa similarly claimed that "the various kinds of patriots seems to increase in accord with the intellectual conflict's nationalistic backdrop."[54] For Ayukawa, communists' nationalist pandering simply contributed to the spread of nationalism, and to precisely that which Adorno associated with the authoritarian personality: an adaptation of and identification with those elements of the wartime order that needed to be critically addressed in order to achieve an authentic break with the wartime past.

Witnesses, Prophets, and Losers –The Process of Poetry and the Role of Poets

But if one could not salvage the fruits of nationalism because the seed was rotten, what was to be done? Ayukawa did not provide a fully realized social alternative, but he was emphatic that the present moment of the "spirit without a homeland" (*sokoku naki seishin*) offered Japanese society the opportunity to construct a form of tradition untethered to the allegedly timeless

[52] Theodor Adorno. Ibid., 99.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ayukawa Nobuo. Ibid., 150.

boundaries of the Japanese nation-state.[55] For Ayukawa, the path through the wasteland of the current situation was necessarily convoluted and circuitous. One could not take short cuts through ideological guarantees, nor could it be plotted out in any reliable sense. Furthermore, any commingling of ideological dogma and social planning invariably recalled the wartime social order. From this perspective the logic of instrumental reason and its nationalistic supplement had revealed their irredeemably totalitarian character.

As such, Ayukawa saw an urgent need not only to abandon his country's "criminal traditions," but also to rethink the concept of tradition itself.[56] It was perhaps here that Ayukawa was most deeply indebted to T.S. Eliot. In his study of interwar European modernism during the 1930s and 1940s, Ayukawa simultaneously encountered the grim fact of historical repetition and the flash of utopian possibility. "What is Contemporary Poetry", includes quotations from letters between Paul Valery and T.S. Eliot written in the aftermath of World War I, in which they discussed the imminent destruction of Western civilization. Valery portended apocalyptic collapse while, in a rare moment of apparently modernist optimism, Eliot rejected it, insisting that civilization would not perish so long as the next generation took up its task of creating a language adequate to its present.[57] Through his invocation of Eliot, Ayukawa crossed the Eurocentric definition of civilization that Eliot presumed.

For Ayukawa, the intellectual and ethical project of poetry necessarily included the practice of historical comparison and translation. As a result, it pointed him to the global prospects that poetry could offer over and against the confines of an insular national literature. "Though we

[55] Ibid., 150-156.

[56] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Arechi no tachiba", 487-488.

[57] Ibid., "Gendai shi to wa nanika", 156.

continued to experience our own words as part of the Japanese language by writing poetry, it was not at all a matter of something Japanese (*kesshite nihon teki na mono de wa nakatta de aru*). Through our minds, the Japanese language experienced a completely new civilization."[58] A different path emerged through their encounter with post-World War I European discourse that did not require submission to the exigencies of postwar Japanese politics or to the longstanding essentialism of ethnic unities instantiated in their native tongue. Freed from both a linear conception of progress and the conflation of the people and the folk, the encounter with international writing allowed them to address the universal: the human.

Furthermore, if universal humanism could only be realized through the violation of ethnocultural norms then it was inherently hostile to a more conventional conception of tradition that presupposed timeless social wholeness and unity within any given group. Indeed, the allegedly eternal form of Japanese identity was the conceptual presupposition built into the ideology of the emperor system since its reconstruction in the 1860s, and which played an increasingly important role erasing contradictions in Japanese society during the 1930s and 1940s. For Ayukawa, the possibilities latent in postwar society could only be realized by reorienting the idea of tradition away from the preservation of the past and toward the realization of a better future.

> The value of true tradition does not pierce through the present from the past. It must be a value that pierces through the present from the future, then through the past…It could be thought that the fact that there is no trail from the future to the present is a kind of theoretical weakness. But to me, on the contrary, the uncertainty of the future should be understood as its theoretical strength.[59]

[58] Ibid., 157.

[59] Ibid., 179.

Ayukawa's conception of tradition required reflection on past and present grounded in hope, rather than a slavish commitment to inherited values. To him, the absence of a "trail from the future" was the true source of its value, as it provided the opportunity for something different.

In this respect, Ayukawa's vision of tradition and redemption has an affinity with Walter Benjamin's revision of historical materialism described in the "Theses on the Philosophy of History". Similarly concerned with the struggle against fascism, Benjamin argued that historical materialism had to fight for the dead by breaking with a conformism that attempts to "wrest tradition away" as a tool for the ruling classes. "Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins" (italics in the original).[60] Here, if we triangulate between Eliot, Benjamin, and Ayukawa we find a shared ethical core. For authentic progress over and against the hegemony of the given, each generation must develop its own critical language. That language must contain a desire for a vision of the future drawn from a "moment of danger," which is in turn grounded in a hope for redemption of the dead. And that very "moment of danger" can only be induced and sustained through a complex process of reflection, worked out through deconstructive analysis of social reality, competing interests, narrative forms, and everyday life. Walter Benjamin would call this the task of historical materialism. Eliot and Ayukawa would call it the task of poetry.

Ayukawa saw the process of writing poetry as inherently chaotic, derived from individual experience, inner life, memory, the external world, and human beings' piece-meal attempts to make sense of their combination. He would give this vision acute expression in a manifesto for Arechi in 1948 in the magazine "Modern Literature," written in collaboration with Tamura Ryūichi,

[60] Walter Benjamin. "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Translated by Harry Zohn (Schocken Books: New York, 1968), 254.

Kuroda Saburo, Miyoshi Toyoichirō, and Kitamura Tarō: "As a projection of our total existence, and as a complex process of sedimentation of thought and feeling, through its formal restrictions and beneath them, the value of poetry as an organic unity derives from its sanction of the explanation of feelings through the intellect, and the explanation of thoughts through aesthetics".[61] For them, the work of poetry has to include all of these elements in order to remain true to its core, refracting the messiness of life and the interaction of thought and feeling. In this description Ayukawa deployed contradictory metaphors. "Organic unity" implies a fusion, where a "complex process of sedimentation of thought and feeling" suggests a more distinct form of layering.[62] Taken together, these metaphors suggest opposed conceptions of historical becoming. But it is perhaps precisely at this axis that the dialectical work of poetry takes place, embodying the contradictory expressions of mental processes and collapsing the distinction between form and content.

As such, postwar poetry had a crucial role to perform, as its capacity to embed the process of mourning into social analysis and affective language held a critical potential for addressing a society repressing and their experiences of the war in order to get on with the process of postwar reconstruction. The poetic form was uniquely suited to deconstruct this logic because its language did not speak to it. Simply put, one knows that a poem is good when it generates conflictive internal responses. And in the postwar, placing primacy on feeling could have profoundly political implications. In a polemical moment, Ayukawa argued that:

> Poetry first comes to life when the unseen becomes visible and puts pressure on the material senses. It is the proof of the unseen. And we must expose how this hidden power works at the foundation of our…political and social angst. With all the contemporaneous or even

[61] Ayukawa. "Arechi no tachiba," 488.

[62] Ibid.

> futural character of our words, we must incite a projection of how the various evils that are the source of terror and despair crept into our vacant inner worlds from the outside.[63]

Poetry, as that which bridges the chasm between visible and invisible, mental and material worlds, might therefore be understood as a conduit for the return of the repressed. In the postwar, it provided an invaluable means of confronting the deeper, darker truths of the recent past and the ways in which the traumas of war remained unresolved. Through poetic "projection" (*shaei*) it became possible both to expose the terror and despair that were the effects of total war and to critically engage with the ways that such effects continued to act as a "hidden power" in postwar society.

This vision of the process of poetry and the function of poets was both theoretically general and historically specific. In Ayukawa's view, the darkness of Waste Land poetry reflected the specific experience of his generation. They were the true "losers" (*haizansha*) in wartime society, both denied the means of critical expression and conscripted to fight and die in the war. The social responsibility of young poets was therefor to speak about the painful experiences that such a history generated. In sum, Ayukawa concluded: "Like it or not, poets cannot help but shoulder the role of the prophet. Poets cannot escape the groaning, sadness, and grief of the world". [64]

The Poetics of Abjection: Illness, Death, and Freedom

As we will see, a language of abjection pervaded Arechi poetry, not least through its constant, even obsessive focus on death. This takes a specific form in Ayukawa's poetry, where the dead continue to live while the living continue to die. The effect is made all the more powerful (and fraught) by the fact that the first-person position of the speaker often seems to recount Ayukawa's

[63] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Gendai shi to wa nanika," 160-161.

[64] Ibid., 157.

own experiences. Death and abjection take form through references to lost loved ones, the cruel detachment of others, and through the ominous presence of animals, skeletons, ashes, and ghosts. The cumulative effect of Ayukawa's poetic mode is to transgress the boundary between experience and representation, as the conditions of life, death and undeath interpenetrate each other. Thus, Ayukawa's poems are exemplary documents of what Julia Kristeva called "abjection". But what does this mean?

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva describes abjection as an encounter with those elements of life that must be expelled and repressed in order to maintain coherent systems of meaning. As such, the presence of the abject threatens us because it embodies the imminent loss of the possibility of signification. "The jettisoned object is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses".[65] And yet in our feelings of revulsion toward these objects lies an enigmatic desire that derives its force from the death drive. For Kristeva, encounter with a human corpse is the apotheosis of abject experience, as the human body embodies the loss of the border between the excretive processes necessary to maintain the continuation of life and what it consumes and excretes. The corpse no longer eats or defecates. It is thus figured as the completion of the human process.

In a telling non-sequitur Kristeva's analysis jumps from individual subjects' encounters with bodily excretions and the corpse to the social form of fascism. To risk a translation of the aporia in her argument, I would suggest that fascism reabsorbs and alchemizes abjection. Overflowing the social with bile, shit, and corpses, fascism reconstitutes human subjectivity by transforming destruction and death into social nutrients. In this way, it sublimates abjection, rendering it into "a

[65] Julia Kristeva. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (Columbia University Press, 1982), 2.

terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you... [sic.]"[66] Thus the antisocial effects of fascism's *danse macabre* are everywhere, even as the bodies it consumes and excretes are never fully put on display.

Yet precisely because abjection is radically outside of systems of meaning grounded in eternal progress it carries a powerful critical potential. In Ayukawa's poetry, it became a means for varied and sometimes contradictory forms of critical reflection, functioning as an antidote to militarism and an existential reminder that individual human beings live singular lives that are not finally reducible to the social whole. Without further ado, let's look at some poems. This is "Hospital Ship Infirmary" published first in the March 1947 edition of "Utopia":

The hospital ship, heavily, then lightly
Runs off toward
The far and unknown homelands of man
"The ship's compass shall lead the lot of you," said the captain,
But to where? Neither Europe nor Asia
To an island inside an illusion
From the thick glass windows
You can just barely make out the tiny ocean and the sky

"That man's complexion……"
"Yellowed" the doctor announced unconcerned
Making a grim face
But isn't it Japan that's sick?
Look!
The yellow 4 o'clock sun
The hot ocean of fluid inside catches flame
Below an ominous rising curve
Within and without, hear the crashing sound of waves!
A bloody wine coughed up from my maw
Collapsing into the berth, playing dead
It's time to cheat God.
Silently, silently
Afterwards I furtively open my eyes

[66] Ibid.

The light of my irises has gone out
And the death mask dimly comes into view
Shadow For all my life inseparable from this shadow
"That one's yellow like some filthy spirit"

There are no doors in the darkness
Hand stubbornly twitches searching for the handle
Man is like a tube
For flowing blood
"Someone's peeking"
The keyhole is an unblinking eye…..
A silence obstructing the length of the door
Slowly and steadily collapsing at my breast
Pupils feverishly searching for an exit
Exchange a desperate glance with the keyhole straining to see
"Let me outta' here, -- to the sea! to mommy!"
A handle-less door.
A little keyhole.[67]

The hospital ship has no destination because it is for invalids, and in the logic of total war, invalids are simply more mouths to feed. So, seeing only the horizon-less expanse of ocean and sky from the window, the ship follows the compass, in pursuit of a home that they've never known, an island trapped inside an illusion.

Inside the ship, doctors observe the speaker, his face pallid and jaundiced. Having failed to remain useful as a soldier, he now performs his duty to the wartime regime as a medical experiment. The poem stages a collision between the speaker's critical inner speech and the indifferent exchanges between the doctors, as opposing perspectives on a decaying body. The doctor registers his color with indifference. Such indifference plagues the nation and yet has become the precondition of its being: "Isn't it Japan that's sick?" Deprived of speech, the speaker's disgust is excreted: "A bloody wine coughed up from my maw." To cheat the illness, the doctors, and God, play dead. When he opens his eyes again, he sees himself, the light drained out of his eyes and his

[67] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Byōin senshitsu," *Ayukawa nobuo zenshū dai ikkan* (Shichōsha, 1989), 18-21.

own face deformed by the absence of life. Is he now in quarantine, or has he moved to the morgue? The doctors no longer feel the need to hide their disgust: "That one's yellow, like some filthy spirit".

Now the speaker is back in his body, presumably, groping his way through the dark. There must be a door, but he can't find the handle. An unclosing eye observes him through the keyhole. Confined in the dark, the speaker regresses to a state of primal fear and desperation. He screams: "Let me outta here, -- to the sea! To mommy!" It's perhaps in these final exclamations that we get to the actuality of the imperial utopia, as "Hospital Ship Infirmary" recalls the common speech of war experience. In their final moments, many imperial soldiers reportedly broke from the imperial mantras, screaming not "Long live the emperor!" (*tennō heika banzai*) but "mommy!" (*o ka san*). How many more dutifully cried out the former while thinking the latter?

In the "Standpoint of the Waste Land" discussed above, the Arechi poets conceded that any utopian vision was difficult to see in their prose writing. They suggested that the path through the "wasteland reaction" (*Arechi teki hannō*) could best be glimpsed in their poetry.[68] While any attempt to find true utopian aspirations in "Hospital Ship Infirmary" would be forced (at best), Ayukawa's poem "America" gives us a bit more to work with. This is "America", first published in July 1947 in the magazine "Pure Poetry" (*junsui shi*).

It was fall, 1942
"Farewell!
I doubt we'll ever meet again
And Dead or Alive
Our path is dark"
We laughed at the shape of our shadows carrying the rifles,
One by one vanishing on the night streets

And the elderly with fake flowers on their chests
Offer words of glorious praise
To us, headed off like lambs to the slaughter

[68] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Arechi no tachiba," 488.

Our premonitions saturated by the storm
And the storm carried with it a chill
And the chill was dripping death
Dripping death extinguishes the little shimmering lives one by one
Oh M You abide our dark promise
Leaving behind the stink of army boots and medicine
As you vanished from this world

I, surviving,
Still stand in the traces of your guilty expression
Was it just ash and flame that destroyed you?
"We strolled along the muddy river that runs through the city
A barge motionless above the water, lost in thought
Do you remember?
In tears or sometimes not
We saw a black dog curled up
On the bridge"
Yes, even though you vanished without a trace
I remember it clearly
Oh M As we wandered the city markets, you muttered
"What science What philosophy
And what rhythm and color
And possibility or impossibility"
And the wind gave you no reply
Still standing on the bridge
I shiver from the cold of a directionless wind
“One determined by the stars doesn’t look back”
Oh M Now I endure the wind intently gazing upon the resistance
And I’ll continue walking toward the desolate ends of the earth…
But as soon as I begin the path, I look back in weakness
“I am here To get to where you are
From where you aren’t
The I that is here, isn’t”
As little drops of light appear
Around the ring of the setting sun
Perhaps you will dimly peak out from within the fog
Is that you, standing there?
Or isn’t it?
For the dead man
I set the scene of 1947
Like every other night, I squeeze in at the table
To meet up with my three wise friends
I put out a hand and they walk like puppets
I let my hand fall and they go limp like puppets
Oh M Must we reach your greatness?
To figure out whether they’re just human bodies filled with stuffing

As he licks at the bottom of his shot glass
A student begins to speak in a low voice, eyes open wide with sympathy
“You all haven’t forgotten, have you?
The second-class masses and people
Are nothing more than human raw materials
For greater races and their affiliates
The youth of Petersburg informed us…
Ugh let’s move to England now
That Winston’s dead
And there is room for doubt
And since they’ve nationalized the banks
Now is the time to give up lingering vanity
Give up!
Your dirty hands
Pull down on the feet of your hanging mothers
Now Now is the time to follow the winding
Path of great men and grand rivers”

Casting off his own soul
The poet smirked
“I’ll get away from these closed rooms
From behind the curtains of this stage…
I overlook nothing
The past is just beginning
And the future ended long ago
Within the clothing and jewelry Beneath the makeup put on just so
Inside the banquet hall filled with dancing and people’s laughter
Look, behold the hatred and shed skin of vanity
Look, behold the pleasure and rapture
Of society exposed
Those who entrusted me with the key to all memories
I’ve stolen the keys and will never give them back”

The bachelor nods to himself
“Don’t worry don’t say another word
You turn your back on me
Wall of silence
Yellow skin
I know that
Your stiff back has no spine…
And indeed now my solitude is full
But I don’t believe
Those days of unbearable cruelty
Are still hiding somewhere
Within the twilight from the far-off horizon

Comes the cry of a bird
As though it’s calling to me, this rustling in the trees

Goodbye to past and future
Let's bid farewell to these phantoms
Or we could always drink them up
Let’s bless this cursed night
Because just when I open my eyes
Just when you close yours
Death is not so strong a drink”

The bachelor hit the student’s liquor glass with a final sidelong glance
And later, the movement of his lips and misaligned teeth, like a beast’s,
Were traced by the inside of the student’s thin eyes
The poet held back a yawn and stood up
As the hat he wears on his head that has the scent of old evenings
The tragic face of a decidedly rejected man appears
“Shall we meet again tomorrow, assuming there is a tomorrow”
Said someone to someone else
The bachelor promptly disappeared out the doors
He walks past a lamppost he had spat on
And heads toward the bed of an impure woman
And at the train station the poet and the student regret his parting for a time

I am left alone
Tell me Who is the witness?
I gaze at myself and recall a faint smile
Shadows of one worldturn to flesh
The little light must not go out
The painting must be a burning red
The music must play the madness without end
“America……”
I suddenly glow incandescent
And cough out a tune
My eyes glimmer and I chatter like the waves
But there is no-one around
The white rain dries inside
The boundaries of the void
Wordlessly the gramophone record spins
“America…..” the walls reply
Like a lone gambling fortune teller
I lower my eyebrow and hide my hand
And mix up
The value of all Aces and
The value of guarded kings and amused queens
In my head

"America……"
Solemnly, for all races
Before all in attendance, I spoke
Anti-Columbus did not discover America
Un-Jefferson did not sign the declaration of independence
Our America has not yet been discovered

Weariness and quiet violence
Slowly shut out existence
Cruel Xenon!
From outside of time this dark existence freezes in abstraction itself,
On the table
Twisted by my hand
Like torn blue sky, my flying handkerchief
My flesh smells of salt
From the room without an exit
A window jimmied open with a necktie pin
This way to the ocean!
The light changes into a single atom
Into a summer downpour
I who hasn't past your pitiful shadow
In my best vest and overcoat
Lean against the table and dream of a new golden age
Some day our exchanged glances
Our casual greetings will birth an unknown nation
And the emissary of our sublime words
With the coat of arms of the sun on his chest
Ascends the stairs of the palace and government building
Pushes aside the dancing masses
And at dawn knocks at our door with his big fist
Ah from days long past
I've been fever dreaming[69]

An inaugural loss, the poem begins with what would turn out to be the speaker's final goodbye to "M," as they both headed off to different fronts in the war. The pain of separation is unbearable, and they dissociate through recourse to intellectualization, "Farewell! I doubt we'll ever meet again/And Dead or Alive/Our path is dark" (the quote comes from Thomas Mann) and laughter. Reality and rage set in, as pathetic old men and women wish them the best and proudly display

[69] Ayukawa, "Amerika," *Ayukawa nobuo zenshū dai ikkan*, 27-36.

their callous indifference through “glorious praise” and the donning of fake flowers, false symbols of eternal youth. The poem juxtaposes this with reality. “Dripping death extinguishes the little shimmering lives one by one.” M’s light is extinguished, and he and the speaker’s dark promise to never meet again turns out to be prophetic.

