

HISTORY, TRAUMA, AND THE ETHICS OF REMEMBERING  
IN THE EARLY WORKS OF TAKEDA TAIJUN (1943-1955)

by

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History, Trauma, and the Ethics of Remembering in the Early Works of Takeda Taijun (1943-1955)

Thesis directed by Professor Janice Carole Brown

This project seeks to determine the manner in which the early works of the Japanese writer Takeda Taijun present a response to the traumatic experiences accompanying the defeat of Japan following the end of the Pacific War and how this response contributes to conceptions of identity, subjectivity, and ethics in the post-traumatic society of modern Japan. The project will seek to interrogate Takeda's ideas and literary techniques through close readings of his early works across three separate thematic lenses: history, the traumatic, and the absolute (represented in the theoretical term of “landscape”). In interrogating Takeda's fiction in this manner, I intend to demonstrate that Takeda's conception of morality underwent a radical transformation in which he discovered an alterity of self emerging from the relief of the individual against the spatial immanence of history. This discovery allowed Takeda to develop a new conception of ethics privileging an intersubjective regard distinct from previous models of human relations based largely on the ethical blind spots inherent to “humanist” discourse within liberal capitalist society. The project includes two original translations of Takeda's work.

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## INTRODUCTION

This project will seek, generally, to address the interlocking issues of ethics, history, and memory within Takeda Taijun's (武田泰淳) early work, a period which I operationally define as spanning from the production of his first widely recognized work *Sima Qian: The World of Shiki* (司馬遷:「史記」の世界 *Shibasen: Shiki no sekai*) in 1943 to approximately 1955, when both the content and expression of Takeda's oeuvre changed significantly as he moved away from works that related directly to the character and consequences of the Sino-Japanese and Pacific Wars and began to focus on more abstracted conceptions of religious morality and the potential for experimental expression in drama and film.

The time period of interest (1943-1955) traces a significant arc in Takeda's development as a writer that is key to understanding the nature of his intellectual project and, ultimately, its successes and failings in formulating an exploration of the moral dimensions of historical trauma and how traumatic events contribute to a conception of individual identity in what Bracha Ettinger, Jean Baudrillard, and other critical theorists term a “post-traumatic” world. Takeda, like many of his contemporaries, including Noma Hiroshi (野間宏), Abe Kōbō (安部公房), Takeuchi Yoshimi (竹内好), Ōoka Shōhei (大岡正平), and others, is notable in that he presents a writer who, early in his career, demonstrated a strong commitment to historical materialism and leftist activism, but who suffered what might be very loosely termed a “historical trauma” in which he was conscripted (either directly or indirectly) to participate in the moral atrocities perpetrated by the imperialist government of Japan in its colonialist period. Takeda, like many of these writers was deeply affected by the collapse of the Japanese empire in

its defeat, and endured a repetition of the trauma of this destruction following the war.<sup>1</sup> As a result, literature became a vehicle by which this trauma was simultaneously recorded, remembered, and relived. Many of these writers, in writing works rooted in their own experience of the various trauma of the war, attempted to make sense of the fissure in their personal and collective identity formed by a “severance” of self across the divide of this historical disruption.<sup>2</sup>

Where the issue of “ethics” enters into this discussion is in evaluating how the intellectual conception of this movement of the individual (or rather individuals, as trauma is never the experience of one person) in relation to the larger “world” (e.g. history, force, or the absolute nature of the event that supersedes the “individual”) leads one to navigate and interpret the political world around them following the traumatic incident. Thus, this problematique incorporates an assemblage of both one’s own self-identification/formulation vis-à-vis the event (identity) and one’s method of “reacting” to the event within the context of the greater social order (agency). Though not the neatest definition of the word, this process loosely conforms to the term “subjectivity,” a concept which, for Takeda, and many other writers after the war, is inherently an issue with ethical and sociopolitical implications in its expression.<sup>3</sup> That is to say,

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<sup>1</sup> By this I do not mean to imply that Takeda or any of these writers ascribed a positive value or faith to the Japanese nation that they felt was betrayed in the defeat. Rather, I mean to say the destruction of Japan in its defeat presented a historical shift in which both the narratives surrounding Japanese identity and the potential of physical destruction enabled by recent advances in modern warfare (e.g. atomic bombs, the firebombings of Tokyo) unseated previous conceptions of the “limits” established by history, creating a sense of existential crisis. Takeda attributes the term “annihilation” to this disruption, a term that I will develop in the project proper.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of severance is an important one to this project, one which I will be writing against at most times. My conception of severance is, on a basic level, based within Lacanian psychoanalysis, referring to a primary point of traumatic separation that is required for both individual identity and language to emerge. Though Lacan’s original concept of severance is essentially limited to the individual within the transition to the “mirror stage” of psychological development, both trauma theorists and literary critics (including Bracha Ettinger, Dominick LaCapra, and Cathy Caruth) have, in recent years, demonstrated that there is rich potential for applying the concept to points of historical trauma and, perhaps more importantly, to the strategy of developing political narratives around incidences of historical trauma. It is with this latter perspective in mind that I use the word severance.

<sup>3</sup> My concept of “ethics” here and throughout this project is largely reliant on Levinas’ conception of ethics as outlined in his work *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961). On ethics, Levinas writes: “Ethics is the spiritual optics. The subject-object relation does not reflect it; in the impersonal relation that leads to it the invisible but personal God is not approached outside of all human presence. The ideal is not only a being superlatively being,

for many of these early writers, by nature of their relation to the occurrence of “history” in events of the war, events with which they held an ambiguous relationship due to the collapse (and reconstruction) of established societal norms, the very identity of the writer becomes a moral quandary which begs examination.<sup>4</sup>

This research question naturally raises the question as to what is meant by “ethics” and, indeed, what is meant specifically by “remembering.” Generally speaking, Takeda's exploration of these concepts can be mapped across three distinct yet overlapping themes of his oeuvre that correspond to different stages of his movement through the process of experiencing trauma and “remembering” this trauma in his early work. For the purposes of this project, I intend to examine Takeda's inquiry into “subjectivity” in three valences of meaning: the subject vis-à-vis history, the subject vis-à-vis the traumatic, and the subject vis-à-vis “landscape.”<sup>5</sup> The intention in dividing Takeda's oeuvre along this conceptual divide is not to offer three competing readings of his work, but to establish the character of Takeda's literary project and, indeed, his conception of ethics, within the context of a conversation of these three interrelated perspectives. I argue that these three perspectives, though they at times present contradictory and divergent approaches,

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a sublimation of the objective, or, in the solitude of love, a sublimation of a Thou. The work of justice—the uprightness of the face to face—is necessary in order that the breach that leads to God be produced—and “vision” here coincides with this work of justice. Hence metaphysics is enacted where the social relation is enacted—in our relations with men. There can be no “knowledge” of God separated from the relationship with men. The Other is the very locus of metaphysical truth, and is indispensable for my relation with God.” (Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis Kluwer (Philadelphia: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 78.).

This does not mean that I endorse Levinas' perspective as gospel, but rather I feel that this presents a compelling means by which we can link Takeda's preoccupation with the relationship of the problems of subjectivity, witnessing, and alterity in his work to a larger question of morality which presented a clear and urgent object for Takeda in determining his own responsibility to the events of the war.

<sup>4</sup> To offer a few examples of moral quandaries that directly faced these writers, Takeda included, there was the matter the identity of intellectuals who did not agree with the imperialist regime but were complicit in its actions, the responsibility for the horrors of the Sino-Japanese Wars, the problem of Japanese “victimhood” following the Pacific war, the persecution of Japanese abroad following the end of the war, and the collective responsibility for the systemic atrocities committed against Japan's colonial subjects.

<sup>5</sup> This third, likely more enigmatic point, is defined later within the third chapter, but essentially refers to the material and conceptual sociopolitical conditions that surround the development of subject-object relations à la Karatani Kōjin's (柄谷行人) now famous essay, “The Discovery of Landscape” (*Fūkei no hakken*, 1980).

ultimately form a sum that is greater than its parts: a conception of morality that coalesces the experiences of the individual with alterior “others” in an extended process of co-poiesis.

Thus, in each of these chapters I will closely examine several of Takeda's works using the aide of a particular theoretical lens. Again, this is not to assert the primacy of any one method of reading, or even to imply a particular character to the works of Takeda's that I examine in each section, but rather to establish the manner in which these texts create an evolving dialogue surrounding the concept of subjectivity and how the melange of these different perspectives ultimately informs a working model of how an “ethical” accounting of subjectivity might occur within a post-traumatic social landscape.

The first chapter will focus on the concept of history in Takeda's fiction. In this chapter I will seek to delineate how Takeda conceived of history as a dialectical relationship between two conceptual forces, particularity and universality, and to examine how the relationship of these two forces shifted following Takeda's experience as a Japanese soldier in the Second Sino-Japanese War and the defeat of Japan in the Pacific War. I argue that these events inherently altered his understanding of the function of history, both in his conception of history writ-large, and in the praxis of memory and recording in literary expression. To that end, this chapter will include an overview of Takeda's personal history, with particular attention paid to the formative experiences of his capture and imprisonment by the Japanese police, his movement to China as a soldier and member of the transport corps, and his life in Shanghai at the time of the defeat. This will be followed by an analysis of his texts dealing with the matter of “global history” in the context of these experiences.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> I wish to note that the emphasis on Takeda's biography here is neither intended to demonstrate some causal “intentionality” in the writing act, nor to offer an empirical yardstick for the purposes of separating the “reality” of his experiences from the “fiction” (impossible as it is). Rather, the intention here is to recontextualize the act of writing within the material existence of the author, to highlight the manner in which writing trauma serves as a

In terms of textual analysis, this chapter will focus primarily on the two works: *Sima Qian: The World of Shiki* and “On Annihilation” (滅亡について *Metsubō ni tsuite*, 1948). In this chapter, I will rely primarily on the theoretical treatises of Karatani Kōjin and Hegel, and the scholarship of Takeda specialists Kawanishi Masa'aki (川西正明) and Watanabe Kazutani (渡辺和谷). Ultimately, I seek to demonstrate how Takeda's conception of “history” or “the world” as an absolute without center, in which the individual operates as a “political actor” observed by a recording “bystander” (傍観者 *bōkansha*), ultimately shifted due to an evaluation of the concepts of universality and particularity following the disruptive event of Japan's defeat in the end of the war. The experience of historical destruction, particularly the atomic bombings of Japan, which are examined at length in “On Annihilation,” inherently altered Takeda's conception of the connective legacy of the historical world, moving to a model of historical alterity based on the potentiality of non-existence. This shift inherently changes the nature of the recorder of history as well, a shift Takeda notes in the conceptual transition of “bystander” into “witness” (目撃者 *mokugekisha*), a transformation in the narratorial gaze that has significant implications for chapters two and three.

Having unpacked Takeda's intellectual approach to history and how it changed in response to the experience of the war and other traumatic points of historical divergence, it becomes germane to consider how Takeda's fiction functioned as a recording of and response to these

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“gesture” of subjectivity. This point becomes more relevant when we consider the shift in Takeda's conception of the role of the historian/narrator from his initial literary work from “bystander” to “witness,” as the act of recording takes on an affective dimension inseparable from the experience of remembering. In other words, what this biographical understanding of Takeda offers us is not an insight into his own character via the text, but an insight into the text via his position as “witness” to the machinations of history.

historical events and what the narratological structure of these texts can reveal about how Takeda's exploration of his own experiences and agency vis-à-vis these events impacted his conception of ethics. The second chapter will move to Takeda's works which deal with his personal reaction to and “remembering” of incidents of historical trauma, many of them drawn from his own experiences living in Shanghai at the time of Japan's defeat in the Pacific War and of being imprisoned by the Japanese military police for leftist activities in the 1930's. For many writers and thinkers of this time, the traumatic events of the war, imprisonment, defeat, and the atomic bombings presented a kind of “indigestible” historical fact that could not easily be resolved with former modes of thinking. Indeed, much of the fiction produced by Japanese writers after the war demonstrates that these individuals were not so much attempting to come to terms with these traumatic events, as they were attempting to determine what stance, if any, was left to them following the collapse of narratives of national and personal identity following the defeat. Eventually, due largely to political pressure from the American Occupation in collaboration with Japan's recently “rehabilitated” class of political elites, the notion that the end of the war and the atomic bombings were points of “severance” separating Japan's newly established status as a postwar democracy from a prewar imperialist power became cemented within historical narrative as fact. However, reading the literature of this time, it becomes clear that though there was indeed a “disruption” of identity, the resulting identities and subjectivities of Japanese individuals following the end of the war were not nearly so clear cut from the past as official narratives propagated by the American and Japanese governments made them out to be.

What is perhaps most immediately apparent in literary works in Japan at this time is the manner in which the event “returns.” In Takeda's fiction, a recurring theme is the notion that a crime, all trace of which is supposedly eliminated by an “annihilating event” (e.g. the defeat, fire

bombings, the destruction of records), somehow miraculously, often grotesquely, manages to return to the present in some spectral form. The characters in Takeda's fiction too, seem to suffer from the incidence of historical trauma in a very peculiar way. Often these characters are clear stand-ins for Takeda's own experience and mirror many of his personal and intellectual quirks (if we are to take his non-fiction writings and interviews as a general guide). But these experiences and narratives are usually divvied up amongst several different characters, creating a kind of “doubling” or “splitting” of the writer's own subjective identity. Naturally, in the act of recording or writing, the writing of oneself always presents an initial, usually unspoken, “splitting” of the writer from his own experiences, from his own identity that is given a bounded form that extends beyond the individual, but which is limited within the context of the work. However, in splitting this subjectivity further across several different literary “agents,” Takeda does not merely portray the multivariate nature of his own approach to reality but, in effect, he allows these particular distillations of subjectivity to extend to beyond the boundaries of the writer's own conception of self, reaching conclusions that extend beyond the domain of lived or even imagined experience that in turn clarify the “lived” material experience as merely one of infinite possible outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

A major effect of this act of subjectival “doubling” is not only the ability to examine the conception of the subject vis-à-vis its own actions, but also to envision the significance of these subject-forming actions within a radical new intersubjectival/transsubjectival orientation. Actions that Takeda’s subject may have undertaken in reality, instead become done “to” him, and actions inflicted on him become “his” own. The context of the actor also changes the nature of the action

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<sup>7</sup> A prime example of this is the dual narration of the characters Sugi and Jirō in the text *Judgment* (審判 *Shinpan*, 1947). Though Sugi and Jirō are both stand-ins for/distillations of Takeda's own experience (his experience as an expatriate writer living in Shanghai and his experience as a soldier fighting on the Chinese front), they assume radically different trajectories both in their conception of the defeat and, ultimately, in the ethical service they pay to that conception (as Sugi repatriates to Japan like Takeda did in reality, whereas Jirō remains in China as penance for his crimes, entering a territory resonant with but completely unknown to Takeda's own experience).

itself, as Takeda's exploration of a “potentiality” that can only emerge belatedly, at a side turn from history, in turn forms the opportunity for a belated “relationality” to emerge between characters who, by nature of historical events, did not come to be. And with this re-imagination, an empathetic sense of “relationality” (what Takeda refers to as *kankeisei* (関係性)), a series of relations informed by humanism, but critical of its place against the grain of the anterior subject, emerges. This phantasmal relationality and empathy can only emerge at odds with the development of history, a force which is for Takeda, ideal and arbitrary, but also teeming with a kind of resonance that can lead to the resurfacing of events and incidences supposedly impossible to recall and new ways in which individuals can discover connections via the uncanny “trace” of these buried experiences.

This new conception of history inherently revamps the dialectical relationship of time and space that structured Takeda's prior intellectual project. The transformation of Takeda's ideas at this time, then, concerns the position of resonance, which moves from the formulation of a direct legacy of individuals to a fragmented potentiality of subjects, split from the course of history by nature of divergent action. Thus, while the outset for this self-exploration emerges from a psychological “severance” the historical event inflicts on the individual and history, Takeda demonstrates that this disruption only breeds a more complicated, matrixial series of relations, formerly inaccessible in prior schemas of identity.

This chapter will focus primarily on the text *Judgment* (審判 *Shinpan*, 1947). In this chapter I will rely on post-Lacanian theorists of psychoanalytic thought and cultural theorists devoted to the examination of representations of the traumatic in media and culture (e.g., Bracha Ettinger and Jean Baudrillard). In this chapter I hope to demonstrate how instances of subjectival “doubling” and “fragmentation” in this work, taken in the context of Takeda's radicalization of

the concept of history, allow us to envision the significance of subject-forming actions within a radical, new intersubjectival/transsubjectival orientation. This new orientation is inherently related to the re-conceiving of history following the experience of the traumatic, and the manner in which both the individual and the larger cultural sphere “remembers again” following this cognitive reorganization is critical to understanding how conceptions of individual agency and ethics emerge in the post-traumatic landscape.

The third and final chapter will seek to examine how this radical shift in Takeda's conception of subjectivity contributed to and implicitly altered his evaluation of the absolute, a term which I characterize for the purposes of this project as “landscape.”<sup>8</sup> Essentially what this term implies is that, following this drastic shift in the nature of individual identity (and with it, individual agency and culpability), Takeda's conception of history dissolves from the status of an ordered system into an interplay of physical forces and experiences which surround, move, and permeate the individual in their own (now-extended) experience of self. As Takeda's fiction develops, the individual becomes increasingly amorphous, though is bounded always by the experience of the “natural world,” the flows and movements (often jarring and “traumatic” in their own right) of the environment that surrounds and links subjects together by nature of their phenomenological

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<sup>8</sup> Takeda himself ascribes several different terms with this meaning in his work, the two most prominent being “the world” (世界 *sekai*), “space” (空間 *kūkan*), and also, to a lesser degree, “landscape” (風景 *fūkei*). I chose to select the last term to correspond to Takeda's evolved conception of the absolute for several reasons. The first being that these terms are used by Takeda quite often, to the extent that their meaning becomes difficult to trace at any one given point without extensive contextual explanation (e.g. is this the “world” described in *Sima Qian* or the “world” following it). Additionally, Takeda often uses “space” and “world” synonymously, though occasionally describing one as constitutive of the other. While my first chapter will in part delineate this relationship of concepts, it becomes unwieldy to use one or the other after this analysis to describe a general trend in Takeda's writing as opposed to one of these distinct concepts within his body of work. Finally, and most importantly, the terms world and space, which are often abstracted heavily in Takeda's writing, do not well encapsulate the sense of phenomenological force Takeda attributes to the absolute in his postwar writings. In these, the absolute takes on dimensions of actual physical landscape, physical force, the cosmos, and the body, which are all portrayed from the perspective of the “witness” (*mokugekisha*). In describing the act of “viewing” the composition of these forces (a viewing which naturally, influences and shapes the viewer), the phrases “world” and “space” may serviceability attend to this meaning, but the phrase “landscape” encapsulates this subjectival composition/shaping more closely, in my opinion.

reality. In examining to what extent this “absolute” moves the individual and, indeed, often overcomes the individual, we can arrive at a conception of subjectival identity in which the particular individual, compressed by the universality of the absolute, comes to fill the shape of the circumstances that move him, in an assemblage-like structure of behavior. This determination of Takeda's leads us to important conclusions about the nature of remembering and the ethical pitfalls one might encounter by conceiving of a larger ideological basis for subjectivity.

This chapter will examine the text *Luminous Moss* (ひかり ごけ *Hikarigoke*, 1954). On the theoretical side of things, I will rely on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Karatani Kōjin, and Brian Massumi. Deleuze's concepts of assemblage, rhizome, and *haecceity* are particularly vital to the construction of the argument here, as is Brian Massumi's conception of “affect” and how it relates to individual subjectivity.<sup>9</sup> It is the discovery of this configuration, of the multiplicity of “thingness” that force conveys, which Takeda discovers in his investigations of fragmented subjectivity in its infinite branching potentiality. This new dialectic acknowledges the resonant inter-connectedness of acting subjects, but simultaneously affirms their encapsulation within a system of flows and forces. The discovery of landscape in Takeda's fiction is thus a “re-discovery” of subject-object relations, not absolute in the sense of a monolithic, ideological “I,” but in subjectivity as a configuration of forces, and flows. The Deleuzian conceptualization of flows in the rhizome offers a solution to the dialectical opposition of time and space that resolves

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<sup>9</sup> Haecceity presents a conception of identity that Deleuze describes as running against the individual subject, an identity that emerges from the “immanence” of a configuration rather than an individual object. Deleuze writes, “There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name haecceity for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected...Tales must contain haecceities that are not simply emplacements, but concrete individuations that have a status of their own and direct the metamorphosis of things and subjects.” Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Masumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 261.

the matter of “stagnation” in Takeda's depiction of history. This new dialectic, which expresses subjectivity as always running against the immediate immanence of history's spatial unfolding within the moment, provides a compelling foil to the Levinasian conception of ethics based on the temporal model of futurity. I conclude that this intellectual tension is what ultimately leads Takeda to reject the potential of models for radical political organization and contributes to a sense of moral complicity that characterizes much of the postwar democratic literary movement.

The project will also consist of two translations of Takeda's work, presented as an appendix to the analytic section of the project. The appendix will include translations of *Judgment* (1947) and “On Annihilation” (1947). The translation of these works is critical to the project as they present an often-overlooked political dimension to Takeda's oeuvre, particularly considering that, to date, a total of only five short pieces of Takeda's fiction have been translated into English. None of these translated works address Takeda's experience with the war, the experience of his imprisonment by the Japanese military police, nor his conception of contemporary political ideologies (e.g. communism, fascism, and Japan's postwar democratic movement) and their historical trappings, with the possible exception of *Luminous Moss* which has suffered from numerous unfortunate omissions in its sole English translation by Yusaburo Shibuya and Sanford Goldstein. While several prior translations are contextualized by translators as addressing the problem of “morality,” the glaring omission of the historical-material context surrounding these texts reduces the conception of Takeda's “moral outlook” to an abstract and toothless condemnation of an amorphous and readily transmuted evil, rather than a reaction to specific historical and personal circumstances and their tangled relationship. I hesitate to say that the goal here is to “recast” Takeda's work in these translations, as he remains virtually unknown outside

of Japan and China, but rather these translations offer the opportunity to further complicate the narratives of political reformation during this period.

## Chapter 1 Records of Annihilation: History, Destruction, and Subjectivity in *Sima Qian: The World of Shiki* and “On Annihilation”

### Introduction

Considering that the great majority of Takeda's work is comprised of short fiction and essays, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that, in scholarship surrounding Takeda, one of the more prominent themes is the matter of “history,” particularly as regards his early work. Though Takeda later rose to prominence as a writer of fiction, like many of his contemporaries in the tumultuous period of the 1920s and 30s, he began his literary career as a cultural and historical scholar and a fervent advocate of the historical materialist project of Marxism. Many of these writers, Takeda included, renounced their commitment to Marxism and leftist activism under increasing (but admittedly unequal) pressure from the increasingly militant police and conservative authorities, but few completely abandoned their focus on developing an ethos of “history” and the nature of political agency vis-à-vis the course of historical events.<sup>10</sup> In a recent study, Takeda scholar Michizono Tatsuya (満園達也) demonstrated that, between 1921 and 1945, approximately 300 articles containing the Chinese character for “history” (史 *shi*) in the title were produced in Japan.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, when one analyzes the breakdown of Michizono's

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<sup>10</sup> Yoshimoto Takaaki, “On *Tenkō*, or Ideological Conversion,” trans. Hisaaki Wake, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, vol. 20, The Culture of Translation in Modern Japan (2008): 99-119.

In fact, the coerced recanting of leftist activity may have inadvertently contributed to intellectuals' conception of this problem as they shifted to a position of uncomfortable complacency with the increasingly disastrous Japanese Imperial project. This newfound position formed a source of existential anxiety for many young intellectuals, although it should be noted that a great number also embraced this shift wholeheartedly and became some of the most rabid promoters of Japanese ultra-nationalism. While the nature of this political shift does not form the topic of this study, I would argue that, for many of these intellectuals, including Takeda, the praxis they developed in light of their political conversion can be traced to a basic problem of existential anxiety regarding one's status as a “historical subject” suddenly deprived of their means of expressing political agency via political organization.

<sup>11</sup> Michizono Tatsuya 道園達也, “‘Shi’ no jidai (Sono ichi) – Takeda Taijun Shibasen no seisei (3)” 「史」の時代 (その一) – 武田泰淳『司馬遷』の生成 (3), *Kokugo bungaku kenkyū* 48 (2013): 155-156.

figures, more than half of these works were produced between 1937 and 1945, a period during which Japanese nationalist discourse reached its zenith following the outset of the Second Sino-Japanese War. While it may be overly reductive to imply a causative relationship between these two developments, it can be argued that the increased attention given to “history” by Japanese intellectuals at this time reflected an increasing preoccupation with the nature of individual and social identity/subjectivity in the context of the Japanese Imperial project and the problem of “locating” oneself vis-à-vis a larger historical ethos.

It is first pertinent, however, to consider what is meant by the term “history” in this context. At the time during which Takeda first began writing in the 1930s, this was a question inherently bound to the structural politics of the Japanese imperial/colonial project. The deployment of historical narrative both in the intellectual and popular spheres for the purpose of strengthening the perceived authority of state power is hardly a novel concept but, in the case of Imperial Japan, this dynamic was also of critical importance to formulating the manner in which individual identity and intellectual subjectivity manifested. Japanese intellectuals and political nationalists alike seeking to form a cultural identity of “Japaneseness” and a conception of a particularly “Japanese” worldview in the context of Japan’s modern state-building project were presented with a strong onus to formulate alternatives to Western models of thought as these were considered to form, to an extent, the intellectual basis of Western powers’ colonial project in Asia. This tension between the drive to formulate an ontological Japanese identity on the side of nationalist discourse and the larger recognition of the complicity of certain modes of intellectual theorization connected with the violence of Western powers across Asia formed a kind of

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Michizono limits his survey to articles published in six prominent magazines at the time: *Chūkōron* (中央公論), *Kaizō* (改造), *Bungeishunjū* (文藝春秋), *Shinchō* (新潮), *Bungakukai* (文学会), *Bungei* (文芸), and *Hihyō* (批評). Naturally, there were potentially even more publications than those that Michizono covers.

divisive line of intellectual agency among Japanese intellectuals. In other words, so long as Japan was beholden to Western models of thinking, the argument goes, Japan (and, by extension, Asia and the East) could never be free of its tyranny. Obviously there lies deeply unmaterialistic thinking and a number of bad suppositions at the heart of this argument, but it cannot be denied that this pressure, vocalized in an urgent need to “overcome” the West, to “overcome” modernity (a concept deeply associated with the imperial evangelism of Western powers), underpinned the project of many of Japan’s intellectual elites at this time.

To offer a specific example, scholars of modern intellectual history likely require no introduction to the so-called “Kyoto school” (京都学派 *Kyōto-gakuha*) of intellectuals who presented a multi-pronged approach to the binding of supposedly “objective” criticisms of religion, history, and anthropological and natural sciences to the aims of Japanese imperial ideology, but understanding the manner in which these scholars’ conceptual theories of historical organization emerged in opposition to perceived “Western” models of the conceptualization of history elucidates not only the manner in which “history” provided a vehicle for establishing intellectual agency and national identity (albeit often complicit in a genocidal imperial power structure), but also how the problem of history and its conceptualization formed a kind of double-bind for writers and intellectuals like Takeda who also encountered these problems at this time.<sup>12</sup> To espouse a “Western” conception of history (the operating definition of which was

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<sup>12</sup> In citing the Kyoto School here, I do not mean to imply that this philosophy was some monolithic seat of intellectual/ political authority at this time, or even that this “school” presented a cohesive ideological core. In reality, the “members” of the Kyoto School were a diverse group of scholars who worked in a diverse array of fields and often espoused philosophical outlooks that were in direct contradiction with one another. Indeed, the “school” itself was a community largely specified in retro and the primary point of identification for “membership” was each scholar’s proximity to the considered “founder” of the group Nishida Kitarō (西田幾多郎). However, diverse and disperse as each of these scholars may be, all of them were devoted to the intellectual project of attempting to critique the institution of philosophy (stereotyped as an inherently Western institution) and to “overcome” the universality of Western logic, a venture which, more often than not, manifested in the development of the ideology of an Asian particularism that was born from the tensions of the developing Japanese Imperial project. Although

essentially based in the work of either Hegel or Marx, as these were the models most frequently associated with Western ideological power in the former case and a direct affront to the aims of the imperial state in the latter case) carried both the existential danger of “denying” Asia and the material danger of being targeted by the Japanese state, which was in the process of eliminating all forms of Marxist and Leftist opposition, often through incredibly violent means.<sup>13</sup> This problematique was compounded by the practice of *tenkō* (転向) or ideological conversion being perpetuated by the Japanese state at this time.<sup>14</sup> Communist organization in Japan had been illegal since the inception of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) in 1922 but, beginning with the brutal police crackdowns and mass arrests of Communists during the March 15<sup>th</sup> Incident in 1928, communists, socialist activists and sympathizers were gradually rounded up by the police and coerced, often violently, into recanting their political commitments and affirming their fealty

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these scholars’ conclusions were often not extreme enough for the right wing at the time who often criticized the school as being antinationalistic, it is truly perilous to ignore how the contributions of thinkers like Nishida, in their concepts of meontology and a “world history” developed from within the Imperial core, offered intellectual justification for the empire-centric perspective of Japanese national project, if only by a larger erasure of supposed political bias from the privileged perspective of the intellectual elite. Additionally, many of the Kyoto School members like Tanabe Hajime (田辺元) were fervent nationalists who actively disseminated the ideology of the ultranationalist ruling class. In this way, the Kyoto School offers a prime example of how the intellectualism of the period, emerging from the tension of political and personal precarity, became a tool for the Imperial project. The Kyoto School also presents a salient example to contrast with Takeda’s development given both parties’ considerations of Buddhism in the context of scientific theories (particularly of the language of physics and naturalism) and their deployment of burgeoning poststructuralist thought as a means of developing new conceptions of how Buddhist thought offers a means of parsing subjectivity and cultural discourse.

<sup>13</sup> Members of the Kyoto school resolved this dilemma through a unique kind of compromise in which they appropriated a popular and ideologically amenable form of historical scholarship derived from the German historian Leopold von Ranke whom they conceptualized as an embodiment of resistance to the historical philosophies of Hegel and Marx from within the Western cultural core. Ranke’s so-called “empirical” approach to history, which maintained that the “essence” (*eigentlich*) of history was not only possible to discover, but that it was the historian’s task to do so through the reporting of essential or objective fact, presented an amenable alternative to the members of the school who purported to desire an “overcoming” of modernity through highly romantic and immaterial notions of historical philosophy. As might be surmised, however, a so-called “objective” history proved hardly tenable in practice, and what Ranke’s “empirical” vision offered was merely an illusion of impartiality cast over a highly problematic ideological stance.

<sup>14</sup> *Tenkō* (lit. about-face or turn around) refers to the mass ideological reversal of Japanese socialists between 1925 and 1945. While *tenkō* refers to recanting leftist politics in any form and many intellectuals renounced their political commitments with little urging, it was often done under duress of police violence or as a condition for release from state incarceration.

to the Japanese state. In this way, for many intellectuals at this time, the conceptualization of history was deeply associated with both questions of personal subjectivity and the problem of how to act “ethically.” Following the mass abdication of Marxism as a result of brutal police crackdowns, writers were tasked to determine their own political identities as subjects complicit with the violent colonial mission of the Japanese Imperial core.<sup>15</sup>

Takeda was by no means immune to the effect of these sociopolitical tensions. To the contrary, their effect was likely compounded all the more when, in 1937, Takeda was conscripted into the Transport Corps of the Japanese Imperial Army and made to fight on the Chinese front. For Takeda, who had already formally renounced his ties to leftist organizations at his father’s behest after several bouts of imprisonment, and who had devoted all of his energies since to the study of China in order to elevate it from cultural obsolescence and antiquity, the cruelty and magnitude of this event must have presented Takeda with a terrible shock. Interestingly, however, Takeda’s personal notes and ruminations on this development from this tumultuous period are quite sparse. What emerged in their place was, instead, a new philosophy of history.