But the speaker fails to abide the “dark promise” and survives. “I, surviving/Still stand in the traces of your guilty expression.*”* And like a coward, he will do any anything to escape responsibility. He deflects his betrayal onto the victim: “Was it just ash and flame that destroyed you?” “‘We strolled along the muddy river that runs through the city, a barge motionless above the water, lost in thought. Do you remember? In tears or sometimes not/We saw a black dog curled up/On the bridge.’ ‘What science/What philosophy/And what rhythm and color/And possibility or impossibility’ And the wind gave you no reply’”. Their golden age was stalked by omens of death and void -- black dogs and silent winds. Now M is gone, and the speaker is alone again, on the bridge, in between. A cold wind blows. Is it M? In grief, we have no choice but to try and go about our business. Like M always said, *“*One determined by the stars doesn’t look back.*”* The speaker performs an incantation to summon the little lights that captures the essence of melancholic introjection: “I am here/To get to where you are/From where you aren’t/The I that’s here/Isn’t”.

He swears he saw M, though, as we all know, M is already dead. Just in case, he “sets the scene” for the dead man. At the bar, the speaker chats casually with friends. The student, the poet, and the bachelor: the mind, the heart, and the flesh. But like all friends from the bar, the bond lasts as long as the conversation, and the conversation lasts as long as everybody agrees. The student begins. It’s time to put everyone in the bar in their place. “You all haven’t forgotten/have you?” “The second-class masses and people are nothing more than human raw materials/For greater races and their affiliates/The youth of Petersburg informed us… Ugh let’s move to England/Now that

Winston's dead/And there is room for doubt/And since they've nationalized the banks". A paean to race hierarchy, national socialism, and empire. He continues: "For now is the time to give up lingering vanity/Give up! Your dirty hands/Pull down on the feet of your hanging mothers". To his credit, the call for group matricide probably caught the bar a bit off guard. But perhaps it's not that surprising after all. The object of annihilation may be unexpected, but the logic is familiar. "For now is the time to give up lingering vanity/Now is the time to follow the winding path of great men and grand rivers". If you plunge yourself into the course of history, all your violence will be forgiven.

The poet smirks. *"*I'll get away from these closed rooms/I overlook nothing/The past is just beginning/And the future ended long ago." The student's totalitarian temporality has got to go: "Look, behold the hatred and shed skin of vanity/Look, behold the pleasure and rapture/Of society exposed/To those who entrusted me with the keys to all memories/I've stolen the keys, And will never give them back.*"* The poet can see through the performance that takes place in the room. He turns over the social body to reveal the maggots underneath. Perhaps such punishment is necessary for rehabilitation. Maybe this is what working through the past has to look like. And we also don't know if he ever made it out of the room. Has he reached a place of moral transcendence outside of the false society, earning the right to pull down the curtain and run off? Or is he in here, working through it with us? Or a third option: is the cynical poet-libertine just one more archetype that keeps the false society in reproductive motion? This returns us to the "smirk." What is to be enjoyed, here? "Look, behold the pleasure and rapture, of society exposed". The poet revels in the fact that we're all hypocrites, a truth that the radical student can't abide. But the poet ignores the fact that the pleasures of social decay are not just for poets. They're also for fascists. The student's linear temporality encounters its other in the poet's cynical recurrence.

The bachelor has had enough. He may well be the only one of them that has work tomorrow, and there's only so much self-indulgence he can bear. After all, dogma like theirs was little help during the war. They were a little too young to bear "war responsibility," but they don't seem like resisters either: "You turn your back on me, wall of silence, yellow skin/I know that your stiff back has no spine…" He's also the optimist of the group, and that's what alienates him most. "Now my solitude is full, but I don't believe those days of unbearable cruelty/Are still hiding somewhere." Like when the speaker tried to remember the good times with M, the moment of the bachelor's hope is cut off by portents: "Within the twilight from the far-off horizon/Comes the cry of a bird, As though it's calling to me/This rustling in the trees." Perhaps it's a ghost like M, speaking again to the wind that never replied to him in life. The group drinks up the specters and bad memories and disperses until tomorrow, "assuming there is a tomorrow." The speaker, who remained silent the whole night, is alone once again. Afraid of the obvious, he tries to deflect responsibility one final time: "Tell me, who is the witness?" This time he answers his own question and begins to pay the debt to M and all the other dead: "I gaze at myself and recall a faint smile/Shadows of one world/Turn to flesh/The little light must not go out".

The speaker hears the name of "America" on a gramophone and echoing off of walls. But which America are we talking about? It's a new world that has not yet been found, an inversion of the United States and the Occupation. "Anti-Columbus did not discover America/Un-Jefferson did not sign the declaration of independence." This new America's founders play their part precisely by staying out of it, by never ruining its promise with enslavement and war.

Yet as soon as he spoke its name, America's promise began to dwindle, instantly replaced by "weariness and quiet violence" taken over by "Cruel Xenon!" It has become an empty shell and a timeless prison, not unlike the room on the hospital ship. In fact, it seems we're back there now,

as the world turns blue, and the speaker begins to smell salt just as the ocean appears as an exit once again. “Like torn blue sky/My flying handkerchief/My flesh smells of salt/From the room without an exit/A window jimmied open with a necktie pin/This way to the ocean!” M is here too, as his light condenses into an atom, and the speaker realizes that no matter how time moves, M will always be there. “I who never past your pitiful shadow/In my best vest and overcoat/Lean against the table/And dream of a new golden age.” After all his pronouncements and declarations for “America”, the mention of the table suggests that the speaker never even left the bar. “Fever dreaming”, he cannot shake the feeling that all this babbling might yet redeem them and give birth to a “sublime emissary” of an “unknown nation” that overthrows cruel Xenon and knocks on the door of the future. All this might yet still give birth to another America, one that might be better and different precisely because it does not yet have a name.

In sum, “America”, dramatizes the complex combination of anger, loss, hatred and fear that the postwar social order could not bear to confront. It is comprised of a series of “projections” that do not make claims to rational facticity, experiential accuracy or ideological coherence. From the standpoint of Arechi, any such efforts could only serve to pervert poetry by transforming it into a tool in a functionalist vision of art’s role in the social mechanism. By contrast, the bar patrons in “America” do not provide answers through recourse to objective analysis or truth claims. Instead, the living in the poem become all the more real through their troubled and tenuous relationships to each other, while their attempts to theoretically work through the problems of the world seem only to farcically reenact them.

Notably, there is one character that appears beyond reproach: M. At the bar, the speaker laments the idiocy of his friends, certain that M would finally explain it all in 1947, if he were there. Yet when we recall M’s utterances, it’s clear he had less answers than anyone. “What science,

What philosophy, And what rhythm, And color, And possibility, Or impossibility." Thus, the speaker too reveals his nostalgia for a past that never was. Like his friend, the poet, the speaker is a jailer, trapping M in a gilded but no less inhuman cage of reverence. So long as he must play the role of the prophet, M cannot be a person. And until they discover their new America, all will remain consigned to the cynicism of the trans war past.

Postwar, Cold War, Trans War

In the 1950s, Ayukawa's uncompromising hatred of nationalism and didacticism became increasingly unfashionable. Iwasaki Minoru points out that Arechi was relatively unknown during its early postwar years as a magazine, only garnering attention after 1951 when they began to publish bound poetry collections.[70] The problem becomes complicated here, because the essay we have discussed bears the clear traces of its serial publication in 1948 and 1949, first appearing as a single work in *Arechi Shishū 1951*. Many of the poems were also from previous years, so in a sense the group's statement reached the wider world too late, even though the 1950s literary establishment embraced them. But this embrace was short-lived in any case. As the Arechi group ascended to popularity, even dominance, they simultaneously came to be seen as representative of an irrelevant literati by a powerful cultural movement that positioned itself much more directly against the American presence in Japan and the postwar Japanese emperor system.

In 1952, the left-wing poetry magazine "Archipelago" (*retto*) appeared as an exigent alternative to what was perceived as Arechi's elite intellectual defeatism. In 1953, Sekine Hiroshi wrote an essay attacking the group, powerfully titled "Dreamless Night". There he positioned Archipelago's "mass principles" against the Waste Land's plan for the "rehabilitation of insular

[70] Iwasaki Minoru. "Sengo shi to sengo rekishigaku," *Keizoku suru shokuminchishugi - gienda/minshū/jinrui*. (Seikyusha, 2005).

principles" and claimed that the latter "has the effect of forcing all of humanity into isolation" (*subete no ningen o koritsu saseru yakuwari o hatashiteiru*).[71] As I have shown, this criticism merely indexed the problem of postwar instrumental rationality that the group was attempting to address. But it was persuasive in its moment.

The stick that cannot bend breaks, and in certain respects Ayukawa dug his own grave. In the late 1940s, Ayukawa described the Arechi position as simultaneously opposed to "wartime fascism" and "postwar communism," implicitly conflating the two positions.[72] Though we have seen that there was a degree of validity to this critique in light of the JCP's qualified embrace of nationalism, there were vast differences between the two positions, and his phrasing was surely more prejudicial than probative. He similarly went on to write a scathing criticism of the *Rain of Ash* anthology that circled around the experience of the atomic bombs but included poets who Ayukawa despised for their collaboration during the war.[73] Though his criticism primarily focused on the didactic form of the poetry, not the content of working through the trauma of the atomic bombs, it seemed to confirm the growing suspicion that Ayukawa had little to offer the burning questions of the 1950s cultural and political situation. In this sense, Ayukawa found himself trapped and isolated as he had during the war. So committed to the position that he had worked out in the 1930s and 1940s alongside his dead contemporaries, there was simply no room to give ground on the matter of poetry. We could say that Ayukawa finally joined M, who knew that it was better to commit to the path laid out, even if it ultimately led nowhere. Like he was alleged to have

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[71] Sekine Hiroshi. "Yume no nai Yoru." Cited in Tsuboi Hideto. *Koe no shukusai: nihon kindai shi to sensō*, (Nagoya Daigaku Shuppansha, 1997), 293.

[72] Ara Masahito "'*Zen'ei geijutsu' to 'Arechi'" Shigaku* (December 1949).

[73] Takahashi Shinichi. "Nihon gendaishi undō ni okeru "Arechi" ha no higaku bungakuteki kenkyū" (Dissertation: Chiba Daigaku 1998).

said: *one determined by the stars doesn't look back.*

Conclusion: The Politics of Loss

As we have seen, Ayukawa's poetry and prose brings the disparate elements of the trans war Japanese and American visions of utopia into dramatic tension to reveal both their theoretical contradictions and their monstrous practical effects. What resulted was not democratic subjection, but totalitarian abjection. By contrast, Ayukawa argued in favor of addressing past, present, and future as irreducible fragments that existed in a constant give and take with one another other but never finally fused. For it was only through their constant re-combination that something new might emerge. As an inherently complex process of "sedimentation," Ayukawa believed that poetry was (and is) uniquely suited for this task.

Though many then (and now) believed this reeked of a particular kind of conservative spiritualism, it is good to recall here that it was Ayukawa's disgust for nationalism that brought him under fire from the postwar Left in the first place. In the moment of the late 1940s and 1950s, during which professed ideological opposites seemed to unify, Ayukawa's poetry dispensed with the given political spectrum in an effort to prioritize the task of *working through* the anger, grief, and trauma of the postwar past as a problem of human being. Apparently too difficult and uncertain to bear, the postwar Left's ultimately successful efforts to banish the Arechi problematic in the moment of the 1940s and 1950s was merely one more act of repression. And in turn, it is now still always, already returning.

“Hang My Corpse in Civilization”: Revolutionary Revenants in the Work of Tamura Ryūichi

Living Nowhere in the Ruins of Empire

This chapter explores the poetry and prose of Tamura Ryūichi (b. 1923-1998). Born in Ōtsuka in the Tōshima ward of Tokyo six months before the Great Kantō Earthquake, Tamura was saved by his mother who reportedly carried him out of his home into a bamboo thicket, and it's sometimes suggested that this possibly prelinguistic trauma set him on the path of language's "destructive power" (*hakai ryoku*).[74] But Tamura always emphasized the importance of his neighborhood's longer history as a part of the former pleasure quarters during the Edo period, insisting that his earliest "linguistic experience" retained its echoes and resulted in a kind of epochal in-betweenness. Tamura spent much of his early life in the company of actors and artists in the Shitamachi area, which he once described as an "anti-world" (*han sekai*).[75]

Tamura's early 1930s poetic practice took place alongside Miyoshi Toyōichiro and other subsequent Arechi poets in magazines like "Le Bal" and "The New Country" who were at the time ardent critics.[76] Tomoyoshi complained that Tamura's poetry amounted to a "clumsy modernism" with no stakes beyond the "play of language itself".[77] Like many of his generation, Tamura's life drastically changed in the 1940s. Before his twenty-one-month stint in the Navy, which he had successfully deferred by entering university at Meiji Daigaku from March 194, Tamura was awed by his literature course taught by Kobayashi Hideo but bristled under the tutelage of Hagiwara Sakutarō.[78] Prior to his conscription Tamura announced that Hirohito's declaration of war

[74] Awazu Norio. "Shi to sozōryoku: tamura ryūichi ron," *Gendai shi techō*, no.15 (1972).

[75] Tamura Ryūichi. *Dead Languages: Selected Poems 1946-1984*. Translated by Christopher Drake (Katydid Books, 1984), xvii.

[76] Awazu Norio. Ibid., 50.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Reflecting on this experience, Tamura later said that his university lecture course with Hagiwara convinced him to never take another class on poetry. Aoki Ken. "Tamura ryūichi nōto dai san kan", *Kikan bunka* 66, no. 3 (2015): 196.

amounted to the greatest poem ever written, as there had been no prior use of language with such a visceral impact, which captured something of his approach to poetics but was likely vectored through the language of his teacher. Amoral pronouncements of these type were not uncharacteristic of Tamura's poetics at any point, but this should not be read as enthusiasm for the Japanese empire's world historical mission. Though never absolutely silent, Aoki Ken points out that Tamura lost interest in writing and spent much of this period pursuing his interests in bunraku and rakugo.[79]

Tamura's loss of hope was symptomatic of the broader sense of angst and stagnation among the generation of young intellectuals that had come of age during the country's plunge into war in the 1930s and early 1940s. From Tamura's distinct generational vantage point -- eighteen years old when the Japanese navy attacked Pearl Harbor and declared war on the United States - the alleged world historical ascension of Japanese history celebrated by an older generation might have appeared more like a collective charge into his individual annihilation. As such, the memories of personal hopelessness and passivity common to the discussion of World War II in Arechi discourse is combined with a great deal of coerced activity. Conscription required Tamura to move several times across the archipelago, and given his late entry in the military, his odds of survival were not good. He narrowly escaped two missions that were all but state mandated suicide: first as a zero pilot (he was too tall) and then as a beachhead against a projected American invasion, which would have most likely been a massacre on par with the various naval incursions conducted during the American island-hopping campaign.[80] But of course, the Americans never showed up.

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Tamura Ryūichi. Ibid., xvii.

So despite the odds, Tamura never saw combat. After his discharge, he returned to his home in Tokyo to find it levelled by American air raids. For a time, he lived in a shack next to his former home constructed from bomb blasted detritus.[81]

Kitagawa Tooru has suggested that Tamura's poetry in the 1960s took on a kind of romantic hue that verged on nationalist nostalgia.[82] I will propose an alternative reading of one of these poems in the dissertation's conclusion, but this chapter (like the others) focuses on Tamura's practice in the late 1940s and 1950s. In these poems, family and home are figured as sites of violence, effectively symbolizing the violence of the Japanese trans war through the lens of familial conflicts on the one hand and spectral encounters on the other. Far from either idle linguistic play or ethnic return, I argue that these poems make historical claims on the real through the intertwined forms of traumatic temporality and memory, and that the power of their language destroys the fantasy of an actualized imperial subject, achieved through a depiction of a subjectivity overwhelmed by the human embodiments of Japanese fascism.

Etchings of Annihilation: Postwar Hallucinations and Tamura's "Prototype"

Tamura and his cohort in Arechi were not unique in the impulse to reflection on the wartime past in the postwar present. Like the discourse on angst of the 1920s and 1930s, less formally engaged critics often complained that the group's emphasis on individual experience and representation lacks sufficiently radical intent.[83] But the Arechi poets adamantly rejected this critique as a reprisal of the didactic expectations of wartime cultural production. What

[81] Aoki Ken. "Tamura ryūichi nōto dai roku kan" in *Kikan bunka* 70, no. 12 (2016): 225-228.

[82] Kitagawa Tooru. *Shi to shiso no jiritsu: gendai shi no rekishi teki jikaku* (Shicōsha, 1966).

[83] For discussion of angst in the discourse of Miki Kiyoshi, see Harry Harootunian. *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

distinguished their practice was the way that they took up the form of poetry to capture abstracted layers of thoughts and feelings that could not be precisely transposed on to problems of politics. For them, transformation of Japanese society had to take place through the psychic and spiritual work of poetry, and the terms of that transformation could not be set in advance. And because virtually no one was above some form of complicity with the wartime regime, there was no stable position from which to pass judgment.

The sense of guilt and complicity that Arechi described through poetry is powerfully processed in Akira Kurosawa's 1949 film Stray Dog which similarly captures the traumatic eruption of the wartime past into the postwar present. Like Tamura's poem 1948 "Image", discussed below, Stray Dog circles the theme of the doppelganger through the encounter between two former soldiers, the film's protagonist, rookie Detective Murakami and the mad dog killer, Yusa.[84] As Murakami chases after Yusa in an attempt to retrieve his stolen gun and stop his crime spree, the narrative delves deeper into Murakami's own memories of war in China and the experience of repatriation into the desolate Tokyo ruins.

Despite the presence and pastoral guidance of the strait-laced senior detective Sato, Murakami never gets passed the notion that he and Yusa are all the but the same.[85] By the end only a thin line separates them, as we can see in the climactic brawl between them, rolling in flowers, their appearances fusing and indistinguishable. At the conclusion of the film, the ambiguous

[84] *Stray Dog*, directed by Akira Kurosawa (1949; New York, NY: Criterion, 2004), Blu-ray Disc.

[85] Chase Hastings suggests that detective Sato represents a Buddhist notion of care for the suffering, but a bit more consideration of trans war history is needed. The film includes repeated opaque reference to Sato's wartime past as a detective. As such, his black and white attitude and his professional success in postwar Japan is implicitly linked to police oppression under the wartime regime. See Chase Hastings "Kurosawa's Stray Dog & Japan's Apres Guerre" in *Perspectives on Black Markets V. 2* (Indiana University Press, 2018). DOI: https://iu.pressbooks.pub/perspectives2/chapter/kurosawas-stray-dog-japans-apres-guerre/

possibilities of the future seemed to lie with Murakami, recently promoted, happily reunited with detective Sato and possibly cured of his war trauma, mindful of the criminal desperation of the present at the same time that he ultimately stood up as a democratic subject and recovered his gun.