While on the Chinese front, Takeda began thinking about the Han historian Sima Qian (司馬遷), a pursuit that appears to have held a deeply personal significance as he described it later in a 1952 interview as “an attempt to test his own spirit.”<sup>16</sup> Specifically, he became deeply invested in Sima Qian’s seminal work on Chinese history: *The Records of the Grand Historian* (史記

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<sup>15</sup> The effect of the *tenkō* on the landscape of inter-war to postwar literature and intellectualism cannot be understated. As Karatani Kōjin writes on the decay of Japanese intellectualism following *tenkō*, “Apostates from Marxism tended to turn to religion or nihilism, or else followed a trajectory in which they modified the Hegelian-Marxist theory of development in order to posit the liberation of Asia as a “world mission,” thereby legitimizing Japanese imperialism. This is a kind of logic that could be produced only by former Marxists.” Karatani Kōjin, *History and Repetition*, trans. Seiji Lippit (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 205.

<sup>16</sup> Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳, “*Shibasen: Shiki no seka*” 司馬遷：史記の世界 (Tokyo: Kōdansha 講談社, 1965), 4.

*Shiki*).<sup>17</sup> Using this text and others by Sima Qian as a basis, Takeda worked over the next six years to develop what might be considered a totally novel approach to historical philosophy. A mélange of historical-materialism, Hegelian concepts (e.g. “the Spirit” and the conceptual superstructure), and literary theory, *Sima Qian* marks the formulation of a philosophy of history that attempted to navigate the fraught political conditions of attempting to locate a Japanese subjectivity and agency by way of the historical event.<sup>18</sup> In *Sima Qian*, Takeda proposes that *Shiki* was revolutionary in that it proposed a “world without center.” In contrast to prior histories, Sima Qian’s *Shiki* does not privilege a particular era, dynasty, or individual figure or actor. Rather, the textual construction of *Shiki*, in affirming the inter-reliance of political actors as the means by which the world “moves” and conceptualizations of history develop (e.g. morality, nations, etc.), places the material relations between political actors, rather than the actors or institutions themselves, as the center of the “world.” In this manner, the “whole” of humanity forms a kind of “centerless” center, in that no individual actor or actors can form a permanent anchor for the world as all individuals, nations, and civilizations are subject to an eventual historical disruption, what Takeda describes in terms of annihilation (*metsubō*).<sup>19</sup> This leads Takeda to formulate a larger conception of humanity as a kind of historical assemblage; he argues that the particular discontinuities (断続 *danzoku*) that emerge among political actors

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<sup>17</sup> For the sake of clarity and brevity, I will from hereon refer to Sima Qian’s *Records of the Grand Historian* as *Shiki* and Takeda’s *Sima Qian: The World of Shiki* as *Sima Qian*.

<sup>18</sup> By “Japanese” I do not mean to imply some monolithic or essential characterization of the Japanese identity; Takeda is very clear in his references to “Japaneseness” in *Sima Qian*, that he is referring to the material conditions surrounding subjectivity in modern Japan in the period during which he is writing, that is, empire in late stage of development. Takeda uses this very particular perspective to criticize the “centrality” of the Japanese nation-state in the conception of contemporary Japanese subjectivity, and it is precisely in this material context that I reference “Japanese” identity.

<sup>19</sup> While Takeda uses a number of specific examples to bolster this point, citing the rise and fall of many different political actors and emperors in Chinese history, including the central Sima Qian himself, by far the most salient example for Takeda was the dissolution of the various ancient states during the Spring and Autumn period, which he claims presented a point in which the world order which had existed until then vanished without a trace.

along the span of history and their interrelation (e.g. the fall of a great ruler, a sudden revolutionary upheaval, and other forms of “annihilation”) actually sustain a greater universal continuity (持続 *jizoku*) of humanity as a “whole.” In other words, annihilation is inevitable, but it does not destroy the world (humanity), but rather, through the sacrifice of particular individuals/world configurations, annihilation sustains the whole by preventing its stagnation. Takeda concludes by asserting that the revelation of Sima Qian is a world ordered “spatially” rather than temporally. In observing Sima Qian’s diagrammatic representation of history, Takeda argues, one can see the “whole” of the world represented in the singular, instantaneous simultaneity of the interrelation of political figures. In contrast to former histories which fall into the ideological pitfall of a perspective focused on a particular historical “discontinuity” that develops (and is eventually annihilated) in the course of its temporal progression, Sima Qian (and thus, Takeda) appear to take the perspective of historical “bystanders” (*bōkansha*) who see the unfolding of the whole of humanity (the Spirit) in the instantaneous simultaneity of human relations.

Naturally, this formulation of history contains a number of problematic assumptions, but it is vital to consider that this work emerged out of a particular moment rife with tensions for both Takeda and the onus of formulating history within the Imperial core. This is not to serve as any kind of justification for Takeda’s claims, rather Takeda’s ideological stance here clarifies the manner in which writers of the period sought to clarify subjectivity in a period during which material political action appeared untenable. In his introduction to *Sima Qian*, Takeda relates the perspectives of the project directly to the contemporary Japanese reader, describing in rather taciturn and pregnant terms that the world of Sima Qian’s history is both diametrically opposed to the world of the contemporary Japanese reader and that it presents the means to gain an

understanding of the human subject in its totality.<sup>20</sup> Takeda thus implies that a holistic understanding of humanity is difficult if not impossible in the sociohistorical moment of contemporary Japan, and thus reading into the “world” of *Shiki*, occupying a sociohistorical context alien in some respect to the present becomes necessary. Additionally, it is made clear in Takeda’s conception of Sima Qian’s biography, that he himself was painfully aware of the “shame” (辱 *haji*) that emerged from the act of living on to write history, an act which Takeda associates both with the weight of establishing an ontological record of the historical that goes beyond oneself and the “shame” of continuing “oneself” in solidifying one’s own position as an “observer” of history. Therefore, I argue that *Sima Qian* presents a work which attempts to resolve the problematics of historical agency in a post-Marxist Japanese setting by way of an appeal to humanism which emerges from “spatial” material relations which are thus (supposedly) not beholden to the problematics of the perspective of a particular sociopolitical orientation. Tellingly, this history does not problematize the morality of individual historical actors (insisting on their necessity to the formation of dialectical human relations), but rather makes its target an “essential” or “total” humanity that emerges from the spatial instant that transcends the temporal order. This is the nature of the “human emotion” Takeda observed in the faces of the peasants during his time on the Chinese front; in privileging the greater human “subjectivity,” the problem of individual agency and the particularity of political praxis finds resolution in its incorporation into a greater continuity of the human “whole.”

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<sup>20</sup> The “totality” (全体 *zentai*) of humanity is a term that Takeda uses quite often but, as might be imagined, the “human subject” Takeda arrives at is hardly “complete” or even “impartial.” Particularly in his pre-defeat writings, the human subject almost totally excludes figures outside the context of the male perspective, and, even then, his conceptions of cultural alterity are incredibly problematic and, quite often, explicitly dehumanizing. This is a point that I will develop though the course of this chapter, but it is worth pausing here to state explicitly that while I will use the terms of “humanity,” “humanism,” and “totality,” quite often in this chapter, these are meant as reflections of Takeda’s nascent historical philosophy and do not serve as an endorsement of his quite selective and specious conception of “humanity.”

It must be noted, however, that though the terms of historical discourse established in *Sima Qian* remained of critical importance to Takeda's project following the end of the war, their meaning and usage did not remain static. To the contrary, I argue that the manner in which Takeda's characterization and deployment of these terms in order to contextualize or, in many cases, to create a new concept of the "historical" forms one of the major revelations that the experience of the Japanese defeat conferred to him. In particular, the term "annihilation" took on a new valence of meaning, changing from a monolithic, ahistorical force which mediates and fosters the development of humanity, to a kind of split or fragmentary concept grounded within the particularity of historical event, but signaling the potential of a greater "absolute" force conceptualized within the potential of material non-existence. Takeda writes this distinction into "annihilation" in the formulation of the coinformative terms "partial annihilation" (部分的滅亡 *bubunteki metsubō*) and "total annihilation" (全的滅亡 *zenteki metsubō*) and he argues that it is the precarity of the subject that emerges from this dialectic that becomes encoded within cultural perspective. It is this cultural perspective, emergent in the revelation of the annihilative experience of the atomic bombings and its subsequent cultural encoding that, for Takeda, inherently alters the role of both human agency and of historical narrative. If Takeda's experiences on the Chinese front revealed to him the manifestation of history and its limitations within the setting of "contemporary" Japan, the event of the defeat revealed to him the even greater magnitude of what history is not; that "history" always emerges in the context of the precarity of what could have been but was not. In other words, in the context of non-existence. This shift has implications both for the ontological nature of "history" and the so-called "subjectivity/agency" of the individual political actor. In Takeda's postwar writings, humanity no longer holds a privileged place in terms of its historically-formed cum ahistorical essence.

Rather, human relations are explicitly modified not only by annihilation, but by the existential problem of annihilation which Takeda claims “warps” human relations by orienting the understanding of human life as orbiting the larger emerging inhuman “absolute” (which itself is mediated by the language of scientific and cosmic inhumanity). Where previously annihilation formed a generative source of meaning, Takeda’s perspective in his postwar writings emerges explicitly as one modified by the limitations of material ontology and yet always mediated by the onus of its inescapable interrelation to “others,” a concept Takeda problematizes as the “relationality” (*kankeisei*) of the subject. In this way, the perspective of the historical “bystander” upheld in *Sima Qian*, is revealed to be both untenable and also ethically corrupt in that it undermines the basis of empathetic or, at the very least, “humanizing” human relations.

Thus, I argue that the manner in which Takeda negotiated the problem of subjectivity against the absolutizing force of historical fact, fact which has the traumatic and relativizing force of the disastrous, first with regards to his forced invasion of China as an imperial soldier and later as regards his position as a defeated Japanese following the end of the Pacific War, elucidates the complex relationship of individual identity vis-à-vis history, a relationship which, for Takeda, implicitly affects the potential for ethical praxis in the context of culturally-privileged sociohistorical ideologies, particularly humanism as conceptualized in the context of the imperial gaze. By tracing the shift of Takeda’s conception of history along certain philosophical concepts he espoused (e.g. continuity, annihilation, the spatial), we gain insight into how philosophical conceptions of history can serve as a discursive space to elaborate the ethical responsibilities of the individual by contextualizing this subjectivity against the grain of the historical “absolute,” a relationship which initially allowed Takeda to elude his own responsibility to history and to later recognize the impossibility of escaping it.

In this chapter, I will seek to explore the nature of “history” in Takeda’s intellectual project and how the development this concept impacted his understanding of individual agency and the potential for ethical action. The first section of this chapter will be devoted to describing Takeda’s own personal history, covering the details of his biography from his early years up to the period during which he began writing his first major work *Sima Qian*. In providing this biographical information, I do not mean to insinuate some causal link between Takeda’s supposed intentions and mental state (impossible to discern as they are) and the product of his texts; rather, in sketching the manner in which Takeda arrived at the study of history, the political and personal tensions that surrounded him during this tumultuous period, and the way in which Takeda selectively wrote the incidents of his early life into later fictions, I hope to elucidate the material conditions surrounding the writer to provide a better grasp of how his intellectual project concretely took shape and how the general contours of his oeuvre became established. It is my opinion that understanding Takeda’s experience of *tenkō*, Buddhism, and his conscription to the mainland provide vital context for much of Takeda’s work. Additionally, biographies of Takeda in the English language are woefully insufficient when they rarely do appear, so it is also in the hope of providing a more reliable source for the basis of Takeda’s literary project that I expound on these details.

The second section of this chapter will consist of a comparative reading of the concept of “history” in two of Takeda’s works: *Sima Qian: The World of Shiki* and “On Annihilation.”<sup>21</sup> In comparing the texts, one written in the interwar period and the other written immediately after, in

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<sup>21</sup> In my analysis of *Sima Qian*, I rely on two separate versions of the text, the 1965 *tankobon* published by Kōdansha and the much more ubiquitous version included in the 1971 *Takeda Taijun zenshū* published by Chikumashobō. I primarily draw on the latter source for my citations as it is much easily acquired. However, the *zenshū* version contains several glaring omissions, primarily of Takeda’s critical introductions, for which I rely on the 1965 version to supplement. Citations taken from the 1965 version of the text are marked as such in the footnotes that follow.

the context of Takeda's experiences of the Chinese front and the Japanese defeat, I hope to demonstrate that these texts present inquiries to parallel, largely identical problems, but reach vastly different conclusions on the point of the potential for individual agency in the fulfillment of an "ethical" praxis vis-à-vis the occurrence of historical fact (or, perhaps more accurately, historical "disaster"). I attribute this shift to Takeda's experience of the Japanese defeat, a historical event that re-contextualized his conceptual framework of "history" and the relation of the individual to the absolute.

### **Takeda's Early Life and the Experience of the Chinese Continent**

Takeda Taijun was born in 1912 under the birth-name Satoru (悟) in the Chōsenji Pure Land Buddhist temple in Higashikatachō of the Hongō district of Tokyo (the modern-day Bunkyo district).<sup>22</sup> He was the third son of the head priest of the temple and professor of religious studies at Taishō University, Ōjima Taishin (大島泰信), and was given the name Takeda Taijun by his adoptive father, Takeda Akiyoshi (武田明義). Akiyoshi was not Takeda's blood-parent; Takeda's biological father, Taishin, was a peasant who was Akiyoshi's pupil. As Akiyoshi was a single monk with no heir and had acted as Taishin's benefactor, even going so far as to fund Taishin's education at Tokyo Imperial University, the two men had a long-standing promise that

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<sup>22</sup> For biographical details of Takeda's life, I rely on a variety of sources. For specific dates of publication and the general outline of Takeda's biography, I rely on the *Takeda Taijun nenpyō* (武田泰淳年表) found in the *Zōho Takeda Taijun kenkyū* (増補武田泰淳研究, 1973) edited by Haniya Yutaka (埴谷雄高), for Takeda's personal impressions, I rely on several of his personal essays, chiefly citing from "Listening to the writer: Takeda Taijun" (作家に聞く: 武田泰淳 *Sakka ni kiku: Takeda Taijun*, 1952), "A Letter on China Culture" (シナ文化に関する手紙 *Shina bunka ni kansuru tegami*, 1940), and Takeda's letters from the front, reproduced within the collection *Pleasures of the Body and the Mind* (身心快樂 *Shinshin kairaku*, 2003). For more detailed information and speculative elements of Takeda's experience, particularly his time on the Chinese front, I rely on Kawanishi Masa'aki's *The Biography of Takeda Taijun* (武田泰淳伝 *Takeda Taijun den*, 2005).

one of Taishin's sons would be adopted out by Akiyoshi. Growing up in the setting of the temple, Takeda was intimately familiar with the practices of the monastic community, particularly the role of providing funerary services to the community, a practice that conferred to him a deep sense of social alienation, a theme which formed the basis of many of his later texts.<sup>23</sup>

To briefly digress here, Takeda's relationship with Buddhist practice in general is a matter of some debate and forms a complex element of Takeda's character. Many critics, particularly in discussing Takeda's text *The Misshapen Ones* (異形の者 *Igyō no mono*, 1951), which draws on many biographical elements of Takeda's own monastic training, cite his Buddhist upbringing as an experience which imbued both Takeda and his literary project with a certain measure of alterity in which, by nature of the implicit social ostracization of members of the monastic order from the milieu of everyday life, Takeda had a unique perception of the modern social order, one which he could never fully participate in by nature of his self-perceived "malformed" psyche. Other critics, such as Karatani Kōjin, maintain that the influence of Buddhism on Takeda's life was primarily a matter of social practice. These critics tend to draw on Takeda's experience of Marxist philosophy and leftist organizations to make the argument that Buddhist practice presented Takeda with a kind of radical alternative to the malaise of nihilism that gripped intellectuals after they were coerced to recant their commitment to leftist practices. There is a degree of truth to both of these perspectives; it is clear from Takeda's own comments that he felt himself indelibly marked by his Buddhist upbringing and that presented a kind of shame or embarrassment to him, particularly as he was confirmed in the monastic order as part of the process of his ideological conversion (*tenkō*) and had only returned to monastic practice and

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<sup>23</sup> *Black Flag* (黒旗 *Kuro hata*, 1949), *Labyrinth* (迷路 *Meiro*, 1950), and *The Far Flag* (遠くの旗 *Tōku no hata*, 1953), to name a few examples.

formal study based on his father's insistence after he was imprisoned for his participation in leftist activities. As some scholars of Takeda's work have contended, this feeling of shame manifested in the form of an "outsider" complex which caused Takeda to feel always at odds with the goings-on of the social world, a feeling only compounded by his eventual departure from Marxism.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the implicit contributions of Buddhist thought to the development of Takeda's literary project are difficult to understate, if not equally difficult to pin down in concrete form.<sup>25</sup> It also cannot be denied that the language of theology offered Takeda a kind of transcendental lens to connect particular elements of his life to the sublime (whether historical, cosmological, or phenomenological).<sup>26</sup> It is not the purpose of this project to expound on the significance of Takeda's Buddhist background to his intellectual project, but it would also seem woefully insufficient to constrain the description of Takeda's Buddhist background to a simple mention of his origins in this setting.

In 1918, Takeda enrolled in Seishi Elementary School in Nishi Katachō of the Hongō district. Though sickly in his childhood, Takeda was a lively child and quite popular with his peers. At age eleven, Takeda suffered an accident in which he impaled his calf jumping over an iron fence

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<sup>24</sup> Ōkubo Tsuneo, 大久保典夫, "Takeda Taijun ni okeru tenkō taiken" 武田泰淳における転向体験 [Takeda Taijun's Experience of Ideological Conversion], *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō* 37 (8) (1972).

<sup>25</sup> To offer a quite limited example, many terms and phrases informed by their origin as Buddhist terms appear in Takeda's fiction, and though they appear seemingly innocuous initially, they become more and more complex by nature of their ubiquitous repetition in and among his works. These terms can include thoroughness (徹底 *tettei*), relationship/relationality (*kankeisei*), perseverance (我慢 *gaman*), and annihilation (*metsubō*). The degree to which either the reading of the text or Takeda himself clarifies these terms in the context of Buddhist thought varies quite widely, but it cannot be denied that these often vexingly ambiguous terms find some degree of contextualization in connecting them to their linguistic origins in Buddhist philosophy by way of the undercurrent of Takeda's Buddhist knowledge.

<sup>26</sup> To offer two further examples, on the positive end, Takeda's description of his father as a "Christ-like" figure and the image of Christ as an abject outcast and yet deeply compassionate figure forms a locus of meaning in many of Takeda's works, including *Luminous Moss* (1954) and *My Child Christ* (我が子キリスト *Wagako Kirisuto*, 1971). On the other hand, the annihilative imagery of the Christian Revelation, and the extreme nature of divine judgment in both Christian and Buddhist cosmologies form another pole of meaning for Takeda, offering a means of conceptualizing the power of destruction in the context of a quasi-spiritual cosmological absolute. This correlation of meaning is evident in several works including *Judgment* (1947), "On Annihilation" (1948), "Who Will We Leave on the Ark" (誰を箱舟に残すか *Dare wo hakobune ni nokasuka*, 1957), and *The Hell Within Me* (私の中の地獄 *Watashi no naka no jigoku*, 1972).

while playing with his friends in a graveyard. During his recovery, Takeda's friends brought him detective novels, manga, literary magazines, and various other reading material, which Takeda credits as the origin of his interest in reading and in literary production generally. As a student, Takeda's grades were lackluster and he had little interest in his education. However, according to an apocryphal story from this period, Takeda once forgot to complete a composition assignment and was severely scolded by his father who had him tearfully complete the assignment over the course of the night. His teacher was apparently deeply impressed by the results and Takeda discovered his talent for writing from the experience.

In 1928, Takeda enrolled in the Urawa High School in Saitama. Though he rarely attended classes, electing instead to spend most of his time in the library, Takeda's grades at this time were quite good. It was during this time that Takeda began studying Chinese literature. Though Takeda demonstrated a genuine interest in the subject, particularly the works of Lu Xun, he maintained, rather self-effacingly, that he elected to pursue the study of Chinese literature based on the advice of a relative that, since students of Chinese literature tended to be rather unintelligent, it would prove an easy course of study, one he could excel in with little effort. Regardless of his reasons for pursuing the study of Chinese literature, Takeda began his formal study of Chinese language at age eighteen at a foreign language school in Kinjochō of Tokyo's Hongyō district. It was also during Takeda's high school career that he made his initial foray into leftist organization, participating in the leftist organization "A" (shorthand for "Anti-imperialism").

In March of 1931, Takeda graduated from high school and enrolled in the Department of Chinese Philosophy and Literature at Tokyo Imperial University the following month. It was then that he became acquainted with both Takeuchi Yoshimi, the famous Lu Xun scholar and

literary critic, and Okazaki Toshio (岡崎敏夫), the famous translator of Chinese literature, both of who would be lifelong colleagues and friends to Takeda. At the end of his fifth month at university, Takeda was arrested for distributing leaflets calling for a general strike with the other student organizers of “A” at the Tokyo Central Post Office and imprisoned for a month at the Marunouchi and Motofuji police stations. Following his release, Takeda ceased public participation in leftist activities at his father’s behest, but was arrested again for distributing copies of the “Second Proletarian Newspaper” (第二無産者新聞 *Dai ni musansha shinbun*).<sup>27</sup>

Following this arrest and subsequent imprisonment, Takeda ceased participation in leftist activities and dropped out of school at his father’s behest, though he maintained contact with his colleagues at Tokyo University and participated as an organizer and contributor in two amateur literary magazines, “Tomorrow” (明日 *Ashita*) and “To Reality” (現実へ *Genjitsu e*).

It is perhaps worth pausing here again to address the matters of leftist activity and Marxist thought in Takeda’s biography, subjects which, compared to Takeda’s thoughts on Buddhism, form an even more contentious issue for scholars of Takeda’s work. To begin with the writer’s own thoughts on the matter, Takeda is quite clear in many of his autobiographical essays and interviews that he considers his participation in leftist activities to have been quite shallow and facile, that he was never truly committed to the cause of Marxism, but was rather doing what he felt was expected of him. It should be noted that, however, such a line is quite common amongst young writers and students in Japan during the 1930s, particularly in the context of the ideological conversion perpetuated by the Japanese government which presented many dedicated

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<sup>27</sup> These incidents formed the basis of many of Takeda’s later fictional works, including (in order of occurrence of the biographical events depicted): *Cold Flame* (冷たい火炎 *Tsumetai kaen*, 1949), *Antirevolutionary* (非革命者 *Hikakumeisha*, 1948), *Evening Rainbow* (夜の虹 *Yoru no niji*, 1949), and *Revenge* (復習 *Fukushū*, 1949).

young Marxists with the threat of imprisonment or even death. While the task of attempting to rehabilitate Takeda's Marxist sentiments when the writer himself (at least in his public statements) was unwilling to do so, is likely an inherently misguided one, but it is equally misguided to dismiss the psychological conflict the specter of Marxism exerted on Takeda and other writers of his generation, even decades after their supposed ideological conversion. In Takeda's case, his eventual distancing from leftist activity presents a complex situation in which his guilt concerning his status as a social "outcast," conflated with his inability to pursue the ideal of revolution with the "puritanical" spirit he felt was due to the lofty ideals of Marxism, presented an ethical quandary that often finds voice in Takeda's writings and self abjection.<sup>28</sup> To offer a brief example here, Takeda's perhaps most direct reproach toward his own political leanings is presented in the short essay, "Myself and Communism" (私と共産主義 *Watashi to kyōsanshugi*, 1953) produced over twenty years after his abdication of Marxism. In this essay, Takeda interrogates, with a clear attitude of dissatisfaction and guilt, the reason for his inability to commit completely to leftist organization in his youth. The text presents a series of anecdotes, relating both to his forced complicity to acts of cruelty in his youth during his monastic training and his disgust and guilt concerning his own un-serious desires and thoughts which distracted from the purity of his purpose as a potential revolutionary. Indeed, for many scholars of Takeda, Marxism and Buddhism appear to act as two sides of the same coin, both in terms of the peculiar sense of anxiety that they conferred to Takeda, and as lenses through which he considered the ethos of humanity. The Japanese scholar Kishimoto Takeo (岸本隆生), for example, relying on biographical details of Takeda's life and criticisms levied by Takeda's long-standing colleague,

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<sup>28</sup> Kishimoto Takeo 岸本隆生, *Takeda Taijun ron* 「武田泰淳論」 (Tokyo: Ōfū-sha 桜楓社, 1986), 14.

Takeuchi Yoshimi, credits the tensions between Takeda's abdication of leftist activities under his father's orders, and Takeda's anxiety over succeeding his father as head monk of the temple as the fomenting forces which led him to write *Sima Qian*.<sup>29</sup> On a perhaps more theoretical level, Karatani Kōjin argues in his book, *History and Repetition*, that, for Takeda, Buddhism itself became a kind of dialectical materialism after *tenkō* and that, indeed, his pursuit of Buddhism cannot be understood apart from his ongoing commitment to the political. Karatani writes:

For Takeda, Buddhism was not a matter of concepts but a concrete system and lifestyle—something aspiring intellectuals would not approach. The same can be said for Chinese literature (...) Clearly, Takeda sees the Buddhist consciousness as a kind of dialectical materialism. Takeda had undergone training to be a monk after he had been arrested five times and fallen out of the Marxist movement, but unlike others who moved from Marxism to Buddhism, he can be said to have sought Marxism in Buddhism. The same can be said for his interest in Chinese literature. He turned to Chinese literature because he was a leftist; it cannot be understood apart from this motivation.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, it is apparent from the logic of works like *Sima Qian* that Takeda's thinking was deeply impacted by the confluence of materialist thinking with the “distancing” effect of the materialist Buddhist perspective Karatani describes to construct an almost cosmological ordering of human relations. However, on a more concrete level, I would argue that the twin influences of Marxism and Buddhism had a similar impact on Takeda's conception of ethics, a point I will develop further in the third chapter of this project.

In June 1934, Takeda published his first critical essay, “On Ethnic Culture” (民族文化について *Minzokubunka ni tsuite*) in the literary magazine “To Reality” under the somewhat ironical pen name Ōjima Satoru (大島悟), his own birth name prior to adoption. In August later that year, Takeuchi Yoshimi made plans for the foundation of a Chinese-Japanese friendship organization, a social group that would form the foundation of several scholars', including Takeda's, early

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<sup>29</sup> Kishimoto, *Takeda Taijun ron*, 15.

<sup>30</sup> Karatani, *History and Repetition*, 200-202.

careers. In 1935, with Takeda and Okazaki's participation, this social group evolved into the "Modern Chinese Cultural Research Group" (現代の中国研究会 *Gendai no chūgoku kenkyū kai*), an informal group of Japanese and Chinese students and intellectuals dedicated to doing away with the outdated form of Chinese studies (漢学 *kangaku*) which they felt portrayed China in a xenophobic and culturally inferior manner, a characterization prominent in Japan at the time. The following year, in 1936, the group began circulating a magazine called "Chinese Culture Monthly" (中国文学月報 *Chūgoku bungaku geppō*) to which Takeda contributed a number of articles. In April, the Chinese writer and loyalist soldier Xie Bingying (謝冰瑩) came to Japan and was hosted by the members of the circle. However, both she and Takeda were arrested soon after her arrival on falsified charges of planning to assassinate the Kangde Emperor of the newly established "Empire of Manchuria," Pu Yi (溥儀), during his diplomatic visit to Japan that year in May. Xie Bingying was released after twenty days due to her demonstrated loyalty to the KMT, but Takeda was imprisoned for a full forty-five days in the Meguro police station as he was viewed as an associate of the Japanese Communist Party, despite having no official ties with them.<sup>31</sup>

Takeda continued to publish Sinological articles under a pseudonym in the following years, but, in the summer of 1937, the Second Sino-Japanese War began and Takeda was drafted into the Japanese military in October of that year and was sent to the Chinese front in the second major deployment of Japanese troops. As he never wrote a truly detailed and comprehensive

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<sup>31</sup> This incident formed the basis of Takeda's fictional works "The Xie Bingying Affair" (謝冰瑩事件 *Shahyōei jiken*, 1947) and "The Man with No Voice" (声なき男 *Koe naki otoko*, 1954), among others.

work relating to his time in the military, details are somewhat difficult to piece together. However, based on the documentation that is available, a selection of articles Takeda wrote for newspapers from the front, and a reproduced series of Takeda's letters during the same time, the Japanese scholar Kawanishi Masa'aki has compiled a series of events in his seminal work, *The Biography of Takeda Taijun* (武田泰淳伝 *Takeda Taijun den*, 2005), that form a surprisingly detailed sketch of Takeda's time in the military. Takeda was drafted on October 12, 1937 and received basic military training between October 16<sup>th</sup> and October 21<sup>st</sup>. He then traveled to Kobe where he was held for a week before boarding a ship bound for mainland China. Takeda landed in China at Hangzhou Bay on November 2, 1937. He was appointed as a special-rank administrator in the Transport Corps of the Imperial Japanese Army, meaning that while he was present on the Chinese front, the actual level of conflict he experienced is unclear and, by nature of his administrative position, he had a good deal of free time on his hands which he primarily used to study. During this time, he kept up a frequent correspondence with both Takeuchi Yoshimi (who was also in China for a portion of this time, pursuing his studies in Japanese-occupied Beijing) and Okazaki Toshio, through whom he continued to publish articles in "Chinese Culture Monthly." However, possibly due to the graphic or controversial nature of these letters, only a dozen or so have been reproduced and most of the unpublished correspondence are in the guarded possession of Takeda's heirs. Indeed, if one reads the published correspondence, one would be liable to think that all of Takeda's time on the Chinese front was spent reading; his correspondences with Takeuchi are largely centered on Takeda's current text of study (writers occupying his attention included Alain, Gide, and Rimbaud), and only occasionally feature Takeda's impressions of the Chinese countryside, or the local farming peasantry.

However, the impact of Takeda's experiences at the Chinese front on the trajectory of his early work and his larger intellectual project cannot be understated. If pressed to clarify what it was that Takeda claimed to "discover" in his experience of China, it could be said that that what he found was the redemptive quality of an "authentic" human emotion borne out in the Chinese people whom he encountered. In a short essay produced in 1940, Takeda described the sensation he received from experiencing the Chinese population during his time on the front:

A wisdom as solid as the earth appeared in the faces of the Chinese peasants we saw on the battlefield, the subtle shade of traditional feelings was carved into them, and they were deeply creased with the wrinkles of a philosophy beyond words. With those faces vividly fixed within the depths of my eyes, the printed criticisms of China appeared to fade and turn grey. The Chinese we saw were living and working. It is not with sarcasm, but with my truest heart that I must say this thing. The fact is that the Chinese living and working gave form to China. What we call China is that sort of thing. It is not any sort of mystery, or monster, or beast. It is a society where both compassion and love hold currency.<sup>32</sup>

Immersed within the daily milieu of the lives of the Chinese peasantry in the countryside, Takeda reported that this was the first time that he experienced "society" in the fullness of reality. In the eyes of the Chinese peasantry surrounding him, Takeda felt that he could see the "wisdom of the ancients" and the legacy of ancient generations brought forth into the present day. Needless to say, this perspective was and remains terribly problematic; what Takeda purported to "see" within the Chinese people bears an uncomfortable resemblance to the purportedly positive ethnonational characterizations attributed to the Chinese by Japanese capitalist colonial adventurers in Manchuria and Taiwan in the early 1900s which led to their gradual incorporation into and subjugation under the Japanese ideological project of "pan-Asianism."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳, "Shina bunka ni kansuru tegami 支那文化に関する手紙," in *Takeda Taijun zenshū dai jū ichi kan* 武田泰淳全集第十一卷, ed. Haniya Yutaka 埴谷雄高 (Tokyo: Chikumashobō 筑摩書房, 1971), 239. All translations of Takeda are my own.