Suffice it to say that Tamura's poetry had no mass audiences or studios to please. There are no qualified (or unearned) happy endings in Tamura's work. This is not least because Tamura dispenses with the very notion of a stable ground from which a person could act in the world. The speakers that populate his poetry are not attached to self-determined subjects or agents on linear paths of self-cultivation or political awakening. Instead, the space of the poems is amorphous, a shapeless psychic nebula formally reconstituting itself without pointing to a narrative resolution. People do not live and act in these spaces so much as they are subjected to them.[86] This is "Etching" (*Fukkokuga*) first published in the second issue of "Bungaku Daigaku" in 1948 and republished in Arechi Shishū 1951.

A scene in a German etching now before his eyes
Was it a bird's eye view of an ancient city entering night from dusk
Or some realist rendering of modernity's precipice leading from darkest night to early dawn
He wondered

That man That is, he who I began to speak about killed his father in
Youth That autumn his mother went beautifully insane [87]

[86] The point can be refracted again by considering the relationship between the historical conditions of textual production and the form of Tamura's poetry in the first decade of the postwar period. The writings compiled in Tamura's first work, *Four Thousand Days and Nights* were put together after the fact, as a representative sampling of work done from 1945 to 1955 in Arechi publications as well as different poetry journals. Other poems from the same period, even those that deal with very similar themes, were omitted. Though it is tempting to seek out and articulate the essence of the poems of *Four Thousand Days and Nights*, such an effort is finally, inevitably, a historical retrojection. At the same time, it was precisely by making claims about the coherence of a particular experience of the war that Tamura and the Arechi poets were able to assert the importance of their project within postwar society.

[87] Tamura Ryūichi. "Fukkokuga", *Yon sen no hi to yoru* (Sōgensha, 1956), 25. Gaps within single lines are present in the original. All translations of Tamura are mine.

In “Etching” one detects the coordinates of an Oedipal triangle, where “that man” (*sono otoko*) qua Japanese society loses its mind through toxic encounters with the outside world. Father is the instantiation of reason, and mother is language – the mother tongue. The man’s murderous outburst symbolizes a patricidal struggle against fascism, which co-emerges with the drive for the immanent freedom to reclaim the mother as an ethnic totality of language. From this perspective, “Etching” can be read as a parable of the descent into ultra-nationalism, in which the son’s Oedipal drive to murder the state and return to the womb of native language culminates in the violent destruction of Japanese society and sociality.

Yet there are limits to such an interpretation, symptomatic of the categorial nationalism of much of the writing on the early postwar in Japan. The first, obvious point is that it transforms individual experience into a stand-in for national history. The move is consistent with the tendency to the Arechi project as a cry of youthful defiance against authority within a national historical frame.[88] Yet they themselves insisted that their poetry was meant to highlight individual experience in particular and to speak to the global horrors of modernity and war in general, not something containable within Japanese culture. The second point is that it effaces the poem’s disjunctive form. Where the first stanza describes the man from a third person perspective, the second stanza introduces a previously invisible narrator, opening the parable of the etching to a problem of other times and places. And the distinction between the two characters is maintained while their differenced is effaced, suggestive of one speaker psychically split. Tamura referred to this poem as his "prototype" (*genkei*) for all his subsequent work.[89] As the basis for Tamura’s poetics, then, the stakes of moving beyond the melancholic nationalist interpretation of “Etching” are substantial.

[88] Tsuboi Hideto. *Koe no shukusai: nihon kindai shi to sensō* (Nagoya Daigaku Shuppansha, 1997).

[89] Awazu Norio. “Shi to sozōryoku: tamura ryūichi ron”, *Gendai shi techō*, no.15 (1972).

For the oedipal ground of "Etching" is radically unstable. First the speaker is here and now, looking at the German etching. But through the act of looking, he is no longer here and now. He disperses across history, before now and after it. "The dusk of a bygone age?" "Or the coming dawn of ours?" Time is out of joint, as the orientation toward forward movement has been lost. Suddenly the speaker appears, to conclude the story of the man. The perspectival shift of the second stanza is retrospective, running contrary to the space and time of the "now before his eyes" – a now which cannot be temporally located. How could the speaker know what the man wondered in the very moment that he wondered it?

This disjuncture begins to make more sense if we read the poem's form as a symptom of its content. As the grounds of subjectivity, the disintegration of time and space destabilizes the distinction between self (the speaker) and other (the man). The speaker and the man are thus inseparable. If the poem is an allegory, if the nation acts in the poem, it is not as a mourning ritual so much as a fractured obfuscation of its crimes and ideological incoherence. This dissociation from the traumatic events of Oedipal murder and incestuous desire alongside the strict separation of the two characters' identity is the precondition for the speaker's retrospective position, as one national subject among others. Yet the apparent safety of narrative distance the speakers sets up merely ensures the repetition and acting out of the violence of a repressed past. Just as allegory requires the fixing of referents outside of the extant cultural object, so too does "Etchings" prototypical narrative require the daily denial of the war's hold on the present of postwar Japanese society. As such, "Etching" figures the epochal separation of war and postwar as a man describing his own disavowed past.

The Other Within

We could then say that "Etching" maps out how periodization worked to facilitate postwar

societal repression. Cordoning off the unbearable violence and destruction of the war as a moment of divergence from a proper modernizing trajectory allowed for the restoration of an ideal type of subject that could now be actualized. But here we see that Tamura's poetics cannot be summarily reduced either to an act of mourning or resistance in the name of the dead. Ancestral figures are not merely subaltern but daemonic, waging their own wars against the living.

Let's consider another early example: "Premonition" (*Yokan*) first, published in August 1948.

Afternoon suddenly arrived He alone, crushed in the bottom of his chair
Hands drooping down languid
The world comes to shadow The agony of the world follows him alone
The Sadness of the world gouges out both his eyes The gaping wounds like open doors He got the feeling that he would flow into the past just like this
From the window, he could just make out the town of his birth For the town, rain falls These 25 years between war and war the ground dampens The town has changed shape again and again And the town of his childhood memories is rejected by this one And yet mother and grandmother must live in this age The past silently comes out through the door And joins up with a part of the future The rain collides with time The rain wounds before his eyes A bandage! An ordinary middle-aged man cut too deep by an ordinary black umbrella

What to do Out the open door come many hands to his shoulders with some force
Cold lips cover his lips A passionless kiss And it hurts but in his heart he delights in the taste

So You've come to kill me[90]

Again, time and space bleed into each other, destabilizing the boundaries that separate the subjects, objects, and memories and throwing the speaker's apparent identity into crisis. "He" (*kare*) is sitting deep in his chair, listless. His hands are losing strength as the world comes into shadow. The boundaries between subject and object blur but have not yet dissolved. His liquidation remains a metaphor for the exhaustion or lethargy of a solitary being. The body stays whole. But memories accost him, as though from without, and shredded the semblance of bodily unity. "Agony" is the subject that stalks. "Sadness" is the subject that gouges. And "he" is not the agent

[90] Tamura Ryūichi. "Yokan", *Yon sen no hi to yoru* (Sōgensha, 1956), 34.

of suffering, but merely the space for its articulation. “From the window, he could just make out the town of his birth.” But didn’t sadness just gouge out his eyes? “He got the feeling that he would flow into the past just like this.” Space and flesh have broken apart, and memory overcomes the present.

Now it is raining for the town and the ground dampens. It’s been raining for twenty-five years: ever-flowing tears for the town in the time between war and war. The rain is constant, but the town has changed over and over. The town of the present rejects his childhood memories of it. Mother and grandmother are living memories, residual manifestations of an earlier epoch that has not died. Desperate, they attempt to escape the ghostly space of memory and return to the real. The past escapes through the doorway of his eye sockets and connects to the future. As the past links up with the future, rain collides with time, as a constant with the protean. “The rain wounds before his eyes.” Rain figures the endless sadness of the world, overlaid with the epochal location of twenty-five years between war and war. For the ordinary man, a bandage! The bandage that is also the umbrella that “cut too deep.” From his eye sockets, mother and grandmother’s hands reach toward the past at his back. All the way out of him, the matriarchal kiss of the past is passionless yet “delightful.”

“So you’ve come to kill me.” The past breaks out of his body into the present to take revenge on the man sunk into his chair. His premonition portended madness and death, as if the premonition of either would prevent their arrival. The hopeless dream of resisting death and madness, like escaping the force of history that lives within him and without, is tantamount to an overcoming of the past. “Premonition” could be read as a kind of historical exorcism. But equally plausible is the possibility that history is exorcising the body of the subject and speaker. Terrifying though it may be, “Premonition” stages a messianic liberation of a violently repressed past from

the body a living being. Why, after all, would his mother and grandmother come to kill him? History is taking its revenge, beginning from within. The ultimately unanswerable question is whether this vengeance should be understood as tragic or triumphant.

In this way, "Premonition" explores the violent co-presence of past, present, and portent within the space of a matriarchal genealogy. Its world constructs itself sui generis through a complex process of temporal fluctuations, unified by the final prospect of filicide. And the poem is formally structured by the anarchic collisions of time, memory, and emotion, which express themselves again and again through the man's encounter with his hometown. Afternoon crushes him into the chair, agony and sadness stalk him and gouge out his eyes, and the maternal line that lives on in his body tries to break out and kill him.

Let's turn to another example, entitled "Image" (*Imeiji*):

Dripping death
This auburn city
A throng of twisted guts in the rain
Black umbrellas, the flow of destroyed experience

That man, is not my father, nor my only friend. He and I possess the same being, the same experience yet we share nothing more than an image.
And, like him, I was born during the First World War and died during the Second.
Like a chair collapsing, I collapse! Yet this is my old image, a death wish dream in the mire.

Piercing eyes, cracked forehead, dull glistening hair,
In black clothes battered by oceans, storms and grand illusions, the shipwrecked man lets forth a quiet scream and vicious chant, at the eve of week's end, when he emerges from within the flowing fog from Fall to Winter, I can't help but scream, "Where'd you come from"

I hang my tongue out like a dog.[91]

Like "Premonition," "Image" dramatizes an unbearable encounter with the past. It opens

[91] Tamura Ryūichi, "Imeiji", *Yon sen no hi to yoru* (Sōgensha, 1956), 36.

onto the autumnal city, its air is thick with the sadness of the world, each drop of rain a death. Its inhabitants, nothing more than an undifferentiated mass of guts, flow. Black umbrellas shield them from the truth of life: death. The speaker recognizes himself in "that man" (*sono otoko*). They are cut of the same cloth, born of the same era. Their existence and experience is the same, yet we're told they share only an image. He is already dead and so is "I" (*watashi*). Brought back by collapse, the speaker snaps out of it. His image is also the image of the man, but an older one. Like mother and grandmother, the man too is an other, but he is not another person. That man fuses with the speaker, becoming the forgotten memory of the unbearable desire to die in the mud, flashing up in a city that keeps its bad conscience at bay through ceaseless flow.

Collapsing, the speaker finds himself alone, face to face with his doppelganger. Shipwrecked, stripped of identity, his eyes are clear of purpose as he emerges from the mist of fall into the sobering cold of winter. Their encounter is ecstatic. The man dresses in black. His clothes are tattered by travel, sadness, and revelations from an invisible world. The man screams but there is no sound. He chants, summoning the speaker back to his forgotten death wish, viciously and repetitively. The man's presence is unbearable. The speaker finally screams out: "Where'd you come from?" But there are no answers to be had, only images that flash up and vanish. When the speaker comes to, there are no signs of the journey but exhaustion and thirst, as his tongue hangs out like a dog.

Thus far we've seen how Tamura's poetics construct a connection between the instability of social life, language, and history. "Etching" depicts a youth dissociating from the terrible violence of the past to maintain some semblance of functionality in the present. "Premonition" describes a man torn apart by the maternal line living within him. "Image" shows us the psychic overload of urban life saturated with death cut through by an encounter with a man that the speaker

simultaneously identifies as possessed of the same being and with whom he shares an image. By dramatizing the repression and return of the constitutive violence necessarily built into narrative development, Tamura's poems in this way suggest that life is nothing more than a bad infinity. Unspeakable violence resides not only at the origins of narrative but is constitutive of it in every instant. These poems thus express a destructive drive directed at their respective speaker's relation to social reality, and thus their immanent basis for articulation. In the worlds of "Etching", "Premonition", and "Image", conscious life is repeatedly overwhelmed by traumatic recurrence.

Julia Kristeva argues that poetic language poses a radical challenge to language conceived as a formal system, because it reveals "that language, and thus sociability, are defined by boundaries admitting of upheaval, dissolution, and transformation."[92] Because poetic language is neither entirely inside nor outside the systemic operation of language, its articulation presents a threat to social order as a form of communion that is simultaneously psychic and sensuous, apocalyptically sublime and utterly banal. If no singular articulation can ever be finally pinned to an essential meaning or causal function, then each instant is not only particular but also singular and the social can never be complete. Instability, collapse, break down, and even death are inscribed on the process of social reproduction without ever finally merging with it.[93] Just as the form of "Image" and "Premonition" disintegrate the subject of enunciation, they constitute a decentered form of subjectivity dominated by the indeterminate order of language. The chaos of poetic language in general and Tamura's language very much in particular thereby challenges the totalitarian fantasy of absolute social order, which in turn set the discursive parameters of Japanist

[92] Julia Kristeva. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Columbia University Press, 1982), 25.

[93] Ibid.

utopia that saw their historical realization in millions of dead.[94]

No Future: A Politics for the Dead

In the early years after the war, preoccupation with death, agony, and suffering may have made such intuitive sense that there was little reason to pose the question of its utility. But at the same time, the political opportunities of the Occupation regime had made their Cold War limits plain as early as 1947, with the decision to retain the Imperial institution and shield Hirohito from war crimes prosecution.[95] The later de-purge of indicted wartime bureaucrats, re-purge of communists and labor activists, and economic and military incorporation of the archipelago into the Korean War indicated to many on the Left that the United States could no longer be considered a progressive force.[96]

In March of 1953, Noma Hiroshi wrote a somewhat tepid appraisal of *Arechi Shishū 1952* claiming that, like the intelligentsia, Tamura and the others were indifferent to the future and the destructive power of words.[97] This seems basically inaccurate by any metric given the themes that

[94] Julia Kristeva. Ibid., 69.

[95] The decision to retain the emperor might well be added into this chronology, which was surely the ultimate act of collusion between Japanese fascism and the Occupation. Nevertheless, 1947 marks a watershed moment in the Occupation's policy toward the resurgent Japanese left, as they backed down a planned general strike, which inaugurated the moment of the so-called "reverse course". See Bruce Cumings. "Japan's Position in the World System." In *Postwar Japan as History*, edited by Andrew Gordon. (University of California Press, 1993). See also John Dower. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1999).

[96] Hajimu Masuda. *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[97] There is of course a rather thick irony in the fact that subsequent poets and scholars have continued to frame Tamura's poetry within the exact same language of "destructive power" that Noma here intimates is lacking. To be fair, Noma is partially responding to the categorical refusal of surrealism that is often associated with the group, but which is predominantly the prejudice of Ayukawa, inherited from Eliot. I have not found any indication that Tamura held the same view of surrealism, and Kuroda Saburō wrote positively about it around this same period, though not in Arechi publications. See Noma Hiroshi. "Senkyū hyaku go ju ni nen pan 'Arechi shishū'" *Noma hiroshi sakuhinshū 8* (Iwanami Shoten, 1988), 350-351.

filled every iteration of the Arechi publications, but especially in Tamura's case, the linguistic orientation toward society retained precisely this destructive and transformative power. What it rejected was both a politicized variant, which demanded dogmatic subsumption of experience of the past and present to the future.

In September 1949, on the eve of the Chinese Revolution that ended in victory on October first and amidst the tumult of the rising tensions in Korea, Tamura penned a barely page-long review of an unnamed Marxist poet in the short-lived magazine "Avant-Garde Art."[98] In it, he gestured toward a vision of the social function of poetry as a means to keep the past alive alongside the present. First plotting out a materialist history of modernity as the expansion of technology, capital, and western power, Tamura explains his doubts with the notion of ceaseless progress, which he had learned in school from teachers that were also his "destroyers" (*hakaisha*) through the figure of competing suns.[99] In response to the poem "Dead Sun" (*shinda taiyō*), which called for a moment of scornful reflection on Japan's dead past of ultra-nationalism and emperorism, Tamura stood on the side of a pluralism that refused to throw out the past, despite his staunch anti-nationalism.[100]

No doubt Tamura's position was out of step with the world of political art. On the eve of carnival and revolution, was it not his ethical responsibility to set aside petty squabbles and help storm heaven? Tamura's answer isn't particularly detailed, but it intimates a conception of poetry's temporal and political dynamic: "In the writing of poetry, if only in it, do not dead and living suns

[98] In stark contrast to the other subjects of this dissertation, Tamura published no prose essays during his time with the Arechi group. So far as I have seen, this is the only prose piece he published anywhere until the 1960s.

[99] Tamura Ryūichi. "Shi to kakumei", *Zen'ei geijutsu*, no.2 (1949): 11.

[100] Ibid.

drive our different visions in essentially the same way as the past and the future?"[101] What Tamura drives at here is the idea that both pasts and presents organize experience, and that both make claims on us. In good Arechi fashion, Tamura refuses to sacrifice even a monstrous past as material for reflection and critical transformation. Consciously or unconsciously, both will be active in its production anyway.

At a superficial level, Tamura's response recalls the cultural liberalism that Tosaka Jun critiqued in his 1934 study, The Japanese Ideology.[102] Could Tamura's anarchic vision of co-present temporalities and adjacent suns be nothing more than the bastard child of the liberal aestheticism that Tosaka and Marxists around the world associate with the breeding ground of fascism? Perhaps. But here again, it's crucial to consider the formative experience of Tamura's generation. Borne of the totalitarian bog that could no longer hide itself from the most sensitive modernist critics after World War I, Arechi poetics dramatized the repetition of wartime ideologies, which recoded feeling as irrational thinking and the unconscious as a pre-historical stage of conscious, political articulation. In Kristeva's terms, poetry would have to be murdered in order to be sufficiently stabilize and enter the realm of politics. And debatably even this socialized use value – dogmatic poetry – has to be repressed in order to realize its capacity for valorization, which exists only in its incorporation into a developmental history of progress. From this perspective, poetry is useful only insofar as it has the potential to become something else — probably literary criticism. To write poetry as Tamura conceives it is, in contrast, to encounter and embrace the

[101] Ibid.