<sup>33</sup> The first chapter of Mark Driscoll's seminal book on the cultural ideology of Imperial Japan, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism 1885-1945* (2010), provides an incredibly detailed account of how the culturally encoded "wisdom and fortitude of character" attributed to the Chinese coolie workers by the Japanese colonial adventurers aided in the establishment of a parasitic cultural

In a recent book chapter on Takeda's experiences of the Chinese front and their translation into his fiction, Barbara Hartley problematizes what she refers to as Takeda's "fetishized expectations" of the Chinese mainland and argues that Takeda, beholden to the problematic Imperial perspective which allowed him to "construct himself as a subject detached from the social milieu," failed to truly encounter the Chinese mainland and its people in their alterity, and that his emotive responses to these subjects are merely a reflection of his own experiences, divorced from the lived reality of those he observes from a clinical and "othering" distance.<sup>34</sup> Hartley's analysis confirms this problematic relationship, one which I would argue holds even in later texts. In "On Annihilation," for example, Takeda compares the figure of China to "a woman's body that has cultivated a complex and mature sexuality by way of countless divorces and countless affairs" in describing the land's relationship to its many historical annihilations whereas the Japanese are compared to virginal maidens, whose sexual experience is limited to incestuous trysts within their own family.<sup>35</sup> Truly, if we can say that Takeda encountered difficulty in discovering the Chinese subject, it is even more appropriate to say he failed utterly in encountering the female subject in its alterity. That said, Hartley's analysis begs the question: if Takeda did not discover the empathetic humanity of the Chinese subject in his observations, what exactly did he discover about himself in this limited and problematic encounter? Hartley proposes that Takeda's writing of the Chinese mainland was an attempt to mediate his idealized expectations of the Chinese mainland with regards to his own complicity with violence in his capacity as an invading soldier and, though I do not disagree with this, I would argue that the

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relationship in which the Chinese became established as de facto laborers by nature of their supposedly "inherited" work ethic, making imperial subjugation of China a "logical" historical enactment of a racial/genetic legacy.

<sup>34</sup> Barbara Hartley, "Fragile Polyphony: Takeda Taijun's Longing for Asia through the Landscape of Shen Congwen," in *Asia through Art and Anthropology: Cultural Translation Across Borders*, ed. Fuyubi Nakamura, Morgan Perkins, Olivier Krischer (New York: Bloomsberg Academic, 2013), 142.

<sup>35</sup> Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳, "Metsubō ni tsuite 滅亡について," in *Takeda Taijun zenshū dai jū ni kan* 武田泰淳全集第十二卷, ed. Haniya Yūtake 埴谷雄高 (Tokyo: Chikumashobō 筑摩書房, 1971), 95.

problematic of the place of the historical subject and the legacy of his problematic relationship with formulating an ethical conception of society that followed his divorce from the Marxist praxis is also a vital force at work in Takeda's writings at this time. Indeed, this would certainly explain Takeda's preoccupation with writers like Alain and Gide, devoted advocates of the establishment of humanist discourse in the social sphere while attempting to elide political structures by appeal to a kind of transcendent human subject. In a much later essay in 1952, Takeda clarifies what exactly he "discovered" on the Chinese front, a glimpse into the organizational "assemblage" of society in motion:

But, an even greater thing that my experience in the military conferred to me, was that it opened my eyes to humanity and society for the first time. From the first, I did not know what those things called humans were. Still, once I entered the military, there were peasants there, and merchants, and factory laborers, and salarymen; in other words, under such circumstances, every sort of human being was there. (...) As I observed those people one by one, it was truly fascinating. Up until then, even if I thought about how this thing called society is structured, I could not see it, and thus I could not understand it well (...) [the front] was a place where society was compressed to that small size and, in exactly the same manner as society, within it a fierce battle for survival was being waged.<sup>36</sup>

What is the nature of this "society" that Takeda discovered and what repercussions did this discovery have for Takeda's conception of subjectivity? And what is the nature of the humanity and the "battle" operating within this social construction? To answer these questions, it is perhaps most germane to turn to the textual product of Takeda's experience on the Chinese front: *Sima Qian: The World of Shiki*.

### ***Sima Qian and the Nature of the Historical Subject***

Though it was eventually published only a few years prior to the end of the Pacific War, serialized across several publications between 1941 and 1943, Takeda began the initial work on *Sima Qian* while still stationed on the Chinese front in 1937. Though produced quite early in his

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<sup>36</sup> Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳, "Sakka ni kiku: Takeda Taijun" 作家に聞く・武田泰淳, in *Takeda Taijun zenshū dai jū hachi kan hoi* 武田泰淳全集第十八巻補遺, ed. Haniya Yutaka 埴谷雄高 (Tokyo: Chikumashobō 筑摩書房, 1973), 4-5.

literary career (Takeda himself would likely contend that his “literary” career did not begin until after the Japanese defeat), *Sima Qian* is easily one of Takeda’s longest works and is still considered by many critics to be, if not his greatest work, the work most representative of Takeda’s persona and his intellectual project. This is perhaps somewhat ironic given that the structure and style of this work are quite experimental compared to many of his other early works, straddling the boundaries of formal historiography, philosophical treatise, historical fiction, and literary analysis. Perhaps even more elusive, however, is the content of the work itself which makes its subject the often arcane and difficult nuances of Sima Qian’s texts within a larger context of the historian’s biography and a larger question of human nature that permeates the work. At first blush, performing an analysis of this text appears truly daunting and, indeed, most scholarship on the text to date has been satisfied to selectively cite thematic elements of Takeda’s argument rather than to approach the text as a whole, given both the incredible breadth of information covered and the winding line of Takeda’s own rationale, which proves often difficult to capture in its elegant simplicity. It would be misleading to say that this project will provide any more of a comprehensive picture of the text, given that I would contend that text itself is relatively less important than tracing the change in Takeda’s larger conceptions of history.

That said, it is useful to establish some basic parameters of the text that often go overlooked in its generalizations within previous scholarship. First, though Takeda tends to wax philosophical in his language, relying very heavily on somewhat obtuse and grandiose terms like the “total world” (世界全体 *sekai zentai*), the “center of the world” (世界の中心 *sekai no chūshin*), “totality” (*zentai*), and “a state of parallelism” (並立状態 *heiritsu jōtai*), the meaning of these terms is always limited to the context of the text of *Shiki* itself and cannot be understood

outside of a pragmatic and material reading of the text. Takeda is very clear from the first section of *Sima Qian* that the study is not one of a larger transcendent history but of “the world” of *Shiki*, that is, the material conditions that surrounded the production of the text and the nature of the world that Sima Qian “constructed” by means of textual recording. Though Takeda makes it clear that his reading of *Shiki* is done with the aim of determining the points of difference and similarity between Sima Qian’s “world” and the one that the contemporary Japanese inhabit, these “worlds” are, from the first, presented by Takeda as completely distinct and materially incompatible. Thus, while one may be tempted (and many scholars have succumbed to the temptation) to extrapolate some kind of general worldview or philosophical outlook from the parameters of *Sima Qian*, this presents a basic point of misconception; what is more important, I would argue, is to determine how the text functions within the framework of Takeda’s aims to 1) analyze the manner in which Sima Qian constructs the “world” of *Shiki* and 2) determine how this construction bears relevance to the “world” of Japan of the present-day. In other words, what I seek to examine is not Takeda’s “philosophy” as such, but the way in which this exercise in textual materiality sheds light on the construction of “philosophy” at this period in history.

Second, although the subject of the current study is the relationship between subjectivity and history and many other scholars have used the word “history” (史・歴史 *shi/rekishi*) to describe the nature of the text, actual mentions of the word “history” in *Sima Qian* are quite limited and, when the word is deployed, it is done quite tactically and refers almost exclusively to the physical text that Sima Qian produced in his capacity as the Han court historian. As the scholar Junliang Huang has pointed out, Takeda’s inquiry into *Shiki* is often portrayed as a treatise on the nature of “history,” but, in reality, Takeda is quite careful in his use of language, directing the

concept of “space” to a characterization of “the world” or “the historical world” rather than history itself.<sup>37</sup>

What this means is that “history,” for Takeda, is not so much a conceptual entity as a textual/material form that allows for the representation of larger concepts by way of selective (and thus inherently ideological) focus on particular elements of reality that are represented in a weighted manner. This relationship is clarified when, in first section of the second chapter “What is History?” (歴史とは *Rekishi to wa*), Takeda writes,

In one corner of the Han Kingdom that fell beneath the great shadow of Emperor Wu of Han, Sima Qian continued writing a single history. That history was a thing related to ‘the world.’ His continuing to write it was his thinking through ‘totality.’ The meaning of thinking through ‘totality,’ and the meaning of thinking through ‘the world,’ and its meaning, complicated beyond complication, were thus clarified two thousand years prior to now.<sup>38</sup>

Though Takeda later expands somewhat on this point, describing a somewhat conceptual relationship between the “history of the world” and the “history of politics,” it is clear that, for Takeda, history primarily occupies the space of material relationships which, in turn, allow for a larger conceptualization of “the world.” Thus, when we discuss the relationship of “history” to subjectivity in Takeda’s work, what is of primary importance is not so much the historical events recorded, but the implications and responsibilities the act of recording entails. For Takeda (and Takeda’s version of Sima Qian), this manifests explicitly as a problem of linking one’s individual position or perspective to one’s sense of identity and agency.<sup>39</sup> Thus, while it is

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<sup>37</sup>Junliang Huang, “The politics of ‘storytelling’: Schemas of time and space in Japan’s traveling imagination of semi-colonial China and beyond, 1920s-1980s” (doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 2015), 167-168.

<sup>38</sup> Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳, “*Shibasen* 司馬遷,” in *Takeda Taijun zenshū dai jū ichi kan* 武田泰淳全集第十一卷, ed. Haniya Yutaka 埴谷雄高 (Tokyo: Chikumashobō 筑摩書房, 1971), 28.

<sup>39</sup> To offer a relatively simplistic example here, if we consider Takeda’s somewhat problematic statements on his experience of the Chinese front, it becomes apparent that the act of “seeing” or “observation” forms a somewhat privileged setting in which one is able to understand the continuity of the social order by observing humanity and the emotional currency of human conflict from the detached perspective of the outsider. Echoing Hartley’s critique of Takeda’s observations, the question again is not so much “what” is observed as it is “how and by whom.” It is, in other words, a problem of the gaze. Though it is not the focus of this chapter, the relationship of this perspective to

important to consider what exactly Takeda finds valuable within *Shiki* for the edification of the Japanese Imperial subject, it is equally if not more important to consider the manner in which “recording” (記録すること *kirokusuru koto*) itself constitutes an act of establishing one’s subjective identity against the object of the “recorded” historical subject.

Turning to the content of the text first, what is the nature of the “world” formulated by Sima Qian? With the exception of a short introductory chapter which I will touch on a bit later, the great majority of the text of *Sima Qian* is contained in a single long chapter called “The Construction of the World of *Shiki*” (史記の世界構造 *Shiki no sekai kōzō*), which is divided into four different sections, each focusing on a different section of Sima Qian’s history: the basic annals (本記 *honki*), the hereditary houses (家系 *sekei*), the tables (表 *hyō*), and the ranked biographies (列伝 *retsuden*).<sup>40</sup> While each section presents a distinct point of philosophical rumination for Takeda, it is important first to stress again that the “content” of the text for Takeda is implicitly based on a consideration of the material dimensions of the text, that is, the contributions of each style of “historical recording” as a form and the projected effect the presentation of this information is meant to evince in the reader. In the case of *Sima Qian*, Takeda orders his analysis to reflect the structure of the original *Shiki* in order to demonstrate the

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Takeda’s own self-perception as a consummate “outsider” to society due to his troubled relationship with Marxism and Buddhism is a point worthy of further consideration.

<sup>40</sup> The fifth section of *Shiki*, “Treatises” (書 *sho*) is mentioned in several places by Takeda, but it does not merit its own chapter based both on its quite short length and its status as a sort of structural anomaly compared to the rest of the text in terms of its focus on the chronological development of particular conventions of civilization. Takeda credits this difference to the origin of the “Treatises,” which was a kind of legacy from Sima Qian’s father, Sima Tan (司馬談), the court astrologer under the Western Han, who actually began work on *Shiki* late in life, but was forced to leave the task to his son after his death. Takeda advances the argument that although his father’s legacy provided both a strong sense of purpose and shame to Sima Qian, a number of conditions surrounding the production of *Shiki* after it changed hands to Qian implicitly altered the nature of the text, distancing it from previous models of historical recording.

manner in which methods of recording developed in response to the increasing complexity of the historical world.

The text begins with the basic annals, which trace the movement of the ancient Chinese power structure from an unbroken line of a single dynastic rule to the interruption of this dynasty by another to the development of competing individuals within dynastic houses in “the hereditary” houses, to the larger span of competing dynasties in a single period through the tables, and then to the individuals beyond the dynastic power structure in the ranked biographies. The textual construction of *Sima Qian* is not merely a reproduction of the original text for Takeda, then, but rather presents a progressive development in textual format that corresponds to an increasing complexity in the organization of human society in the ancient world up to the point when *Shiki* is written. It is this relationship between textual mediation (heavily associated with the “conceptualization” of history as it is a manifestation of the recorder’s perspective of the world) and the material relations of historical subjects that forms the contours of the “world” Takeda describes. Thus, while Takeda often appears quite abstract in his conclusions concerning the nature of the “world” presented in the text, it is vital to remember that Takeda is always presenting these conclusions in the context of 1) the conditions of the text which cannot be taken as a direct reflection of a larger sociopolitical structure, but can reveal insights to the manner in which the writer/ recorder affectively responds to the conditions of the world around him in a way that allows for the emergence of more expansive conditions of subjectivity and agency and 2) an ongoing and largely implied (though occasionally made explicit) relationship between the “world” of the text and its subjects of observation, the writer Sima Qian, and the “reader,” a figure whom appears to occupy the deepest point of Takeda’s concern (as this is the Japanese

subject and, indeed, himself reading within the present).<sup>41</sup> This may at first appear an odd way to structure a commentary on a historical text, but this focus on textual materiality and “readership” quickly becomes clarified as Takeda identifies the driving force of history, the so-called “center of the world,” within humanity, an identity which draws its influence from all instances of political action across history and from the interplay of seemingly irreconcilable differences among various human actors. Takeda prefaces his reading of the basic annals with the following statement:

The history of the world is the history of the political. The political alone structures the world. What politics bears, the world bears also. The meaning of the political in *Shiki* is “that which moves.” It means that which moves the world. That which forms the dynamism of history, that which forms the dynamism of the world, are political human beings. Political humans are the entity that forms the core of *Shiki*. Political humans are the center of the world. (...) “That which moves” is humanity. There is nothing outside of humanity that moves the world. (...) By sketching the figure of “humanity,” [Sima Qian] sketched out “the world.”<sup>42</sup>

From this initial statement, it becomes clear what draws Takeda to Sima Qian’s history: the political valence of the human subject and their supposed ability to “move” the world. By placing humanity at the center of the world, Takeda effectively makes a bid for a kind of materially-oriented transcendence, in which the material existence of particular human actors and their interpolation forms a kind of conceptual continuity, emergent in the perception of the trajectory of these figures from a bird’s eye view, that underpins the movement the world from one historical period to the next. Importantly, Takeda couches this reading always in a comparison between the “world” of the Han depicted in Sima Qian’s history, and the history put forth by “we Japanese” (私たち日本人 *watashitachi nihonjin*) in the present of the 1940s, which

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<sup>41</sup> This second point will be clarified in the course of my argument, but suffice it to say here that the nature of this relationship, much like that of Takeda’s method of “discovering” humanity on the Chinese front, is that the acts of “readership” or “observation” work in tandem with the acts of “writing” or “recording” to affirm the subjectivity of material human relations and elevate the reader by nature of their perception of the qualities of humanity, discovered within the historical other, within oneself, thus linking the historical world, the historian, and the recipient of the history in an almost cyclical relationship.

<sup>42</sup> Takeda, *Shibasen*, 27.

Takeda says, “in one sense, is totally opposed [to the conclusions of Sima Qian’s history].”<sup>43</sup>

The difference of the “world” formulated by the Han historian and the “world” of the contemporary Japanese subject, Takeda explains, is formed by essentially differing perceptions on the equalizing force of humanism, which privileges human subjectivity and its political agency over political structures (e.g. kingdoms, heroes, and dynasties in Han China and nations, politicians, and ethnological identity in contemporary Japan) which are usually, and mistakenly, perceived as the primary guiding force to the development of history. This is Takeda’s meaning when he claims that the mindset of the contemporary Japanese is completely oppositional to that of the Han historian; in making the Imperial core, “that which moves” and thus, the “center” of the world, the figure of humanity disappears.

To return to the problematic surrounding the problem of subjectivity in this period of increased political pressure and the seeming powerlessness and shame that Takeda experienced in his own alienation from his political and intellectual identity due to the pressure of larger structural institutions, this shift of power to the figure of humanity presents two important developments for Takeda’s intellectual project. First, returning to Takeda’s prior statements concerning his “observations” of social organization in China, it becomes clear that the conceptualization of humanity in its observation allowed Takeda to travel a fine line in which he was both able to attribute agency to the act of reading, while also conveniently formulating a means for the victory of the human subject over the political institution in the context of an atemporal futurity where their subjectivity might find validation. This struggle is perhaps best represented by the allegorical figure of the Han historian Sima Qian, himself, who is abject and pitiful in his lifetime, having suffered castration and political disempowerment at the hands of

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<sup>43</sup> Takeda, 26.

the Western Han Court, but ultimately asserts himself and achieves timelessness through the act of historical recording and its legacy. In this way, Takeda “discovers” both “humanity” and, with it, a delayed/indirect agency, by way of a temporally and culturally “othered” subject (historical China) which allows for a mass Japanese “readership” of a humanity they can claim conceptual ownership of, but also a selective and material independence from (as experiencing this group in its true materiality/alterity would come at the cost of losing its sublime characterization in retro). Second, in inverting the relationship between the political structure and the individual, Takeda essentially shifts the power dynamic underlying subjectivity (and thus, political responsibility) from material action and political organization to intellectual perception. While state structures and ideological narratives may provide convenient and temporarily stable points of personal reference, in *Sima Qian*, it is “perceiving” the greater span humanity that opens “the world.”

But how does Takeda justify this claim of humanistic centrality and what implications does this have for the “materiality” of the text? How does humanity come to occupy this position as the “world’s center” and what exactly is the nature of this “humanity”? For this, it is necessary to examine the first section of the basic analects, in which Takeda analyzes the historical disruption that occurs with the fall of the primeval Xia dynasty at the end of the Summer Annals. Takeda writes,

Because of the lamentable habits of King Jie of Xia, the “Summer Annals” ended. It was not the rise of an exemplary individual that heralded the end of the “Summer Annals,” but the annihilation of a no-good one. The center of the world of humanity wavered. A peaceful rule brimming with wealth and prosperity is not something that can continue forever. At some point it will end in annihilation. Even if readers were able to slightly put their hearts at ease as the good prince Tang replaced the evil king Jie and ascended the throne, by now the annihilation of the center of the world had begun pounding on the readers’ hearts. To put it another way, the theorem that the center of the world, just like any other individual entity, is something that will ultimately be supplanted by another entity, came to exist here.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Takeda, 31.

The downfall of the King Jie at the hands of the good prince Tang presents two vital points to the development of Takeda's conception of the assemblage of history. The first and perhaps more obvious feature is contained in the appearance of "annihilation" (*metsubō*), a force integral to the operation of the historical world. Given its historical trappings and unquestioned solidity as the first historical dynasty, its origins stretching back to the mythical origins of the Five Good Emperors who supposedly founded ancient China, the Xia Dynasty formed an uninterrupted institution within history and thus presented what might be considered a historical constant. Again, because what Takeda is concerned with is the political power attributed to both "perception" and "affect," the Xia can be said to have formed the "center" of the political world by those subjects who believed in it. It is for this reason that the annihilation which dethroned King Jie, which caused the world to shift, is conceptualized in terms of the feelings of the subject of the "reader" who is not explicitly clarified political actor himself, but stands in a position where he can observe the vicissitudes of history and conceptualize them. The annihilation Takeda describes is thus not of Jie himself, but of the perception of an essential institutional "fixity" within human consciousness. For if the Xia dynasty, which was a constant that upheld the world, can disappear, what can possibly remain solid? Thus, for Takeda, historical annihilation, though in material terms a negative, is ultimately ascribed positive connotations as it allows for the realization of a larger continuity (and thus subjectivity) within humanity, and prevents the stagnation of history that accompanies a tacit acceptance of the political structures which are mediated by humans, but considered as greater than "humanity" in their façade of historical centrality. Again, this point is problematic insofar as it posits a larger "humanity" which, while constructed from the material existence of individuals, holds a greater moral and historical significance that can only be perceived from without, a relationship that creates stark

ethical concerns which will be touched on later. For now, it will perhaps suffice to note that, in Sima Qian, annihilation occupies a generative space for the renewal of “humanity,” one which Takeda describes in highly systematic terms. Takeda summarizes this function of annihilation in a later text in the following manner: “After all, the annihilation of each individual country actually serves the purpose of nourishing the world, and the absorption of those nutrients goes on to ensure the survival of the whole of humanity.”<sup>45</sup>

The second point, which forms Takeda’s larger thesis in his analysis of the basic annals, comes from the consideration of the manner in which oppositional/dialectical human relationships, while appearing disruptive in a “temporal” conception of historical development, actually structure the world by means of an inter-reliant synthesis, what Takeda describes as a “spatial” (*kūkanteiki*) organization of history. This point is significantly more nuanced than the first and Takeda spends the whole of this long chapter teasing out its meaning, but the essence of this point is that, in predominant conceptions of history, the temporal structure of historical narrative directs our focus toward historical “shifts” and “disruptions;” cataclysmic events that mark the end of one period and the beginning of the other. This focus on the temporal development of history as a series of developing disruptions leads readers to enshrine and lament the rise and fall of monolithic political figures and superstructures which become immaterial and thus unapproachable as we elevate above the milieu of human life.<sup>46</sup> The rise and fall of empires, revolutionary movements, nations; these all present essentially temporal conceptualizations of history as they are “centers” of the world which are expressed in terms of their “duration” as

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<sup>45</sup> Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳, “*Shinpan* 審判,” in *Takeda Taijun zenshū dai ni kan* 武田泰淳全集第二卷, ed. Haniya Yutaka 埴谷雄高 (Tokyo: Chikumashobō 筑摩書房, 1971).

<sup>46</sup> Takeda never explicitly states this in the text, but considering that his point of criticism correlates to the “history” put forth by “we Japanese” in the late 40’s, it is reasonable to assume that there is an implicit criticism levied against the fixation on the (supposedly) enduring ethos of the Japanese nation-state, the larger ethnocentric identity associated with it, and the conception of “greater than human” figures like the Japanese emperor enshrined by political structures at the time.

institutions and are remembered selectively in terms of the legacy accomplishments they leave to time. Thus, we are led to consider history in terms of immaterial sentimentality, a form of affective response that diminishes the capacity for individual action and for recognition of the inherently material nature of the structure of the world, formed from a confluence of human actions that give it shape.<sup>47</sup> Takeda refers to this material structure of the world in explicitly physical terms, describing the “three-dimensional” (立体的 *rittaiteki*) nature of humanity, its rich “potential” (可能性 *kanosei*), and energy (エネルギー *enerugishu*), which can only be achieved by looking beyond the limitations of a temporal conception of history, a narrative which most often is beholden to the limiting interests of particular political ideology at the time and thus loses the greater context of “the world.”<sup>48</sup> As might be expected, however, this sort of universal humanism, while perhaps not as immaterial from earlier Western conceptions of humanity, is prone to its own ideological pitfalls, which I argue become even more apparent when the scale of the “space” of history expands in the course of Takeda’s analysis. This point finds clarification as Takeda approaches the problem of “good” and “evil.”

As more and more disruptions emerge as ancient China develops, in the form of various annihilations of dynasties, kingdoms, and influential individuals, Takeda hones in on the development of the popular conception of “good” (聖 *sei*) individuals triumphing over “evil” (悪 *aku*) figures. The vacillation between periods of fortune and misfortune and their association

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<sup>47</sup> A concrete example of this presents itself as Takeda’s critique of the Japanese cultural formation of “sorrow” (*aware*) which is a state of mind that comes from the perception of the “fleeting” nature of the world which finds confirmation in a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, as inevitable political upheaval and annihilation of historical institutions are conflated with the decay of the world itself. Takeda argues that this kind of immaterial thinking is borne out of a “temporal” reckoning of history, which invests these structures with a durability and transcendence they cannot hope to achieve in reality.

<sup>48</sup> Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳, *Shibasen: Shiki no sekai* 司馬遷：史記の世界 (Tokyo: Kōdansha 講談社, 1965), 4.

with a supposed divine providence presents another theme Takeda seeks to problematize. In his analysis of the presentation of these historical figures by Sima Qian in the annals, each of whom is presented with a kind of equanimity that affirms both their particular human traits and their relation to the shifting “center of the world,” Takeda determines that, in Sima Qian’s world, oppositional traits like good and evil, though readily given to dialectical opposition and synthesis in the realm of the conceptual, are deeply inter-reliant and in fact exist in a mutually causal relationship within the material world of human action. To put it in rather banal terms, Takeda makes the claim that goodness cannot exist without evil and vice-versa. This is not, it should be noted, a rule that Takeda seeks to extend to the level of a larger theorem that determines the future course of the world, but, again, a description of the manner in which the textual “world” of history develops as a matter of perspective. For Takeda, these two halves of morality are not assigned any kind of essential value, but are rather considered in terms of how they “move” the world, that is, how the opposition of these forces forms a dynamism that moves political actors within the world. Takeda writes:

If what determines a political human being’s action is “virtue,” wouldn’t “moving the world” also be “virtuous”? (...) Already [in the progression of the historical record] without the appearance of an evil king, the appearance of a good one seems untenable. If “virtue” is something that can determine a political human being’s actions, then “vice” ought to hold the same determinative power shouldn’t it? If “virtue” is “something that moves the world,” isn’t “evil” also “something that moves the world”?<sup>49</sup>

The element of morality, in other words, unfolds a “spatial dimension” of humanity, adding an additional layer of complexity to the “space” of history by opening an additional dimension of the political beings that move the world. The discontinuity of human morality, the difference between these historical figures, good and evil, “splits” the center of the world in twain but, in doing so, the scope of humanity expands exponentially in breadth and complexity. Takeda refers

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<sup>49</sup> Takeda, *Shibasen* (1971), 32-33.

to this development as the emergence of a “Good/Evil Dual World Center” (性悪人間的の世界中心 *Seiaku nigenteki no sekai chūshin*) and argues that this presents a phenomenon in which reading into the subject of humanity “opens” the world of history, presenting a point in which the discontinuity of individual actors forms a larger and more expansive continuity of the space of the world in its totality (the text of history).<sup>50</sup>

This plurality is not limited to the one-to-one relationship of “good” and “evil.” As the act of recording history develops with the rise and fall of various political structures, a larger plurality of kingdoms and countries influences the nature in which the world is perceived along lines of the world’s “center.” Additionally, as the political landscape depicted in *Shiki* increases in complexity with the section on hereditary houses’ incorporation of various kingdoms, factions, and actors, all of whom inform and are informed by each other (in the same manner as “good” actors are informed by “evil” ones), this relationship expands from a dualistic dialectic out to the level of a vast network of political actors, developing the world structure to a point of even greater complexity, all mediated by the act of recording, the perspective which allows the “reader” to observe the unfolding of these connections in a setting of suspended temporality. As Takeda notes, “The relationship among countries came to occupy an important part of history, and writing the history of one country came to mean writing the history of many other countries.”<sup>51</sup> Takeda describes this emergent development of multiple recordings of history oriented around the “center” of humanity as occupying a “state of parallelism” (*heiritsu jotai*) among various waxing and waning human forces of human compulsion. Similar to the revelation of the “dual world center,” the construction that emerged in Takeda’s analects, this state of parallelism is an

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<sup>50</sup> Takeda, 31.

<sup>51</sup> Takeda, 34.

inherently spatial one, but “the state of parallelism” expands the geography of human relations out even further, unfolding the network of human relations to a point that gradually appears to, in its sum, approach the world in its “totality” (*sekai zentai*). Based on this assemblage of history, one formulated on the cumulative function of various material relations of human actors, various competing and collaborative discontinuities mediated by the various historical annihilations of the historical world, Takeda describes the “humanity” figured within “spatial” composition of history as a synthesis of historical “discontinuity” (*danzoku*) and “continuity” (*jizoku*). Takeda writes,

As a rule, no matter what individual, or bloodline, or collective, continuity is considered preternatural. However, isn't it so that what complicates continuity is that the vicissitudes of fortune and the mortal significance of the living, have meaning as temporal changes, and, in *Shiki*, this is problematized? And isn't it so that one reflects on continuity, though continuity contains changes and thus writing continuity itself becomes writing non-continuity, as though one is awestruck by the flow of time? And, isn't it the case that, when something that ought to be continuous does not endure, it can only appear to us as a lamentable phenomenon? Indeed, if one considers continuity temporally, it is always interrupted and diverted. If one thinks of continuity in terms of particularity, in the end, it is impossible for anything to be continuous. But, *Shiki* does not approach continuity in this way. In the *Shiki*-esque world, continuity is considered spatially. It is considered from all sides [全面的に *zenmenteki ni*].<sup>52</sup>

What this means is that, for Takeda, history, insofar as it describes the development of a temporal passage of events, can never achieve an ordering of the world that allows for a continuous (and thus powerful) human subjectivity. Traditional conceptions of history are always removed to an extent from the material conditions of reality, which are formed by a “spatial” simultaneity of forces that are inter-reliant in order to produce the conceptual “reality” of “movement,” the outcome of a confluence of spatially-related forces that gives shape to the larger “world.” In this sense, Takeda relies on the Hegelian/Marxist dialectic of historical development, but he effectively alters its meaning by shifting the discourse from the idea of movement (and thus complexity) as a result of temporal progression, and instead reorients it to a

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<sup>52</sup> Takeda, 70.

series of immediate material relations (spatial) that are permitted to exist within the textual space. It should be noted that, for Takeda, this spatial relationship is not a reflection of the material “world” we inhabit, but rather presents a product of the reconfiguration of information that the textual construction of history performs, a reorganization that allows the reader to experience an otherwise impossible to perceive simultaneity of reality that allows for the emergence of an “absolute world” that goes beyond the temporal order. This is not to imply that the temporal order has some claim to material reality that the spatial order does not. Rather, for Takeda, the temporal order, which is the dominant mode of discourse, not by fault of Western influence, but explicitly because this order gives power to the institution of the status quo, is problematically associated with an essentially misleading emotional codification of particular political structures in cultural expression that actively inhibits the appreciation of the spatial resonance of forces by way of their perceived (and absolute) temporal segregation. Again, the problem that Takeda writes against is one of perception but, as this point clarifies, the reconfiguration of the world by means of a spatial perception as opposed to a temporal one allows Takeda to achieve a kind of transcendence through the material relations of particular historical subjects. This transcendence is not the ideological “overcoming” of history espoused by schools like the Kyoto School, however, it is precisely by nature of the material relations of individuals, and the maintenance of this “network” of relations, that the concept of a predominant humanistic totality achieves fruition. What the “discovery” of this perspective permits is the reconfiguration of historical fact into a means that offers an alternative to dominant modes of thinking that simultaneously empower political superstructures and disempower “human” subjects of these larger organizing forces. In this manner, the particular vicissitudes of individual humans, their flourishing and flagging fortunes, form discontinuities which support the greater continuity of humanity as a

dynamic energy that moves the world. Regardless of the nature of human character at any given point, without the confluence of these characters and their conflict, what we might call “humanity,” the world would surely stagnate and succumb to ruin.