[102] In Tosaka's account, liberalism had no adequate defense against fascism because of its tendency to relegate problems of politics to the pluralistic realm of culture. Without disavowing the power of this argument, one has to acknowledge that this critique marginalizes culture as a superstructural manifestation of political economy, which would seem to contradict his fervent commitment to the politics of the everyday. See Tosaka Jun. *Nihon ideorogiiron* (Iwanami Shoten, 1977).

sadness and agony of the world as a confrontation with the paralyzing and decentering truth of endless war and domination, rejecting any attempt to return to the bright life offered by a new sun.[103]

But why embrace agony and sadness? Neither for masochism nor melancholia. Rather, embracing the sadness of endless war, the agony of fascism, and the global totalitarian system that emerged after 1945 is necessary for a true reckoning with the past because it demands not only that we never forget the crimes that bring the world as we know it into being, but that we continue to relate to them in our present because they are still ongoing. For Tamura, this pluralistic condensation of history, fantasy, and memory had life and death implications because his life up until that point had been bracketed by world wars, the failures of communism, and the rise of fascism. Tamura was born in 1923 and published "Premonition" in 1948 – "These twenty-five years between war and war". A lifetime. To eclipse the imperial sun and progress toward democracy was simultaneously to consign their whole lives to the dustbin of history, or what narratives of modern Japan often refer to as the "dark valley". And in contrast, to allow the past world of dead suns a resurrection in poetry; to allow them to coexist in a complex tension with living suns was simultaneously to liberate the present from the strictures of its own common sense and to create a space for Tamura and his generation to process their own experiences. If Tamura's anarchic pluralism risked allowing the door to fascism to open once more at the level of culture, it did so on the basis of a radically open commitment to the relationship of human expression and

[103] In this respect, Tamura instantiated what William Haver once called a "politics of inconsolable perversity". See William Haver. *The Body of this Death: Historicity and Sociality in the Time of Aids* (Stanford University Press, 1996). For discussion of the postwar bright life, see Simon Partner. *Assembled in Japan: Electrical Goods and the Making of the Japanese Consumer* (University of California Press, 2000).

autonomy.

Let us consider Tamura's perhaps most ideological poem "Standing Coffin" (Rikkan) published in 1952, which rejected this kind of overcoming in certain terms.[104]

I

Don't touch my corpse with hands,
Your hands
Can never touch "death"
Mix my corpse
Into the mob
Pound it with the rain
    We have no hands
    We have no hands to touch death with
I know the windows of the city
I know the windows where there's no one
And there's no city anywhere you go,
With a room for you
Marriage, Work
Passion, Sleep and even Death
Are chased out of your rooms,
And become like you, the unemployed.
    There is no work for us
    There is no work to touch death with.
I know the city's rain
I know the herd of umbrellas
And there's no city anywhere you go
With a roof with room for you
Rent, Faith
Revolution, Desire
And even Life
Are chased out from under your roofs
And become like you, the unemployed.
    There is no work for us
    There is no work for us to touch life with

II

Don't put my corpse in the ground
Your death can never rest in ground

[104] There is in fact some debate over the proper phonetization of Standing Coffin, as the word is a compound that Tamura seems to have invented. The Asahi Shinbun has transliterated it as *rikkan*, but one of the contributors to the Arechi group is alleged to have pronounced it "tachikan". For contemporary discussion of the issue see the following website postings. DOI: https://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q14147102089

Stuff my corpse in a standing coffin
Sticking straight up
    We have no coffins in the earth
    We have no coffins to hold our corpses in the earth
I know the ground of death
I know the meaning of the ground of death
And there's no country anywhere you try to go
With room for the coffin of your death
The body of a young girl flowing forth in the river
The blood of a shot little bird
Are chased out of your ground
And become like you, the exiled.
    There is no country above ground
    There is no country above ground that's worth our deaths
I know the value of your earth
I know the value of your lost earth
And there's no country anywhere you go
With enough room to sate your grandest life
Reaping barley until the time of futures
Ensnared beasts and little daughters
Are chased out of your lives
And become like you, the exiled
    There is no country above ground
    There is no country above ground that's worth our lives

III

Don't burn my corpse with fire
Your deaths
Can never burn in fire
Hang my corpse in civilization
And let it rot
    There is no fire for us
    There is no fire to burn our corpses
I know your civilization
I know your loveless and deathless civilization
And there is no home anywhere you go
With room for you and the family
A father's tear
The painful joy of a mother's childbirth
Are chased out of your homes
And become like you, the sick.
    There is no love for us
    There is only love for us when we're diseased
I know your quarantine
I know your dreams of moving from bed to
Bed

And there is no quarantine anywhere you go
With room for you to really sleep
Hands drooping down languid from the bed
Eye's opened wide by wonder and thirsty hearts
Are chased out of every quarantine
And become like you, the sick
There is no poison for us
There is no poison to heal us[105]

Perhaps this is the silent chant, the "death wish dream in the mire" of the man in black robes who didn't make it back alive. Like in "Image", two figures encounter one another. Each stanza stages a conflict between "I" and "you", concluding, as "we". But as I've suggested throughout, Tamura's poetics move as a vortex -- images collide and refract but do not finally cohere. The "we" is not greater than the sum of its parts and there is no synthetic overcoming or qualitative shift. Instead, the dead can only announce the impossibility of reconciling self and other into social being.

And yet there is something fundamentally different about "Standing Coffin". In the previous poems, the shock of encounter drives the subjects to their final dissolution. Murder, suicidal desire, and filicide are brought to the surface through poetic language. By contrast, from the other side of the threshold, the dead speak with clarity of purpose and desire. They know what they want and what they don't, and they seem to have no illusions about whether or not they'll ever get it. It's already too late for redemption. Like the mother and grandmother of "Image," what they want is out of the whole fraudulent host of political and social rituals made in their name, as a means of assimilating them into a political and historical narrative.

As such, the speakers of the poem reject any synthesis into a larger social whole. They demand that their corpses remain untouched, unburied, and unburned, and that their sickly bodies go unto death un-quarantined. Such a move represents a radical inversion of the inaugural postwar

[105] Tamura Ryūichi. "Rikkan", *Arechi shishū 1952* (Kokubunsha, 1974), 20-23.

ideology, expressed in Hirohito's infamous call for Japanese to suffer the insufferable and endure the unendurable that was defeat. Surely they did just that -- but did so openly. To mix directly into the mob and speak as dead among the living, surplus population among the workers, and sick among the healthy is an annihilation of the social as the hegemonic forms of Japanese wartime and postwar regimes were capable of conceiving it, which was always ultimately about individual sacrifice for social progress. From this perspective, we could say that the subaltern of "Standing Coffin" could not speak without destroying language itself. The poem was not exactly a call for justice for past crimes and certainly was not a vision of messianic redemption. Rather, the dead and despised of "Standing Coffin" represented something authentically new and uncontainable precisely because they were always already present but erased for the functioning of society.[106] At its outer conceptual limit, a hegemonic ascension of the voices of the poem might well crystalize a world beyond historical overcoming, insofar as the telos of progressive history would always require their denial. In a world where they spoke, the generations of dead and outcast might no longer weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living because they would live amongst them in the real.

In his study of Tamura's poetics, "A Journey into Terror," Ayukawa Nobuo argued that "Standing Coffin" constituted Tamura's critique of modern civilization as a "drifting world" (*tadayō sekai*) but, I find this reading limiting when read against Tamura's explanation. According to Ayukawa, "in a world where human beings are born, raised and die, land, the home (and family) and work are, so to speak, the womb of our emotions. But, a humanity cut off from these things is

[106] For an analysis of the relationship between "Standing Coffin" and the ongoing process of primitive accumulation in the age of imperialism, see my article "'No One is Who They Say they are': The Political Aesthetics of David Peace, Waste Land Poetry, and Extreme Music," *Boundary 2: An international Journal of Literature and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2024): 89-112.

an unstable one. Deprived of land, home, family and work, they become the ghosts of a "drifting world."[107] This was the (in my opinion incorrect) explanation of Tamura's words, cited in the same essay. Here is the Tamura quote: "In a world where people cannot die, they cannot live either. In such a world, individuals are chased out of all cities and off of all lands, and simply become numbers in a drifting world, where 'I' and 'you' are nothing are nothing more than variations of 'we.'"[108] Where Ayukawa's vision gestured toward the failure of organic forms of community tied to land and family in a way that set people adrift, Tamura emphasized the fact of death that had been stolen from people during the war by making their lives sacrifices into the immortal life of the nation. The ability to die an individual, singular death was simultaneously the basis for the pursuit of an authentic life. And what set people adrift was the loss of their singularity and transmutation into abstract numerical values. In this way, "Standing Coffin" does not finally resolve through recourse to an older way of living. Rather, it rejects extant forms of community that attempt to quantify finitude for the purpose of social reproduction.

From Beyond Death

In this chapter we've explored Tamura's poetics in relation to their cultural and intellectual milieu. The shift to ethnic communitarianism and fascism from the 1930s through the end of the war resulted in a glorification of sacrificial death as an imperative for the good of the emperor and the life of the nation. Overcoming this socialization for death had profound political implications because it opened a field of antagonism and debate over human destiny that could not be finally resolved through social and political stabilization. This is especially poignant when one considers

[107] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Kyofu he no tabi", *Yon sen no hi to yoru* (Sōgensha, 1956), 12.

[108] Tamura Ryūichi. *Dead Languages: Selected Poems 1946-1984*.

that the postwar Japanese state and Occupation sought to reestablish control through the very mechanisms that had led to the war in the first place.

In response, Tamura turned the question of subjectivity on its head by exploring the inversion of social reason in the context of personal survival. The speakers of his poetry dissolve into the fraught spaces of experience, memory, and trauma, interrupting the forward movement and historical amnesia demanded by the postwar program of assimilation to the emergent American empire. For Tamura, poetry was unique in its capacity to layer concepts, experiences and memories as a means of representing the trauma of the past without subjecting it to political judgment. Crucial to this formulation was the idea that poetry had the responsibility to address social reality on its own irresolvable terms, as dead suns coexisting with the living. For it was precisely in the space of poetry that the dead and gone could be given voice freed from the ideological demands and historical contexts of their respective presents. In this way, Tamura's poetry demonstrated a unique sensitivity to the lived expression of utopias in the modern social imaginary, which had in the Japanese case culminated in unspeakable brutality. Tamura's poetics crystallized this sensitivity by staging a historical revolt against individual stabilizations and social rituals of mourning that would consecrate the dead and consign them to a historical narrative of national resurrection. For in his view, it seems the past does not seek redemption. It wants revenge.

Kuroda Saburō and Poetry's Dark Night

Introduction: Uncovering the Self, Reclaiming the Future

This chapter explores the poetry and prose of Kuroda Saburō (b. 1919-1980). Kuroda was born in Hiroshima, graduated from the Kagoshima Prefecture First Middle School, and entered the Seventh higher school in Kagoshima in 1936. During that time, he began studying post-World War I American and European literature and poetry. At the age of 17, he started publishing in the journal "Vou" under the aegis of the famous modernist poet Kitasono Tatsue, alongside Tamura Ryūichi (chapter two) and Nakagiri Masao (chapter four). In 1942, he graduated from Tokyo Imperial University and began work at the South Seas Development Company, which, in 1943, dispatched him to Java to manage a jute farm as part of a larger colonial economic development plan for Southeast Asia. The period from 1942 until the war's end saw no publications, and most of the poetry he wrote during this time was not published until the mid-1950s. When Kuroda returned to Japan in July of 1946, he began writing furiously and explicitly about the relationship between poetry and power in a way that set him apart from the other Arechi poets.[109] Where Tamura's work obliterated historical and spatial markers to explore trauma and madness, and Ayukawa's staged and narrativized personal experiences of mourning and questions of spiritual life, Kuroda's work examined the work of poetry in relationship to the social and political processes of meaning making.

At the same time, his poetic work tended to elude explicit ideological programs. Kuroda was convinced that postwar discursive forms reprised the wartime order and saw poetry as a means of working through the past. In his essay in *Arechi Shishū 1951, "*Poetry and Authority," Kuroda explained the social world as one of "give and take" to emphasize that modern societies structurally

[109] Kuroda Saburō. "Shi to kenryoku", *Arechi Shishū 1951* (Tokyo: Kokubunsha 1973), 200.

oriented human relations into roles of perpetrator and victim, exploiter and exploited. [110] The abstract rejection of this reality was the presupposition of Nazism, which sought to personify the violent forms of capitalist subjection in the figures of its enemies. [111] In 1952, Kuroda proposed stripping away the proper name of the poet altogether, suggesting that poetry should be read without the bourgeois celebrity of an author as a reference point. This would allow the power of poetic language to flow more freely to and from the "people" (*minshū*), independent of their class identity. [112]

Thus, Kuroda emphasized the relationship between poetic process and personal reflection within a broader context of politics and power. His aesthetic universe was replete with mirrors and windows that facilitated breaks with the outside world and directed the speakers toward themselves. These reflective spaces existed alongside walls, paths, and prisons – the elements of a social world that had emerged behind the speakers' backs and against their wills. Kuroda's poetic subjects thus struggled to think and feel in the context of a repressive social apparatus and its psychic effects. Out of the combination of images and meanings of language, Kuroda believed that poetry constructed mirror images of people that would allow them to acquire more complex forms of self-understanding. For Kuroda, this kind of self-examination was the precondition for a democratic sociality, as he believed that through poetry, "a person speaks to himself, and learns to speak to others as he speaks to himself." He thus saw poetry as the basis for a different practice of social life that was grounded in one's own authentic self. Kuroda's conception of poetry, therefore, bears a more than passing resemblance to what Antonio Gramsci sought in philosophy: "The starting

[110] Kuroda Saburō. "Shi to kenryoku", *Arechi shishū 1951* (Tokyo: Kokubunsha 1973), 200.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

point of critical elaboration, and is "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory." [113] He thus saw poetry as the basis for a different practice of social life that was grounded in one's own authentic self.

Vacuous Language – Politics and Reason

In his efforts to explicate this unique capacity of poetry, Kuroda sought to address the question of subjectivity in relationship to people's everyday lives and experiences. For him, the path toward substantive social transformation was not to be found in top-down capitalistic reforms of feudal subjectivity or even through political revolution. Instead, social change took place first at the level of individuals through unique projects of self-exploration and recognition. In his view, the problem was not an absence of social concern but an excess of it, as the allegedly free speech of postwar discourse reprised affective tropes from the recent past (a notion he shared with Nakagiri Masao). After a brief period of release from oppressive social norms, the Japanese people were once again a "public," defaulting into abstracted and generalized forms of social interaction, alienated from their inner speech by habit and a sense of social propriety.[114] This was perhaps most clear in the space of political and social gatherings, where people seemed to default into public versions of themselves.[115]

> It doesn't matter if there are only one or two people in an audience. Where an audience is expected, people never speak the way they would in secret. Whether it's a meeting of a neighborhood organization, a school parent's association event, a loudspeaker on the street, or a national assembly meeting…people speak in a formal tone for which the audience will

[113] Antonio Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers 1991), 324.

[114] Kuroda Saburo, "Shi to bunka", *Kuroda saburo zenshū dai ni kan*. (Shichōsha, 1989), 79.

[115] ibid.

> feel admiration… No matter what kind of miser or vulgarian they are, or whether they formerly spoke of constructing Greater East Asia or now speak of constructing a democratic Japan. Even when people scream "I" or "We," it is…an I that has dispelled the I and a we that has dispelled the we. [116]

Social life had its own discursive norms that dictated what could and could not be said, and people's fears, anxieties, and rage had to be translated into a "formal tone" appropriate to the stoic operation of civil society. This kind of code-switching implicitly quarantined poetry to a world of meaning and symbols that acquired its social function by expelling the vitality of the speaker from the utterance and cordoned off linguistic practice from innovation. In Kuroda's view, the evacuation of the authentic self from discourse had become axiomatic for both speaker and listener in public speech, which was dominated by a functionalism that saturated its formal tone regardless of content. Under the guise of propriety, public speech comprised a "vacuous language" (*gengo no kūhaku*) that invariably overwrote the complexity and possibility of everyday life. [117]

Similarly, Kuroda argued that language in postwar Japanese civil society had been estranged from the speaker, conforming to seemingly natural laws of formality that worked to limit the say-able and the thinkable. It had been deprived of its qualitative character and specificity, reduced to the function of a currency, and transformed into a "typological thing" (*ruikei teki na mono*) that existed purely as a means of circulation.[118] It was in this abstracted form that language hijacked agency from individual human beings and acquired the character of an ideological weapon for the ruling classes. Postwar politicians and elites flooded discourse with typological signifiers to assert control over the social production of meaning. In this respect, he averred, the Japanese social form

[116]Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Kuroda Saburo. Ibid.

had not substantively changed since the war, and politicians lauding the new democratic order seemed affectively identical to those that cheered on colonial expansion and co-prosperity. To Kuroda, this represented a significant contradiction because the freedom of speech that had ostensibly arrived with the Allied Occupation had not facilitated a corresponding shift in ways of public engagement.

Public language stultified the cultivation of individual critical voices through the imposition of a fictive "mass character" (*shūdansei*). It was thus completely opposed to the practice of poetry, as the means through which one recovered oneself and became capable of speaking to others from this place of personal truth. In this way, Kuroda tried to show that the struggle of the postwar present was a struggle over the production of meaning. Absent an egalitarian social organization, hierarchically constituted definitions of words confined individual linguistic experience, resulting in the transformation of subjectivity into objectivity.

The Dance of Images and the Promise of Poetry

Against the antisocial character of public speech, the process of poetic inquiry pierced through the veil of reification and offered a means to return what was spoken to the speaker. Kuroda argued that because linguistic arts are necessarily comprised of the combination of meanings and images, poetry's imagistic character actualized an under-determined multi-directional temporality that was constitutive of all human experience.[119] In his schema, meaning emerged through social consensus and was therefore determined by the accumulation of the past. By contrast, the images in people's inner worlds were more fluid, acquiring unique meanings from the free association of subjective experiences that could inflect words with emergent nuances in a world to come. If meaning were

[119] Kuroda Saburō, "Shi no an'ya,", *Kuroda saburō zenshū dai ni kan* (Shichōsha, 1989), 81.

freed from the presumption of social consensus and the "surface layer of consciousness," the possibilities of language would be restored to the minds and mouths of individual beings. Poetry was uniquely suited for this kind of restoration because it operated at the intersection of language and image and could facilitate a speaker's encounter with visions of the past and future in a more unmediated state. As such, he described the writing of poetry as constructing a mirror of one's own self. Through this work, Kuroda argued that the poet was simultaneously involved in a process of "self-recognition", which made authentic encounter with the other possible.[OBJ] This kind of work possessed great social and political power, as it offered a means of countering received forms of interaction that took people away from themselves and rendered them pliant to social order. with visions of the past and future in a more unmediated state. As such, he described the writing of poetry as constructing a mirror of one's own self. Through this work, Kuroda argued that the poet was simultaneously involved in a process of "self-recognition" which made authentic encounter with the other possible.[120] This kind of work possessed great social and political power, as it offered a means of countering received forms of interaction that took people away from themselves and rendered them pliant to social order.

What emerged from this process was the poem, as an amalgamation of images and meanings that embodied the process of human experience. As an object in the world, the poem embodied multiple temporalities and inner and outer worlds without installing a hierarchy of one over the other: "Where the retrospective and the prospective are mutually contradictory, a singular unity comes into being within the contradiction itself, and that is when poetry is born..."[121] By suspending meaning and image, past and future, and objectivity and subjectivity in a kind of

[120] Ibid., 84.