This concept of the spatial simultaneity of the world, and its effects on the observer/reader, find their fruition in the section on Sima Qian’s tables that, by nature of their visual format, establish a geography of the spatial world which Takeda looks over with deep fascination. What is perhaps more interesting, however, is the attention Takeda devotes again to the position of readership, specifically the “affective response” of a potential reader observing the vastness of history in the spatial world represented within the tables. Takeda writes,

Looking at these “world tables,” one does not feel temporal changes, the vicissitudes of fortunes, or the mortal significance of the living, rather, it is the feeling that one is physically looking over the whole of the world in one space. More than anything else, the spatial configuration of the total world wells up in one’s heart, and feelings of admiration for the flow of time do not stir even slightly.<sup>53</sup>

In this passage, we find what constitutes the “total world” (世界全体 *sekai zentai*) that Takeda refers to. The absolute does not exist within the pages of the text, but rather within the gaze of the reader, the one who “perceives” the world by way of the text. Takeda explicitly affirms this stance later, noting that “seeing the various parts of the world at once with the aid of the “tables,” is thinking history spatially. One could say that it is both seeing and thinking the historical world in terms of its absolute continuity.”<sup>54</sup> The revelation that the totality of the historical world exists within the eye of the beholder clarifies both Takeda’s conception of humanism and the manner in which history and subjectivity interact. While the “world” of the text forms a systemic, continuous conception of humanity, it cannot be said to be complete unless the text is transmitted to future generations of readers, thus ensuring both the model of “continuity” established in the

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<sup>53</sup> Takeda, 72.

<sup>54</sup> Takeda, 73.

text (in that the “humanity” of the future generations exists on after the annihilation of former generations to continue the cycle of historical renewal) and allowing for the larger span of history to be opened up by establishing a “perspective,” a prescribed method under which material reality might be organized in such a way that it gains a significance that moves beyond the confines of both the particular material reality of the text and the material reality of the reader in that particular historical moment. While I agree with Karatani Kōjin when, in his analysis of Sima Qian, he contends that it is not a “transcendental” work of philosophy in the manner of Takeda’s contemporaries’, I would argue that Takeda does achieve a kind of transcendence by way of the material, placing the historical materialism of human interrelation and the textual materiality of recording under the lens of an analytic perspective rooted in the ideological concerns of the present day, which allows for the deterritorialization of historical “fact” into an abstracted, fluid conception of humanity.<sup>55</sup> It is the act of “transmission” (連続 *renzoku*) of the text that allows this to happen, transmuting the text from the level of “historical materiality” to the level of conception via the reader, who asserts agency in the affective act of “re-seeing and re-thinking” the material world by way of the text.<sup>56</sup> Takeda himself hints at the affective (and ideological) trappings of the process of “transmission” in his description of the reception of *Shiki* over the generations: “If it [*Shiki*] was a ‘history of facts,’ it would be a story left forgotten. However, *Shiki* is a ‘history of humanity.’ Historical figures are not seen as mere wise men, or as mere politicians, or as mere facts, but as ‘human.’”<sup>57</sup> This line which reveals that, for Takeda, the emotional valence of narrative is not merely happenstance, but critical to the very operation of recording which, in its nature, requires an audience for its meaning to transfer to through the

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<sup>55</sup> Karatani, *History and Repetition*, 205.

<sup>56</sup> Takeda, *Shibasen*, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Takeda, 82.

succeeding generations. Unlike the content of the historical text, however, Takeda's audience is not material, for it occupies a setting beyond the sociopolitical limitations of material reality in the present and instead acts as a subjectivity that transcends the present and becomes one with historical totality and the "world" through the recognition of its own image. In this manner, the act of "transmission" that accompanies historical record appears to form a kind of affective deterritorialization for Takeda, marking the point at which the material of history finds its generalization in a future (and thus immaterial) humanity, the contours of which are unknown. But what then of the "recorder" himself? What sort of agency or subjective actualization can he achieve if his work is predicated always on the unseen and unguaranteed future?

*Sima Qian* closes, perhaps somewhat oddly, with a short passage concerning the titular writer as he looks out over his own impending "annihilation" in the form of the invading Xiongnu<sup>58</sup> people who defeated the Han in 200 B.C. and would continue to make raids on the northern regions of China well after Sima Qian's death. Takeda writes: "An unconcealable sorrow. With an unconcealable sorrow, Sima Qian looked over the problem of the Xiongnu. What he looked over with an unconcealable sorrow was not only this problem. It was the whole of the world."<sup>59</sup> Takeda hints here at an affective dimension quite different from that of the reader who is able to peer out over the whole of the world with awe and fascination and, in doing so, gain mastery over it in the formulation of "totality." Indeed, in this statement, the text completes a kind of vicious circle, trapping Sima Qian within the world he created, one that he cannot alter, but can only look upon with an "unconcealable sorrow," a lamentation which he cannot help but express. This rather enigmatic ending thus renews the question posed earlier in this chapter: "If history is

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<sup>58</sup> A nomadic group of peoples in the Han dynasty, most frequently associated with the Hun invasion of China. Sima Qian famously characterizes the Xiongnu as the antithesis of the Huaxia (the settled Chinese people) in developing the Hua-Yi Distinction (Sino-Barbarian Dichotomy).

<sup>59</sup> Takeda, 112.

a textual recording, what does the act of recording do to/for the subject?” What position do we attribute to Sima Qian (and thus, Takeda as well) as recorders of history, as “perceivers” to its unfolding and what are ethical dimensions attached to the subject in the act of “recording”? To address this question, let us turn briefly to the structure of the “perspective” that undergirds the entirety of the text and, indeed, the conception of the “world”: the positions of the writer and reader.

### **Ethics, Annihilation, and the Authority of Authorship in *Sima Qian***

The first chapter of *Sima Qian: The World of Shiki*, is, interestingly, not about *Shiki* at all, but presents a partial translation of Sima Qian’s famous “Letter to Ren-An” (仁愛に報ずる手紙 *Jin-ai ni hōzuru tegami*) into classical Japanese with intermittent commentary provided by Takeda following particularly interesting passages. Sima Qian’s Letter to Ren-An was a response to Ren-An’s letter to his friend, which initially asked Sima Qian to recommend good men for advancement in the court but, following a grave political misstep on Ren-An’s part in the interim between sending the letter and Qian’s reply, it indirectly also became a plea to Sima Qian for his intercession to save him from a looming execution. Depending on the perspective and aims of the reader, the letter can be described ultimately as a study in powerlessness or, according to less charitable scholars, an exercise in diplomatic deflection and tactical self-effacement. In the letter, Sima Qian laments to his friend that he no longer has the means to help him, having fallen from favor with the Han emperor. Having called the emperor’s judgment into question some years prior, defending the surrender of the Han army general, Li Ling (李陵), when he was faced with a hopeless battle against the Xiongnu in the northern campaign, Sima Qian was given the choice to either be executed or to suffer castration and live on shamefully as a eunuch. Sima Qian, lacking the necessary funds to commute his sentence, elected the latter course, suffering

tremendous agony and the public humiliation that was associated with castration. He describes in detail the depth of his shame, having been “defiled” by the punishment of castration, which he describes as the most disgraceful punishment possible and notes that his life now is merely a testament to his disgrace. Despite loathing this state of abjection, Sima Qian lives on due to his strong sense of dedication to completing the historical record started by his father.

It is in the context of this letter that Takeda famously begins *Sima Qian* with the line “Sima Qian was a man who lived on in shame.”<sup>60</sup> This iconic line itself presents an incredibly rich point of departure for an analysis of the text but, before diving in to the potential significance of this conceptual starting point, it is perhaps even more revealing to consider the manner in which critics have elected to interpret this line. By far, the most common interpretation of this line is made in the context of Takeda’s own character. The argument advanced by critics in this reading roughly amounts to this: Takeda himself can be considered a “man who lived on in shame,” given his forced recanting of his political action, his status as a scholar who continued his work despite the shame of social ostracization he suffered as a member of the monastic order and as a failed revolutionary, and the shame of fighting against the Chinese as a soldier of the Japanese military. Indeed, it is more than likely that Takeda’s fascination with Sima Qian contained a personal element to it, and Takeda even describes his initial interest in studying Sima Qian as forming “a test to his spirit.”<sup>61</sup> It is not my intention to reject these claims; however, I would argue there is a far more productive point to be made about what the meaning of the act of writing is in the context of the subject and what this “shame” associated with “living on” means as regards history and the nature of the act of recording. As Karatani Kōjin writes on this initial line of *Sima Qian*,

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<sup>60</sup> Takeda, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Takeda, *Shibasen* (1965), 13.

Nonetheless, this sense of shame can be said to exist at the core of Takeda's writing. When he refers to Sima Qian's shame, Takeda does not mean that he suffered a shameful punishment. Rather, he is saying that to write is itself something shameful. No matter why one writes, or what one writes, to write is itself to "live on in shame." In other words, the act of writing can never be legitimized in any sense, and it is precisely this fact that makes writing possible.<sup>62</sup>

When we consider the meaning of the phrase "lived on in shame" (生き辱さらした *ikihajisarashita*), Takeda is not merely referring to the fact that Sima Qian survived, but that he lived on to record history and that, for all of Sima Qian's lamentations regarding his lowly state, this can be said to be the thesis of his letter as well: that he elected to "live on" for the sake of his work, for the sake of a recording that he could pass on as his legacy to future generations. Having lost all political status and holding few to no prospects in the present, writing is an act which allowed Sima Qian to transcend his own historical place and assert a form of agency, in his *self-preservation* within a later time, an act that holds power, but also an unalienable sense of shame associated with the continuance of one's own existence, lamentable though it is. This temporal/transcendent aspect to the act of writing, its ability to carry on beyond the individual, forms what Takeda refers to as the "terror" of records. Takeda writes, "There are those who consider records to be terribly simple things, but I think they are terrifying. Because if the record becomes large enough, it will become a record of the world, and that which makes a record of the world is, in essence, re-viewing and re-thinking the world."<sup>63</sup>

What do we make of this statement? Considered in the context of the last enigmatic lines of the text, the "unconcealable" sorrow that gripped Sima Qian in his final days, the position of the writer appears, initially, to be one predicated on occupying a position of helplessness or powerlessness in contrast to the reader. Whereas the reader is able to, in reading Sima Qian's work, see the vastness of the historical world and the totality of humanity, the writer laments in

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<sup>62</sup> Karatani, *History and Repetition*, 202-203.

<sup>63</sup> Takeda, *Shibasen* (1971), 6.

ignominy and, though given the ability to “re-view” and “re-think” the world, to establish different paradigms of thought, they are unable even to make the smallest of changes to their present condition, or to their inevitable impending future (annihilation). It is perhaps for this reason that Takeda describes Sima Qian as occupying the position of a “bystander” as regards history, powerless to do anything but observe the flow of history as it occurs. However, this attitude of self-effacement and abjectness conceals an important political valence that accompanies this “bystander” position: the immense privilege and “power” of claiming to step outside of history (and, by that token, humanity itself).

In order to “see” history in its totality, one must first occupy a vantage point that allows one to perceive, from a position of absence, even from a distance away from what one is supposedly part of. There are several methods to do this, of course, and it is achieved most easily in the realm of abstraction, but there is also the method of establishing an “outside” to oneself, a valence of “otherness” to a reality surrounding the viewer which he cannot inhabit that thus allows its capture. When we consider Takeda’s impressions of the front—the whole of society encapsulated within the Chinese landscape, the deep humanity that permeated the features of the peasantry—we find not only a reflection of Takeda himself, but the self which Takeda denied and projected onto the object of the Chinese people. The conceptualization of the universal within the “other” always requires, to an extent, the silencing of the alterity, the discontinuities of the othered subject, in order to form a cohesive, “continuous” whole. In Takeda’s case, his conception of the Chinese during his time on the front was not merely an act of “re-viewing” humanity, but implicitly changing it, relegating it to a place outside of himself and transforming “subjects” into “actors.” Takeda himself notes, in his review of *Shiki*, the process by which Sima Qian was able to capture history in recording, “In order to write *Shiki*, it was first necessary to

discover the method of taking humans as political actors. As a result of this, a means to thinking the world was opened, and a means of gathering the elements that structure totality was opened.”<sup>64</sup> Though the conception of humanity as “political actors” here appears as a bid to root subjectivity in the material effects of human action, this conceptualization involves the assertion of implicit assumptions concerning individuals and their supposed place within a larger ideological continuum. In this sense, the capture of humanity, performed by the individual “bystander” observing an “otherized” human subject, privileged by nature of his ability to invade and act as supposedly disinterested (or even lamentable) onlooker to the vistas of human annihilation, forms a kind of inhuman humanism, one which considers the sacrifice of others unavoidable for the sake of a future “readership” of similarly privileged individuals who can claim the right, by nature of their material separateness, to “review” and “reconsider” others. Reading the text of Sima Qian, it is clear that Takeda’s “historical record” operates at all times within the confines of a material order of the text, but the subjectivity established within this continuum, the “totality” of humanity this to which this textual assemblage opens a vista of terrible violence in which the viewer plays “bystander” as he “helplessly” watches” on. Considered in this manner, Takeda’s conception of the historian takes on a newfound and particularly insidious meaning: “By recording he [the historian] is actually doing everything.”<sup>65</sup>

In an early passage on the basic analects, Takeda describes Sima Qian’s descriptions of the historical figures of history as presenting the kind of quiet and respectful equanimity of passing by the graves of humanity one by one.<sup>66</sup> Though Takeda does not infuse this passage with any particular emotional valence, reserving his pathos for Sima Qian’s noble mission of recording

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<sup>64</sup> Takeda, 27.

<sup>65</sup> Takeda, 18.

<sup>66</sup> Takeda, 30-31.

and his admiration for the vast span of history in its spatial unfolding, one cannot help but consider here the nature of a “world” in which humanity has already met its annihilation. Indeed, when one considers the historian in the capacity of a gravekeeper as Takeda describes here, a bystander left to tally the dead, Takeda’s vision of the mainland takes on a significantly more macabre tone. Achille Mbembe, in his work on postcolonial theory, uses the term “necropolitics” to describe a deployment of political power in the endgame of empire, in which the ultimate demonstration of authority is the establishment of political zones in which empire is able to determine not only who is killed, but also who is “exposed” to death in the fact of their living.<sup>67</sup> Mbembe speaks quite concretely in his analysis of death camps established within colonial interests, particularly during the Holocaust historically, and in Africa contemporarily, but as Mark Driscoll demonstrates in his seminal study, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque* (2010), the necropolitical mode in the Japanese Empire was not only enacted through the systematic annihilation of individuals in the Japanese colonies through forced labor, drug trade, and prostitution, but also within the textual space of fiction and biopolitical treatises which made certain types of life expendable and exposed colonial subjects to the grimmest of tortures.<sup>68</sup> Thus, I would argue, that in establishing the Chinese front as a kind of graveyard of humanity, Takeda’s conception of the world makes a political statement which tacitly endorses the annihilation of countless individuals subject to the imperial gaze, cleanly systematized within the mechanical assemblage of the historical, expressed in the analytic language of the physical sciences and world geography. Recording and perceiving, thus, are not only a source of shame, a

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<sup>67</sup> Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 14.

<sup>68</sup> Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan’s Imperialism, 1895–1945* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010), 203-224.

testament to personal indignity that remains forever; misused, they become a weapon of terrible implication.

Somewhat ironically, however, Takeda himself would himself encounter this mortal vision when, on August 6, 1945, the atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese mainland. Though Takeda did not witness this “annihilation” personally as he was stationed in Shanghai at the time as a cultural liaison, its effect on his conception of the historical could not be more profound. Indeed, taken another way, it may precisely be because Takeda, the consummate observer, witnessed the annihilation of Japan from without that its effect was all the stronger, demonstrating to him the very violence of the narratives he recorded of cultural “others” turned against himself in his capacity as a citizen of the “annihilated” Japanese empire. Fortunately, we have the resource of Takeda’s own observations of this particular and transformative annihilation to aid us in discerning the effect of this historical catastrophe on his conception of humanity and the relation of culture to history in the form a short essay he composed just after the war.

### **“On Annihilation” and the Fragmentary “Potentiality” of Subjectivity**

Published in the March 1947 volume of the literary magazine *Hana* nearly four years after the final serialization of *Sima Qian*, “On Annihilation” presents what might be considered a direct follow-up to the earlier text while, at the same time, demonstrating a truly radical departure from its presentation of similar historical concepts. Indeed, though Takeda wrote over thirty critical essays and works of fiction in the interim between these two texts, no other text references the historical concepts—i.e. “annihilation”, “the absolute”, “the world”—elucidated within *Sima Qian* so directly as this short work. As the title evidences, Takeda’s primary concern is with the nature of “annihilation,” however, as will be clarified, Takeda’s concern is not so much with the “annihilative” event itself, but with the problematique of humanism and the perspective with

which one contextualizes the annihilative event. In other words, the very ideals championed in the pages of *Sima Qian*.

“On Annihilation” begins, somewhat strangely, not with a depiction of the intense historical revolutions or destructions that Takeda freely lists off in *Sima Qian*, but with Takeda directly questioning the recent rise in media and popular interest centered on the topic of annihilation (particularly disaster film which saw a considerable rise in popularity in the period immediately following the Second World War). Takeda describes, with some measure of apparent anxiety, the recent trend in which people will go to a movie theater, “experience” annihilation vicariously from the comfort of their seats and, after receiving a kind of cathartic shock, return to their daily lives. Takeda writes that he is worried by the recent surge in public interest and cultural representations of the subject of annihilation, especially since, outside the comfort of the theater, annihilation is expanding at a rapid pace in the world beyond the boundaries of these modern comforts. But, as quickly becomes apparent, Takeda himself is painfully aware of what leads one to become fascinated with “annihilation” and his true concern is not a perplexity with this recent fascination with annihilation, but the problem of how the “conceptualization” of annihilation and its response implicitly alter conceptions of subjectivity and cultural perspective; in other words, the means by which the movement of humanity takes shape within a sociocultural setting. Indeed, in contrast to *Sima Qian*, what Takeda appears to stress in “On Annihilation” is not so much the political agency of the individual or the nature of history and humanity, but how “perspective” is shaped by historical materiality and how this perspective, in turn, contributes to the movement of the world, one which is adopting an asymptotic trajectory toward the annihilative.

To what can we attribute this new “anxiety” of Takeda’s toward annihilation, which, previously, he was content to leave to the perspective of a bystander? In “On Annihilation,”

Takeda claims that he first became enthralled with the characters for “annihilation” (滅亡) after experiencing the celebration of the defeat of Japan while living in Shanghai. Abject and feeling like a marked “outsider” to the festivities of the victors of the war, Takeda describes himself as struggling to find something to cling to, at which point he elects to take comfort in the seeming “universality” of annihilation, which he describes as “A thing like a massive sponge that sucks in all morality, all justice, existing without a sound. A thing like the ironic smile of god watching the life and death of all humanity, its visage completely unfeeling,” which allows him to forget his own abjection by imagining the inevitable destruction of others.<sup>69</sup> Quite tellingly, Takeda’s description of the nature of annihilation is quite similar to the systematic “world” described in *Sima Qian*, though perhaps with a more ominous and disapproving tone. Takeda writes:

Annihilation is not only our fate. It is the fate of all that exists. The nations of the world have all been annihilated at some time. The peoples of the world have all been annihilated at some time. And these, the nations that have annihilated many nations, the peoples of the world that have annihilated many peoples, will ultimately be annihilated. Annihilation is absolutely not an individual tragedy that ought to be admired or lamented. It is more material, more in keeping with the laws of space in the world; a precise fact. Just the same as the movements of the stars, or the maturation of plants, it is no more than an overwhelmingly precise, recurring fact. Just as individual humans take the lives of individual animals and plants, chew and swallow them, and digest them and absorb their nutrients for themselves, the great structure known as the world is a thing that annihilates a certain people or a certain nation and takes it as nourishment to sustain itself.

A nation being annihilated by war and vanishing from the face of the earth is but a small digestive function in the body of the organism called the world, or its menstruation, or merely a yawn. Within the womb of the world, several, or rather several scores of people battle and annihilate each other, but to the world this is nothing more than the internal movements of organs to aid the circulation of blood through the body. Without this movement, the world itself would weaken, and would likely have no choice but to perish.<sup>70</sup>

In this passage Takeda’s reckoning of the inherently violent element of a perspective he quite carelessly espoused in the pages of *Sima Qian* is clarified and problematized. Takeda explicitly describes these ruminations on annihilation as the result of a “warped” sensibility that gripped him, a psychology that Takeda describes as being similar to that of a petulant child who has lost

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<sup>69</sup> Takeda Taijun, “Metsubō ni tsuite 滅亡について,” in Takeda Taijun zenshū dai ju ni kan 武田泰淳全集第十二卷, ed. Haniya Yutaka 埴谷雄高 (Tokyo: Chikumashobō 筑摩書房, 1971), 92.

<sup>70</sup> Takeda, “Metsubō ni tsuite,” 92-93.

a game and is ruminating selfishly over the victory of his classmates. What initially appears as a grand unifying principle of humanism prior to the war, in the context of the defeat, rapidly decays into a petty response to feelings of alienation and resentment Takeda felt upon falling into what no doubt presented to him a situation of historical obsolescence, to be forgotten along with all the other “unwritten” annihilated within history. In this manner, the “perception” of the writer/reader established in *Sima Qian* is explicitly problematized as corresponding to an obsession of the self that seeks to incorporate the entirety of the world within its self-annihilation, a kind of historical solipsism. Whereas in *Sima Qian* Takeda sought to demonstrate the continuity of humanity by way of materiality of historical record, following the defeat, Takeda problematizes the manner in which such continuities are established, relying not on “material fact” of history, but rather cultural trends and their treatment of “annihilation” in order to elucidate the manner in which perception itself is mutable by nature of one’s association to a larger cultural entity which defines the terms of engagement with reality before the individual ever encounters the “text” of history.

As an example, Takeda offers up the classical Japanese conception of annihilation, one Takeda describes as variegated in its expression of “annihilation,” but generally conforming to the trend of focusing on quite “particular” forms of annihilation, usually of a single hero or clan within an affectively charged period of history (e.g. the Sengoku period). Takeda cites the work of the Japanese modern writers Tanizaki Junichirō (谷崎潤一郎) and Mori Ōgai (森鷗外), tracing the trends of Japanese cultural expression back to the more antiquated *Tale of Heike* (平家物語 *Heike monogatari*), giving these as particular examples from the rich vein of literary expressions of the concept of “annihilation” within Japanese history. Takeda notes, however, that

despite the depth of literary admiration and lamentation featured in these works, they are all modulated by a perspectival “distance” from the material event of annihilation and the terrible power of this destruction. Takeda writes,

These writers, every one of them, dealt with these annihilations long after the annihilation itself, or rather, within a psychological state completely inaccessible to annihilation. Even if they anticipated the same fate for themselves, they had the margin to complete their stories within the present; that is, they were able to live on to a secure time and place. In the end, it is not so much that they were the ones singing dirges of a ruined nation, as it was that they were on the side of those listening to the dirges of a ruined nation.<sup>71</sup>

In this manner, the “totality” of annihilation is explicitly separated from the cultural representation and “recording” of annihilation, which is always belated, partial, and thus untrue to the desperate psychology of the initial annihilative event by nature of temporal and affective distancing. Culture, and thus subjective expression, of annihilation can never truly achieve a complete record of annihilation, as culture is precisely the product of those who were not victim to annihilation and thus inherently holds a place of historical alterity toward those who were destroyed. Here Takeda explicitly problematizes the political valence of those who observe “annihilation” and claim to understand its true horror, considering this merely a product of the “warped” psychology given to those who comfort themselves through the vicarious consideration of humanity at the limits of its extremity; this same psychology, Takeda implies, is shared by those who enjoy the thrill of watching the annihilation of humanity the world over from the safety of their seats within the movie theater. Perhaps even more interesting, however, is that Takeda, in examining the cultural representations of historical recording, begins to discover something akin to a “plurality” of “annihilation.” In describing the seemingly universal presence of annihilation in representation across cultures, Takeda determines that it is due to the “partial” (*bubunteki*) nature of annihilation that its representation is constantly updated and

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<sup>71</sup> Takeda, 94-95.

renewed as the cultural conception of it changes in response to historical events of destruction.

Takeda writes,

All cultures, and above else all religions, hold some relation to the annihilation of a certain thing. It is just as if they are born from the desire for salvation from annihilation, or rather a salvation they pray for because they were annihilated. As long as annihilation is a partial annihilation, it will urge on the partial renewal of the individual and, as the individual grows closer by degrees to total annihilation, it will become a kind of completely unknown thing, and in the event it is not annihilated, there is also the case that it will give birth to a singular shining crystallization which holds a totally new atomic value. That individual cannot choose the form of that thing that he gives birth to, nor can he himself even mark expectation that it will be born. Rather, it is just as if it is born with the individual as reluctant as ever, with no relation to one's will.<sup>72</sup>

Here we can see a distinct shift in the relationship of agency and perspective as regards the historical subject; whereas in *Sima Qian*, the subject formed the world in perceiving it, in “On Annihilation,” perception is explicitly defined as a cultural formulation that is informed by the material circumstances of the event and the “loss” that occurs as it is recreated in its representation. “Annihilation” in the fullness of the original historical event can never be represented truly accurately as it can only be perceived from a position outside of annihilation. In this sense, one's own perception, though it may “create” the world in the sense that it “renews” the conception of history that finds expression and codification within cultural forms, but this perception itself is always modified by the limited nature by which “history” itself is transmitted and, even then, the individual does not truly have control over what form the annihilation will take as it is always qualified by the nature in which the historical world unfolds. In this sense, the individual perspective often serves not as a means of opening an exteriority of culture, so much as it itself acts as a conduit for cultural expression and construction. The discovery of the cultural mediation of historical perspective in the setting of the immediate postwar, for Takeda, does not so much alter the position of the subject in its capacity to “formulate” cultural reality, but it does

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<sup>72</sup> Takeda, 95.

clarify the inherent limitations of these expressions as a function of the context of cultural identity and mediation.

But what is meant by this fissure in meaning between “absolute” (*zenteki*) vs. “partial” annihilation. The distinction between these concepts is clarified for Takeda in the slippage of historical meaning between the historical event of the atomic bombings and its immediate incorporation into the Japanese and larger global conception of the historical (and formative) conception of what annihilation can be potentially be. This historical disruption of the event of the atomic bombings thus forms a kind of gravitational locus of the work, warping the manner in which Takeda perceives the world:

The true meaning of annihilation is found in total annihilation. Its essence is exactly as it is portrayed in the Revelation, a thorough annihilation brought forth by sulfur and fire and smoke and poisonous beasts and snakes. Compared to that great annihilation, the current annihilation is smaller in scale, and that alone is a comfort to the destroyed. Only two atomic bombs were dropped on Japanese soil and, for that reason, we were left alive; those are the terms of departure for the Japanese going forward. If it had been ten bombs, there would be no need for awe or regret or democratization; all that would remain is ash. Seen from the eyes of “the world,” Japan's quite partial annihilation, and the remaining survivors that were therefore exempt from it, might be akin to sinewy, unpleasant food that cannot be broken down by digestion and remains. However, even just this destruction has succeeded in attributing a completely new, completely unprecedented look to annihilation, for both Japanese history and the history of the Japanese people's sensation of annihilation.<sup>73</sup>

This line lends insight into the manner in which Takeda's conception of history developed with regards to the historically “disruptive” event of the defeat and the atomic bombings. For Takeda, the unfolding of history in the postwar setting is defined explicitly by the precarious tension that emerges from the relationship of the “particular” (the actual, e.g. the explicit historical fact of the two atomic bombs) and the “universal” (the potential, e.g. the implicit context of the bombs that were not dropped). The confluence of these two forces forges a precarious historical “space” suspended temporally at the crossroads of survival and oblivion, one which Takeda describes as,

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<sup>73</sup> Takeda, 94. Emphasis added.

“standing on that inherent precipice and tracing back the course of culture.”<sup>74</sup> The place of the subject within history is also implicitly altered by this revelation. As a result of the atomic bombings, the Japanese people’s conception of “annihilation” is forever changed; additionally, the conception of the Japanese people is irreparably altered. Thus, Takeda determines that the historical “legacy” of the event, if it can be called as such, is not so much a “material fact” which contributes to a larger conceptualization of humanity or an evidence of its particular capacities and the depth of its historical vicissitudes, but a facet of “perspective” and “sensation” itself which will find expression in a manner beyond the individual’s control. However, Takeda assigns an especial significance to the “particularity” of the atomic bombings explicitly because the scale of the destruction inflicted not only leaves an indelible mark on culture and the individual subject, but it also reveals the enormous pressure surrounding the relatively fragile existence of human culture as an entity which finds renewal within the experience of destruction. Takeda affirms this sense of precarity in describing the fearsome nature of a “total annihilation” which has the capacity to destroy the culture that gives it shape:

However, in terms of its original meaning, it is impossible to say that annihilation gives birth to culture. In the aforementioned birth of culture, there is no doubt that there is an undestroyed lineage, incredibly fine, almost indiscernible. Up until now there has certainly been this line. Clearly, this line has been generally allowed by the world. However, I wonder if it will be permitted to continue from here on? Today, when there is a tendency in the character of modern war, repeating twice, three times, and on, where more and more it approaches absolute annihilation, there is no doubt that science has finally succeeded in making the formerly partial, established form of annihilation, such as the destruction of one clan, of one fortress, a thing of the past. There is the possibility that a phenomenon similar to an instantaneous, sudden mutation could occur. Just as the native communities who had never touched a gun were attacked by foreigners holding guns and, not even given the time to understand what had happened to them, met their end in an instantaneous, sudden annihilation, the world from now on could, on an infinitely wider scale than these communities, be completely eradicated before our eyes can even register it.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Takeda, 96.

<sup>75</sup> Takeda, 95.

As the above quote indicates, the shift that occurs here is rooted in a basic change in understanding of the destructive force of the annihilative vis-à-vis the subject. Whereas in *Sima Qian* the annihilation presented a means for the individual to observe the development of the contours of historical “space,” a generative and systemic locus of meaning that one appreciates from a textually and temporally modulated “distance,” in “On Annihilation,” this perspective is problematized within the context of material reality and the means by which cultural perception has an active impact on material reality. With the revelation of cultural precarity, the link between historical development and its expression through culture, the position of the “observer” described in the introduction of the essay, is clarified as an ethical position, not merely in terms of the responsibility of writing the world and thus establishing one’s own identity in terms of an absolute ontology, but as participant in a larger ideological framework of subjects participating in the “witnessing” of an event. The revelation of the atomic bombings, as an instance of “particularity” that invokes the “universal” (again a universal which can only be conceived of within the individual prior to and outside of its material occurrence) implicitly alters the nature of perception, transforming it into a mode that inherently “involves” the individual in the history they perceive, both as a cultural actor who holds responsibility for giving form to the historical in its cultural codification, and as a “witness” to the totality of annihilation in its limited expression through the particular (as it clarifies the individual’s belonging to the precarious “cultural line” that could easily be wiped away at any time). In this manner, the “humanity” of the subject does not come from a perception of the “historical” (and thus foreclosed) nature of “others,” but from one’s increasing cognizance of their own historicity as participant within the cultural assemblage which both narrativizes past “disruptions” and subsequently shapes future ones. Putting the matter of historical recording aside, the mere act of experiencing annihilation as a disruptive

force changes the standards of the absolute and, with these standards, the relationship of the subject to the absolute. This change manifests in a number of ways, but it is clear that what concerns Takeda is a cultural capacity for a kind of renewal of cultural forms that allows the individual to experience the disastrous event indirectly from the perspective of the unrelated observer, a relativizing experience that shifts the place of humanity from the “real” to the “abstract.” Takeda describes this shift, which is both intellectual and affective, as implicitly diminishing one’s ability to act in an ethical manner, describing the state that emerges from this as a “distortion of the heart.”<sup>76</sup>

Reading this passage in the context of *Sima Qian*, it is clear that the “experience” of the defeat has problematized the “bystander” perspective Takeda discovered earlier; whereas in *Sima Qian*, the “terror of records” was associated directly with the “shame” of establishing the individual ego as a legacy within the framework of history (in other words, an internalized responsibility), the “terror” here comes from the recognition of one’s implicit involvement as a social actor in the material dimensions of historical events by way of artistic representation. Takeda here delineates separation between two modes of “seeing” possible in the observation of history, splitting the act of seeing in this piece as well between the twin concepts of acting as a *witness (mokugekisha)* to history in the experience of its stark precarity, and observing from an intellectual distance, in stark contrast, revealing, I would argue, the ethical and affective weight of this literary act of witnessing over the “observation” of the previous text. Takeda writes, “Because standing on that precipice, and enduring the fog and smoke of anxiety that comes

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<sup>76</sup> Takeda, 94.

bubbling up, is clearly a different practice from sitting in a luxuriant chair and enjoying a crisis reflected on the screen.”<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, if we examine what the material “effect” of annihilation is, it is not so much the maintenance of a continuous system, but an alteration of cultural ideological perspective to the mode of escalation or crisis which threatens the continuance of culture (and, by that token, humanity itself). Insofar as the conceptualization of annihilation is a cumulative assemblage that is formulated by escalating historical instances of annihilation (e.g. the shift to atomic bombs), the larger perception of cultural annihilation, too, will increase to approach more and more dire expressions of annihilation, exerting an effect of increasing distance from observers of these representations in various cultural media. Thus, the effect of partial annihilation is not merely an escalation of the annihilative mode, but an escalation of the terms of individual/cultural representations of annihilation, representations which actively shape our affective response to the world and, with that, our manner of effecting political change in the world (or electing not to). This is what is meant by Takeda when he invokes the antipolar (and cultural) force of a “configuration of humanism” that adapts to meet the demands of ever-escalating instances of destruction:

At that time, whatever sort of configuration humanism holds, will it be able to confront this? And with what expression will literature, literature which always has the potential to confer new content to humanism, welcome this annihilation? And above all else, with what kindness, what ferocity, what trembling flesh, will the Japanese literati, blanching with the loss of their virginity, receive this heretofore unseen “male” violence?<sup>78</sup>

Takeda’s means of expression remains problematic as ever. Despite the poverty of Takeda’s expression here, it is worth noting that the conceptualization of “humanism” raised by Takeda here is a cultural product and response to the historical “event,” occupying a peripheral position

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<sup>77</sup> Takeda, 96.

<sup>78</sup> Takeda, 96.

which bears an ethical praxis to confront the escalation of violence and the political organization of the present conditions of the world. Takeda recognizes here, I would argue, his own responsibility or “belonging” to the unfolding of history in his capacity as a writer, a witness who writes a “response” to historical “happening” that itself alters the course of human perception and, thus, cultural expression. The problem is inherently one of perspective, and the consideration of one’s own responsibility to the formulation of historical discourse. Takeda himself admits to his own capacity to fall into a blind-spot with regards to this responsibility and how the disruption of historical destruction lifts the veil, so to speak, to the larger potential for the annihilation of history in its totality:

I, being worried about the life and death of myself and the members of my family, will consider a world war only to the extent that it falls into a range related to that life and death, and will not take the long view to roughly grasp the death of the individual called the world. An annihilation not merely limited to the multitudes the world holds, an annihilation that goes beyond as far as one can see; this enormous time and space is all but forgotten. But, occasionally, when we touch the edge of that annihilation, this enormous time and space, previously a thing unrelated to us, immediately returns to us. (Considering annihilation includes the effect of causing one to think of something larger, something longer, something more complete than this kind of thing.)<sup>79</sup>

This raises the question then, of how to preserve historical alterity, writing with respect to the elements of humanity erased from existence in the course of history. In other words, when both cultural modes of expression and the veneer of normalcy attributed to the minutiae of daily life push us always to consider annihilation as a personal matter rather than a universal one, how do we move outside this mode within the setting of the “everyday”? The conclusion that Takeda reaches is, interestingly, found within the expansive space of literary expression and is evidenced, I argue, in the textual construction of “On Annihilation” itself. Through an examination of the text, specifically, the historical plurality that emerges in dialogical narratives, the means of suspending one’s perception emerges for Takeda.

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<sup>79</sup> Takeda, 96.

### **Annihilation(s) and the Emergence of Historical Plurality**

In *Sima Qian*, Takeda looked over the tables of ancient China's myriad historical figures and claimed he could see the whole of the world stretched out before him, in a simultaneous instant. However, the textual geography Takeda constructs in placing the "world" of the Han historian against the "world" of the contemporary Japanese subject belies the political conditions that, on a basic level, permit the very violence that Takeda is attempting to deconstruct within the structures of the imperial core. Insofar as a conception of "humanism" is predicated on the essential destruction or "annihilation" of humanity, no matter how well reasoned or analytically structured, will ultimately contribute to an inhuman system of relations, one which promotes "annihilation" of that which falls beyond the borders of the individual conception. When Takeda looked out over the Chinese front and saw the whole of society stretched out before him, he was not merely removing himself from humanity, but also removing "humanity" from the subjects he looked out over. In the setting of the postwar Shanghai, a political situation in which Takeda joined the ranks of the "annihilated," it can be said that Takeda, silenced in his foreclosure into history, found himself on the other side of this equation, and experienced the magnitude of alterity.

Interestingly, this "discovery" of alterity accompanies a kind of intertextual explosion in the "texts" that Takeda draws on in his conception of the "annihilative" event: Buddhist sutras, American cinema, personal anecdote, biblical verse, the tale of a sumo wrestler's defeat, scientific theorems and physics, Tanizaki and other Japanese literati, the *Tale of Heike* and the *biwa hoshi*. Compared to his texts in the prewar (including *Sima Qian*), "On Annihilation," short though the text may be, presents a vibrant landscape of intertextual reference and play, which puts Takeda's earlier texts to shame. As is clarified in the above section, the revelation of

intercultural alterity, on the one hand, allowed Takeda to formulate the distinction between partial forms of annihilation and total annihilation, but, I would argue, this discovery also prompted Takeda to reconsider his own relation to cultural norms and concepts as a writer, attempting to perhaps move beyond the cycle of culturally complicity which produced an escalating trend based on the obsession with culturally codified conceptions of annihilation. In contrast to the escalative/annihilative mode perpetuated in the writings of other Japanese writers like Tanizaki and Ōgai, “On Annihilation” presents a move toward an increasingly pluralistic view of history, in which different textual influences and voices are able to exist in a dialogue with each other. Within the expansive space of the textual landscape, Takeda was able to discover a method that allowed for the emergence of an historical alterity/potentiality that supersedes temporal distinction/disruption. Textual pluralism in Takeda’s work thus marks the emergence of a new “continuity” constructed of a plurality of voices that bridge cultural/temporal barriers while still being respected as distinct entities. In one sense, this “textual landscape” that emerges in Takeda’s fiction can be considered a continuation of the sort of “spatial” world established within *Sima Qian*, one which does not correspond to the limitations of a temporally-constructed world here. But whereas in *Sima Qian* individual alterity was subsumed or erased to form the continuity of totality, this relationship is nonexistent in “On Annihilation.” Though a kind of totality exists in the form of a potential, though unrealized “total” annihilation, it cannot be clarified in ontological terms. Rather, it emerges through a gradual unfolding within culture. And, while Takeda does make larger references to cultural and religious formulations, citing the importance they place on annihilation as a concept, these normative functions of culture in the universal are subverted by particular textual epitaphs that

challenge readers to think beyond the boundaries of culturally-prescribed conceptions of the world. As Takeda writes on the “annihilation” featured in the Buddhist “Jātaka Tales”:

Here, too, annihilation is foretold as encompassing a time and place that exceeds common sense. “One hundred thousand years,” “Together with the mountain Meru,” “To the immaterial heavens,” the strange devas cry, wearing their crimson robes. The warning of impending annihilation faces the *Loka-byūhā*, it takes leave of the provisions of normalcy and demands that one make an abnormal change of heart. The fact that the first sign necessary for the emergence of a great wisdom is annihilation, demonstrates the great function and the great opportunity that annihilation holds.<sup>80</sup>

The emergence of the tension between the larger trend of cultural progression/renewal and the capacity of text to reveal potentialities beyond the normative boundaries of cultural definition described here, implicitly changes both the nature of readership and the role of the recorder for Takeda. Rather than using text as means to “capture” the essence of reality in its perception, the text challenges the reader to make an affective response toward that which is beyond the provisions of cultural normalcy. And, on the part of the writer, it is not so much their responsibility to affect an analytic and comprehensive conception of the world that allows its capture as it is their responsibility to immerse themselves within the inherent mutability of reality that emerges with respect to many voices, to form a conduit for expressions that exist always in flight from ontological conceptualization.

### **Conclusions: History, Fragmentation, and Perspective**

The discovery of both “perspective” and the “terror” of recording remained vital points for Takeda’s intellectual project as he moved from cultural study to the writing of fiction, but, as the shift from the interwar *Sima Qian* to the postwar “On Annihilation” demonstrates, the terms of engagement changed. After experiencing both the terror of annihilation and the “violence” of humanism firsthand, Takeda underwent a drastic change in his conception of subjectivity and its relation to history and the act of recording. Whereas in *Sima Qian*, the subject existed in a

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<sup>80</sup> Takeda, 97.

mediated relationship with history, a bystander to whom the past is “transmitted” but whose effect on it is merely a further act of “reviewing” and “rethinking,” in “On Annihilation” this mediated observation is from the first problematized as a means of perpetuating the annihilation of countless others and though history cannot exist outside of a kind of “transmission” in the form of an unbroken line of ontological reality, always this existence is threatened or modulated by the effects of the overwhelming weight of the “totality” of nonexistence, the precarity of the individual place. What this revelation leads to is a greater sense of a historical “alterity” that surrounds the subject and an appreciation of how one’s very existence as an “observer” of history forms a political valence based on the nature of one’s indebtedness to cultural forms which modulate and implicitly alter the “conception” of historical forces (e.g. annihilation) and thus effect historical movement in particular directions.

Having “survived” his own annihilation, it may be considered all but natural for Takeda to have reconsidered the gravity of annihilation and his own relation to it, but there is a greater lesson offered here about the mediation of cultural expression on subjectivity and the potential for finding a means of responding “ethically” to the experience of history. “On Annihilation,” I would argue, presents an early experiment along these lines by specifically addressing the construction of *Sima Qian* in the context of the annihilative historicizing disruption of the atomic bombings. The experience of this disruption can be described as forming a point of fragmentation for Takeda’s conception of history. As Takeda began to write fiction on his experience of the period, his means of expression began to reflect the same kind of “polyvocality” he found in his conception of history, delving into the slippage associated with the memory of trauma in the context of annihilation, and the ethical responsibility of the individual toward the traumatic event. The next chapter will seek to examine the problem of “perspective” raised in

“On Annihilation,” but from a slightly different angle, exploring the potential Takeda discovered for a fragmentation of self and a polyvocality of subjectivity made possible within the sphere of fiction in the aftermath of trauma.

## **Chapter 2: The Ethics of Witnessing: Trauma, Polyvocality, and Alterity in Takeda Taijun's *Judgment***

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I sought to explain how Takeda's conception of history developed following his experiences on the Chinese front and how this conception of history underwent a "disruption" or "severance" that played out in the evolution of his concept of annihilation (*metsubō*) in a comparative reading of his seminal intellectual study, *Sima Qian: The World of Shiki* and his postwar essay "On Annihilation." However, Takeda's experience of the defeat in Japan was not merely limited to a disruption in his conception of history. Reading Takeda's early fiction, it becomes clear that the structure of memory and its relation to the ethical issues surrounding those "remembering" is a highly privileged subject. This is a development that accompanied Takeda's revision of his concept of annihilation, and it can be said that these texts are, in part, a product of this ideological shift. Still, it is readily apparent that this experience demanded of Takeda a rigorous examination of his own ethics vis-a-vis his position as a writer and his choice to narrativize his own experience in the war. As a result, the way the events in these texts are "told" reflects a critical shift in the way in which Takeda understood the experience of memory. At the same time, these texts also offer some insight into the struggles of determining how to express an experience that was ultimately a fragmentary one, one which, for Takeda, was mapped against the confines of a historical continuance that allowed him to "tell" history within the setting of the present. In Takeda's texts, the temporal present emerges as a result of an uninterrupted line of communication, encoded in records and texts that can be transmitted from one subject to the next. This forms a linked set of potentialities surrounded by events, perspectives, and potentialities divergent and unrecorded. This is also the manner in which subjectivity and individual identity is structured in Takeda's texts, a "record" always at

odds with the overwhelming possibility of historical oblivion.

It is prudent perhaps then, to first consider what is meant in considering the issue of “recording” or of the expression of memory generally. Who remembers? Who is speaking, what is gained and, more importantly, lost in this process? And, to whom is what owed? In *Sima Qian*, this is a relatively uncontentious question; it is the historian, the record keeper (記録者 *kirokusha*), who records all from a privileged position as a kind of essential “by-stander,” to the historical Event. Though I have already expounded on the nature of this by-stander identity vis-à-vis the concept of history in Takeda’s work, it is worth reconsidering this stance in the context of Takeda’s fiction, particularly given the nature of Takeda’s work which often presents fictionalized, divergent, and spectral accounts of what can be assumed to be his own experiences.<sup>81</sup> Though I think it largely unproductive to attempt to identify the manner in which these texts mirror Takeda’s own life experiences, the fact that Takeda elected to explore these quite personal and often unflattering or personally harrowing experiences so directly in his fiction, begs the question as to why he chose to record and then fictionalize these experiences? Or rather, to generalize beyond the stifling boundaries of authorship (and the author-text relationship), what is meant by the act of recording? What does recording do?

It is perhaps unduly obvious to point this out but, just as official recordings and narrativizations of historical events are a matter of political agency and have clear implications for the identification of both the historical subject (the Event) and the subjects of this Event

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<sup>81</sup> This chapter, specifically, will examine the text *Judgment* (1947), which has been confirmed by the scholars Kawanishi Masa’aki and Itō Hiroko (伊藤博子) to correspond fairly closely to Takeda’s biographical experiences on the Chinese front and in Shanghai. Both scholars’ accounts and research in piecing together the details of Takeda’s personal life are quite extensive, though as Itō himself has repeatedly pointed out, there are a number of striking discrepancies between their accounts of Takeda’s life based on biographical testimonies of his contemporaries. This demonstrates, I believe, failing its theoretical unimportance, the material futility in analyzing these texts in strict terms of Takeda’s own biography.

(individuals and groups of people involved), so too does the act of recording oneself and one's "own" experiences entail an inherently political act of presenting and "identifying" one's own actions and self. As Emmanuel Levinas outlines in his work *Totality and Infinity* (1969), the basic problem of narrativization is a one of treating obligations to "others" as secondary to an individual ontology which ultimately conceptualizes reality in a manner oriented around the self or, in the case of larger conceptual entities such as the State, a position of self-sameness.<sup>82</sup>

Levinas writes,

*Being and Time* has argued perhaps but one sole thesis: Being is inseparable from the comprehension of Being (which unfolds as time); Being is already an appeal to subjectivity. The primacy of ontology for Heidegger does not rest on the truism: "to know an *existent* it is necessary to have comprehended the Being of existents." To affirm the priority of *Being* over *existents* is to already decide the essence of philosophy; it is to subordinate the relation with *someone*, who is an existent, (the ethical relation) to a relation with the *Being of existents*, which, impersonal, permits the apprehension, the domination of existents (a relationship of knowing), subordinates justice to freedom. If freedom denotes the mode of remaining the same in the midst of the other, knowledge, where an existent is given by interposition of impersonal Being, contains the ultimate sense of freedom. It would be opposed to justice, which involves obligations with regard to an existent that refuses to give itself, the Other, who in this sense would be an existent par excellence.<sup>83</sup>

And,

Such is the definition of freedom: to maintain oneself against the other, despite every relation with the other to ensure the autarchy of an I. Thematization and conceptualization, which moreover are inseparable, are not peace with the other but suppression or possession of the other. For possession affirms the other, but within a negation of its independence. "I think" comes down to "I can" -to an appropriation of what is, to an exploitation of reality. Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power. It issues in the State and in the non-violence of the totality, without securing itself against the violence from which this non-violence lives, and which appears in the tyranny of the State. Truth, which should reconcile persons, here exists anonymously. Universality presents itself as impersonal; and this is another inhumanity.<sup>84</sup>

In this sense, recording presents an inherent tension as the act of writing, while at once acknowledging the otherness of the "thing" of the event, threatens always its incorporation into the subjectivity of the writer, to narrativize it out of alterity into the monolithic "I." This dynamic presents a double-bind, as the identification of history in its recording always threatens elements

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<sup>82</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis Kluwer (Philadelphia: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 45-46.

<sup>83</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 45.

<sup>84</sup> Levinas, 46.

outside the recorder's blind spot (whether intentional or not) with oblivion. All of this then begs the question: Is it possible to do justice to the event in its recording? Is it possible to "remember" the event without its "annihilation," as Baudrillard terms it?<sup>85</sup>

I would argue that it is this tension that Takeda discovered as he approached the event of the defeat and the matter of his own responsibility to the historical incidence of Japan's place in the historical world. As a former soldier on the Chinese front, he was personally culpable for violence committed against the Chinese people and yet, as a former leftist, a scholar of Chinese literature, and an intellectual expatriate in Shanghai, he was, to an extent, alienated from the project of Japanese imperialism and its associated nationalist identity and, similarly, escaped the destruction of the Japanese mainland in the Tokyo fire bombings and the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. How could Takeda, as a writer, a supposed "by-stander" to history, record these events while doing "justice" to the "others" surrounding him, or even to himself, an individual bearing the traumatic experiences of political imprisonment, war, and the guilt of complicity? Is an "ethical" accounting of the self and the other possible?

For this, we turn again to Levinas, who describes the manner in which language presents a means by which the individual ("the same") might encounter the Event ("Other") with respect to its alterity.

We are the same and the other. The conjunction *and* here designates neither addition nor power of one term over the other. We shall try to show that the *relation* between the same and the other-upon which we seem to impose such extraordinary conditions-is language.<sup>86</sup>

And,

The irreversibility of the relation can be produced only if the relation is effected by one of the terms as the very movement of transcendence, as the *traversing* of this distance, and not as a recording of, or the psychological invention of this movement. "Thought" and "interiority" are the very break-up of being and the production (not the reflection) of transcendence. We know this

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<sup>85</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2014), 49.

<sup>86</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 39.

relation only in the measure that we effect it; this is what is distinctive about it. Alterity is possible only starting from me. Conversation, from the very fact that it maintains the distance between me and the Other, the radical separation asserted in transcendence which prevents the reconstitution of totality, cannot renounce the egoism of its existence; but the very fact of being in a conversation consists in recognizing in the Other a right over this egoism, and hence in justifying oneself.<sup>87</sup>

For Levinas, language presents the means by which we might encounter the “Other” but only insofar as the linguistic interplay with the other remains *dialogical* and not discursive/representative; when the historical event is conceptualized by the individual, placed into the enclosed setting of a singular and self-same narrative, we fall into the pitfall of limiting the experience of the world to our own.

I would argue that his problematique offers a new possibility for the space of fiction, one that is borne out in Takeda’s literary project. If we examine Takeda’s early texts, we do (as many scholars have noted) see signs and pieces of Takeda’s own experiences, experiences which are heavily beleaguered and problematized, but, somewhat strikingly, the figure of Takeda himself is not represented in these works. Or, more accurately, when Takeda does appear, it is primarily as a “partial subject.” In Takeda’s partly autobiographical *Judgment*, for example, the two narrators Jirō and Sugi present competing, temporally staggered, and irreconcilable accounts of what should approximate Takeda’s singular experience of the war and subsequent defeat. And yet, neither of these accounts can be taken as false; rather it is in their encounter with each other that the trauma of one is transmitted to and clarified by the “other” (and vice-versa). In this sense, subjectivity in Takeda’s early postwar works, in contrast to the earlier *Sima Qian*, is, to an extent, fragmented. The process of remembering, of recording the experience is no longer the matter of the individual watching the movements, the general continuities and supporting discontinuities of the great structure of history operate, but discovering and rankling against the discontinuity of memory itself. In Takeda’s writing, memory and recording present sites of encounter in which

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<sup>87</sup> Levinas, 39-40.

one experiences some “thing” outside of themselves, a trace, another “partial-self” they recognize as a non-I, but which cannot be taken for a mere object.

This fragmentary but communicative nature of memory has important implications not only for the individual, but for understanding historical subjectivity. The “severance” of the period of the defeat and Takeda's experience of China, the struggle to determine identity as a person with no state, and the deeply personal experience of determining one's own culpability as a political actor in historical events, even as history itself becomes foreclosed by the “severing act,” all figure heavily into Takeda's works in this period. What is perhaps of greatest importance in considering these works, however, is the manner in which memory and the “trace” of the historical event reassert themselves in the face of oblivion, a forgetting all but ensured by personal and communal repression and the re-figuring of history into political narrative. The incident of a killing on the battlefield for which there exists no living witness, acts of cannibalism forgotten by those living atop the remains, a murder erased by fire bombings but revealed as the guilty man speaks in his sleep<sup>88</sup>: Takeda's fiction is rife with examples of the incidents of the past, supposedly unwitnessed and buried, making an “impossible” return in the present. Moreover, this return does not merely destabilize the boundaries of the individual, but also establishes new and complex relations and subjectivities within the present. Individuals without any knowledge of the past become its witnesses, the individual becomes doubled, fragmented, and mirrored to itself, and traumas unexperienced and untold assert themselves within present conditions. The resultant series of relations, not rooted in binary and “Othering” subject-object relations, but in a kind of spectral resonance, bridges the severed and demarcated boundaries of the temporal, the spatial, and the individual. In Takeda's fiction, the wound of the

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<sup>88</sup> *Judgment*, *Luminous Moss*, and *Evening Rainbow*, respectively.

traumatic event is ever-present, but something reaches out from the threshold of the “forgotten.” The past does not stay buried.

To understand this development, the work of psychoanalyst and theorist Bracha Ettinger becomes rather helpful. The Ettingerean concept of the matrixial proposes that the absolute Other conceptualized by both Levinas and Lacan is formulated on the basis of an inherently masculine reading of repression anxiety, which always interprets the traumatic in terms of an originary severance. In this traditional model of the traumatic, the Other is an object of the individual gaze; it becomes apposite the individual whom is formed by way of repressing what he is not, a one-to-one relationship, in a sense. By contrast, the matrixial stresses the inherent plurality of difference prior to repression that transcends the subject-object divide, not by fusing the two as one (against which Levinas cautions), but instead stresses a *shareability-in-difference*, an affective network that stresses the inherent plurality and multiplicity of sharing trauma among multiple subjects and partial subjects (I(s) and *non-I* (s)).<sup>89</sup> Ettinger writes,

The matrix in-forms the subtle, minimal transformations that *I* inflict on the unknown *non-I* as an Other-as-an-object, and participates in the particular rapport that the *I* bears and witnesses in the act of painting, toward that same unknown *non-I* as an other-as-subject. Other unknown *non-I*(s) — viewers as subjects/objects — will also later become, in one way or another, partners *and* witnesses to this, differed by a matrixial space and joined by a matrixial time. They will experience a similar metamorphosis, and will momentarily co-emerge with the gaze caught in the artwork.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 82.

<sup>90</sup> Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, 87.

“Metamorphosis” is a critical concept in Ettinger’s work and thus requires some explanation. On a basic level, metamorphosis, much like the term metamorphosis, implies a kind of transformation or, more accurately, a “becoming” in the Deleuzian sense of the word, that takes place as a co-poietic activity between or among partial subjects by way of matrixial encounter. What separates the concept of metamorphosis from the “traditional” metamorphosis can be ascribed to these concepts’ differing treatments of alterity vis-à-vis subjectivity in their conceptualizations in psychoanalytic theory. Metamorphosis (in the Lacanian reckoning) is a concept inherently reliant on the displacement or severing of meaning by means of symbolic transference; in metamorphosis, meaning is converted by process of metaphor or metonymy into the realm of the Symbolic and thus the original meaning is eclipsed completely in its signification. The relationship operates on an existential binary that occludes the potential for the expression of alterity. By contrast, metamorphosis, in its capacity as an “incomplete” or “partial” becoming, recognizes the inherently “relational” nature of the creation of meaning and thus functions as a generative act in which the alterity of multiple subjects (and objects-as-subjects) form a kind of affective network that allows the recognition of traces of the origin of meaning as well as others within their alterity, untransformed. It is by nature of

And,

The traces of a matrixial object, which are lost for one partial-subject while they are inscribed by another partial-subject, may afterward be transferred back to the “first” partial-subject slightly transformed, and also to yet another partial-subject — to a new partner with whom the *I* forms another matrixial alliance. *From one matrixial relation to another, passing through different partial-subjects beyond the present in space or time*, a non-I may become, beyond present-ability, an indirect witness to the trauma of the other. Through the matrix *via* sublimation there arises, in the aesthetic realm, co-response-ability to “events without a witness.”<sup>91</sup>

The value in the Ettingerean concept of the matrixial is precisely in that it does not reject the “phallic” castrating/severing nature of the Event, but serves as a complementary lens to understanding this element of the Real. It is undeniable that something happened, that something was lost, but, in Takeda’s writing, the potentiality of these foreclosed subjectivities are given new voice. They return, spectral, Othered, impossible to reconcile with the reality of the subject that “survived” the foreclosing event, but too familiar to be written off as a mere object of the subjectival gaze.<sup>92</sup> In this sense, subjects in Takeda’s fiction inhabit a literary borderspace, the object of which is not Takeda’s experience itself, but the links between these “partial” subjectivities, between experiences and traumas, once “buried” and “encrypted” by the passage of time and the repressive act of narrativization, that bring a radical alterity with them in their return.<sup>93</sup> The return of these spectral bodies, of these presumably “severed” links, allows for an

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this difference of the two concepts, that “metamorphosis” offers an ethical alternative to traditional conceptions of subjectivity, identity, and meaning-making, as this chapter will demonstrate.

<sup>91</sup> Ettinger, 68. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>92</sup> By this I do not mean to say that the “Othered” subject does not present an object to the “I.” Reading *Judgment*, it is clear that Jirō presents an “object” to Sugi’s gaze, but Jirō’s abiding role as Sugi’s “Other,” an other than cannot be understood or contained within the confines of the “I” and, perhaps more importantly, the manner in which this subjectivity manifests, as a belated encounter in the form of the letter, places Jirō’s subjectivity along an immanent trajectory of escape from conceptualization by the narrator whose trajectory is, if we choose read him as a prefiguring of Takeda’s own represented experience, foreclosed in his return to the Japanese mainland.

<sup>93</sup> Cathy Caruth, in her seminal work on the literature of trauma, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), attributes the potential of literature to approach the problem to the fact that it inhabits such a “borderspace,” the ambiguity between the “knowing” and not “knowing” with relative ease in its natural place in the border between representation and the void of the “Real.” Caruth writes, “If Freud turns to literature to describe the traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing.” Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

ethical accounting distinct from discursive methods of representation, one that, in Levinasian terms, does “justice” to the Other in its alterity. The discovery of this alterity implicitly changes the nature of subjective agency vis-à-vis the act of writing, a shift paralleled in Takeda’s own evolved conception of the narrator which transforms him from by-stander into “witness” (*mokugekisha*) of the trauma of “an-other” as Ettinger terms it.<sup>94</sup>

This chapter will examine the text *Judgment* (*Shinpan*, 1947). This work presents a fascinating inquiry into the manner in which the act of remembering implicitly impacts both the subjectivity and ethical implications of the individual who remembers. The development in complexity of the construction of memory within this text reveals Takeda's own experience of shifting narratives of political identity during the period of the defeat. But, more importantly, the development of the complexity of the writing act, from the monolithic voice of the recorder/historian in *Sima Qian* to the dialogical (and polyvocal) structure in *Judgment*, presents an appreciation for the increasingly problematic nature of the memory act that presents a continual preoccupation in Takeda's work. Simultaneously, the increasingly complicated psychological landscape of Takeda's fiction presented in the development between these two works mirrors a shift in Takeda's own understanding of the relationship of subjectivity and ethical agency, developed in his own explorations of the manner in which memory and historical narrative manifest. Though potentially reductive, in examining these texts under the lens of the Levinasian/Ettingerean “Other,” we can observe not only how Takeda's depiction of memory elucidates the way in which the experience of memory of the traumatic leads to the emergence of

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<sup>94</sup> The concept of “witnessing” is a term vital to understanding the intellectual projects of Ettinger, Levinas, and Takeda, as well as the links among them. To offer a brief outline of the concept here, witnessing implies (1) an affective link with the Event-Thing being witnessed, (2) an ethical relationship with the Event-Thing witnessed that allows for its alterity without it being incorporated into the “I” of the viewer, (3) an element of “sharing” the event with other “partial-selves,” non-I’s that participate in the act (an element Ettinger terms “wit(h)nessing”), (4) the act of witnessing is a transformative one, the witness is changed in the capacity that witnessing is an encounter with “other(s).”

a trans-subjectivity oriented around an ethical obligation to the past, but also how the development of this ethical “regard” structures identity within a post-traumatic landscape.

### ***Judgment: The Emergence of a Matrixial Alliance***

Takeda began work on *Judgment* in the period immediately following the end of the Pacific War, and most of the work on the novella was completed in the course of his repatriation to Japan from Shanghai. Published in the April 1947 issue of the literary magazine “*Hihyō*,” *Judgment* is the story of two men, Sugi and Jirō, who encounter the end of the war in China; Sugi in the cosmopolitan city of Shanghai and Jirō in a hospital on the Chinese front. As many critics of the text are quick to point out, both of these characters present a kind of “stand-in” of Takeda’s own experiences; Takeda met the end of the war while working in Shanghai for the “Chinese-Japanese Cultural Cooperative” (中日文化協会 *Chūnichi bunka kyōkai*) and he then worked as a notary and documents translator before repatriating to Japan in 1946, closely paralleling Sugi’s character in the story. At the same time, however, between 1937 and 1939 Takeda also served in the Transport Corps of the Japanese Imperial Army after being forcibly conscripted, much like the character of Jirō. Whether Takeda killed on the battlefield in the manner Jirō narrates remains a highly contested issue among scholars. Based on Takeda’s autobiographical essays, it seems likely that he experienced combat in some form or another, but his personal letters from this period are largely missing, having been rescinded from the public by Takeda’s family.<sup>95</sup>

However, whether Takeda’s experiences conform exactly, or even relatively to these characters’ is largely unimportant; what is important for the purposes of this study is not what

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<sup>95</sup> Around ten letters addressed from Takeda to his colleague Takeuchi Yoshimi during his stint as a soldier have been republished and are readily available. While these letters are fascinating and provide vital insights as to Takeda’s impressions of China (prefiguring his writing of *Sima Qian*), the subject matter is largely uncontroversial and there is little mention of his experiences in his capacity as a soldier.

these characters represent, but their relationship and the “alliance” that these characters form as partial-subjects, both as fragmented elements, specters of Takeda’s own experience, and as a “dialogic” conversation between subjects approaching the problem of trauma. To borrow a term from Deleuze and Guattari, this study is interested primarily in the *assemblage* of memory the text presents, both with regards to the characters’ relationship in the text, and Takeda’s relationship with the text as writer. In examining the development of these characters vis-à-vis the text, I hope to demonstrate how these characters demonstrate the ethical complications of representing the traumatic in narrative, and how matrixial alliance offers a means of ethical action in a post-traumatic setting.