[121] Ibid., 83.

dialectical tension, poems constituted a human representation of the world that remained open to process that a social world governed by the accumulated past could not conceive. [122]

Futures Past

Such exploration was necessary in the postwar moment because the contradictions of past and present were being overwritten by the demands of the Cold War order. Postwar commentators in Japan came to describe the period of the war as a descent into a "vacuum" (*kūhaku*) evoking an image of cosmic, natural catastrophe, while discourse in social sciences deployed a language of an incomplete transition to capitalism. In both cases self-styled rational discourse sought to explain why the Japanese had failed to resist by suggesting their quiescence to fascism stemmed from the absence of bourgeois revolution and its corresponding individual subjectivity. [123] From this perspective, prior social forms had not yet been mastered, and undeveloped patterns of thought and behavior lingered. As such, it made a perverse kind of sense that the prospect of democracy appeared to the people in profoundly undemocratic conditions, where the Allied Occupation would instruct Japanese society in the proper exercise of democratic decorum. [124]

Yet the postwar publication of materials produced during the war kept the question open and demonstrated that the war could not be reduced to the collective fanaticism of a not yet rational society. Whether or not they resisted, whatever one believes that means, Japanese people continued to struggle with themselves and their relationship to the social world during the war and after it.

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[123] Maruyama Masao suggested that the Japanese submission to fascism in part derived from the absence of a comparable event to the protestant reformation in their prior history. See Maruyama Masao *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*. Translated by Ivan Morris (Oxford University Press ,1963).

[124] Harry Harootunian compares this type of subjectivity to the mutants created in the Island of Dr. Moreau. See Harry Harootunian. *The Empire's New Clothes: Paradigm Lost, and Regained* (Prickly Paradigm, 2004).

Kuroda continued writing poetry longer than Ayukawa or Tamura, and his wartime work saw wide publication in the postwar period. His poems served as a perhaps unwanted reminder that the wartime past was not as intellectually empty as postwar narratives sometimes suggested. Even in the "dark valley," even as Kuroda himself collaborated with colonial development, a glimmer of the future and the possibility of the social borne out of individual human encounters was never fully extinguished. Consider, "Future," first written in 1942:

It's true we've never met
Why don't I know you?
How is it possible?
You're a person with beautiful dreams
I know you well
And I know
You know me well too
Pale afternoon
Perhaps you'll suddenly appear on the corner
Looking drowsy
With light amazement floating in your eyes

And then
Under the blue light sky
There's a lonely little boy
When he heads to the ocean
When he rides the bus
Ah he throws it away in a fit of anger
When the glass plate
Lay mercilessly smashed at his feet
He was alone
The blue light sky riding his shoulders[125]

"Future" depicts the struggles of three people to hope despite disappointment, and the unlikely ties that bind them together. The opening stanza bears all the signs of a new love – ecstatic identification with a stranger. "It's true we've never met, Why don't I know you?, How is it possible?, You're a person with beautiful dreams, I know you well, And I know, You know me well

[125] Ibid., "Mirai", *Kuroda saburō zenshū Dai Ichi Kan* (Shichōsha, 1989), 21-23

too." In the fleeting and ephemeral embrace of the other, there is also something spectral. A stranger across from him, wordless. Nodding in agreement, or embarrassed and avoiding eye contact. "Perhaps you'll suddenly appear on the corner, Looking drowsy, With light amazement floating in your eyes." The love may be unrequited. It might be more like an obsession, the speaker observing a body and projecting a fantasy of thoughts and experiences in the gray dusk light.

In that same sunlight, there's a "lonely little boy," busy with leisure and travel, the ocean and the bus, to escape from his isolation. Apparently bereft of human contact, the little boy turns to objects of beauty for sustenance. There's something irrevocably human in the little boy's desperation, and his apparent self-disgust. He must feel like a freak, wandering around, hopelessly attached to a glass plate, the emotional significance of which is apparent to no one else, and maybe not even to him. Whatever memories he tries to hold on to don't need the plate. They are not reducible to it. If it was a gift, it makes him feel closer to the giver, but he isn't actually. If it's a relic of a former life, it won't bring anyone back. And if it's just a trinket, a beautiful object, it's even more worthless. What's the use of a plate with no food on it? The lonely little boy has had enough and decides once and for all to lighten his physical and psychic load. Now the plate "lays mercilessly smashed at his feet." Catharsis? Surely. Everyone loves breaking things. Revelation? Maybe, but revelations come cheap. And it seems like he's back where he started: "he was alone, the blue light sky riding his shoulders." The little boy walks the path of the present, bearing the burden of the heavens on his shoulders.

What kind of future exists here? Between I, you, and the lonely little boy, no substantive connection yet exists. They have never met, and they may never meet. What they share is indeterminacy and longing, caught up in the swirl of everyday life. Between the three of them, there may yet be identification, ultimately hinging upon the action of the "I." As the observer of

the scenes, the speaker must bring "you" and the "lonely little boy" together and take the risk of encounter to form a community. There are no guarantees that any of this will work out. But if, in the presence of suffering and lost children, one does not act, the future is already over. As the observer of the scenes, "I" have to bring "you" and the "lonely little boy" together and take the risk of encounter in an effort to form a community. There are no guarantees that any of this will work out. But if, in the presence of suffering and lost children, one does not act, the future is already over.

Kuroda's poem "Man of the Mob" *(Gunshū no hito)* also written in the early 1940s and republished in the postwar, gives a sense of the larger social world that might have constricted the speaker of "Future." It describes the experience of paralyzing fear in the face of collective violence:

> Sometimes the mob righteously smacks a cowardly boy
> In the street, after the mob disperses,
> All that's left are the fallen scattered leaves of the tree line
> Sometimes
> A forgotten window
> Is opened and closed by a little wind
> A great moon comes out without warning
>
> What have I done?
> Inside me too
> The window is opening and closing
> Is there really no one who will stick their head out?
> I feel the wind blowing like yesterday
> I feel it blowing like this tomorrow too[126]

The speaker describes an oscillation between feelings of acceptance and powerlessness. It begins in identification, with qualified celebration of violence against a young boy's cowardice. Yet this sense of righteous indignation against fear seems to dissipate along with the mob that has left the fragile corpses of the tree line in the street to be blown around by a little wind. Returned to himself,

[126] Kuroda Saburō, "Gunshū no hito", *Kuroda saburō zenshū dai ichi kan* (Shichōsha, 1989), 28.

the man who is no longer of the mob feels a chill coming through a "forgotten window." In the absence of the mob, the space between self and society returns, and so does the capacity to feel the pain of the cowardly young boy – the other.

"What have I done?" Like a window opening and closing, the speaker oscillates between empathic identification with the little boy and tacit acceptance of the violence and exclusion that constitutes the collective of the mob. The speaker wonders: "Is there really no one who will stick their head out?" Yet this is of course a self-indictment. "I feel the wind blowing like yesterday, I feel it blowing like this tomorrow too." This final announcement of hopelessness that the wind of today is blowing like yesterday and like tomorrow effectively disrupts the opening stanza. Though we are thrown into a scene of apparent mass fusion, the poem's final verse demonstrates that the speaker of the poem's singular identity existed before the beating and after it. His feelings of hopelessness point to an intuition that something is wrong, over and against the alleged righteousness of the beating. The wind that is blowing at this very instant (after the beating), feels just like the wind that was blowing yesterday. And it will, he suspects, feel the same way tomorrow. His frustration at the scene implicitly suggests a vision of something different if only *someone* was willing to "stick their head out."

"Man of the Mob" and "Future" depict a fragmented form of self in the early 1940s, disclosing a complexity that could not be adequately contained by totalizing images of dark valleys, voids, or feudal subjectivity. Utter dejection appears alongside excitement, loneliness with the promise of love. Kuroda's work, like many of the Arechi poets and modernists more generally, centered on the question of temporality as it pertained to individual experience. In "Man of the Mob" the window to the narrator's heart opens and closes seemingly at random, disclosing a sense of powerlessness. In "Future", the destruction of the glass plate embodies the eruption of affective

energies, and perhaps an unwillingness to look at one's self. In this way the future appears opaque, fractally in the plates' broken shards, as a spontaneous action against a social form that aspires to unmediated loyalty and action. During the war, and indeed like in any moment, the struggle for a community and a future had to take place through exploration and feelings that could not be abided by mass society, nor by a political discourse that operated within a closed universe of discourse and meaning. It was this same set of concerns that Kuroda pursued across the divide of surrender and defeat. [127]

Where is History? Walls and Mirrors

In his wartime poems, Kuroda emphasized the struggle for community itself. Life in the mob seemed to hinge upon passive acceptance of reality, disrupting the reflective potentials that appeared in the everyday life of the "Future." And yet their simultaneous publication in the postwar suggested that ordinary people had not given over to hopelessness, despite the overwhelming power of mobs. Walled in by the indefinite threat of violence the poems transcend the specificity of their moment to speak to larger questions of self and society, prompting the consideration of how things had changed. Let's now consider some of his postwar works. This is "Months and Years," published first in October, 1947:

Months and years are carried off
Like this candle
Staring in the mirror
The past sneaks inside me once again
It touches the air, saturated
And clots

For instance when I commit the crime of killing a woman
I am I, am I finally I?
Clad in the two beautiful robes of joy and despair
I've forgotten how to say yes and no, it's already been so long

[127] Kitagawa Tooru. "*Zoku na shimin no keiken to imi – kuroda saburō ni okeru shiteki ronri no keisei*", *Kuroda saburō zenshū dai ni kan* (Shichōsha, 1989).

It creeps in in an instant
An aimless fear
In the mirror, I see I
Escape is failure, is escape really failure?

Months and years are carried off
Like this candle
Staring in the mirror
The past sneaks inside me once again
It touches the air, saturated
And clots

The candle slowly dwindles, surely but almost imperceptibly, save for the wax drops that would slide down its shaft as it melts. The speaker observes himself in the mirror. The inertia of months and years wasted has accumulated. Staring in the mirror, watching the candle burn grounds him in the present, the space of action. But this space melts. "The past sneaks inside me once again." As the candle wax congeals the past saturates "and clots." The past overwhelms the present.

The speaker tries to show us what it's like with an example and to break the sense of dread and despair through action. By committing the crime of murdering a woman, the speaker wonders if he might have finally found himself – "Am I finally I?" From here he becomes unmoored and yet stuck: "Clad in the two beautiful robes of joy and despair I've forgotten how to say yes and no, it's already been so long." Staring in the mirror he sees the extremes of his emotional experience but cannot accept or reject either. In a protracted moment of stagnant reflection, simultaneously eliciting joy and despair, he has lost his autonomy, having "forgotten how to say yes and no."

In the next stanza the speaker is returned to the mirror. From the candle lit room, he plunged into the darkness of his fantasies and memories and made his way back out, a bit worse for wear. The past crept in, and an "aimless fear" has followed it. He realizes that he is not in the past but the present and asserts it: "In the mirror, I see I," though one can't help but sense that he protests

too much. The speaker is, after all, asserting this to himself for himself at the same time that he's telling *us*. Who is he trying to convince? The vision of murder begins to feel morbidly adaptive. It is easier to go there then it is to look in the mirror. "Escape is failure, Is escape really failure?" The impulse to action is a an acting out rather than a working through. In place of an answer, he returns to stagnation: "Months and years are carried off, like this candle, staring in the mirror, the past sneaks inside me once again, it touches the air, saturated, and clots." "Months and Years" begins and ends with the same image. Is there a perverse telos at work here? The ending (stagnation and powerlessness) is contained in the beginning (stagnation and powerlessness). The speaker might have temporarily found himself in murder but loses himself in the mirror. He is one with flame and yet he gags on the past. Is it the fire of war consuming his soul? Or is he just in a room, unable to bear his own shadowed countenance in candlelight? In its circularity, "Months and Years" embodies the struggle of precisely that process of self-recognition and the dance of images that Kuroda laid out in his prose writings. How can one ever be sure that they have progressed, rather than stagnated or regressed in denial? Constructing a mirror of the self necessarily involved an encounter with the accumulation of pasts that dominated the inner and outer world without the promise of personal transformation.

But what did it mean to be saturated and stagnated by the past? Perhaps we see the beginnings of an answer appear in another 1947 poem, "Where is History":

Where is history?
A person surrounded by countless walls
I am a person born within the walls and
You and all of you
Around Countless I's and you's and you all's
There are white, beautiful walls
There are sturdy stone walls
Near crumbling walls
Walls

Where is history?
Towns destroyed in the fires of war
My town
Your and your and your town
Hiding in the overgrowth
A single solitary wall remains
Such a little land
To divide such a little land
Countless walls
Now fall into flames, fall down
And then, in the highs and lows of hills and valleys
The person looks on without reason

Even amidst the overgrowth
A threadbare path is forming
Of stomped on shards of fallen down brick and broken glass
To steal a little leisure
Divide the overgrowth
Tread upon brick and glass
From crumbled wall to crumbled wall
He goes on crossing
A paltry salary, wearing a rayon shirt
A red-ribboned little girl
From crumbled wall to crumbled wall he keeps on crossing, wordlessly [128]

"Where is history? A person surrounded by countless walls." The speaker's language here is ambiguous, as it's unclear whether history resides in the wall, or the person surrounded by it. As the stanza continues, the boundaries between time and space, subject and object continue to blur. "I am a person born within the walls and, You and all of you, Around Countless I's and you's and you all's." The "I" and "You" are countless but this is a problem of their quantity. The walls, by contrast, can be distinguished by quality: "There are white, beautiful walls, There are sturdy stone walls, Near crumbling walls, Walls." The walls that have been erected possess a diversity of color, durability, and age. They will live, grow old and die in history. You and I may not.

[128] Kuroda Saburō, "Reksihi wa doko ni aru no ka," *Kuroda saburō zenshū dai ichi kan* (Shichōsha, 1989), 108-110.

History's objects, which became restless in their confinement, have burned it down: "Towns destroyed in the fires of war, My town, Your and your and your town. Hiding in the overgrowth, All that remains of it is a single solitary wall." The fires of war have annihilated the partitions of time and community and replaced them with pure space, deprived of meaning. Returned to the state of nature, "the person looks on without reason." With the completion of the second stanza, it appears the end of history is nigh. Or perhaps it's just the end of history as defined by walls. Space is cut and partitioned once again but only minimally and by the movement of the speaker. In the space of the shapeless, directionless ruin, "a threadbare path" comes into being, as he treads upon the partitions of the old order "shards of fallen down brick and broken glass," that he attempts to crush beneath his feet. If history now lives in him with the destruction of *nearly* all the country's partitions, its residence is not guaranteed, as human action is simultaneously figured as leisure and an act of theft. Perhaps this is why he must "go on crossing." "Passing the paltry salary wearing a rayon shirt, a red-ribboned little girl, From crumbled wall to crumble wall he keeps on crossing, wordlessly." As the subject of human history, he traverses the ruins and shuns the trappings of social life that are expressed in the forms of *others*. Though they appear to have acquired the qualitative distinctions that were, up until recently, the exclusive privilege of walls, to have become human like him, one who has had his freedom granted by contingency and purging fire cannot be too cautious. And what could be more confining than money, family, and fashion? If history once resided in many walls, then perhaps the walls have merely taken up residence in them. Perhaps they are not fellow subjects of singular human histories after the end of the empire, but merely the *bearers* of the walls' new regime -- manifestations of their law.

So, among its innumerable forms, history can be a wall. It can retrospectively partition times, places, and people in a relentless search for its own legitimacy, which it then legitimates.

To naturalize this form of consciousness, to render it total, it is not enough to set up actual, physical barriers in space. It must simultaneously erase their traces by inscribing them everywhere, on bodies and social practices of production (work) and consumption (fashion). Does this mean that he who "keeps on crossing, wordlessly" has finally made it out? Does the refusal of language and, by extension, sociality, mark man's final escape from time?

We will probably never know. And though "Where is History" poses the question in plain terms, the poem's answer is ambiguous. Perhaps the ascription of a phantom objectivity to walls marked the real subsumption of human life into the maintenance of the empire, and by contrast, their all but total reduction to rubble was simultaneously the production of a "threadbare path" to human history, the stage that Marx saw as coterminous with the arrival of the world after capitalism, and the time in which history would begin to move by something other than its bad side. Yet Kuroda was a fellow traveler, not an ideologue. His ambivalent relationship to the language of reason spoken by postwar modernizers and Marxists has already been described. And reading the poem as an allegory for stages of development would implicitly conflate post-capitalism with ruin. The end of the regime of walls, like the end of the Japanese empire, presented an exigent possibility in the form of an everyday whose historical origins had been ripped up by the root and left in the streets, in ruined structures and the bodies and blood that glutted the rivers and streets of Japan and its colonies.

In its ambivalent vision of the promise and limits of the postwar scene, "Where is History" embodies the problematic that William Haver calls *Apocalypse Now*. "If we are to think the apocalyptic as something other than tragic destiny or redemption, then Apocalypse Now must be thought, not as the telos of a historical development but in its present possibility, its everydayness, in and as that banality of the quotidian world which would be at the same time the irremediable

interruption of the everyday."[129] As Haver notes, a true break with futurity defined by telos was at once a break with the vision of historical time that emerged out of liberalism.[130] Thus, like the man that traverses the ruin resisting language, a properly human history could only ever amount to the daily working out of one's own conditions of existence, freed from all extant forms of historical repetition and confronted with the immediately inconceivable task of an ongoing working out of the terms of our own existence, freed from all extant forms of historical repetition and confronted with the immediately inconceivable task of an ongoing working out of the terms of our own existence. Or so we might surmise.

What remains to be seen, however, and what has to be understood as the theoretical limit built into "Where is History," is the problem of the social. For the final stanza ultimately ends in a kind of heroic existentialism, with a solitary man moving forward, steadfastly resisting all potentially tainted forms of social life, seeing in them the specters of the recent past. Recognition of the other therefore carries with it a profound danger. Not for nothing that Kuroda concluded an essay from this period with the lamentations of the Dolorist Julien Teppe: "Intercourse cannot be escaped. There is not one brave person that can speak the truth. The truth is too cruel to bear. All conversation is lies".[131] Similarly, "Where is History" ends.[132] How does one begin to conceive of a new practice of social life when language has been rendered into a functional element of the

[129] William Haver. *The Body of this Death: Historicity and Sociality in the Time of Aids* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

[130] Ibid.
[131] Kuroda Saburō, "Shi to bunka", *Kuroda saburō zenshū dai ni kan* (Shichōsha, 1989), 80.

existing order? And more pointedly, how can poetry exist when language has been stripped of its authenticity?

Recovering the Present: Toward a Democratic Subject of Poetry

There are of course, no conclusive answers to these questions. After years of utopian guarantees, restoring this sense of indeterminacy to the present, in all of its complexity and difficulty, was perhaps the central point of the Arechi project. For a radically different kind of community could only grow out of this recognition. This brings us to our next poem: "Prisoners of the Age," (*jidai no shūjin*) published in late 1947:

I

With Freedom of Speech
With Freedom of Action
Stolen, what is left to the prisoner?
He has little, they say
A corner of the sky cut out by the window
Recollections
And Dreaming

Who knows what's happened here?
At the gates of the prison
In familiar hat and kimono
They take back their old stolen things
Reverie
Ah in these reveries
Recollections give way to dreams of a liberated future
Who will notice what they've forgotten and left behind?

Then, Disillusionment

II

Just a little marble
But when it was lost
A great hole opened in my heart
Ah
Days become forgotten
And the little marble comes forth

From behind the cabinet collecting dust
What comes forth
It's
Nothing more than a little marble
In tears
Or sometimes not in tears
To fill up the hole in my heart
It's all too common
It's all too familiar
A single little marble
Carried in the palm of my hand
Beneath the pale darkening tree line
Upon the pavement that reeks of sewage
Was I vacantly standing there
Or wasn't I?

III

What's stolen is stolen
What's stolen back is stolen back
Corpses fill the field
And wildflowers bloom behind the corpses

Now your heart brims over with joy
In your palm is glittering freedom
What was in your breast that was not stolen
Is there something in your palm that was not stolen?
Something not stolen back…
Ah during those lost days
Behind iron bars
What did you say to yourself?
Amidst the mob at the station
What did you say to yourself?

And now
Having reached such joy
In freedom
What do you say to yourself?[133]

The reason that the postwar in Japan never really ended is that it was never allowed to begin. For many at the time, imagining and developing a more stable present and future trumped coming to

[133] Kuroda Saburō, "Jidai no shūjin", *Kuroda saburō zenshū dai ichi kan* (Shichōsha, 1989), 78-82.

terms with the past, which was summarily banished as a dystopia that was always already elsewhere. Yet as the first stanza of "Prisoners of the Age" also shows, even in the claustrophobic spatialization of fascistic hopelessness, the mind wandered. And even when a person is bereft of hegemonic temporal signifiers like clock time, and the body is confined to a cell, the experience of life is present. The prisoner, reduced to the status of a caged animal, "has little, they say." His connection to the outside world is confined to images of "a corner of the sky cut out by the window," a vision of freedom that inevitably shares its meaning with fantasies of death. For the prisoner set adrift, the dynamism of the world disappears, and the mind flees into the past and other memories.

And suddenly, for reasons unknow, the prisoners are set free. They put on their old clothes and "take back their stolen things." Emerging from a veritable platonic cave, the mind is returned to the world and overwhelmed by "reverie." The refuge of a less recent past that had been so crucial for survival disappears in an instant, replaced by desire for a "liberated future." Yet in the rush to get on with the business of the future, they may be too hasty. "Who will notice what they've forgotten and left behind?" And "then, disillusionment."

The second section begins after the rapture of utopian visions has dissipated – the speaker returns to his thoughts, recollecting the experience of the loss of the "little marble." It may appear to be nothing more than a trinket but for the speaker the little marble clearly means everything. Never wanting to lose it again, he carries it around in his palm, "in tears or sometimes not in tears." Yet to have it restored to him is not quite enough. The ex-prisoner doesn't feel right anymore and perhaps doesn't know what feeling right means anymore. "A single little marble, Carried in the palm of my hand, Beneath the pale darkening tree line, Upon the pavement that reeks of sewage, Was I vacantly standing there, or wasn't I?" The present dissolves and a tree lined street summons memories of a mob beating. But the marble has been returned. "What's stolen is stolen, What's

stolen back is stolen back, Corpses buried in a field, And wildflowers bloom behind the corpses." The future grows from the soil of a mass grave, cultivated by the people that have stolen back their stolen things. Can the Japanese nation, now stripped of its empire, completely and collectively forget it ever aspired for a new world order? The answer seems to be no, but not for lack of trying. for a new world order? The answer seems to be no, but not for lack of trying.

"You" (a different prisoner?) carries around the little marble of "glittering freedom" with joy. Surely everyone experiences the age differently despite many similarities. Something remains in your heart. "I" beseeches "You," for advice. Maybe you are finding integration into the postwar order a bit more manageable. "Is there something not stolen in your hands, Something not stolen back…" How did you talk yourself through those days "behind iron bars?" In "the mob at the station?" These questions address the past. And perhaps "you" can help the erstwhile "I" make sense of his own past. The final stanza points us to a different problem and a different relationship to the past. How do you live "now?" After "having reached such joy, In freedom," and having made it through the past that lives in the present, how do we ensure that such freedom, such a little marble, is never stolen back again? Is such certainty even possible? "What do you say to yourself?" In the final stanza, the reflective apparatus of Kuroda's other poems has been substituted for direct interpellation of the reader.

The reader, perhaps a fledgling poet, is asked to explain and consider how they talk to themselves about the previous age of imprisonment, and the undetermined present. At the same time, the marble taken from the poet's heart is a symbol without clear referent, and the reader is left to invest it with his or her own unique meanings of loss and recovery. In sum, "Prisoners of the Age" implores readers to consider their distinct moments of inner speech and connect them to the external world, embodying the function of poetry that Kuroda had laid out in his writings on

poetics. To answer the question: “What do you say to yourself” is the question no one can answer for you. And you must be able to answer it to encounter the other. It is therefore the first step to escaping the passive existence of life in the mob. And it is only through such self-inquiry that Kuroda’s prisoners might enter a new age of freedom beyond the prison walls of the past.

Conclusion: The Ambivalences of Encounter

More than any other member, Kuroda took up the problematic of the Arechi group as a political challenge to social life. In poetry and prose, he sought to explore the way that people could free themselves from the confines of socialization that, under the guise of reason, had led the world to the brink of annihilation. The way out could not be discovered through acquiescence to the postwar order – indeed it merely extended many of the same heteronomous tendencies of the wartime regime and required its own forms of submission. In Kuroda’s view, this “vacuous language” was inherently opposed to the practice of poetry because it presumed a single unified world of meaning that was ready made and self-evident. Against this tendency of postwar public discourse, Kuroda argued that the inner world had to be addressed on individual terms beyond the realm of consensus or mandate. And this was precisely where poetry became central to the practice of democratic subjectivation. mandate. And this was precisely where poetry became central to the practice of social life.

Poetry provided the means to construct an image of one’s own relationship to the world from the materials of individual human experience. The language one used was saturated by meanings derived from the past and image-referents that were open to transformation and the future. Their possibilities lay precisely in their complexity, as they were loaded not only with social meaning but also inchoate associations of individual experience. Beyond the world of collective meaning and ready comprehension, these images existed at a layer of consciousness not fully

subsumed by the social. As Kuroda put it, these images "danced in the dark night." By becoming conscious of these elements and combining them with social meaning through the writing of poetry, Kuroda believed one could begin to better understand oneself and by extension, one's relationship to the social world. This in turn would facilitate new forms of communication that would actualize the content of democratic life in ways that ordinary language foreclosed. Like Ayukawa's new form of tradition discussed in chapter one, this vision necessarily left the path to a different future opaque, yet it at least offered the prospect of a life beyond the vicious cycles and voids of public speech.

As we have seen, Kuroda's poetry during the war and postwar embodied the theory laid out in his prose writings. His image system constantly implored his poetic subjects and his readers to look within, to face the pasts that had confined and all but destroyed them. Kuroda's vision therefor possessed a conception of epochal transformation that took its energy and motor power from the lives of individual people and their reflections on what they said and did. Such energy would restore people to their singular experiences of the world and allow for the possibility of a practice of life consistent with the unpredictable ways that ordinary people apprehend and live through the strangeness of the everyday. would restore people to their singular experiences of the world and allow for the possibility of a practice of life consistent with the unpredictable ways that each and every person apprehends and lives the everyday.

Confessions of the Lost Generation:

Nakagiri Masao and the Tragedy of Liberalism

Chapter 4

The Origins of Arechi Consciousness

This chapter focuses on the work of Nakagiri Masao. Born in Fukuoka in 1919, his family was based out of Kurashiki city in Okayama. He entered the First Kobe Middle School in 1932, and began participating in the poetry group "VOU" in 1936 alongside Kuroda Saburō and Kihara Kōichi, who would later become a regular contributor to the Arechi magazine. He matriculated to The Kobe University of Commerce in 1937 but failed to obtain adequate credits in English composition and military drilling (*kyōren*) and dropped out. At age 20, Nakagiri allegedly emptied his father's wallet and fled to Tokyo, returning to university at Nihon Daigaku in Tokyo and working as a journalist for the Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shinbun. In 1942, he narrowly avoided conscription into the navy after a medical examination revealed that he had contracted tuberculosis, which required a medical quarantine that lasted over a month. He spent the rest of the war moving around Tokyo picking up jobs at several newspapers, at one point as a naval correspondent, while attending school and tending to family troubles. In April of 1945, American air raids destroyed his home in Kamiochiai and all of his worldly belongings (including his books).[134]

Nakagiri's exemption from combat has likely contributed to his comparatively minor status within the group, even as his poetry reflects many of the same concerns as those who were dispatched to military and colonial operations across the Japanese archipelago and Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, his contributions to the Arechi project were of central importance and tremendously varied, including poetry, autobiographical reflections, journalistic essays, literary analysis, and several translations of English language poetry and prose. As discussed in Chapter One, Ayukawa

[134] Nakagiri Masao. *Nakagiri masao zenshi* (Shichōsha, 1990), 441-445.

claimed that his earlier encounter with interwar modernism in the English language renewed his faith in the possibilities of what his native tongue could do, despite the insularity of a culturalist discourse delineated by the ideological parameters of Japanism. Nakagiri's translations of Auden, Eliot, and John Donne provided this same opportunity for the group's readers, concretizing the prospects for a non-nationalist future that Ayukawa theorized. Following the method built out in the previous chapters, here we will put Nakagiri's poetry and prose into dialogue within the larger context of the Arechi project and global trans war culture. In so doing, we will see how Nakagiri discursively constructs a form of poetic subjectivity out of the figure of social and political violence to open up possibilities for softness, vulnerability, and compassion necessary for a new form of social life.

Nakagiri's most programmatic contribution to the magazine was probably "Thought of the Waste Land" (*Arechi no shisō*) which appeared in the December 1947 issue. The essay begins with a description of a pamphlet-sized "ism dictionary" (*izumu jiten*) that Nakagiri claimed to have seen circulating around Tokyo.[135] As the name suggests, the ism dictionary included descriptions of various philosophies, political systems, religious doctrines, and the like, going all the way back to the beginning of human history. One might imagine that texts of these sort would have provided comfort to readers like Nakagiri, whose experience of the Tokyo Air raids resembled the burning of the library at Alexandria, but when Nakagiri first encountered the pamphlet he claimed a shiver went down his spine. "So many works fallen into ruin."[136] The appearance of failed intellectual

[135] Nakagiri Masao. "Arechi no shisō", *Arechi fukkokuban bessatsu kaisetsu* (Nihon kindai bungakkan, 1983), 34.

[136] Ibid.

and cultural forms side by side on sheets of paper like a menu (or perhaps a funeral program) seemed to encapsulate the conditions of thought in 1947 Japan.

Perhaps accounting for the appeal of such a pamphlet, Nakagiri claimed it was understandable that people sought out something to believe in. But this all too human tendency for easy answers and uncritically inherited principles had to be scrutinized since it led to utter catastrophe for himself and his contemporaries. Skepticism was necessary:

> In a situation where all isms reside side-by-side in the present, of course we desire to develop a set of principles. But before we believe in this possibility, or despair over it, or argue about it generally, we thoroughly take hold of our consciousness that the present age is a waste land and affirm the existence of this consciousness so that we don't lose it. For all of our activity is based on Arechi consciousness.[137]

Thus, for Nakagiri, Arechi consciousness was not only a repudiation of wartime ideology but a disidentification from the notion of identity as such. To affirm it, one had to maintain this consciousness as a practice and protect it from the seductive power of absolutes and abstractions that threatened to subsume the complexity of lived experience into a broader narrative sweep of history.[138] In its practice, Arechi consciousness borrowed freely from aesthetic and conceptual forms of all kinds without ever finally subordinating itself to any of them. And in Japan, Nakagiri's call for autonomy of thought derived from personal experience and values cut across the demands of the imbricated political and cultural realms that characterized much of Japan's twentieth century.

The latter portion of the essay consists of a sustained attack on Kyoto School philosophers for their sophistry at the roundtable discussions of the "World Historical Standpoint and Japan",

[137] Nakagiri Masao. Ibid., 34.

[138] Ibid., 36.

which took place in 1943 as part of an intellectual propaganda campaign. Nakagiri argued that the Kyoto School had deluded themselves into believing that they had taken up a position leading history, when in fact they were merely supplying rationalizations for war, and thus constantly "chasing after it."[139] He believed that this misrecognition persisted after war's end, and singled out Tanabe Hajime as a philosopher that seamlessly adapted his wartime positions to the postwar context through a new synthesis of Christianity, Buddhism, and Marxism.[140] Because this new system did not seem to include any substantive reconsideration of the past or present, it need not change in form. Nakagiri effectively suggested that the Kyoto school philosophers were walking ism dictionaries, captured by their own philosophical systems and thus unable to apprehend the actuality of lived experience or historical change.

By contrast, Arechi consciousness and Nakagiri poetry would grasp on to what was new and old in everyday experience, functioning as the point of departure for any attempt to construct national narratives, principles, or isms. Nakagiri's other essays deploy this method, utilizing the work of people like Thomas Mann and Stephen Spender to try and better understand his own experiences of fascism and sometimes pointing to the limits of their formulations. Simultaneously, Nakagiri's poetry would bring out a kind of everydayness largely evacuated of historical temporality and attuned to the chaotic interplay of memory, affective association, and the constitutive gap between language and sense experience.

Lost Generation Redux

Perhaps more than any of the other poets discussed in this dissertation, Nakagiri systematically engaged with texts from the trans war period to try and make sense of his own life.

[139] Nakagiri Masao. Ibid.

[140] Ibid.

This is the explicit task of "Confessions of the Lost Generation" (*Lost Generation no kokuhaku*), an autobiographical prose essay he wrote in July of 1947 and published in October just a few months before he coined the phrase Arechi consciousness. Here Nakagiri began with a chronology of his formative years, intercalating his passage through grade school with acts of chauvinistic violence that had been the subject of media fanfare like the 1931 Mukden Incident, the botched military operation that collaborators renamed the incident of the "three heroic human bombs" (*bakudan san yūshi*) in 1932, and the full-scale invasion of China in 1937.[141] Against Thomas Mann's declaration that fascism was a "problem of intelligence", Nakagiri insisted that the possibility of resistance was a decidedly more ambiguous one for young imperial subjects.

> We didn't necessarily possess a clear awareness of the war as a war of aggression. After all, damn it (*ittai*) someone would have had to instruct our young selves in this [way]! For us greeting these wars as somehow desirable would have been unthinkable from a common conception of right and wrong. But the war caught us up, loosely at first, and as it became increasingly coercive, our feelings gradually hardened.[142]

Because of the absence of proper moral instruction from his home country in either past or present, Nakagiri turned to texts like Thomas Mann's 1938 lecture "The Coming Victory of Democracy", which Mann orated across the United States on a lecture circuit. In Mann's analysis, the rise of fascism and the "apostasy from liberalism" in Europe could be explained primarily as a series of publicity tricks.[143] Where the principle of democracy was celebrated as a "timelessly human" instantiation of the absolute good, fascism's seductive power lay in a combination of an apparent

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[141] Nakagiri Masao. "Lost generation no kokuhaku", *Arechi fukkokuban*, 2.

[142] Nakagiri Masao. Ibid.

[143] Thomas Mann. "The Coming Victory of Democracy." Translated by Agnes Meyer (Secker & Warburg, 1938), 13. https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.221831. Hannah Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2017). Theodor Adorno. "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in C*ritical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. Translated by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Primo Levi. *The Drowned and the Saved* (Vintage, 1989).

newness (attractive to the young and spiritually enfeebled) and its ability to link up with human communities' deep historical reliance on force and domination. In a description that prefigured the analyses of Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, and Primo Levi, Mann pointed out that once fascism has "subjugated the body, it can even subjugate thought. For man in the long run cannot live a double life in order to live in harmony with himself. All this force can accomplish".[144] The notion of a "double life" in Japan has often been associated with the importation and performance of an inauthentic Western culture, but in Mann and Nakagiri's account the problem is decoupled from organicism. Violence and domination are the basis of social control, and subsequent commitment to place based notions of culture flow from it.

Perhaps because fascism and democracy were largely understood as foreign imports in late trans war Japan, Nakagiri's definition made little use of Mann's more expansive and philosophical explanation of the phenomena, focusing instead on the violence of youth education. His own experience had been cut through and mediated by fascist propaganda around the incidents described above, such that the ideological and cultural terrain had largely precluded critical social engagement. Moreover, an open-ended education was never provided. As Nakagiri points out, there had been no equivalent to the various antifascist writers congress' that took place across Europe and the United States in the 1930s.[145] Perhaps resulting from his own collaboration with the imperial project as a newspaper reporter, Nakagiri doesn't provide any precise political or artistic prescriptions. Rather, the final confession of the lost generation was that Nakagiri felt that people of his age remained lost.[146]

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[144] Nakagiri Masao. Ibid., 17.

[145] Nakagiri Masao. "Lost generation no kokuhaku", 4.

[146] Ibid., 13.

John Solt notes that in the 1930s, the Japanese Special Higher Police (*tokko*) became especially sensitive to the use of foreign loan words and the Roman alphabet, both of which featured prominently in modernist publications during the trans war period.[147] And with the promulgation of the National Service Draft Ordinance in July of 1939, cultural producers suspected of left-wing sympathies increasingly found themselves drafted to the front. Not unlike the trans war government's earlier attacks on Marxists and anti-colonial nationalists starting in the 1920s, in 1940 experimental poets were rounded up in Kobe and arrested en masse. Active as he was in modernist circles, Nakagiri's work drew similar attention and in 1941 the Special Higher Police called him in for questioning.[148] By the summer of 1942, obstructed from publication both by state intimidation and superiors in the world of poetry (*shidan*) who had turned to the writing of patriotic verse, Nakagiri confessed a fall into grief. He laments this turn, retrospectively reflecting that "when we did things like drunkenly rebuke the cops, and [resist] getting dragged into student labor mobilization, we did nothing more than give meaning to state power."[149] In hindsight, Nakagiri insisted that youthful self-abandon and general misanthropy only legitimized authoritarian control. In this respect, Nakagiri and the Arechi group were in line with other trends in discourse after war's end, which took the opportunity for either critical self-reflection or defensive obfuscation.

> It was thought that when the Pacific War ended, so too would our ignorance, and that a pleasant age would immediately begin. This was an idiotic delusion. It's two years since war's end and the situation hasn't changed a bit. Now our thought can be freely expressed…but the Japanese people of our coterie are the same as before. When they say

[147] John Solt. *Shredding the Tapestry of Meaning: Kitasono Tatsue* (Harvard University Press, 1999).

[148] John Solt. Ibid.

[149] Nakagiri Masao. "Lost generation no kokuhaku", 6.

> democracy, the tone of the word doesn't seem to be any different than…state-ism during the war.[150]

Nakagiri's critique of tone highlights the gap between language as a "system of differences" and the singularity of the utterance.[151] In occupied Japan, discourse centered on and all-but-immediately naturalized the category of democracy as a name for the new order. Part of that process involved the installation of a massive bureaucracy, fitted out with its own censorship apparatus that targeted far right revanchism as well as all criticism of the occupiers.[152] With the consolidation of democracy as an analog for the postwar order, the complex work of transforming consciousness and custom was rendered a fait accompli. State-ism's (*kokkashugi*) destructive desire lines the utterance, a verbal sleeper agent waiting to be reactivated within the language of democracy.

Nakagiri argued that "principles" for poetic practice had to be grounded in the perspective of the individual poet rather than in political ideology or collective identification, and the call for Arechi consciousness that came after Nakagiri's confessions may be read as a qualified mea culpa for his own societal abdication. Amidst the early postwar discourse of writer's war responsibility and perhaps as a result of his own tacit compliance with wartime journalism's propagandistic bent, Nakagiri seemed uninterested in an intellectual purge and open to the prospect of a kind of cultural truth and reconciliation process. What poets had the responsibility to provide in the past and present was not political uniformity but examination of the social world. Rather than any kind of

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[150] Ibid., 13.