### **The Poiesis of Identity and Annihilation: Sugi’s Account**

*Judgment* is initially told from the perspective of Sugi who recounts his experience of the Japanese defeat in Shanghai, from an unknown time and place. From the first few lines of the story, the frame of memory is established, orienting the events described within a particular frame of meaning:

I think that I would like to tell the story of an unfortunate youth I met in Shanghai after the war. I feel as though contemplating the misfortune of this young man also means contemplating the misfortune we all share. At the very least, for myself as an individual, it is not as if his dark fate is the unrelated affair of a stranger. As the time I met him was directly after the war, and the place was an international city, his arrival appeared as a kind of revelation, one seemingly fraught with deep significance.<sup>96</sup>

In this opening passage, we are introduced to the dimensions of a record which establishes a series of relations among the recorder, subject, audience, and the contours of the memory (the time and place of the Event-Thing). The structure of the story is presented here as a tale (*monogatari* 物語) relayed to an audience, one identified by the narrator in terms of the pronoun

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<sup>96</sup> Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳, “*Shinpan* 審判,” in *Takeda Taijun zenshū dai ni kan* 武田泰淳全集第二卷 (Tokyo: Chikumashobō 筑摩書房, 1971), 3. All translations of Takeda are my own.

“we” (*watashitachi* 私たち). This implicitly presents a series of implications as regards the narrativization and “enclosure” of the Event being presented. The narrator, who is later revealed to be Sugi, claims to be telling the story of a youth (Jirō, the object). However, in reality, the story he actually “tells” is of his own experience of the defeat in Shanghai, in which the figure of Jirō plays an important, though initially quite narrow, role. In fact, it is not until the character of Jirō disappears midway through the text as the narration switches over to Jirō, telling his own “tale” in the form of a belated letter after the “real” Jirō has already disappeared from Sugi’s life. This opening passage also introduces us to the matter that forms the central problematic of Sugi’s character: the “we” who share the misfortune of this individual young man. The nature of the “we” to whom Sugi refers is never clarified explicitly; it may be tempting to attribute to this “we” the conceptualization of the Japanese people, a group/identity which forms the abiding concern of Sugi’s character in the story. However, for reasons I will explain in describing Sugi’s arc, in which he encounters the problematics of narrativizing collective identity, this characterization rings somewhat false. What is more important, is the series of relations of the “tale” expounded here which bind the “I,” the “we” and the “non-I” (Jirō). And yet, the frame of the memory, the place and time irrecoverable except in the irreducible alterity of the Event-Thing, qualifies this relationality with an inescapable valence of alterity, the particularity of time, place, personal affect, and the ever-present possibility of abjection in its narration (the stranger (*tasha* 他者) whose identification Sugi denies).

All of this is to say that, from the initial moments of the story, both the “traditional” frameworks of narrative and memory are subverted in Sugi’s telling. What is revealed in the course of the story is that this is not a “tale” of the narrator’s “gaze” vis-à-vis an objectified individual, nor of his recording/incorporation of this individual into his conception of his himself

(or of the greater “I” posed by the ambiguous collective of “we”). Rather, these groups become clarified as an ongoing series of relations that proves both their separateness and sameness impossible. True, the narrator, the “youth” and the “we” all inhabit different ontological realities insofar as they are positioned vis-à-vis the occurrence of the Event-Thing (and indeed it becomes clear later that the trauma itself is not even the same “thing” among these parties), but they exist within a form of “alliance” insofar as they co-inform each other in shared poiesis of “working-through” the “misfortune” of the traumatic.<sup>97</sup> Understanding the manner in which Sugi as the narrator arrives at this expansive relationality from the position of his “particular” individual trauma, which arrives belatedly, only after the ethical pitfalls of guilt and repressive culpability, reveals Takeda’s larger commentary on the necessity of an ethical “telling” of the traumatic that emerges against the grain of sociopolitical organization and challenges it.

The beginning of Sugi’s self-narration finds him in a state of dejection and anxiety, living in Shanghai less than a month after the defeat of Japan in the Pacific War. The defeat has changed things, but in a manner he is unable to account for, and once familiar vistas of the city now fill him with a deep anxiety. As he observes the rapid changes surrounding him in the city of Shanghai, he is hounded by the impression (one which he later states he is uncertain even exists) that the familiar figures surrounding him have begun to treat him differently. He notes, “The wonton shop where I was a regular, the neighborhood gatekeeper, and the bicycle repair boy all greeted me in the same gentle manner as always, but already I was no longer a customer or a fellow citizen to them; they treated me like a foreigner surrounded by a special kind of

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<sup>97</sup> As Ettinger notes, the working through of trauma in this manner always involves a kind of co-processing in which we receive traces of the trauma of partial-others that we encounter in a manner foreclosed to our co-processing partial-other and we in turn pass on traces of our own trauma to others in a kind of continuous network. The emergence of this interrelated “trans-subjectivity,” in the experience of the traumatic forms a vital development to understanding Takeda’s fiction following a shift in his understanding of his own culpability following the event of the defeat.

sadness.”<sup>98</sup> What do we make of this anxiety? What is the relationship of this historical change, what Ettinger might call the “Event-thing” of the defeat, to Sugi, the individual?

Reading on, it becomes clear that what separates Sugi from the normality of his daily milieu is the (real or imagined) onus attributed to him for his identity as Japanese. Though Sugi is never identified either explicitly or implicitly as espousing nationalist zeal for Japan, it is clear that the event of the defeat has left a distinct mark on his psyche by way of his association with the larger figure of the Japanese people. As Sugi’s testimonial continues, it quickly becomes apparent that for him there exists a somewhat problematic relationship between the individual and the larger Japanese ethnonational identity vis-à-vis the issue of historical criminality/trauma. Or rather, to take a step further, it is more appropriate to say that the identity of this collective identity overwhelms the context of the individual completely in conceptualizing who or what is responsible for the unnamed trauma that has taken place and, likewise, for the punishment to be subsequently meted out. Something has changed as a result of the end of the war, something that impacts Sugi both directly and indirectly, something to which he is unable to ascribe a name by nature of its setting as part of an abstracted national identity. He describes it as “the misfortune we all share” or an indistinct sense of “guilt” or “placelessness” that he ascribes to the two large diaspora groups living in Shanghai: the Jews and the White Russians. What is the nature of this newly-established difference and what is the nature of the relationship between Sugi, the individual, and being “Japanese,” a member the collective identity, here? In order to understand why Sugi’s conception of this historical “crime” assumes this trajectory, it is perhaps most germane to examine the manner in which he conceptualizes the Japanese community, that is, in terms of “textual” allegory.

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<sup>98</sup> Takeda, *Shinpan*, 3.

It is important to note that Sugi does not personally experience the devastation of the Japanese mainland, he does not directly witness the devastating Tokyo fire bombings, nor the annihilation of the atomic bombings that punctuated the end of the war. However, this does not prevent him from “documenting” these traumatic events. To the contrary, despite not personally witnessing the destruction of the Japanese mainland, Sugi attests, with uncanny confidence, that the passage of the annihilation from the biblical Revelation “reproduces it perfectly”:

Since I was in Shanghai where the bombings were few, I could only imagine the disastrous scene of the mainland, but there was no doubt that the description in Revelations reproduced it perfectly. Perhaps it was not only the first trumpet that had been sounded over Japan. The great massacre of the Revelations continues from the first trumpet to the seventh; and, when I considered that mightn't the cataclysms of beasts, poisonous insects, fire, smoke, and brimstone be next, and that state of limitless agony arose beneath my eyelids, I remember a terrible chill ran down my spine and eventually I fell into an eerie calmness. I did not believe in the final judgment, but I could not deny that a reality closely resembling the final judgment had been wrought upon the earth. Nor did I think that the ruin of Japan was God's judgment, but, even so, I felt that I had made a new discovery with the realization that the description of the Revelations fit seamlessly to Japan as it was now. The ruin of nations has been repeated over and over countless times throughout the course of history and this is no more than one of them; to see this demonstrated here, not in theory, but in raw pictures, I could not help but feel a sense of sorrowful awe.<sup>99</sup>

What conclusions can we draw about this “textual reimagining” or “fantasizing” of the Japanese people in terms of the biblical Revelation? What is the nature of the psychological change that occurs in Sugi when he imagines the “annihilation” of Japan, the shift in his “hopelessness” to “despair”? And what, materially, does the reimagining of the Japanese people in terms of the Revelation accomplish? To understand this preoccupation with the Revelation, it is perhaps helpful to consult Takeda’s thoughts on annihilation generally. Reading his 1947 essay “On Annihilation,” it becomes clear that the conceptualization of annihilation serves to placate some sense of psychological dread, and satisfies a kind of belated resentment. Takeda writes, “It [ruminating on annihilation] is perversion, it is envy, it is jealousy. It is not a normal provision, but an abnormal distortion of the heart. However, I wonder; isn't it exceedingly rare for a person

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<sup>99</sup> Takeda, 5.

to end their life without occasionally being assailed by that sort of jealousy, that sort of distortion of the heart?”<sup>100</sup> Takeda then goes on to reference the Revelation specifically, noting that it portrays the “true essence” of annihilation, insofar as it presents a “total annihilation.”<sup>101</sup>

Considering these two statements in tandem, we can garner some insight into Sugi’s reference of the Revelation with regards to the annihilation of Japan. The effect of reading the annihilation of the Japanese people in the event of the defeat in terms of the Biblical Revelation is to situate both the individual and communal implications of the responsibility of the war and its devastation in the context of an absolute “Other.” Although Sugi does not believe in the judgement of an absolute “god,” the mirroring of the Japanese to the Revelation “perfectly,” encapsulates the severity of Japan’s destruction in terms of the sublime presented by the end of history; a destruction from which there is no escape or recourse, one which has effectively “sealed” the Japanese identity within history. This narrativization, which transforms the Japanese (both individuals and the conceptual whole) into a “cursed” people subject to the wrath of the divine appears to open historical links between the communities of the Japanese and the expatriate communities of Shanghai, but this identification is ultimately a shallow and dangerous one that serves both to diffuse the matter of Japanese responsibility for the war (as the Japanese identity is already that of the judged, of the annihilated) and also invites a reading of political equivalence to

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<sup>100</sup> Takeda, “Metsubō ni tsuite,” 94.

<sup>101</sup> Takeda, 94.

As I explained in the previous chapter, the distinction Takeda develops between “partial” (*bubunteki*) and “total” (*zenteki*) annihilation is a problem that forms the locus of the shift in his understanding of history as a system oriented to the universal, to an accelerative process formed by the relationship of particular historical realities to the vast “space” of historical potentiality that surrounds these events as a kind of “presence” that impacts the expression of these events and the capacity for the individual action vis-à-vis the historical. It would be short-sighted, however, to overlook the psychological/ideological function that annihilation has as a means relativizing the meaning of “loss” by orienting it to an “Othered” conception of destruction as absolute. In this manner, the distinction between partial and absolute annihilation gains a new valence of meaning in the capacity of orienting the particular as a kind of “movement” always toward (or at the very least in the context of) the universal. The analysis of this movement, a kind of deterritorialization, is critical to understanding the way in which praxis corresponds with increasing fervor to the contours of ideological expansion, as will become clear in the analysis of Jirō’s character.

the exiled peoples of the world, whose identity becomes depoliticized in the reading of exile as an ontological problem rather than a politically material one. Not only does this reading do injustice to these groups by “silencing” their particular voices in exchange for a universalized conceptualization of the exile, it does a kind of violence in that it permits a means of escaping culpability in a self-imposed exile of the Japanese identity. The empire vanishes as it dons the cloak of the anonymous exile.

To clarify this ideological shift, Sugi’s characterization of the Jews and White Russians as “essential outcasts” presents an unethical characterization on two distinct counts. First, it silences and equates the political reasons for the exile of these two groups. While the Jews in Shanghai fled the brutality of the Holocaust and racial violence, the White Russians, in organization often a nationalistic and often highly Anti-Semitic group, fled due to political pressure of the Bolshevik revolution. Regardless of the political leanings of the reader, to equate these two groups by nature of their status as exiles is extremely reductive and, materially, practically functions as Holocaust apologia. In the Japanese context, the foreclosure of political culpability presented by the “literary” characterization of annihilation has clear ramifications in the context of Japan at the time that Takeda undoubtedly encountered after the war. As eminent historian John Dower has demonstrated in his analysis of Japanese politics under the American Occupation, the problem of Japanese culpability for crimes in the Pacific War was quickly forestalled in the interest of mobilizing Japan as an economic and ideological partner in the American-led “Pacific Partnership” in order to deter Communist activity in Asia.<sup>102</sup> In place of accountings for the manner in which Japanese citizens both at-home and abroad contributed to the Imperial efforts, narratives of Japanese victimhood in light of the annihilating events of the

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<sup>102</sup> John Dower, *Ways of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting: Japan in the Modern World* (New York: The New Press, 2002), 116-120.

defeat began to proliferate. And, while Dower is quick to note that the problem of victim-consciousness in aggressor nation-states is hardly limited to Japan and that there are other extenuating factors contributing to this development (e.g. the often ignored mass-starvations and scarcity of resources in the immediate postwar), there is no denying that the concept of victim-consciousness, on a basic level, is not merely a reductive presentation of Japanese identity vis-à-vis the event of the defeat, but a foreclosure to the potential for culpability, one which remains a prominent element of conservative Japanese ideology today.

Second, the insistence on a pre-immanent ontological identity of the “exile” presents a violation of the Levinasian conception of ethics in which the “Other” is silenced and dehumanized by representation of the “Othered” entity (i.e. the “exile”) in terms of the limitations of the self (i.e., Sugi, the expatriate). Sugi has no referent for the scale of destruction or the material reality of the exiled groups he draws into his accounting of the “judged” and yet, tellingly, all become mired in his own personal, abjectifying attitude. In Sugi’s accounting, the Jews living in Shanghai cease to be an entity unto themselves as he readily appropriates their perceived misfortune and “sin” for his own. Where once he “gawked at them [the exiles] as curiosities” he now reveres them as great “mentors” (*senpai*).<sup>103</sup> While at first glance this appears to be a more humanizing conceptualization of these peoples, both are in fact the product of a colonizing gaze, one which sees them first as irreconcilable with the Japanese identity, an objectified other, and then as “teachers” already part of the systemic Japanese self-same world structure. To refer back to “On Annihilation,” the material effect of a systematic conception of the world reliant on the “I” is merely to further justify the presumed apolitical independence of the “I” vis-à-vis the “Other.” As Levinas argues, this can only invite the ethical pitfalls of

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<sup>103</sup> Takeda, *Shinpan*, 3.

solipsism or, more likely, an ideologically fabricated valence of difference within the “sameness” of the “I” that perpetuates the violence of political ideology.<sup>104</sup> And, as a result, the voices of these groups are effectively snuffed out before they can even be heard.

This conceptualization of the Japanese people vis-à-vis the absolute Other of annihilation, a characterization that essentially “seals” the Japanese political identity within the Event-Thing of the defeat, forms Takeda’s primary point of criticism in his characterization of Sugi, one he readily attributes to himself in his biographical descriptions of his time in Shanghai. While the conceptualization of the calamitous destruction of the Japanese mainland in terms of the “literary” sublime of the Revelation may seem an innocuous comparison at first glance, Takeda later clarifies the problematics of this representation. Specifically, he clarifies by example the way in which language, as a representative tool, obscures the blind spots of self-same political ideology and thus, in effect, invites the perpetuation of the violence inherent to this ideology. This clarification arrives in the form of the so-called “Indestructability of Energy Theory” (エネルギー不滅説 *Enerugi fumetsu-sestu*).

Sugi is not the only character in *Judgment* who conceptualizes the implications of the defeat. The quasi-religious conceptualization of the Japanese vis-à-vis the Revelation is explicitly paralleled by the quasi-scientific Indestructability of Energy Theory introduced to him by his friend, who mirrors Sugi in his own attempts to resolve his anxiety surrounding the defeat. To summarize, the Indestructability of Energy Theory makes the argument that history is composed

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<sup>104</sup> The function of false ideological differences to justify structural violence is a matter Takeda devoted increasing attention to in his fiction following the war. In the later text *Luminous Moss*, Takeda argued that the implicit allowance of certain forms of violence permitted by the selective “Othering” of particular, unlikely forms of socially unacceptable violence (e.g. cannibalism) allowed for the continuance of socially prescribed forms of violence. In the context of *Judgment*, a similar line can be drawn in considering the identity (and political culpability) associated with the nation-state.

of the destruction of countless nations and that the “energy” of the destroyed nation is not lost, but becomes the energy that sustains the world and “humanity” writ large. This theory is, interestingly, largely identical to the theory of world-maintenance Takeda himself claimed to espouse and then later reject in his essay “On Annihilation,” which in turn borrows heavily from the conception of the “world without center” in the earlier *Sima Qian*. Pedigree aside, this theory presents an “inhuman” conception of humanity *par excellence*, permitting the presumably endless annihilation of faceless individuals and identities for the preservation of a monolithic and “essential” humanity. Even more tellingly, however, is the subtle manner in which the particularity of this theory’s referents reveals the political blind-spots of the colonial gaze. His friend notes: “‘That’s just what this world of mankind’s is,’ he said while brushing his shaggy hair. ‘From the very start, it’s something that’s continued by the destruction of many countries. Those nation bastards are things that will all inevitably perish at some point. Sparta, Carthage, Rome, it was the same for all of them. And with *Shina*, the nation from the age of Spring and Autumn Wars perished leaving nothing behind.’”<sup>105</sup> Though the theory proposed by Sugi’s friend may first appear as an impartial account of an impartial bystander observing the course of history, his language betrays the political character of his own perspective. The use of the colonial term for China, *Shina*, instead of the phonetic reading of the Chinese characters, *chūgoku* (中国), situates his criticism within the context of the Japanese Imperial core. What’s more, the base of this ideological stance, reliant on the conception of a decentralized “world history,” underplays the historical concept that this system is centered on the figure of the destroyed Japan which serves as the unseen center of the historical world, structuring universality in its absence.

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<sup>105</sup> Takeda, *Judgment*, 8. Emphasis added.

The literary critic Murakami Katsunao, in his analysis of the role of “self-awareness” (自覚 *jikaku*) in Takeda’s work, has problematized the historical perspective espoused in works like *Sima Qian* as falling prey to this conceptual pitfall which he terms the “meta-level.”<sup>106</sup> The “meta-level,” Murakami argues, is the implicit bias that emerges in analyses of history written from its exterior, from the perspective of an uninvolved bystander, which acts as an erasure of the material political conditions that give rise to this perspective by situating the ideological center within a larger, generalized conceptual or systemic framework. This relocation does not truly alter the political character of the displaced ideological “center,” however, but merely allows it to continue along its course supported by the supposed “objectivity” of the conceptual perspective for which it is responsible. Murakami primarily examines how this dynamic enabled the members of the Kyoto school of Nativist Japanese philosophy to justify Japanese imperial chauvinism in the delineation of a larger world history in which Japan assumed the natural position of the lead.

While it would be a stretch to argue that Takeda’s conceptions of a decentralized historical world in *Sima Qian* reflect the writer’s imperialist leanings, Murakami’s argument deftly demonstrates how the very concept of a “world history” was an effect of an intellectual distancing enabled by the position of political hegemony Japan held as an imperial power. As a result, this concept inherently empowers the language of the imperial power and indirectly (or, in the case of the Kyoto school, rather directly) reinforces a perspective reliant on the violence of the imperialist gaze, while hiding these violent tendencies by way of an appeal to universality.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Murakami Katsunao 村上克尚, “‘Jikaku’ no tokkensei wo tō: Takeda Taijun ‘Shinpan’ ni okeru shōsetsu no kanōsei” 「自覚」の特権性を問う: 武田泰淳「審判」における小説の可能性, *Nihon kindai bungaku* 日本近代文学 87 (2012): 65-80.

<sup>107</sup> There are numerous examples of this ideological double-bind in Japanese literature at this time. While Murakami directs his attention to the writings of Suzuki Shigetaka and Takeda, another Japanese writer, Hotta Yoshie (堀田善

In other words, what Sugi's narrativization of the Japanese vis-à-vis the annihilation and his compatriot's more explicit ordering of Japan vis-à-vis a politicized "global" annihilation accomplish is an implicit dehumanizing of Japanese identity. In attributing to the Japanese an "Otherness" conceptualized as the absolute Other, they fail not only to do justice to others but also recognize "Japanese" subjects in terms of their true alterity, their individual voices. Sugi, in his bid for a historical universality, overshadows the personal/individual nature of his repression of his own culpability vis-à-vis his Japanese identity.

To return to the problem posed earlier, "what is the nature of the Sugi's relationship as individual to the greater Japanese collective identity," we see from these examples of attempts to "work-through" the event of the defeat, that the Japanese identity in the context of the defeat presents a source of incredible anxiety that defamiliarizes Sugi from his own subjective identity and agency. Though supposedly an expatriate and a free agent, his status as Japanese returns from the event of the defeat to "mark" him irrevocably as culpable to some crime he cannot name. As Judith Butler notes on the transitive nature of sociohistorical trauma, "We have to ask about historical losses, the ones that are transmitted to us without our knowing, at a psychic level, left in pieces, pieces that might be linked together in some way, but will not fully 'bind' the affect. (...) Identification itself will be understood to emerge from a space in which we unknowingly inherit the trauma and desires of others, and find that they are indistinguishable from our own, that we are transitively instated by the other,"<sup>108</sup> In this sense, what Sugi struggles

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衛) explores a very similar theme in his deconstruction of the concept of the "zero" in his novel *Loss of Homeland* (*Sokoku sōshitsu* 祖国喪失, 1952). In this text, the narrator encounters members of the expatriate community of Shanghai who argue that, in abandoning their country of birth, they have effectively liberated themselves from the prejudices and pitfalls that accompany nationalism. However, as the protagonist, a Japanese expatriate, comes to realize, the possibility of truly escaping the trappings of one's national identity is ultimately irreconcilable with the individual's reliance on their native language, the political and cognitive lens that constructs the boundaries of agency. As in *Judgment*, language presents a sociohistorical reality that determines the individual.

<sup>108</sup> Judith Butler, foreword to *The Matrixial Borderspace*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), ix-x.

with is the “loss” of something he did not realize he had, the trace of the “former” Japanese identity now lost irrevocably in the event of the defeat. Sugi’s agonizes over “witnessing,” the defeat as he recognizes a trauma which he did not personally observe, and can claim distance from, but to which he is still culpable. To clarify the implications of this term, “witnessing” the traumatic, in contrast to “observing,” implies an inherent involvedness of the viewer, an involvedness that emerges from the agency of the Event-Thing as Other. In other words, it is the trauma itself that actively solicits a response from the individual. Ettinger discusses this dynamic primarily in the context of historical trauma (primarily the Shoah), a scenario in which the individual is inherently separated from by way of a wide gap of spatio-temporal difference. However, I would argue that the problem of sociopolitical identity, particular in the case of a traumatique which both implicates and victimizes the individual on the basis of Events “without witness” (e.g. the Rape of Nanking and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) forms a similar kind of trauma that similarly “demands” a response of the “distanced” individual (in the form of a historical anxiety one cannot personally account for). In the case of Sugi, the response this elicits is a conceptualization of the Japanese identity in terms of the annihilating event, an act of “Othering” that forecloses the link between the individual and the traumatic potential of identifying with another’s trauma (the trauma).

Thus, the conceptualization of the Japanese defeat in terms of universal annihilation presents a kind of psychological “severance,” a repressive act that forecloses both the potential for identification with Japanese identity in its actuality and the potential for a true recognition of (and subsequent ethical accounting for) the matter of personal culpability for the individual’s complicity in a society of structuralized violence. The recognition of this culpability, one which extends beyond the battlefield and enters the familiar frame of one’s own identity, one’s

linguistic agency, is a disorienting experience that makes one's "at-homeness" with oneself, uncanny and alienating, to the extent that Sugi becomes a "foreigner," an "exile" in his own home. For Takeda, the defeat presents a kind of traumatic event that begs a response, it elicits the individual to realize their own ethical responsibility to an identity beyond the individual. However, as the work of scholars like Dower and Murakami demonstrates, neither this process nor its political implications are limited to the scope of the individual. The experience of social trauma, insofar as it challenges us to confront the alterity of "others" within our own homes, is an ethical issue, one which we fail to do justice to if we suppress this alterity. Through the character of Sugi, a partial-subject of his own experiences, Takeda delineates the manner in which social trauma challenges our capacity for ethical thinking and the manner in which we may fail to respond.

It is against the backdrop of this fervent attempt at encapsulating Event-Thing of the defeat in its historical conceptualization, its depoliticization from the bystander perspective, that the second narrator of the story, Jirō, "returns" from the battlefield to complicate matters. From the very first, Jirō is characterized by Sugi as maintaining a strange, almost alien regard toward the event of the defeat, but, in contrast to both the diasporic ethnic groups and the native Chinese whom remain always abject in Sugi's conception of them as absolute "Other," Jirō is always described by Sugi as being strangely familiar to him, if only by his nature of his status as a fellow Japanese. Yet, simultaneously, they are always distanced due to their differing ideas regarding the "severing" event of the defeat. As Sugi describes his alienation from Jirō in their initial encounter:

He had no desire to speak of either the suffering or the foolishness he encountered in his life as soldier, and he seldom, if ever, expressed his impressions concerning the defeat. Even when the three of us were chatting at the dinner table, the old man would read aloud the highlights from a Chinese newspaper and, saddened, would wear an expression of bitter disappointment, but Jirō, seeming completely unconcerned with such dizzying changes, would only occasionally grunt in

agreement, nothing more. I myself, for a time, was somewhat dissatisfied with Jirō's seasoned apathy. If he doesn't think the defeat is anything important, he might either be a dyed-in-the-wool defeatist, or could he be an incredibly frivolous child, just deciding things on the spot? I played around with various theories like that. However, Jirō never gave any opinions on politics, he never showed feelings of sadness; he would just do the laundry or prepare food as usual, all the while giving no sign that he intended to say what was really on his mind.<sup>109</sup>

As a result, Jirō always appears to Sugi (and by proxy, the reader) as enigmatic and inhabiting a space surrounded by a sense of alterity in the sense that his perspective does not conform to Sugi's own interior accounting of the world. Jirō, in the context of this unknown resistance, challenges Sugi's aforementioned attempts at conceptualizing the defeat in terms of the absolute, consistently referencing, both in the example of the annihilative Revelation and the systematic Indestructability of Energy Theory, the lack of accounting of the culpability of the individual subject. The introduction of Jirō as a "conversant," with Sugi, thus widens the frame of the conceptualization of subjectivity from the narrow and opportunistic ideology of the Japanese as a punished or "annihilated race," by reinjecting the complication of the individual. In this sense, Jirō initially presents to Sugi what Levinas terms an *other-in-alterity* in his capacity as a foil or, to borrow from Ettinger, a partial-self. Sugi is able to relate to Jirō and respect his autonomy in his capacity as a subject, but Jirō remains always in an identity unknown to Sugi. Regardless of how often Sugi attempts to conceptualize Jirō's intent (whether as nihilism or naivete or religious fervor), Jirō always resists Sugi's "readings" of his character until the point of his confession where, by nature of the structure of the text, Sugi's narration assumes a metatextual commentary of Jirō's self-narration, a commentary occurring both too early and too late to properly "capture" Jirō's intent which it merely pursues by way of a kind of sustained flight. This point will receive further clarification with the revelations of Jirō's letter.

As the story progresses, Sugi eventually wearies of his ennui and, in ingratiating himself with

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<sup>109</sup> Takeda, *Shinpan*, 6.

the larger Japanese expatriate community, finds a kind of contentment in the brisk pace of the everyday. Interestingly, the actual descriptions of the Japanese community Sugi records here find a stark contrast in the abject and “cursed” conception of Japanese he espoused in his time apart from this group. The experience of the mundane, the trifling, what might be loosely termed “the everyday,” leads Sugi to forget his conception of the Japanese vis-à-vis annihilation and to immerse himself in the humdrum of “everyday” life. However, is it truly possible to take this “everyday” at face value? Does this conception of the Japanese community do ethical justice to history in the Levinasian sense? Again, the figure of Jirō offers an alternative by way of semi-opposition. As Sugi forgets the problematized aspect of Japanese communal guilt, the figure of Jirō wanes, falling victim to a mysterious malaise of his own which the narrator cannot comprehend. Over time, this strange melancholy seems to envelop Jirō as he distances himself from his fiancée Suzuko, his family, and, ultimately, Sugi as well. The meaning of this regression and its potential relation to Sugi’s newfound comfort in the embrace of the everyday is largely unclear until the novel’s climax, but, to summarize here, the conceptualization of the everyday, much like the conceptualization of community, presents a kind of selective “forgetting” that represses elements of the Other incompatible with the enclosure of the self. But what exactly is forgotten here? This becomes clear in the climactic scene of Sugi’s “half” of the novel.

Following an awkward encounter in which Sugi visits the family of Jirō’s fiancée, Suzuko, during which time Jirō is almost completely despondent, the two of them walk home. Walking home, Sugi and Jirō inadvertently take shelter in a Christian church in the midst of a blizzard and are coerced into participation in a Christian service. Although the passage is written in Japanese, it is heavily implied that the congregation is formed largely of native Chinese parishioners and this group is described as comprising the entirety of Shanghai’s populace, from fashionable

wealthy youths to swarthy workers, all of whom are dressed in simple clothes and enfolded in a uniform solemnity. The entire service is presented to the effect of an uncanny atmosphere, as the voices of the congregation, united, lose the contours of language and assume the wordless capacity of sound, turning into ethereal sighs, moans, and sobs. At the peak of this strange display, the congregation is asked to confirm their faith in Christ, which they all answer (excepting Jirō and Sugi) with a singular reply of “Yes.” The silence of Jirō and Sugi is immediately apparent, however, and the congregation quickly turns against them, demanding to know if they believe in Jesus. Sugi quickly demurs, but Jirō refuses to speak and, when asked again, a Chinese parishioner speaks in his stead asserting that Jirō does believe, effectively cutting off any potential for silent dissidence.

Sugi, though able to participate in this ritual, is alerted by nature of this rite, to the price due participation in the “practice” of a conceptual community: the “Othering act” required by the forcible identification of the individual into the collective identity. The scene of the church solidifies the boundaries of a community organized by a conception of the absolute, an ideological orientation that demands the subjugation of individual alterity to a greater moral totality. The linguistic construction of the exchange which serves to establish the boundaries of community (the call and response of identification in the generalizing word of “yes”) serves not as a means of identifying the nature of the divine, but as a means of identifying the individual as party to the absolute organizing force of god by nature of their proximity to this totality.

However, as Levinas notes on the limitations of theology:

Theology imprudently treats the idea of the relation between God and the creature in terms of ontology. It presupposes the logical privilege of totality, as a concept adequate to being. Thus it runs up against the difficulty of understanding that an infinite being would border on or tolerate something outside of itself, or that a free being would send its roots into the infinity of a God. But transcendence precisely refuses totality, does not lend itself to a view that would encompass it from the outside. (...) We thus encounter, in our own way, the Platonic idea of the Good beyond

Being. The transcendent is what can not be encompassed. This is an essential precision of the notion of transcendence, utilizing no theological notion.<sup>110</sup>

In this scene, the call that identifies the individual ontological proximity to the totality of God forms the lacuna, the “Other” delineating the boundaries of communal identity, as silence, the silence of the absolute ambiguity and incomprehensibility of the individual. The problem with community, Takeda clarifies, is not that it is unable to account for this silence (as alterity is a pre-assumed condition), but that it must “speak” for silence. Ideology cannot “converse” with alterity as such, but always seeks to represent the perspective of the “I” in an act of linguistic violence. This final scene, which reveals, in the context of communal identity, the gap between Jirō and Sugi, alerts Sugi to the blind spot in his communal praxis, the implicit silencing of alterity that forms the base of the ideological community. However, it is not until Sugi reads Jirō’s letter following his disappearance (an act of reading into which the frame of the story itself disappears as Jirō is finally given a voice of his own) that the nature of a community based on alterity (the shared misfortune to which Sugi refers in his introduction) is clarified by way of Jirō’s discovery of an alterity-of-self that forms the key to Sugi’s problematized communal identity.

### **The Confession and the Alterity of the Individual: Jirō’s Account**

With the disappearance of Sugi, we at last gain insight into Jirō’s interiority in his telling of the events of the story. This narration appears, belatedly, in the form of a letter in which Jirō describes his experiences following his conscription into the army up until the climax of Sugi’s self-narration. In the same manner as Sugi, within the first few lines of the letter, Jirō reveals the central tension of his character: an abiding preoccupation with his individual culpability for the

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<sup>110</sup> Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 293.

act of killing on the battlefield. Explaining why he has elected not to repatriate to Japan, Jirō notes: “I committed murder on the battlefield. Since it is war, killing the enemy on the battlefield is nothing particularly worth mentioning. It's only natural behavior for a soldier. However, my murder was the murder of myself, as an individual. In the end, it was a murder that I deliberately committed, not as the 'I' who was a soldier, but as 'I' myself.”<sup>111</sup> Immediately, we find a contrast here to Sugi's conception of culpability which is oriented around the disappearance of the self against the grain of a conceptualized communal identity. From the very first, Jirō rejects any sense of culpability oriented toward one's participation as part of a collective, focusing almost obsessively on his own actions, to the point where he insists that his actions are not “his own” if they are not complete products of his individual will. In Jirō's rather uncanny accounting of self, killing in the capacity of the “I” a soldier cannot be qualified as an act of murder, being natural, but killing in the capacity of “I” as the individual becomes a willful act, an indelible sin.

Furthermore, although from this early stage, Jirō's account already hints that his preoccupation is focused always on the problem of “I,” this “I” is not singular; in fact there is a great plurality of “I”s surrounding Jirō at any moment. He describes the “I” that is a soldier, the “I” that committed murder, the “I” that was raised by his mother, the “I” that was educated, the “I” that pulled the trigger, and the “I” that did not kill (which exists only in the space of Jirō's mind). What does Jirō's naming of these “I”s, this listing of selves, accomplish? To answer this question, let us consider Jirō's self-narration in his “individual” act of killing.

When hesitating to pull the trigger in a firing line poised to execute two Chinese civilians, Jirō narrates his internal conflict and how the act relates to the personal identity of the “I.” Jirō explains: “If I stop, nothing will happen. If I pull the trigger, I will become an 'I' that is not the

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<sup>111</sup> Takeda, *Shinpan*, 14.

former 'I.' All the while, only the determination to do the impossible began working within me, and it was this that would decide things. To try and become what was not the former 'I,' that is what beckoned me.”<sup>112</sup> From this passage, we gain a useful clue into Jirō’s conception of identity, in that it appears to be oriented around a basic idea of movement (more accurately, displacement) which raises again the problem of identity and ontology. In his treatise on affect theory, *Parables for the Virtual*, Brian Massumi notes on the nature of Being, “A thing is when it isn’t doing. A thing is concretely where and what it is— for example a successfully shot arrow sticking in a target— when it is in a state of arrest. *Concrete is as concrete doesn’t.*”<sup>113</sup> In his analysis of dominant models of cultural and social theory, Massumi determines that a major blind-spot in the conception of identity, of the nature of a thing, is the insistence on ontological modes of thinking that situate a thing within a fixed positionality, a perspective in which the subject’s indeterminacy, its relation to the Other in the moment of its becoming, is lost. As Massumi notes:

It has withdrawn into an all-encompassing relation with what it will be. It is in becoming, absorbed in occupying its field of potential. For when it comes to a stop in the target, it will have undergone a qualitative change. It will not just be an arrow. It will have been a successfully shot arrow. It is still the same thing by definition, but in a different way, qualitatively changed by the passing event. But if it is qualitatively changed, isn’t it only nominally the “same”? Shouldn’t we assert, with Leibniz, that all the predicates that can be stated of a thing— all the “accidents” that might befall it (even those remaining in potential)— are of its nature?<sup>114</sup>

This gives us a means to evaluate the “movement” of the “I” in Jirō’s telling; a movement that constantly evaluates the “I” in terms of its displacement, not its actual movement, from its “former” position. In effect, Jirō determines the nature of himself at all times not by matter of difference from his surroundings (unlike Sugi who evaluates himself by difference from/similarity with an externalized Other) but by difference of the himself. Jirō’s conception of

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<sup>112</sup> Takeda, 19.

<sup>113</sup> Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Pennsylvania: Duke University Press, 2002), 6.

<sup>114</sup> Masumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 7.

self, much like Zeno's arrow, is repeatedly stopped and deconstructed along the path of its movement by points of "suspension," moments in which the potential for "being" and "not being" are clarified in considering the self via the potential selves it is not currently but may be. The problem of ontological thought, however, is that these points of diversion can never both be enacted; the self either does or does not, it cannot "be" both simultaneously. In this manner, the body in motion, in the process of becoming, must always be considered as holding a manner of alterity toward itself, a "zero-point" among individual suspended states of displacement that separate the acting body from the body of completed action. In considering the ethical implications of this reductive conception of subjective agency, we can observe a clear relation between Jirō's perpetually "still" yet "moving" conception of self, of his will and the "Othering" of his own sensation, which presents the repressed nature of his own affective experience of self-in-becoming. The conception of oneself which is formed by the incessant "awareness" of the gradient of potentiality is a relativizing experience, one which not only deterritorializes the experience of the Real but also leads to a totalizing of the self that finds a resistance against ever-shrinking boundaries of the self vis-à-vis the "non-self."

To clarify, let us examine Jirō's personal account of the first scene of his "killing" the one he enacts as part of the firing squad.

However, in the next instant, suddenly the terrifying thought 'Why can't you kill a person?' flit through my skull with a flash. It was completely unexpected, even to me. As I stared steadily at the bodies of the two peasants moments from being killed moving bit by bit into the distance, and my ears had the premonition of the sound of a shot within the air and that deviant thought flashed, silent as death. After it vanished, what remained had neither human emotion nor morality; it was a thing like the vacuum of space, as insensitive as lead. Both the idea: human emotions are soft, such things are of no use; and the thought: this killing is merely one small count among the tens of thousands of people being killed; and all other things approximating thought disappeared. Then, I could feel only the thickness of the peasants' flesh, its softness, the color of the darkly shining muzzle of the gun, and the coolness of the mud beneath my knees; the voice of the order, the voice of countless continuous gunshots, and then I also fired.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Takeda, *Shinpan*, 16. Emphasis added.

In this scene, we find the complete assemblage of Jirō's subjectivity in operation. The act of killing itself is not problematized as Jirō treats this as a foregone conclusion. Neither is the material action of him shooting or not shooting the problem, as he could simply throw the shot. What presents a problem for Jirō is the question of whether he can or cannot kill. The problem is one of locating himself, not of his effect on others. These elements are actively suppressed and what remains is a self whose potential identity is at all times in the process of being foreclosed by the passage of time. This is the palpable tension that forms in the moment in which Jirō watches the two men, "moments from being" killed, receding into the distance. In the context of Jirō's subjectivity, what is receding into the distance is not the men themselves, but the constantly elapsing self disappearing against the grain of historical inevitability. The irony is that Jirō, who is obsessed with mastery of himself and justifies his actions constantly by appeal to intellectual superiority, is only able to kill in the moment when thought is replaced movement, sensation. The self able to question disappears as the arrow approaches the target made inevitable by the insistent movement of the "I" departing the "former I," which constantly recedes into oblivion.<sup>116</sup> The self temporarily disappears into motion and reemerges changed.

I would argue that what emerges from this dynamic, the conceptualization of identity in terms

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<sup>116</sup> Jirō makes it clear in both instances of killing how little he recalls of the people he murdered, unable to remember even their faces. Interestingly, Jirō consistently situates this "forgetting" in the context of movement, describing how he "traveled to various places and went to various places," and "met with the eyes of people on the verge of death countless times." In this manner, the obliterating of violence is closely linked to his traversing of the geopolitical space of the battlefield which is contrasted with "civilized society," a space where the consequences of socially organized "judgment" hold sway. The impact of place on "morality" forms an important wrinkle in the development of Jirō's identity vis-à-vis action, first in terms of the dynamic of violence and punishment (Jirō states quite clearly that he would not be able to kill in the context of civilization for fear of judgment but, removed from this context, he might well kill again) and, later, in terms of maintaining an "awareness" of one's crime against the grain of everyday life. This should not be taken as an endorsement of "civilization" over the violent order of the battlefield. I would argue that, in the example of the film *To the Shores of Iwo Jima*, Takeda explicitly calls to light the fictional "spaces" in which society sanctifies and sanitizes violence for its own perpetuation. Rather, the contrast of these spaces, one inhabited primarily by Jirō and the other by Sugi, presents an example of how material conditions impact the manner in which ideology, modulated by space, enables violence to emerge. Takeda Taijun, *Shinpan*, 17.

of the absolute “I,” a subjectivity that “exists” only at a resting state of fixity, solidified and identifiable only after the act of becoming, is an alterity of self. This “otherness of self” is borne out in experience of “sensation,” the emerging self as the body in motion, feelings and actions that escape the fixed loci of the “I” and delve into the ambiguity of potentiality. In other words, Jirō’s conceptualization of identity in the fixed and monolithic “I” that corresponds directly to actualization of his will, causes Jirō to encounter the absolute potentiality of his actions and to recognize, on the boundaries of the reality of his actions, the infinite potential non-“I”s that are foreclosed by his taking or not taking of action. The encounter with this alterity is a disorienting experience that deterritorializes the boundaries of Jirō’s selfhood to encapsulate totality, and the “self” or “will” Jirō works so hard to cultivate, begins to exert an agency of its own. The self that emerges only by way of establishing itself against potentiality (at the risk of constant ontological dissolution) gains, to continue the metaphor, a kind of momentum, one which, by nature of the repressive stance, seemingly emerges from the void within, a wicked physic of perpetual movement against the affective grain. What Ettinger terms “the trace.”<sup>117</sup>

Tellingly, this alterity of self emerges most vividly in the “return” of the traumatic, which Jirō experiences only after the incident of murder is “forgotten,” supposedly foreclosed completely. Following his return from the battlefield, Jirō states that he believes quite confidently that he has escaped all possibility of “judgment” for his crime of killing, stating that: “The sole solitary trace of the act, the only clue, the sole condition that would be suitable to constitute a criminal case from this act, is the fact that I am alive. The problem only exists within me.”<sup>118</sup> Jirō’s statement is ironic in that it foreshadows the essential problem of a subjectivity formed obsessively around the conceptualization of selfhood. That is, the trace of the event does not emerge from without,

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<sup>117</sup> Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, 68-69.

<sup>118</sup> Takeda, *Shinpan*, 20.

but from within, as a testament to the “selves” that reside beyond the boundaries of individual consciousness. Just as when Jirō’s “self” vanished into sensation the moment he pulled the trigger, the trace of trauma emerges as an uncanny sensation, beyond rationality, beyond the limited confines of the individual will. In Jirō’s case, this takes the form of a fascinating phantasy in which the repressed traces of the event reemerge in a radical inversion of inter-subjectival relations. Jirō notes:

One day, while I was sleeping, I was thinking about the two of us, loving each other like this, living together, and then finally growing old together. Both of us healthy, and happy, and now finally old, and then... I had savored my own pleasure. At that time, suddenly I remembered the old couple I had shot to death. And then I realized that I had only killed the husband and afterwards had left the old wife behind. The old woman likely died some days later. There was no way she could have survived, but she probably had no intention of surviving either. In any case, it was a miserable fate. They may have lived happily together originally. They may have loved each other and gotten married. Conceivably, even as they were clinging to the ground, huddled together in a corner of that burning and smoldering village, they may have loved each other still. It may have been that even as they felt the approach of a terrifying omen, in holding each other close, they were giving one another a final comfort. What if it had been us instead, I thought. And as I did, I was tightly gripped by the feeling that wouldn't we also become like the old couple? We are old, I become blind, Suzuko becomes deaf. Then our village is set ablaze, the two of us are sitting alone on the ground. And then I can hear footsteps, a human voice. A soldier from some other country soon arrives. However, I am terrified and cannot move a muscle. And then, the foreign soldier, who closely resembles the former 'I,' casually picks up his rifle. What I think then is the same as what I thought before. The same shot. The bullet hits my head. Suzuko who has become the old woman moves her shoulders and face with a twitch. Without making a sound, she remains there staring. Night comes. There is not a single person who comes to save her. That scene floated clearly in front of my eyes. It may become like that, I said to myself.<sup>119</sup>

Here Jirō relives the trauma of the violence he encountered on the battlefield, supposedly buried in the passage of time. But, in place of the face he has forgotten, his own emerges. What is perhaps most striking about this passage is the simultaneity of Jirō’s awareness between “himself” in the form of the old man (if, truly, the term “himself” can apply to Jirō in this state) and this doppelgänger who, though clearly a stand-in for Jirō’s character, is not truly a distinct “Other” from Jirō, as he shares the same impressions as Jirō did at the time of the event. The experience of the trace thus does not occur as a remembrance of past from the standpoint of present; there is, in fact, no past experience to relive. Rather, the experience of the past is

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<sup>119</sup> Takeda, 20-21. Emphasis added.

superimposed over the present, and the “self” that forms the boundaries of the experience becomes permeable. Jirō is simultaneously the figure of his doppelganger and the figure of his victim, both phantoms of the Other that exist outside Jirō's experience and yet which he cannot help but claim responsibility for. What emerges in the simultaneity of Jirō as the victim and victimizer is a collapse of the ontological self; Jirō's awareness is distributed to an extent that the “self” as such loses the solidity of its boundaries and the potential of sensation, a phenomenological reality that emerges from beyond the boundaries of the “I,” evinces a new, spectral relation among disparate interrelated partial-subjects, belated and imagined though they may be. The return of the trace of the event in the uncanny, which forms an expression of the “othered” self, establishes a new set of relations which displace the previous “static motion” of the identity formed as perpetual motion away from the historicizing force of oblivion and the framework demanded by ontological conceptions of the self. The simultaneity of self and other, bridged by the simultaneity of sensation/motion, forms a subjectivity which opens new potential for ethical identification in perceiving a self which is not the self, a “non-I,” with a set of conditions that are not one's own but ever-present as a potential becoming. Potentiality takes on a new meaning here, not as a “loss” always cut away from the “I” but as a perpetually present element of the I-in-becoming that is only unseen insofar as one loses an “awareness” of it by way of the prejudice of the ontologically defined “I.”

The ambiguity that emerges in this experience of the Other-as-self is explicitly contrasted by a distinct, ideological reading of the war that emerges soon after this passage. Shaken by his experience of this fantasy and its implications for his relationship with his fiancée, Jirō goes with Suzuko to see an American film on the Pacific War that depicts the violence inflicted by the American forces.

Following New Year's, Suzuko and I went to see a movie. It was an American Technicolor film

called *Iō-tō*.<sup>120</sup> The color of the sea, the color of the sand, the color of blood, all had a searing vividness; they were incredible pictures. Of course, it was real footage. The American landing crafts crowd the shoreline, casualties are covered in blood and carried on their comrades' shoulders; facing the holes in the sand, the terrifying blaze of flamethrowers flows out over them. Japanese soldiers in horribly burned clothes come rolling backwards off the sandy slope. Suzuko gasps and her nails claw into the flesh of my arm. It's a modern fighting scene demonstrating the power of technology. Soon the battle ends. A strange white smoke hangs over *Iō-tō*, smashed boats and guns are washed by the raging waters of the sea. The American soldiers covered in sweat and mud gather on a sandy plain. A soldier stands and reads from the Bible. The soldiers listen attentively in silence. Their naked arms and shoulders illuminated by the southern sun. It left me with a serious impression. Then, the vacuum of the soul and the leaden insensitivity both emerged, just as they had that day.<sup>121</sup>

The film depicts a bloody battle on the island of Iwo Jima in which the American soldiers soundly defeat the Japanese forces and then join together in prayer over the scene of their victims, encapsulating the scene within a religious solemnity. The perspective portrayed here presents a very different method of “remembering” compared to Jirō’s experience of the Other.

Recreating and *representing* the traumatic event in the context of a “mediated” narrative implicitly involves the contextualization of that event. The process of remembering is motivated both by the desire to give meaning to an experience which leaves behind the ambiguity of a “loss” a missed encounter with the Other (the encounter with which is foreclosed by the boundary of the “artificial memory”) and by a political praxis which requires a “forgetting” of the inherent alterity of the violent act in order for it to be incorporated into the structure of social continuance. This is the process by which the traumatic event of violence is incorporated into the ideological structure; the event ceases to be the memory of the individual(s) and becomes the memory of a conceptualized community (or of conceptualized forces that form the contours of the absolute “I” (e.g., the technological and the divine in this instance)). Framed by the contextualizing forces of religion and technological might, the destruction of the Japanese by the American forces is presented in the film as an absolute moral good, one that is horrifying in its

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<sup>120</sup> Takeda is likely referring to the American film: *To the Shores of Iwo Jima* (1945), which is the first color film that depicted the events of the battle including the famous scene of the raising of the flag over the battlefield. As Jirō describes, the film was a propaganda short edited together from real footage taken at the battle.

<sup>121</sup> Takeda, 22.

practice, but sanctified in its service to a higher moral power that is outlined in the communal act of prayer. The entire scope of the film arguably serves as a kind of fantasy that encapsulates all of the ideological/narrativizing forces in the text (the Judeo-Christian divine, the annihilation of science, the religious community), but it is made uncanny as it is portrayed here from the perspective of the “enemy,” a monolithic entity that is diametrically opposed to the experience of the Japanese victim which it exterminates without prejudice.

What Jirō discovers both in the experience of the “encounter” with himself-as-Other in the reverie and in the social order of “Other” of the film, is the essential impossibility of not-sharing trauma, the trace of the event that finds passage through his own internal alterity and demands vocalization. The “trace” of the event that reemerges seemingly from the void clarifies the shared anxiety among individuals, and forms a kind of an affective network in which individuals are compelled receive and transmit “partial traumas” born from the lacuna of the conceptualization of the event. In Jirō’s case, the lacunae formed by the “loss” of the subjectivities of his victims, and the “loss” of the act of violence, borne out in these “phantasies,” (one in context of the spectral unconscious and the other in the context of the mediated social “super-conscious”) reveal not only the indelible nature of the trace, but the inherently “shared” nature of these traumas. In other words, the revelation of these phantasies alerts Jirō not only to their inherent “impossibility” to retrieve the event, but also to their inter-reliance; the problem of his becoming “Other” is inherently also a problem of his capacity as a social subject, as a “Japanese,” a communal identity he has, to this point in the narrative, rejected before it was even raised as a possibility. In witnessing the sanctification of the violence of the “Other,” a vehicle not only for the annihilative “forgetting” of the event, but also for the birth of a sanctified narrative of violence enabled by technology under the auspices of the religious sublime, Jirō is alerted to his

own socialized form of forgetting, evidenced by his own admission that he would be fully capable of killing again provided the social boundary of judgement was lifted. What occurs here, I would argue, is the identification of personal culpability as occurring-with social culpability, a realization of the complex of material and political conditions that surround the individual and the manner in which these conditions actively encourage the perpetuation of violence founded on a cycle of repressive severance of alterity, both with regards to the individual and the extended affective network of social organization.

This revelation manifests itself in praxis, as Jirō is compelled to “tell” both his fiancée and, in the context of the story, Sugi, the details of his crimes, thus setting into motion another process of co-poiesis as these characters become processors of Jirō’s trauma. The depictions of both characters’ reactions are telling with regards to this dynamic as the experience of trauma deeply affects their own conception of “relation” to the boundaries of their subjectivity. Sugi’s reaction has already been discussed fairly thoroughly, both in terms of how the revelation of experiencing Jirō’s trauma served as a point of deconstruction of the separatedness of the triangulated subjects of “I,” “we,” and “object,” but Suzuko’s reaction is also quite interesting. As Jirō notes, “That night I could imagine how disturbed she must have looked sitting in front of her parents. As she looked at her own elderly mother and father, she would remember the old couple huddled in front of the muzzle of my rifle, and then, shocked beyond thought by me, who had stolen the lives of the old couple, she would arrive with horror at the fact that she herself was engaged to be married to that criminal.”<sup>122</sup> Here it becomes clear that the experience of the traumatic trace of the “event unwitnessed,” the fragment of another’s trauma, leads Suzuko to recontextualize her own experience of family and to recognize her own culpability in her relationality to the act of

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<sup>122</sup> Takeda, 23.

killing. Though she herself did not pull the trigger, in transference she becomes superimposed in front of the muzzle of Jirō's rifle and experiences the horror of killing in the context of her own home, a context that is "invaded" with the experience of the partial-subject in alterity, the fiancée she recognizes but no longer "knows."

What Takeda demonstrates here is that the effect of the matrixial experience of trauma is the development of a corresponding trans-subjectivity, the revelation that not only is trauma a matter shared among individuals, but that the act of experiencing the trauma of others calls us to share in the affective experience of others, that we develop constantly in "communion" with the revelation of the matrixial transmission/reception of the experience of partial-others. Insofar as this text functions as a metafiction in its capacity as a "recording" of feelings, partial-events, and as a conversation between Takeda as author with his readers, I would argue that this presents a process of co-poiesis on two levels. On one level Takeda creates with the partial subjects of his own experience and, on another, he creates with the reader of the text, who is drawn into an identification of their own relationality both with the writer and the inherent instability of the "writer as subject" that the text relies on. The borders between the two parties are rendered permeable, first in the text's opening invitation to experience "the dark fate" of a supposed stranger which forms their own misfortune and then again in the revelation of the ethical failings of social narrativization which not only fail the "Other" in representation, but fail we ourselves in our capacity for transsubjective relationality, in cutting away from our potential identities by drawing false lines of difference. Thus, in the reading of the text, in the experience of coming to grasp the co-affective relationship of these subjects to one-another, Takeda invites a similar kind of revelation on the level of readership in which we become processors of Takeda's own traumatic and realize, in our capacity as "witnesses" to his telling, a telling which arrives always

belatedly by way of specters and partial witnesses, to Takeda's own experience.

At the climax of Jirō's portion of the story and the novel's end, we this appeal vocalized, as Jirō determines to maintain his distance from Japan for fear of losing his "awareness" of his crimes. Jirō notes:

And then he asked what I planned to do now. I answered that I planned to remain in China. If I return to Japan, and again welcome back the everyday life of the past, I will once again lose my awareness of myself. It is not merely the distance of a single ocean that separates this place from Japan, since, on the other side, an everyday life that causes the loss of awareness awaits. I want to remain in the place of my crime and live looking at the faces of the countrymen of the old man I killed. Since that should be useful for keeping awake my awareness which otherwise is like to become dull. Judgment is not a one-time occurrence. It happens again and again, it is ever-present. However, people do not notice it. Only when they are dragged to the place of judgment are they shocked into awareness of it. From now on, I will walk the land of my judgment. I do not think that even in doing this that I will make up for my sin. However, I cannot go on without doing it. Although my spirit to atone is weak, my spirit to see my judgment through on my own is strong. (...) "You make the third Japanese person who has made a confession like yours to me. Their methods may be different, but all of them have committed to defending their awareness," and, so saying, Suzuko's father returned home. I was glad to know that I am not alone. I think it's strange I didn't notice until now that I have comrades who, in whatever foolish or clumsy way, are working to judge themselves. You once spoke to me about the final judgment. And I do not know what the present condition of Japan is. But in my present condition, it's exactly as if the first trumpet has sounded, and the calamity of the first angel has descended. The second and the third will no doubt fall as well. And I am eternally grateful to have had you as a friend I could report all of this to. Since I am sure many of our comrades do not have another to report to, and even now are silent behind the darkness.<sup>123</sup>

In this final scene, Jirō completes the circle of the story, elaborating his discovery of the alterity of self vis-à-vis the limitations of awareness and his belonging to a radical new subjectivity reliant on the co-poiesis of parties heretofore unknown. His final statement stresses both the transsubjective nature of culpability, once confined to the spatio-temporal space individual, but now revealed to be "ever-present" just beyond the borders of awareness, and the transsubjective nature of the "telling" of trauma itself, highlighting both the manner in which severance from the phenomenological reality of "judgment," of the ethical call to face one's culpability for others (even if that other is oneself), in the everyday allows for the sublimation and perpetuation of socially-permitted violence and the manner in which subjectivity is reliant not on the emergent

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<sup>123</sup> Takeda, 24-25.

“I,” but on the “reporting” of one’s own experience that saves one from the dark silence that finds the final repression of the traumatic in the oblivion of the subject. Defying such a silence, one which, by the standards of phallogentric severance, should be all but inevitable, Jirō secures his own subjectivity by entrusting his record to Sugi, thus completing the loop of the “conversation” established in the beginning of the text in retro. This “conversation,” establishes identity vis-à-vis the partial alterity of becoming, the “misfortune” that finds ambiguity (but also possibility for sharing) in the “sustained flight” of Jirō’s self-awareness. In contrast to the ontological fixity (and resulting tyranny) of the individual/communal identity, this characterization does a kind of justice in recognizing the inherently co-affecting and transitive nature of the “misfortunes” of both individual and community, the latter being no longer formed by its fixed ontological boundaries, but by the praxis of a continuously “becoming” awareness of culpability.

### **Conclusions: A Conversation of “Partial-selves”**

In considering the structure of *Judgment*, we gain several helpful insights into how the “memory” is structured. Because the text is explicitly split into two separate halves, the frame told by the narrator presents an experience ultimately surrounded by a sense of alterity by nature of its distance from the narrator, Sugi. Sugi's position in the text, as a character whose trajectory closely follows Takeda's own (a repatriate to Japan, who, over time, presumably discards the trappings of the “annihilative” philosophical outlook and embraces a sense of *minzoku* commonality), presents a character who is given voice only by nature of his return to Japan. Jirō's voice within the text is restricted to a letter, and his narration is implicitly bound in the indistinct temporal boundaries of Sugi's telling. The framing from the beginning of the story immediately clarifies that the figure of Jirō is at all times suspended by an ambiguous

relationship, not only with Sugi and Takeda's own experience, but with the extended experience of the “we,” who share the misfortune of the defeat. However, Jirō himself is given to us only through a letter, an inherently unstable and unbound form of communication in the text, its events far flung from the present, and, with Jirō 's disappearance coinciding into the text of the letter, beyond verification or reproach. In this way, Jirō 's crime and his subjectivity are given to us as foreclosed. With the conclusion of the letter, Jirō disappears into the indistinct and silent future, a potential unrealized in the ambiguity of its conclusion (in contrast to Sugi who presumably repatriates and goes on to write the story).

But, as the scholar Takahashi Keita has pointed out, these readings are not simply contradictory, but also reliant on each other.<sup>124</sup> Sugi's preoccupation with Japanese national/communal identity can only be problematized to an end of ethical accounting by way of his relation to the figure of Jirō and Jirō becomes, through Sugi's act of “writing,” exemplary of the tension experienced by the Japanese people, the “misfortune we all share,” he moves beyond himself. Jirō, for his part, is only introduced to the concept of a “judgment,” of an ethical accounting of the individual that arrives by nature of their responsibility for the Event-Thing of the Other by Sugi. And, it is this that clarifies for Jirō both the nature of the Event-Thing as something that cannot help but be shared, and the limitations of the individual vis-à-vis their own alterity. Jirō never doubts his capacity for self-mastery until he is introduced by way of Sugi, to the notion of an “event without witness,” the idea of a culpability to the “Other” that supersedes the limitations of the individual and, indeed, time-space as a whole. And, as Jirō emphasizes in the final lines of the text, he is ultimately reliant on Sugi in the “telling” of his confession, not

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<sup>124</sup> Takahashi Keita 高橋啓太, “Takeda Taijun 'Shinpan' ni miru 'bungaku' no 'seiji' sei: sengo bungaku saikentō no shiza” 武田泰淳「審判」に見る「文学」の「政治」性--戦後文学再検討の視座, *Shōwa bungaku kenkyū* 昭和文学研究 63 (2011): 1-12.

merely as a passive messenger, but as the corresponding “partial-subject” to share his trauma with and to also receive an element of the traumatic from. The fact that both Sugi and Jirō reach different, yet co-reliant conclusions of their “ethical response” at the terminus of the text (Sugi in his “delivery” of Jirō’s confession and Jirō in his sustained “awareness” in self-imposed exile) is not so much Takeda’s commentary on a personal failing in electing to follow one path over the other, or even of the limited nature of “writing memory” as such, but of the manner in which co-poiesis functions. Trans-subjective relations always arrive in the form of the almost-missed encounter, in which divergent histories, divergent traumas, find an exchange between partial-selves, partial in their alterity, allowing ultimately for ethical reckoning, but never monolithic or singular. For the exchange to be truly ethical, Takeda clarifies, the otherness of the individual and of the trauma at large must remain intact.

This chapter has sought to expound on what might loosely be called the “psychological” dimensions of Takeda’s work. However, given the traditional casting of this word, as an invitation to wander a privileged, labyrinthine interiority, to explore the “impenetrable thicket” in the Heideggerian sense, this characterization rings false. The problem of humanism, for Takeda, is ultimately one of accounting for an alterity of self that emerges in reaction to a “demand” from one’s environs, from the oblivion of historical space, and how to do justice to this alterity. It is perhaps tempting to seek in Takeda’s fiction a personal preoccupation with sin, to try to account for the personal crimes, atonements, and ethical triumphs and failings he attributed to himself. This was no doubt a matter of some abiding interest for Takeda himself; both his personal writings and fiction are rife with confessional asides, self-deprecating jabs, harsh self-criticisms, equivocations, and, yes, even occasional moments of personal redemption. But, to read Takeda’s fiction, or even his personal writings, as a reflection of the writer, is to make, I think, an error

similar to the kind of “injustice to the Other” Takeda’s fiction cautions us against in depiction of the ethical failings of Jirō and Sugi. Ethical action, Takeda demonstrates, is not possible either in a vacuum or even in the false intellectualization of a community that demands a relativization to conceal the tyranny of the ontological “I”; it cannot be found as a mere “bystander” to the occurrence of history (and in fact such a position is not ever truly possible). What is needed is a new set of relations, a “witnessing” of oneself together with others in a co-informative process that clarifies the impossibility of not sharing the Event-Thing and our shared responsibility for it. In the next chapter, I will seek to examine how the discovery of this new sense of subjective “relationality” and historical alterity altered Takeda’s conception of the world “surrounding” the subject, in other words, the problem of “landscape.”