[151] Samo Tomsic. *The Capitalist Unconscious: Marx and Lacan* (Verso, 2013).

[152] Takemae Eiji. *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation and its Legacy*. Translated by Robert Rickerts and Sebastian Swann (Continuum, 2002).

purge of writers with war responsibility, Nakagiri suggested that "perhaps the only poet that should be "disqualified" (*shikkaku*) is one that neglects to investigate…the essence of war".[153]

The Tragedy of Liberals

The sense of individual powerlessness articulated in Nakagiri's "Confessions" reappears in his 1952 essay "The Tragedy of Liberals" (*jiyūshugisha no higeki*), which introduces readers to Stephen Spender's 1938 play "Trial of a Judge: A Tragedy in Five Acts". In it, Spender represents the destruction of an unnamed society and the rise of fascism. In the first act, "Judge" sentences a gang of fascist black shirts to death for the murder of Petra, a sickly young Jewish man who they beat and killed during a home invasion. Shortly after the judge delivers his sentence, government minister Hummeldorf pressures him to pardon the killers, who he insists will be freed regardless. Real politick overrides liberal values, as Hummeldorf insists that submission to the black legions will allow the republic to maintain the façade of its legitimacy and "save our honor".[154] In virtually the same moment, the judge has sentenced a group of red shirts to death, after they murdered a police officer during their flight from arrest for doing communist propaganda work. Hummeldorf rejects the judge's threat to resign in protest of the transparent hypocrisy and instead demands that he deliver a death sentence to the reds, further undermining the liberal commonsense of the law as an objective social institution amidst the broader trend toward fascist appeasement. The play concludes with the triumph of the black chorus and the imprisonment of the judge and the reds – the former fallen into grief and the latter maintaining their spirits by holding out hope for revolution and redemption.

[153] Nakagiri Masao. "Lost generation no kokuhaku", 10.

[154] Stephen Spender. "Trial of a Judge: A Tragedy in Five Acts" (Random House, 1938), 38. https://archive.org/details/trialofajudgeatr010499mbp/page/n47/mode/2up

Despite the play's overarching moral allegiance to Petra and the reds, Nakagiri links the judge's isolation to Spender's own semi-alienated relationship to the interwar communist movement.[155] During several standoffs throughout the play, blacks and reds attack each other verbally, presenting alternate conceptions of past, present, and future – a war of position that sharpens the lines of antagonism between them and foreshadows intranational violence. Yet at various points throughout the play, debate between reds and blacks devolves into bloodlust, with each side calling out: *Kill! Kill! Kill!*[156] Moreover, the narrative's basically didactic reenactment of the collapse of Weimar is cut up by dream sequences, poetic affect, and free associations that link up disparate moments in time through personal experiences. Nowhere is this more visible than in the monologue of "Wife", who early on celebrates the rise of the blacks as a displaced redemption of her own failure to bear children:

The drums beat. The flags are waving.
The men march down the street.
Everything has been wrong for forty years
Because I bore no child.
But now the decorated war restores
Men to their sun and women to their night.
The young will rise from each other's sleep,
The free to be disciplined, the happy to be killed.
My huge animal body was unsatisfied
My breasts were starved because they gave no food,
My cries of hatred were as instinctive
As the babe's scream till the nurse brings its nappy.
But now I forget my self-destroying poison:
In the larger hate which destroys the world
The time is redeemed and I am content.
Let the unconsidering compact bomb cut through
Tenements and the horizontal thoughts
Of civilization. It was all false, false,
Only my hatred and abrupt death were real.
Let all children be killed, their little dreams.
Flake like ashes under the melted girders.

[155] Nakagiri Masao. "Jiyūshugisha no higeki", *Arechi Shishū 1952* (Kokubunsha, 1974), 143.

[156] Stephen Spender. Ibid.

I have waited for this general anger
To lance my crippled soul of poison
Till my hate explodes in war like a bomb. I am glad.
Oh, love, I'm cured, I'm cured.[157]

Reaching a state of sadistic ecstasy, the stage directions conclude: "[t]hree loud taps of the drum as she throws off her shawl to be received with an explosive burst of enthusiasm from the crowd".[158] Basking in the solar power of fascist men, the wife performs a kind of striptease, having been cured of her poison with the penetrative force of a bomb blast that re-levels the horizontal thoughts, civilization, and their repulsive tenement populations. Long ago Walter Benjamin warned (a bit simplistically) of the fascist tendency toward the "aestheticization of politics."[159] What Spender demonstrates here is the way that fascist aesthetics express themselves through the heteronormative sexual relation. Malformed by the First World War and her body fully identified with the nation, the wife's poisoned soul is pierced and vitalized by the lustful gaze of the fascist mob. Bringing them into herself, she finishes with an exclamation that evokes the image of a climax: "[o]h, love, I'm cured, I'm cured".

Here we should recall the work of Klaus Theweleit, who confessed his own sense of powerlessness in the face of one of the foundational microfascist institutions: the family. More than uniform brutalization, Theweleit describes a dynamic of violent paternal discipline and empty maternal consolation working together as preparation for Nazi political subjection.[160] By contrast, Spender's "Wife" plays a rather more active role. The rise of the black guard represents a second

[157] Ibid., 49-50.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zohn (Schocken Books, 1969).

[160] Klaus Theweleit. *Male Fantasies Volume 1: Floods, Bodies, History* (University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

chance for her to perform to a proper role within the patriarchal order, as war restores to men their solar power and women are recaptured by the rhythms of the moon. Far from consoling children after their beatings, the wife presents herself as a repentant subject of the insipient empire who resents having missed the opportunity to produce more cannon fodder for a war forty years ago. Without children her "huge animal body was unsatisfied," her "breasts were starved because they gave no food".[161] The wife's body functions an unused spatial container for an imperial arms buildup, starved by its absence of productive utility and deprived of its source of meaning. As a good fascist wife, she finds contentment in the opportunity to sexually collude with the germinal form of Nazi power and the prospect of a future mass infanticide. Thus, in Spender's formulation, revanchist hatred sieves the utopian dimension of maternal love, transforming it into a form of political violence. Killing children and incinerating their dreams is the unconscious wish of the fascist mother's symbolic function.

Nakagiri points out that, though the name Hummeldorf and anti-semitic murder are suggest of the collapse of the Weimar Republic, Spender never actually names the setting of this tragedy, and that the stage apparatus and costumes are never specified.[162] In Nakagiri's view, the "subject that was occupying Spender's heart" (*kokoro o shimeteita shūdai*) was basically an ethical ethical question: "[W]hen a society is fed by violence, isn't a lone liberal tragic?"[163] In this way, Nakagiri identifies Spender's alienation with that of the Judge. But read in the light of Nakagiri's confessions and tacit collaboration with the fascist war machine, it is not much of a stretch to suggest that his study was simultaneously an autobiographic triangulation. For what they all shared

[161] Spender. Ibid.

[162] Nakagiri Masao. "Jiyūshugisha no higeki", 157.

[163] Ibid.

was an apparent inability to submerge themselves into a political ideology, even in the face of imminent civil war. Caught between a moral commitment to justice and a fear of professional castration, the judge cannot never finally identify with the notion that utopian ends justify violent means. Spender would not let commitments to working class emancipation dominate the terms of his conscience or the meaning of his art. And as such, Nakagiri suggests that both Spender and the Judge came to grief, uninspired by the communist's faith in revolutionary redemption.

We might benefit from remembering here that Nakagiri had leaned on the problem of education rather than intelligence, in spite of the fact that Thomas Mann had been quick to point out that fascism was not merely a youth cult. Instead, he insisted that "the susceptibility to the fascist miasma has nothing to do with age or youth it is much more a question of intelligence, of character, of the sense of truth, of human feeling…"[164] Forty years younger than Mann and ten younger than Spender, what if Nakagiri had received an education from them instead of being conscripted out of college for inadequate performance of military drills? Or what if either of them had led the modernist charge in Japan instead of Hagiwara Sakutarō, who's full-throated Japanism in the late 1930s instantiated the hysteria of the judge's wife. Likely both Mann and Spender would have been arrested. Perhaps they would have also died in prison. But taken this way, Nakagiri would not be the castrated paternal figure of the judge but his fearful, wayward child. Neglected, brutalized, and then consumed.

The Essence of War

With war's end, Nakagiri's poetic practice took up Mann's call for democracy to engage in a "rediscovery of itself" and "defined in the broadest possible terms" by exploring the essence

[164] Thomas Mann. "The Coming Victory of Democracy", 14.

of war and the destitution of survival. How ever one feels about who deserved disqualification from social life after World War II, let us take seriously Nakagiri's injunction to investigate the "essence of war" and see how he might have attempted to address it. This is "War," published first in *Arechi Shishū 1951*:

A human forehead covered in sand
A red thread extends without limit
Melting metal, my eyes barely open
Half naked women
On the edge of the world,
I thought I saw them

Leaves of the rubber trees split apart
We ran in a daze
We lost our minds,
The index finger of my right-hand twitches against my will
Your form disappeared,
Because I killed you.

My hands and your heart are connected by a little chunk of lead
Little teeth, little legs, everything little,
On the edge of the world
I thought I saw them
Peter!
Why are you smiling at the man who killed you, me?

From a faraway place,
Like flowing toffee
My friend comes closer
Was his name Henry?
Or was it Robert? I don't know
But how don't you condemn the man who killed you, me?

We at last return
To this country we once thought beautiful
My boots are covered in mud
Now, walking on the Tokyo pavement full of holes
Where are you coughing
Where are you sucking at blood cheese?

I wonder if you can see him
The pitiful man who killed his friend
At the edge of the world, crawling like an animal

And I wonder if you know
To survive, and go on living
Is more cruel than death.[165]

The speaker of "War" finds himself bound up in a fateful connection with his friend, as the "red thread" of destiny (*akai ito*) has brought him into contact with an enemy soldier. Their fates are mediated by a bullet, which has materially linked them together on the battlegrounds of empire.[166] One can only guess at the soldier's identity – first called Peter, then Henry, then Robert -- and these may well not be his name in any case. More important than the dead man's name is the taught musculature of his face, which continues to resemble a smile aimed back at the speaker's gun. After war's end, the speaker returns to a destroyed Tokyo he once thought beautiful, tortured by the cruelty of survival. The veil of imperial glory has been stained by the injunction to kill and left in tatters by American bombs. To go on living is worse than death, but this is not a depiction of postwar survival guilt in a conventional nationalist sense. The speaker makes no mention of dead fellow imperial soldiers, nor does he describe any remorse for his failure to die for the empire. Tokyo has no other people in it and the only traces of human life are roads full of holes.

Idleness and isolation lead the speaker's thoughts back to the man he killed, who somewhere coughs and sucks at "blood cheese."[167] This condensation of images combines coughing up blood and then swallowing it again with a vampiric sucking at two distinct life-giving substances, whose intermixing facilitate the soldier's passage into undeath. The early Abrahamic separation of blood and milk evokes an extrapolation of the prohibition against incest, as dual

[165] Nakagiri Masao, "Sensō", *Arechi Shishū 1951* (Kokubunsha, 1950), 106-107.

[166] My thanks to Caterina Addis, who suggested the link between the red line of fate and the trajectory of the bullet.

[167] Blood cheese is an alternative term for head cheese, a European food which typically includes some combination of cheese, pig's blood, suet, oatmeal, and beef tongue. Barring preservatives, it goes without saying that blood cheese would be prone to rot and molding, especially at "the edge of the world".

excretions of the female body associated with the processes of conception, birth, and child rearing. In his final moments, the body of the soldier instantiates a violation of social taboos, simultaneously ingesting and excreting, smiling and dying. Meanwhile the speaker crawls around in distress, like an animal.

How might this constitute the essence of war? The act of killing sends imperial subjects further along the path of a collective colonial devolution, a process first implied by the presence of as of yet uncivilized "half-naked women" at the edge of the world. The exposure of nudity suggests a prior stage of civilization from the perspective of capitalist empire and this in turn opens up the theme of barbaric descent that characterized so much imperial culture from the beginning of the trans war period, preoccupied with the notion that the practice of colonial violence might be brought home to the metropole. If this theme achieved an iconic status in European cultural production as a means of addressing the unevenly developed and class stratified methods of trench warfare during World War I, it retained a link to mainstream print culture through the romance and nostalgia of people like D.H Lawrence and Joseph Conrad. The repetition of colonial violence in the pacific theater thirty years later points up the epochal shape of a trans war actuality that, in a properly modernist fashion, connected the most up to date technological forms of imperialist conquest to the porous boundary between sex and violence that consecrated the Freudian "scientific myths" of civilization's origins. Thus, the transhistorical essence of civilizational warfare in Nakagiri's poem appears in the murderous relation of imperialist soldiers, layered on top of savage women sexualized yet not fully separated from nature.

A Song of Night and the Screams of Day

The cruelty of survival gestured at in the closing lines of "War" features prominently in "Song of Night" (*Yoru no uta*) written roughly four years earlier and appearing in the January 1948, issue of the Arechi magazine. Here Nakagiri connects the criminality of the wartime and occupation state, through the subjection position of a female sex worker and the "death row prisoner".

I am always smiling
As if I'd completely forgotten my anger
As if this too is my destiny
I face everyone with a smile
And in reality
Every night, I, sell my own soul.

My radiant flesh
My lush black hair
I am always warm
Always content
Always sweet smelling.
But beneath the darkened bridge
With a cigarette in my mouth
My crimes
Become real like sun.
Every Night, I, am sentenced to die.

What becomes of the death-row prisoner's good looks
No matter how many crimes are heaped upon
Can't one always add another?
I purse my lips
And blow smoke into the man's face
As the disturbing chugga chugga sound
Of a train car passes through my head
Is this feeling only mine?

Ah, I want to **lash out** in rage
I want to tell myself that even the death row prisoner
Has a right to anger (emphasis Nakagiri's).[168]

[168] Nakagiri Masao. "Uta no yoru", *Arechi fukkokuban*, 42-44.

The speaker describes her composed exterior in the face of imminent death as a daily keeping up of appearances. With night's arrival, away from the world of order and taboo, in the absent space of the text, she encounters a man, and their rendezvous will signal the sale of her soul and perhaps her death. The crimes for which the speaker must die take place in the shadows of what continued to be called the "bright life" of modern Japan. As she blows smoke into the face of a man, the speaker's encounter is reminiscent of the opening scene of an interrogation, no less formulaic or ritualistic in its own right. The performance is interrupted by the sound of a train, leaving the speaker calling out for the solidarity of an other. The desire to "lash out in anger" (*mushō ni okoritai*) recalls the failed moral revolts of Nakagiri's confessions and Spender's judge, lacking coherence and efficacy and descending into fatalism.[169]

In 1947 the figure of the death row prisoner would have likely brought to mind the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, the show of force that inaugurated the new era by constructing a narrative of Japan's fascistic descent. The most famous of these prosecutions was surely that of Tōjo Hideki, who was resuscitated by allied doctors after a suicide attempt on September 11, 1945, brought to trial on a capital charge, and finally executed.[170] But perhaps a more direct reference point was the femmicidal rampage of Kodaira Yoshio, the decorated imperial soldier and serial killer. Getting his first taste for blood during his participation in the 1928 Jinan Incident (for which he received military honors) Kodaira was imprisoned after committing his first civilian murder of his father-in-law in 1932, for which he received a pardon in 1940. The body of his second victim was found

[169] Nakagiri Masao. Ibid., 44.
[170] Even Tōjo's prosecution was a product of cynical calculation, as his acquiescence to the death penalty came with guarantees of protection for his family.

shortly after war's end, and he was executed in 1949 after being convicted of the murder of eight other women in 1946.[171]

In "Song of Night" the image of postwar destitution manifest in black markets and sex workers (the so-called "*pan pan*") obscures the fact that both forms of extralegal commerce were commonplace throughout the Japanese empire trans war period, as were the risks of intimidation and violence that underwrote them. Like Kodaira's war on women, postwar periodization cordons off the deeper historical roots of fascistic violence and societal complicity. As such, the association with Tōjo's ignominious death is secondary. The death row prisoner in "Song of Night" is, after all, most likely a sex worker. Whether Kodaira or even the speaker of "War" finally carried out such a death sentence will finally never be known.

Like other members of Arechi, Nakagiri depicted the difficulty of reflection in the aftermath of trauma. As a kind of counterpoint to the exploitative sociality of night, Nakagiri presents the daytime hours as alienating, isolating, and possessed of its own form of brutality. This is palpable in "Daylight," published alongside "War" in *Arechi Shishū 1952*:

Time.
Time is flowing.

Mirror.
A white ship comes gliding
Toward the clear white image of the harbor
A harsh premonition
I screamed.
My mouth didn't open.
A crack.
A cricket jumps past.

Quiet joy

[171] Max Ward. "Introduction: Postwar Japan as Occult History – David Peace's Tokyo Trilogy" *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2024): 7. For a horrific and mesmerizing historical novelization of Kodaira's murders, see David Peace. *Tokyo Year Zero* (Knopf Doubleday, 2007).

The mirror gently trembles.[172]

The link between the image of the mirror and the flow of time recalls Kuroda Saburō's poem "Months and Years" discussed in the previous chapter. Like in Kuroda's poem, the act of self-reflection becomes the basis for ominous association – here figured as a white ship coming toward a white harbor, which in turn begets a "harsh premonition" and aural hallucinations of screaming. Absorbed into the mirror, the speaker is frozen outside of time observing the movement of insects. His quiet joy is contained by the mirror portal, the gentle trembling of which suggests its inability to contain the eruption of condensed meanings and affect that are captured in its reflections. In contrast to the portentous encounter of "Song of Night," "Daylight" takes place in isolation. As a reflex action of the objective world against the speaker's gaze, reflection dissolves in the nexus of real abstraction, as the frozen image of his countenance not only generates associations but brings the mirror itself into subjective actuality.

Death Rituals

Finally let us consider a poem that might most precisely enact Arechi consciousness, published alongside "Daylight". We noted in the introduction that Tamura reported to have borrowed a line from Nakagiri for his quasi-anthemic long form poem "Standing Coffin" but it would be more accurate to say that they shared it. Moreover, Tamura's poem wasn't published in its complete form until the latter half of the 1950s, so it's possible that Tamura's more developed vision, which verged on a fully realized poetic social totality, grew out of the immediacy and concreteness of Nakagiri's earlier fantasy for a ritual. This is "Thanatopsis," from *Arechi Shishū 1952*:

Don't speak to people about death

[172] Nakagiri Masao. "Hakujitsu", *Arechi Shishū 1951*, 108-109.

Don't speak with words that disappear like smoke
You can't see death
When what exists is nothing more than ash
Death is the light of the sun
Death is Today

Don't live today by means of tomorrow
Don't say "But tomorrow is….."
Like grass along the road
Your destiny is being cut
Don't try to escape it
Instead spur it forth

The life of an ant
The life of a penicillium
The life of an ocean fish
A single ruby
A rose hair engraved in stone
What is grand is delusion
Even a little knowledge is to know everything
Cut off your ears
Burn out your eyes
Make your skinny chest bear the pain
Of knowing everything

Lie down in the mud
Get covered in rotting leaves
Puff out your cheeks
Drain your blood And with your whole body
Receive rain
Receive compassion [173]

"Thanatopsis" begins by articulating an essential gap between speech and being through the figure of death.[174] The speaker begins by establishing a series of injunctions *against* "talk" (*kataru na*), which will inevitably fail to capture or contain death, dissipating into smoke. Like the light of the sun, death cannot be adequately grasped by the living because its absolute absorption annihilates

[173] Nakagiri Masao. "Thanatopsis" in *Arechi Shishū 1952* (Kokubunsha, 1974), 12-13.

[174] Less explicitly invoking trans war violence, Tamura would return to this theme in 1962 with his poem and eponymous collection "World Without Words" (*kotoba no nai sekai*). This poem will be discussed in greater detail in the dissertation conclusion.

human life and meaning. At the same time, both appear as the presupposition of life. The sun is the source of all being, and its absence (or overwhelming presence) will usher in total death. Death's presence is immanent to every instant of organic processes, as the absolute end contained in the beginning. Projected interminably into the future, the actually of death is also "nigh" (*kefu*).

Whether or not Nakagiri was versed in the history of existentialist thought in Japan and elsewhere, "Thanatopsis" resonates with several of its ethical and political themes in the trans war, as the confrontation with human finitude becomes the organizing principle for an examined life.[175] The second stanza follows the same basic coordinates as the first, insisting that the listener resist the impulse to say "[b]ut tomorrow is". Here the speech act functions as a means of overriding the reality of the presence of death, compelling us to live today by means of tomorrow. The image of cut down grass along the road evokes an image of death or collapse. But in this case, it is not the cutting short of life's infinite potential, but the constricting path of destiny. As such, the speaker implores you to accept this cutting, to even "spur it on" (*sore wo sokushin se yo*).

The third and fourth stanzas zoom out, juxtaposing the objective world with that of the human subject. In contrast to the unmediated lives of penicillium, ants, and fish, knowledge rends the human experience from its original animality. Not unlike the commodity, the Marxian germ cell, even a little knowledge fully alienates the human animal from its hypostatized symbiosis with the womb of the earth, as subjection to language becomes the basis for a new kind of being, both

[175] The notion that human beings tend to sacrifice the actuality of the present to the demands of the future plays a central role in the early interwar work of work of Miki Kiyoshi, Tosaka Jun, and Nishida Kitarō. For discussions of Miki and and Tosaka's conceptions of historical time see Harry Harootunian. *Overcome By Modernity*: *History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton University Press, 2000). For Nishida's early philosophy of expressive activity, see Nishida Kitarō. *The Ontology of Production: Three Essays*. Translated and with an introduction by William Haver (Duke University Press, 2012).

more than an animal and less.[176] After the fact of this subjection, the speaker proposes cutting off your ears and burning out your eyes, actions that might stop the incessant accumulation of knowledge and augment your capacity to bear the pain of knowing everything. Finally, after rendering yourself blind and deaf, the speaker proposes a ritual to return you to unity with the objective world. By covering your body with leaves and wet dirt and then draining it of blood, you are primed for a purifying transfusion of water and compassion. Since your cheeks are puffed out, you cannot swallow them. Instead, it is as though your being has become porous. You are now able to receive them with your "whole body" (*zenshin ni*).

The ritual of "Thanatopsis" is stripped of all historical identification by historical atrocity. There are no trains or mirrors, or any explicit referents toward modernity or early modernity. There is, however, a sociality. The basic structure of first-person injunctions toward an other instantiate the minimal relation of I and Thou. But like in much of Tamura's work (before and after) the form of that relation is multiple and indeterminate. The use of second person is not uncommon in the long durée of Japanese poetry but here we see the modernist blur of subjectivity that is too often misattributed to post-modernism and the alleged decoupling of value from materiality that characterizes the hyper abstraction of neoliberal financialization. But long before the oil shocks, austerity, and the final destruction of the gold standard in the 1970s, identifications had already begun to float and dissolve amidst urban spaces, the traumatic shocks and displacements of industrialization, and the brutalizing forms of heteronomy that powered the uneven emergence of nation states.

[176] For this paradoxical Lacanian formulation of human subjectivity, see Alenka Zupancic. *What is Sex?* (MIT Press, 2017).

Moreover, the active orientation toward ritual production is suggestive of the archaisms that appeared in discourse across colonial metropoles, particularly during post wars. This primal fantasy of social engagement estranged from space and place could as easily be the end of the world as its beginning. In his writings on Beckett's play Endgame, Adorno noted "[t]he condition presented in the play is nothing other than that in which 'there's no more nature.' Indistinguishable is the phase of completed reification of the world, which leaves no remainder of what was not made by humans; it is permanent catastrophe, along with a catastrophic event caused by humans themselves…"[177] In "Thanatopsis" traces of animal life appear in a mutilated totality, as what is grand amounts to delusion (*kyodai naru mono ha kyomō de aru*). The residuum of bacterial and animal organics are quickly dismissed, prompting the speaker to demand a further stripping down by burning out eyes and cutting off ears. The minimal space of ritual redemption opens up in mud and "rotting leaves". Not unlike the weeds that appear in Morikawa Yoshinobu's "Slope" discussed in the introduction, the glimmer of utopia appears within a natural cycle of production and consumption, as mud, rotting leaves, and rain may yet mulch the speaker and listener and regenerate the earth through unsentient life. Where Beckett foreclosed this possibility in order to reduce the postwar world to parody, "Thanatopsis" retains minimal signs of hope within human practice and without.[178] In sum we here may detect an echo of the Spender's ambivalent hope of Spender's moral allegiance to the oppressed, and even a fractured articulation of Mann's call for democracy in the broadest possible sense.

Conclusion: Confessions of a Liberal

[177] Theodor Adorno. "Trying to Understand Endgame", *Notes to Literature Volume 1*. Translated by Sherry Weber Nicholsen (Columbia University Press, 2019), 122.

[178] Ibid.

First and foremost, Nakagiri's Arechi consciousness demanded a primacy placed on the world of experience, which all but inevitably included some amount of reflection on the war and one's complicity with it, as well as an attempt to imagine a world beyond it. Nakagiri's journalistic complicities were in some ways more active than the other core members in the group, but ultimately comparisons of this kind do not tell us very much and are anathema to the Arechi project in general. In different registers, Nakagiri's historical studies of Spender and Mann captured something of the back and forth between the desire to establish principles and an affirmation of the fact that the best laid isms often go awry.

"War" and "Song of Night" represent radically different versions of trans war experience and survival, with the speaker of the former haunted by the imputed humanity of his enemy turned friend, and the speaker of the latter trapped within a cycle of exploitation and violence that might have constituted a life crueler than death. "Daylight" might be read as the inverse of the death row prisoner's alienated performance of rituals, as its speaker lives fully outside of his own body, absorbed into a reflective surface overflowing with associations that cannot be finally pinned down. The death row prisoner's desire to lash out in anger portends the shame and aural hallucination of "Daylight", as a scream that seemed to come from within the speaker despite the fact that his mouth "didn't open a crack."[179] The mirror becomes an almost filmic projection of inner space that threatens to subsume the real.

It may be of more than passing interesting to note that "Thanatopsis," titled in English, derives from thanatos (death) and opsis (view or sight). As such, the speakers command to burn out your eyes may imply a more central importance for vision than earlier suggested. The elimination of sight prepares the subjects of the poem to bear the pain of everything. Alongside

[179] Nakagiri Masao. "Hakujitsu," *Arechi Shishū 1952*, 108.

the prior purge of sound, the subjects of "Thanatopsis" prepare themselves for a ritual fusion with earth and sky and the acceptance of compassion. Beyond the moral failures of liberalism and the hierarchical forms of instruction and knowledge production that attended Nakagiri's education, the sensual experience of touching mud, leaves, and rain might offer a means of connection to place freed from the imperial sun and the baggage of blood and soil. Thus, the proxy death of "Thanatopsis" and the minimal unity affirmed by Arechi consciousness contain the possibility of immanent transformation, grounded in the productive power of the death drive within a simple poetic paradox: Death is nigh. So too, is life.

A War Without End: The Death of Arechi and its Afterlives

The Death Knell of Arechi

Any time one of the core members of Arechi attempted to make a claim about the group's practice, it invariably included some attempt at clarification, if not an explicit defense of their project. As mentioned in passing in the introduction, this defensive posture dates back to the group's first iteration in the late 1930s, as the first iteration of Arechi was shut down at the behest of government censors. According to Christopher Drake, this was at least in part because of the group's "dangerously negative" title.[180] Perhaps even more than its referential gesture to non-national culture, the very word Arechi seemed to imply a critical posture toward Japanese society, verging on the kinds of "emotional outburst" that Hirohito later warned against during his declaration of defeat. This combined with the fact that Nakagiri and Ayukawa had both failed their required university training in Japanese national morals and military drilling may have been enough to verify that Arechi poets were indeed "quislings" (*hikokumin*) and that the best way to straighten them out was military indoctrination and conscription. What better way to instill proper "instruction" (*kyōren*) then to dispatch them into the breach for the glory of the empire?

Given the various complicities and compliances discussed in the previous chapters, the Arechi poets were not in a position to play revolutionary (or revanchist) after August 1945, but it seems unlikely that any of them possessed a secret desire to do so. As we have seen, the fundamental point of their project was an exploration of personal experience in the wake of an apocalyptic war over and against all calls for conformity. This position was never well received. Beginning in the late 1940s and up until the present, critics have attempted to unmask the group's praxis for its anemic liberalism and "retreat to individualism."[181] Neither complaint holds up under

[180] Tamura Ryūichi. *Dead Languages Selected Poems 1946-1984*. Translated by Christopher Drake (New York: Katydid Books 1984).

[181] marxists.org/chinese/reference-books/poems-of-struggle/japan-tcly.htm

scrutiny. As I have shown, each poet's practice was simultaneously social and individual, clustered around a common set of themes, reference points, and overlapping experiences but singularly articulated through the prisms of their own lives. Ayukawa's poetic invocations of the ghost of Morikawa Yoshinobu, Tamura's perverse linguistic and ancestral triangulations of madness, Kuroda's pessimistic assessment of democracy, and Nakagiri's confessions of alienation all started to appear in the first two or three years after the surrender and were very much of a piece with broader trends in discourse across disciplinary boundaries.

However one feels about the opaque relationship between the Arechi poets' cultural production and politics *tout court*, the notion that they retreated from the world verges on libel. Each of their prose texts responded to and incorporated elements of critique from postwar progressives and the insipient New Left. Most notably, the final text of the last publication *Arechi Shishū 1958* was a roundtable discussion titled "The Successes and Failures of Arechi" carried out by Sekine Hiroshi, Yamamoto Tarō, Katagiri Yuzuru, Sekiguchi Atsushi, Nakamura Minoru, Shimaoka Shin, and Itō Shōshi. In this first fully external critique (no participants had contributed writing to any of the group's prior publications) we begin to see the contours of what has come to be the conventional narrative, which suggests a growing irrelevance and charges of intellectualism, individualism, and apoliticality. To briefly sum up the relevant points from this roundtable: discussants uniformly agreed that the Arechi project succeed as "thinking poetry" (*kangaeru shi*) but Yamamoto suggested that this resulted in a loss of poetry's affective dimension as song.[182] Shimaoka suggested that the Arechi poets' desire to deepen the understanding of their "ego

[182] "Arechi no 'kōzai'" in *Arechi shishū 1958* (Tokyo: Arechi Shuppansha 1958), 229. Ironically this kind of critique had been earlier levelled by people like Tamura Taijirō, claiming that "thought" (Marxism) had never been in step with the Japanese people, which is why it failed to garner mass support during the war. See Tamura Taijirō. "Nikutai ga ningen de aru", *Shōwa hihyō taikei dai san kan*. Edited by Takeshi Muramatsu (Banchō Shobō, 1968).

consciousness" never became sufficiently active in transforming social consciousness, and therefore never reached the status of the political at all.[183] Finally, Sekiguchi averred that the power of the group's iconic declaration, "the present is a wasteland", had finally "come to dissolution" (*kihaku ni natte kita*).[184] There was no debate about this point at all.

It goes without saying that much had changed since the group began publishing a decade prior, and even more since their aborted start in the late 1930s. By 1958, the postwar had already been declared over in government white papers for 3 years, anti-American cold war sentiment had emerged in response to nuclear bomb testing and cold war domination, and the insurgent movement against the security treaty signaled the advent of a new generational clash addressed to the conjunctural crisis wrought by the US-Japan cold war alignment. But interest in, respect for, and critique of the Arechi group never really dissipated in the world of letters and culture, nor did the core membership ever stop engaging with society and the broader world through the form of poetry. In a somewhat unexpected convergence, Walter Benjamin and Althusser seemed to agree that the present is always already beset by the prospects of contradiction and crisis, regardless of whether a revolutionary mass seizes the opportunities of redemption offered by overdetermined social contradictions. Whether or not consciousness is activated then, the present is always a waste land of contradiction and crisis. Let us conclude with a brief consideration of the afterlives of Arechi.

Afterlives: The Resurrections of Arechi

The relation of language, experience, and violence that minimally organized Arechi consciousness had a habit of resurfacing at various crisis points in the subsequent history of

[183] Ibid., 249.

[184] Ibid., 253.

postwar Japan, even without the participation of any of the prior participants. The alleged abstraction and negativity that made the Arechi project a target of dogmatic left-wing critics provided it with the capacity to resonate with disparate historical conjunctures and cultural crises. Though many of the group's members continued prolific careers as poets, translators, and cultural commentators until the 1980s and 1990s, it was the early postwar discursive constellation set up by their collective project that resurged as a reference point, not the group itself. Here we will briefly consider three invocations of waste land that may be of interest to scholars of subsequent moments in the history and culture of Japan and the world.

In 1968, the same year that Tamura published *The Young Waste Land*, the avant-garde director Ōshima Nagisa was busily at work on "Diary of a Shinjuku Thief." The film follows Birdey Hilltop (Yokō Tadanori) and his erstwhile love interest Suzuki Umeko (Yokoyama Rie), who first meet in their prescribed roles as book thief and store clerk in the Shinjuku branch of the Kinokuniya bookstore. As the narrative unfolds, their relationship transforms into a space for psychic and sexual exploration, with their distinct physical blockages seeming to embody a larger deadlock within politics and society. In an early scene foreshadowing the two characters' liberations and final abandonments of societal norms, Suzuki walks the floor of the bookstore after hours. Staring at a pile of books that appear on the floor, a chorus of excerpts voice over her apparently miserable contemplation, almost mocking her conformity. In a kind of global sound collage that includes recitations of Hagiwara Sakutarō, Jean Genet, Muhammad Ali, Joseph Stalin, Jomo Kenyatta, Tomioka Taeko, and Arthur Miller, the final stanza of Tamura's 1962 poem "A World Without Words" (*Kotoba no nai sekai*) is read aloud as an image of one of his poetry collections and a photographic portrait appear on the screen:

> If only we didn't remember words,
> But because we remembered Japanese and a few foreign words,

I stand still inside your tears,
I come back inside your blood.[185]

The contradiction between Suzuki's non-normative sexual and revolutionary desires are constricted by her comparatively hum drum life as a professional book clerk in the hub of the former empire, left standing alone in tears.

Without claiming an absolute privilege for Tamura over the host of other figures invoked, it seems to me that the desire to not remember language articulated in "World Without Words" might most precisely resemble the coordinates of Suzuki's crisis and subsequent transformation, as a paradoxical call to action that is fundamentally incapable of prescribing a political itinerary. Birdy and Suzuki's journey periodically included and excluded her boss Tanabe Mōichi (as himself), a failed cultural critic that owned the bookstore. Part of an older generation, Tanabe counted himself out of Birdy and Suzuki's psychosocial revolution against intellectualism, announcing a commitment to his intellectual but unradical social role: "The books are me".[186] Thus, in 1968, the eruptive potential of the loss of language through language constituted another form of the blurring and dissolution of sociological categories so embedded in the politics of the 1960s in Japan and the world.[187] Global in its orientation and paradoxical in its vision, Tamura's later poem hewed close to the standpoint that Arechi poets first articulated in 1948, privileging the discursive space of poetry as the site to address "the problem of faith in language."[188]

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[185] Ōshima Nagisa. "Shinjuku dorobō nikki" 1968 https://archive.org/details/diary.-of.-a.-shinjuku.-thief.-1969.1080p.-web-dl.-ddp-2.0.-h.-264-sb-r

[186] Ibid.

[187] For a discussion of the global politics of 1960s artistic practices in Shinjuku, see William Marotti. "The Politics of Violence, Glue-Sniffing, and Liberation: Exclusions and Possibilities in 1968 Japan" in *Drugs and the Politics of Consumption in Japan*. Edited by Judith Vitale, Miriam Kingsberg Kadia, and Oleg Benesch (Brill, 2023), 288-315.

[188] Ayukawa Nobuo. "Arechi no tachiba", 487.

Stimulating (if perhaps less radical) invocations of the group appeared in textual spaces across the 1980s, during which time Kuroda, Nakagiri, and Ayukawa all passed away. Roughly two years before Naoki Sakai's pathbreaking deconstruction of Japanese culture through the praxis of Arechi, the poet and scholar and Kitagawa Tooru first published his *Arechiron* in 1983, which constituted the first study of its kind, bringing together historically grounded poetic interpretation with narratives of his personal relationships to members of the group.[189] As a culmination of his work connecting postwar poetry to practices of autonomy that Kitagawa had also begun in the early 1960s, the stakes of the decade's LDP's initiatives for high growth, income doubling and depoliticization seemed to return as a ghost in the Japanese economic miracle of the 1980s.[190] In a new context of nationalist pop-cultural exportation, alleged hyper-technologization, and the transformation into what has been called an "information society", the desolation of the figure of waste land might have even constituted a form of nostalgia for the global 1960s and the anarchic destitution of the latter half of the 1940s.[191] The simultaneous deaths of three core Arechi poets in the 1980s perhaps put to the test Sakai's claim that postwar poetry refused to accept its own final interment as "historical nutrients serving the spirit…"[192]

In the contemporary moment, invocations of Arechi seem to remain primarily within the purview of academics and poets, lack the connection to the 1960s that characterized the former two. Nevertheless, a growing body of articles in English and books in Japanese continue to

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[189] Kitagawa Tooru. *Arechi ron* (1983)

[190] For discussion of the depoliticizing effects of high growth, see William Marotti. *Money Trains and Guillotines: Art and Revolution* (Duke University Press, 2013).

[191] For a study of the relationship between apocalyptic anxieties and the shift to an information society, see Thomas Lamarre. "Born of Trauma: *Akira* and Capitalist Modes of Destruction" in *Positions: East Asia Critique* 16 (no.1), 2008. 131-156.

[192] Naoki Sakai. *Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 192.

interpret and reinterpret the project from a host of perspectives with radically different ends in mind. Though this may never constitute an Arechi boom, the prospects of a return to the core problematic of their standpoint and consciousness are strong, not least because of the likelihood of another global crisis.[193] In the all but inevitable event of such a catastrophe, the figure of Arechi will probably reappear as a trope, and hopefully the trope will function as the point of departure for further investigation of their problematic's ongoing relevance. There may be plenty of time yet. It may already be too late.

[193] As an analog, one might consider the Covid-19 pandemic corresponding resurgence in interest in Albert Camus' *The Plague*. Alain de Botton. "Camus on the Coronavirus" in New York Times, March 19, 2020. DOI: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-camus-plague.html

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