### Chapter 3 The “Re-discovery” of Landscape: Subjectivity and the Ethics of the Absolute in *Luminous Moss* (1954)

#### Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I sought to demonstrate how the experience of the defeat altered Takeda’s conception of subjectivity and its expression vis-à-vis the narrativization of history and the “representation” of memory in the context of historical trauma. As is perhaps apparent by now, underpinning both of these issues is a shared question of the “object” of the subjective experience; in other words, a problem of alterity and “others” who form the basis of subjectival identification. Both in the example of Takeda’s approach to the subject of “China” in *Sima Qian*, and in the considerably more nuanced subjective blind spots of Sugi and Jirō in the postwar *Judgment*, the problem of “others” and how the perception and recording of “others” forms the backdrop (unethical as it may be) of subjective identity and the means by which one’s agency can emerge. As these chapters also demonstrated, however, engaging with alterity is implicitly tied to the recognition of one’s own relationality to “others.” Specifically, in instances of artistic, empathetic, or social co-poetic response to the traumatic or the historical, there is the potential for one’s own “internal” alterity to be clarified. These points of encounter provide the potential for the formation of a novel kind of subjectivity, one structured under conditions of affective resonance and the “witnessing” others in a participatory engagement with one’s own ethical responsibility toward “others.” This “discovery” of a new relationality amongst subjectivities emerges directly from a critical interrogation of humanist discourse, both in terms of the supposedly essential nature of the human subject and in the centrality of humanity within the larger world.

What becomes of increasing interest in Takeda’s project in the setting of the postwar, however, is the manner in which this formerly “central” human subject becomes fragmented and

displaced in the context of literary expression. Looking to the displacement of the human subject between *Sima Qian* and “On Annihilation” in the first chapter, for example, it becomes apparent that what occupies an increasing concern for Takeda is not so much the human subject, but the larger social forces that surround these subjects and find expression through them, forces like “history,” “culture,” and “representation.” Similarly, in texts like *Judgment*, we find the fragmentation of both narrator and narrative are not merely a simple binary split but, rather, occur always in the context of a mediation of affective forces, that is, the tension of the “non-I,” or of potentiality, that surrounds and implicitly shapes the nature of reality and the relation of human subjects. The realm of these affective forces which mediate human relations establishes another layer of the assemblage of subjectivity, one that forms a vital factor to understanding both the nature of the subject and its “ethical” responsibilities. This factor can roughly be captured in terms of the “environment” of subjects, but this monolithic conceptualization is not especially productive for the sort of problem to which we are applying it. “Environment” implies a reality exterior to the subject, to the “I,” no different from the vistas that Takeda looked out over and recorded in works like *Sima Qian*. What the revelation of the defeat and Takeda’s explorations into literature reveal is not merely a plurality of the human subject, but a plurality of “environment” as a series of forces that affect the individual and the capacity of these “environs,” both material and affective, to alter and shape the individual in their relation to others. These environments are, naturally, not limited to the social world or even to the human world, there is a cultural world, a world of representations, a world of texts, a world of “non-I’s,” the vastness of which is conferred to us only when we touch their boundaries by way of the traumatic (for Takeda, the “annihilative”) event which reveals our own precarity against the immanence of these forces.

In the setting of *Sima Qian*, a testament to the predominance of the individual ego, this environment was a “human” one, encapsulated in terms of the “world” (*sekai*), a word which inevitably begs the question of “whose” world, distinctions and boundaries Takeda was eager to make in his writing of the text (e.g. the world of *Shiki*, the world of the Han, the world of humanity (*ningen no sekai* 人間の世界)). In other words, the environment in the setting of Takeda’s early work is not only apprehend-able by the observer-cum-subject, it is explicitly by nature of this apprehension that both the “subject” and the “world” can be said to exist at all. It is a matter of distinction, of establishing ontological boundaries. In the setting of the postwar, however, this perspective is quickly complicated; one’s relation to “others” is clarified not merely in the span of one’s own perceptions (though subjective perspective has distinct political consequences), but in the manner in which one is beholden to particular forces (e.g. annihilation) which both *move* the subject and *move through* the subject, finding expression in the “becoming” of the individual in response to the forces of the world. The event, the environment, is no longer external, but also impossible to reduce by way of a complete synthesis with the subject. Rather, just as in the co-poietic co-response-ability (to take a leaf from Ettinger’s book) of trauma, these subjectivities exist in constant conversion and conversation, processes of partial-becoming. This new dynamic, a kind of relationship amongst subjectivities *with/against* the environment forms a new assemblage of subjectival relations in Takeda’s later work. I argue that this dynamic finds expression in a concept that gains particular prominence in Takeda’s postwar fiction: landscape (*fūkei*).<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> It can perhaps be gleaned from this admittedly insufficient introduction that the concept of “landscape” does not appear overnight in Takeda’s work; landscape appears alongside other earlier terms of Takeda’s including “the world” (*sekai*), “space” (*kūkan*), and “totality” (*zentai*) in early postwar works like *Sima Qian*. What makes the concept of “landscape” particularly interesting in its development in the context of Takeda’s postwar literature, however, is that, in contrast to these other terms, which inhabit a fine line between materiality and theory, landscape appears, for the most part in Takeda’s early work, to encapsulate an easily traceable material concept related to the

But what do we mean when we speak of “landscape”? Within the context of Japanese literature, this presents a surprisingly loaded question. Within the context of modern literature, the problem of landscape is perhaps most famously addressed by the Japanese literary scholar Karatani Kōjin in his now famous essay, “The Discovery of Landscape” (風景の発見 *Fūkei no hakken*, 1980), in which he seeks to determine the conditions underlying the development of the style of landscape painting and the emergence of “literary landscapes” in the Meiji period as an expression of a kind of particularly modern perspective, and the changes this development effects on larger conceptions of subject-object relations in both the Japanese and European contexts. Karatani pursues this argument by focusing on the development of modern perspective in Kunikida Doppo’s (國木田獨歩) naturalist short story “Unforgettable People” (忘れぬ人々 *Wasureenu hitobito*, 1898) and the criticism of this rapidly developing perspective within Natsume Sōseki’s (夏目漱石) *A Theory of Literature* (文学論 *Bungakuron*, 1906). Karatani advances the argument that, with the sociocultural revolution of the Meiji period, which saw a larger shift in modes of literary expression to works focused on developing psychological interiority, there was an accompanying shift in the manner in which larger conceptions of subjectivity found expression as a product of a new form of subject-object relations. This is most readily apparent, Karatani argues, in the development of “landscapes” within Western-style painting and naturalist literature in Japan at this time, a development which found writers and artists looking outward, to the “object” of their environs in order to express their own interior psychology as a reflection of their perspective on the exterior world. Landscape painting, of

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power structure of “observer” and “observed.” As I indicated in the first chapter, drawing primarily on criticisms from Barbara Hartley, the “landscape” Takeda discovered in China was terribly problematic, but I would advance the argument that, in contrast to other concepts advanced in *Sima Qian*, Takeda recognized in landscape possibilities for a kind of alternative to traditional models of subject-object relations insofar as literature offered a space in which larger sociopolitical landscapes could be deconstructed and rearranged, thus challenging the ontological fixity of subject-object relations.

course, presents the prototypical example of this development: the artist gazes upon the natural environment of the exterior world, and paints it, objectifies it, into a concrete expression that is founded on the distinction, the difference, between the individual “I” that observes and the exterior world which is observed. However, this development is not limited to the realm of artistic expression and, in the context of modern writers like Kunikida, the “landscape” is not limited to the natural world, but incorporates the human subject as well. Karatani writes:

I have included this long quote as a way of demonstrating that the man on Doppo's island is not so much a "person" as a “landscape.” As the narrator says, “At such times, it is these people who flood my mind. No, it is these people standing in the midst of scenes in which I discovered them.” (...) For landscape, as I have already suggested, is not simply what is outside. A change in our way of perceiving things was necessary in order for landscape to emerge, and this change required a kind of reversal.<sup>126</sup>

And,

Before Japanese ethnology could come into existence, it needed an object. But this object, the “ordinary and abiding folk,” was discovered through a process alluded to in Doppo's words. This is why in Yanagita's work the study of folklore has always been linked with discussions of landscape. Yanagita's concentration on the problem of language, moreover, derives from an awareness similar to that of Takahama Kyoshi that “landscape” was really a matter of language.<sup>127</sup>

Thus, we can observe that, for Karatani, the development of modern consciousness is predicated on the establishment of a seemingly preternatural series of subject-object relations that allow the subject to determine themselves against an “objectified” exterior that serves as a kind of ontological anchor against which the subject can be formed. It is in this sense that Karatani defines “landscape,” describing it as “an epistemological constellation, the origins of which were suppressed as soon as it was produced.”<sup>128</sup> Landscape is thus, in the modern conception, a configuration of objects by which one orients oneself, a series of relations, like that of the lines mapping various stars, that connect various objects into an order which creates signification and

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<sup>126</sup> Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. Brett de Bary (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993), 24.

<sup>127</sup> Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 33.

<sup>128</sup> Karatani, 22.

can orient the observer within a larger epistemological discourse. Ever the dedicated historical-materialist, Karatani explicitly links the “discovery” of this perspective to the historical development of conceptions of subjectivity emergent from the perception of an alterity that delineates boundaries between the subjective “interior” and the environmental “exterior” of others. Karatani credits this development to historical changes in thought, citing both Descartes and Freud as thinkers whose conceptions of interiority were permitted to form and spread (to be “discovered,” in other words) by nature of material conditions of European society at the time. Moreover, Karatani intimately links the “discovery” of landscape to a larger discourse on the establishment of cultural ideology since, for an “object” capable of supporting the totality of subjectivity to be established, the historical-material foundations of this “landscape” must be erased. Karatani writes,

Once a landscape has been established, its origins are repressed from memory. It takes on the appearance of an "object" which has been there, outside us, from the start. An "object," however, can only be constituted within a landscape. The same may be said of the "subject" or self. The philosophical standpoint which distinguishes between subject and object came into existence within what I refer to as "landscape." Rather than existing prior to landscape, subject and object emerge from within it.<sup>129</sup>

Taken in this sense, the discovery of “landscape” within artistic expression, for Karatani, merely presents the most contemporary incarnation of a reoccurring discovery of interiority which develops its particular form as an effect of sociocultural conditions at the time, and then becomes a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy as it erases its own material origins as a product of a particular historical moment.

Thus, to summarize, it appears that there are two elements that we can ascribe to Karatani’s landscape as a more general historical trend: 1) It is an assemblage of subjectivity reliant always on “perspective” which determines the terms of engagement by which the individual encounters

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<sup>129</sup> Karatani, 34.

the world; this the act of “viewing” that allows the “constellation of meaning” to achieve signification. And 2) it is a phenomenon tied to the historical-material conditions of the period and, as is evident in the example of Kunikida Doppo, the experience of landscape is complicated by its relationship to its temporally locative sociopolitical origins; origins that, Karatani observes, the subject always seeks to erase in order to elevate perspective to a larger, more complete universal signification.

Placing this admittedly reductive model against the example of Takeda’s fiction, we see that early works like *Sima Qian* conform rather conventionally to this model. As the first chapter of this project demonstrates, the “landscape” of historical humanity Takeda crafts in his criticisms of the Han historian is thoroughly “perspectival” and, though Takeda’s analysis is quite reliant on material criticisms of history, the transcendent figure of “humanity” that emerges in this text does obfuscate the material “origins” of this landscape by implying a cyclical transition of human subjectivity throughout the larger course of history, effectively rendering the particularity of history (specifically, the political realities of the present from which Takeda writes) effectively nullified. But what of the “landscape” developed in texts like “On Annihilation” or *Judgment*? Obviously, perspective is critical to both of these works, but the perspective is fragmented, it doubles back on itself to form its own critique and thus forms a vocal multiplicity. The viewer and constellation are present, but the stars are no longer a source of orientation. The two (and only two) atomic bombs dropped on Japan, the historical destruction of China, the event of the defeat; these events do not explain the individual or locate them by matter of difference, but reveal the precarity of the whole subjective assemblage. The “discovery” that takes place is not the subject discovering some new dimension of the self, but a grim “reminder” of one’s own permeability and affect-ability by the external world, seemingly indifferent to the concerns of the

human. Thus, the discovery of landscape in Takeda's postwar fiction is not the discovery of a new subject-object relationship, but of an "exterior" plane to this series of relations. This point also calls into question the problem of "historicity," for, as texts like "On Annihilation" demonstrate, the voices "discovered" within these landscapes are incongruous both in terms of temporal origin and signification. The lamentations of the *Loka-byūhā*, urging individuals to repent, exist in conversation with the *biwa hoshi* reciting the *Tale of Heike* and the scientific nihilist, who sees, in the annihilation of Japan, the greater organism of the world. The textual landscape formed by this polyvocal discourse is clearly of a different breed from Karatani's and, yet, there are undeniable points of convergence insofar as this new "landscape" is formed from the realization and deconstruction of the limitations of traditional modes of subject-object discourse.<sup>130</sup>

Thus, landscape appears in the modern as a turn to the interior, solidifying the distinction between the inner and the outer, but I would advance the argument that, following the turn of his intellectual project with the event of the defeat, the opposite becomes true to an extent in Takeda's work (or, at the very least he begins to explore the potential for this mode). In many of these works, the inner "becomes" the outer in the consideration of one's own alterity, of one's own precarity as one subject in a collective process of sociocultural and historical "becoming." As Karatani himself indicates, this perspective, this "landscape" of the precarious subject, is explicitly tied to the historical materiality of the postwar moment, a historical disjuncture that allows for this particular revelation to occur. This raises the question, however, of just what sort of perspective emerged from the historical event of the Pacific War and the Japanese defeat; what were the terms of subject-object relations that emerged in the aftermath of this particular

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<sup>130</sup> This is to say nothing of Takeda's own glaring blind spots and the groups that he continued to objectify, even in his postwar discourse. Gender is likely the most prominent one, and Christian discourse presents another.

historical development? As the prior two chapters of the current study have demonstrated, the effect of the defeat had a clear and significant effect on the manner in which Takeda considered subject-object relations, particularly with regard to the matters of alterity and the “interiority” (or, more accurately, the permeable nature of subjectival interiority in terms of cultural belonging and the co-poesis of memory).

I would advance the argument that this historical shift in subject-object relations following the war was accompanied by its own revolution in artistic expression, a kind of “re-discovery” of landscape that becomes apparent in Takeda’s postwar fiction. When we examine Takeda’s fiction from this period, there are countless instances in which there are fascinating digressions from the events of the human players of the text, to focus instead on various “landscapes,” both natural and manmade. Examining works like *Luminous Moss* (*Hikarigoke*, 1954), *Evening Rainbow* (*Yoru no niji*, 1949), and *The Misshapen Ones* (*Igyo no mono*, 1950), we find that Takeda often “interrupts” the flow of his narration with various references to the material composition of the natural, structural, and cosmological environs his characters inhabit. Rather than providing a kind of “orienting” structure to the text, a landmark that clarifies the position or internal standing of the subject, however, these sections reveal a different order of operations altogether, one which the narrator is incapable of observing in a complete or satisfactory way, let alone to participate in. To the contrary, when the narrator of *Luminous Moss* stumbles on the titular lichen quite by accident within a sea cave, or when the criminal of *Evening Rainbow* stares into the colors of the corona formed in the sky by the conflagration of the Tokyo fire bombings that nearly killed him, or when the young acolyte of *The Misshapen Ones* stares into the face of the stone Buddha, indifferent to the plight of humanity, as he resolves to face a senseless and savage beating at the hands of another initiate, we find a different kind of “landscape” here, a different

order of “exteriority” than the one described by Karatani. In examples such as these, there is a clear subject and object in the “observer” and the “observed,” but the relationality of these two is not static; the object overwhelms the subject, it “invades” their sensibilities, an exterior emerges from within the interior of the observer. The object moves, the constellation collapses. In this sense, Takeda’s postwar landscapes differ quite radically from the static, complete vistas that we are perhaps used to. Instead of occupying an ontological space of exteriority which can be examined and sketched from without, landscapes in Takeda’s writing (whether natural, textual, or psychological) are somewhat more precarious and strange in their configuration, appearing often to elide the boundary between definite and indefinite, seeming almost to challenge the observer attempting to incorporate them through a kind of slippage that puts them always at arm’s reach.

There is a sense of “exteriority” here, that much cannot be denied, but the terms are changed; exteriority does not remain “exterior,” but moves through and permeates the individual, appearing almost magnetically reactive to the alterity within the individual itself. I term this “interior exteriority” landscape, which is a concept that derives strongly from Karatani’s conception of it, but which draws on the influence of poststructuralist thought, particularly on the revelations of affect theory which does not accept subjectivity as a matter of ontological fixity, but as a motive process of becoming in which the boundaries of the individual subject are rendered permeable in its movement between observed states of ontological identity. In this sense, I argue that landscape in Takeda’s work is almost more of a physical force or confluence of forces rather than a distinct object, a series of “affects” which form a “zone of indiscernibility” around (and through) the individual, to borrow terms from Brian Masumi. As a result, what landscape “is” and what it “does” for subjectivity, for agency, and identity, are drastically

different from the modern conception, rooted in the clear delineation of subject and object within a larger philosophical framework. The contribution of poststructuralist discourse to Takeda's work, then, is in helping to unpack how the recognition (and fragmentation) of traditional subject-object relations that occur in Takeda's fiction clarify his continually evolving criticism of humanist discourse and its ethical failings, by offering alternatives to these historical blind spots of human-centric conceptions of the world.<sup>131</sup>

To offer a quite germane example here, the poststructuralist theorists Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in their conception of subjectivity as a process of affective becoming, use the term "haecceity" to describe a new kind of identity that clarifies Takeda's conception of landscape. Deleuze and Guattari write,

There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name *haecceity* for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules and particles, capacities to affect and be affected.<sup>132</sup>

And,

We must avoid an oversimplified conciliation, as though there were on the one hand formed subjects, of the thing or person type, and on the other hand spatiotemporal coordinates of the haecceity type. For you will yield nothing to haecceities unless you realize that that is what you are, and that you are nothing but that. (...) You are longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles, a set of nonsubjectified affects.<sup>133</sup>

Here the pieces begin to fall into place; the concept of haecceity offers a kind of "alternative" to the ontological fixity of the subject-object dualism; the individuation attributed to landscape, to the "nonhuman," affirms the ubiquitousness of movement as a defining feature of subjectivity,

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<sup>131</sup> The question as to whether Takeda is able to move beyond this dynamic is another question altogether, however, and this is a problem resonant with many of the issues raised within this chapter. My own conclusion, based on Takeda's expressed skepticism with the pursuit of "overcoming" humanity, relating to the discourse of the late interwar Japanese intelligentsia, is that Takeda did not think an escape from this traditional framework of subject-object relations possible, although, in his explorations of disaster discourse, he did find more than a few examples of humanity being "overcome" by the various forces of the natural world.

<sup>132</sup> Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Masumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 261.

<sup>133</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 262.

the capacity for change of individuals who are related within a spatiotemporal order (longitude/latitude). Such a conception of subjectivity, not in terms of exteriority, but in movement, in transformation that causes the distinction between the “I” and the “other” to disappear. This “movement” and “indiscernibility” have important implications for the way in which we consider “humanity” and human relations. Within the assemblage of this “landscape” human relations and “relationality” are clarified by way of a kind of becoming with regards to a confluence of exterior/inhuman forces which cannot be considered truly “distinct” from the human subject as these forces surround and permeate the individual, giving shape to the subject by means of a kind of affective “pressure,” (i.e. the tension of environmental precarity that surrounds the individual). In affective terms, the subject cannot be called a “center” in the manner of *Sima Qian*, as it only holds ontological character in its capture, which effectively destroys the movement that clarifies its nature. As Deleuze puts it in his description of haecceity, “it is defined only by a longitude and a latitude.”<sup>134</sup> Natural landscapes, textual landscapes, linguistic landscapes; in Takeda’s postwar fiction, landscape offers coordinates of meaning that are not authoritative, but complementary arrangements, fleeting in their organization, gone after an instant, disappearing into the periphery as the observer himself is helplessly cast on, subject also to motive forces. The revelation of the “affective” subject is thus the capacity to deconstruct ontological structures of meaning to reveal capacities for both subjects and objects to relate in novel ways that reveal capacities for ethical understanding previously obscured. It is this “potentiality” of subjectivity that Takeda explores in these fictions.

This chapter will focus on delineating the nature of “landscape” and its implications for subjectivity as it appears in Takeda’s 1954 text *Luminous Moss*. Though it was produced nearly a

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<sup>134</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, 260.

decade after the defeat of Japan in the Pacific War, the problem of the war remains a distinct element to the text which finds the narrator “unearthing” buried legacies of this historical period and, with them, landscapes of potentiality that surround and pervade the subjects that inhabit them. In “re-discovering” these landscapes, always present and yet precarious in their belated, spectral relations to subjectivities in the foreclosed, “present” reality, Takeda demonstrates both the material grounding of subjectivity within the context of sociocultural landscapes, and the potential for ethical engagement with ulterior legacies in the “reclamation” of buried sociopolitical landscapes through polyvocal literary expression.

Published in the March 1954 issue of *Shinchō*, *Luminous Moss* is a novella in two-parts, the first of which details, in travelogue style, the journey of an anonymous narrator to the remote village of Rausu on the furthest northeasterly point of the island of Hokkaidō, closely located near the newly-established Russian border, following the secession of the island of Kunashiri to the Soviet Union in 1945. The purpose of the narrator’s visit is never explicitly stated, aside from his passing interest in seeing the natural occurrence of glowing moss rumored to grow in the sea caves in this region. However, this seemingly innocent expedition leads the narrator to discover several distinct, yet interrelated, historical traumas of the region. The most prominent of these is an incident of cannibalism (known as the Pekin Promontory Incident (北京岬事件 *Pekin misaki jiken*)) committed by a Japanese soldier at the end of the war, supposedly obliterated with the passing of time, but given new voice and complicated in Takeda’s exploration of the polyvocal nature of historical record, a previously unappreciated element of narrative expression that unfolds in Takeda’s unraveling of the historical roots of place.

The text itself is surrounded by a number of political valences that are likely worth unpacking before we turn to the content of the text. First, it is worth noting that the novella is largely

autobiographical. Takeda scholar Itō Hiroko has amassed a large quantity of biographical information and documents, including letters, interviews with correspondents, and physical documentation, that essentially confirm all the events Takeda describes in the first half of the novella as actually having occurred during his visit to Rausu in 1953. Additionally, the so-called “Pekin Promontory Incident,” in which a Japanese naval officer, shipwrecked on the Hokkaidō coast at the end of the Pacific War, gradually cannibalizes the survivors of his crew, that Takeda’s narrator uncovers in an unassuming tome of local history, is an actual historical occurrence which only (re)entered public consciousness by way of its exposure in Takeda’s literary work. The implications of this fact alone are already quite fascinating, but the political dimensions of the work are compounded all the more when one considers that less than three years prior, Ōoka Shōhei’s now-famous “fictional” account of cannibalism by Japanese soldiers on the Philippine front in the Pacific War, *Fires on the Plain* (野火 *Nobi*, 1951) completed its long-delayed serialization in the magazine *Tenbō* (展望).<sup>135</sup> Takeda, who wrote the *kaisetsu* to the 1953 edition of the novel, was quite critical of its contents and, for many scholars, including Murakami Katsunao and Robert Tierney, *Luminous Moss* does not merely reference *Fires on the Plain*, it is a direct response to the rhetorical stance Ōoka advances in his discourse surrounding the

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<sup>135</sup> The “fictional” nature of Ōoka’s text, specifically the question of whether the incident of cannibalism depicted is fictional, has remained an issue of enormous contention for critics, readers, and Ōoka himself. In his critical analysis of *Fires on the Plain*, “Ideological Transformation: Reading Cannibalism in *Fires on the Plain*” (2004), Erik Lofgren demonstrates how Ōoka, despite making no claims to the effect at the initial time of the novel’s publication, gradually came to erase and then vehemently deny the possibility of the protagonist of the novel committing an act of cannibalism, selectively affirming the “fictionality” of this particular element of the text against other, presumably “factual” elements of the narrative. Lofgren argues that this odd continuing commentary on Ōoka’s part was part of a larger process of cultural forgetting of Japanese culpability that occurred over the course of the postwar which Ōoka willingly participated in in order to dispel his own culpability. Lofgren links this gradual erasure of Japanese culpability to the emergence of a “false memory” of Japanese victimhood in the conflict that emerges both in later film adaptations of Ōoka’s novel and larger political discourse. Taken in this sense, Takeda’s account, in which the fact of Japanese cannibalism emerges from a “fictional” account in the setting of the postwar and which dispels violent mischaracterizations of the Ainu native people, might be considered a kind of mirror image to Ōoka’s account.

novel.<sup>136</sup>

Whether or not Takeda intended *Luminous Moss* as a kind of rebuttal to *Fires on the Plain* is not particularly germane to the current discussion of the text, but it does establish an important element to the text in terms of its simultaneous engagement with historical fact, contemporary political discourse, and the boundaries of narrative/fact. What this multivariate engagement of the text does, I would argue, is establish a kind of sociopolitical “landscape” surrounding the text itself. The text, by nature of its political character, is one of many in this period that initiates a “re-discovery” of historical voices, perspectives which may always be extant, but are buried in that they fall outside the boundaries of the foreclosed narrativization of “postwar” Japanese society and are thus deliberately “forgotten.” In other words, the “exteriority” Takeda discovers in his investigation of Hokkaidō is not an a priori “exterior” (if such a thing can even be said to exist), but is, from the first, externalized by way of the social organization of modern Japan which, in the same manner as an ideological entity, is predicated on the silencing of certain potentials. The Ainu linguistic heritage of the land, the cannibalism of Japanese soldiers by their own, the political borderspace of the Japanese north; these are not inaccessible facts, or even facts “hidden” from public knowledge, but they still must somehow be “unearthed” and vocalized for an ethical accounting to exist. What the process of discovering this historical traumatique reveals, however, is not the “Event-Thing” in its historical incidence, as a fact to be discursively revealed, but the landscape, a kind of *transcriptum* this trauma creates. The revelation of the interconnectedness of these buried traumas expands our own culpability as witnesses of this forgotten event, as witnesses to the traumatique of the historical ethnic

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<sup>136</sup> Murakami Katsunao 村上克尚, *Dōbutsu no koe, tasha no koe: Nihon sengo bungaku no rinri* 動物の声、他者の声: 日本戦後文学の倫理 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha 新潮社, 2017), 86-87.

cleansing of the Ainu and the ethical catastrophe of the Tokyo War Tribunals, events considered unrelated in the context of the dominant political ideology, but related in their capacity as “othered” elements to the image of the postwar Japanese national character. When Takeda opens this tomb, the trauma quickly moves out of bounds, implicating both the readers and the subjects of “civilized society” writ large as culpable witnesses to the larger problematic of “civilized violence” that perpetuates even in the present, by way of the “Othering” acts of bordermaking and the establishment of the boundaries of sociopolitical ideology. It is this revelation, made possible by the experience of landscape Takeda’s work evinces, that allows for the recognition of the violence inherent to the process of establishing boundaries of individual identity.

### **Landscapes and Language**

Though the discovery of the Pekin Promontory Incident, an actual incident of cannibalism at the end of the Pacific War, forms the great majority of the text’s content, the manner in which this incident is revealed is rather complicated, emerging somewhat belatedly following the narrator’s detailed account of his travels through the Hokkaidō landscape. It is clear, however, from the initial sections of Takeda’s travelogue, that the landscape is not a neutral, natural entity, but a kind of elusive plane where vectors of sociohistorical meaning emerge in competing “tellings.” These narratives cast the space of the story into an ambiguous temporal relief that allows for buried memories to emerge alongside the limitations of contemporary understandings of place, a shift, I would argue, that ultimately allows for an ethical accounting of buried, “Othered” historical event vis-à-vis the operation of contemporary society.

The story opens with Takeda’s narrator traveling by bus to the remote village of Rausu. Though the initial descriptions of the northern vistas are idyllic, the scene quickly becomes problematized by the nature of the town’s close proximity to the disputed Kuril Islands, a

distinction that transforms Rausu into the politicized space of the national border. Takeda writes:

Though I have called it a “foreign land,” its grassy green slopes, and the folds of its blue mountains can be distinguished far off in the distance; it is nothing more than the outline of a normal island. And though I call it the “border,” there are neither soldiers nor gun batteries nor barbed wire, nor any signs of any other imposing thing one might look upon; it is simply a quiet coast. Wild horses ambling along the sandy beach facing the waves. Crows perched on stakes along the beach. (...) No matter how many times I told myself that beyond the sea was a “foreign country” or that this place is the “border,” the odd feeling of irritation, that Tokyo newspapers and magazines write up, that twists the nerves of their readers, simply vanishes.<sup>137</sup>

Immediately, we find there is a layering of several sociopolitical valences of meaning here.

The natural scenery of Rausu is juxtaposed with images of the only recently quieted warzone, a conceptual identification attributed to the urban/national center of Tokyo (which finds a natural contrast in both the pastoral outland community of Rausu and, later, in the historical, quasi-religious valence of native Ainu geopolitical boundaries, which Takeda’s narrator cites almost compulsively at every given opportunity). Additionally, the immediate introduction of the Kuril Islands boundary dispute in the establishment of the space of the text, a geopolitical conflict that alludes to the inherently unresolved nature of the Pacific War and the violence that still underpins the supposedly peaceful society of the postwar, severed from the “bunkers and barbed wire” of the beaches of the conflict, buried under less than a decade. Additionally, the signifiers of war which Takeda mentions here, contrasted with the mundane reality of nature, fix them almost spectrally on the scene of this landscape; though they clearly do not exist, the fact that they deserve mention at all indicates their presence in the narrator’s mind, blurring, by way of narration, the boundaries between the subjective interior state and the natural exterior. The fact that the batteries and barbed wire are merely imagined adds an immediate sense of doubt to the perceptions of the human, which find political boundaries where they are “meant” to be. Though the matter of the border is hardly mentioned following this introductory passage, the inherent

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<sup>137</sup> Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳. *Hikarigoke* ひかりごけ, in *Takeda Taijun zenshū dai go kan* 武田泰淳全集第五卷, (Tokyo: Chikumashobō 筑摩書房, 1971), 171-172. All translations of Takeda are my own.

fluidity of Rausu as borderspace forms an integral element of the structure of Takeda's story which repeatedly collapses the temporal structure of the space to allow for the conversation and exchange of historical traumas and events, thought foreclosed, but materially unresolved. These legacies find new purchase in the literary space of the text, one that can, as Takeda demonstrates, cross boundaries of time, space, and contexts of socially-established difference to form new links, new potentials for meaning and exchange among supposedly foreclosed subjects, which continues to exist beneath the surface of everyday consciousness.

Into this already quite complex arrangement, Takeda introduces, belatedly, as though pulling back a camera on the scene, the larger social "observers" of this particular landscape, the "readers" of Tokyo newspapers who themselves create this sociopolitical valence of the border in their arrangement of the boundaries of the Japanese national interior to the Soviet exterior. Takeda immediately problematizes this power structure of border and metropole in a kind of perspectival reversal, writing from the position of the border, presented in terms of lush natural abundance, to look in on the frustrated and frenetic microcosm of the Tokyo metropole, "observing the observer," as it were. We see here again a kind of arrangement of "exteriority" and "interiority" that Karatani refers to, but the terms are altered somewhat as Takeda directly clarifies the "discovery" of landscape, of particular sociopolitical constellations of meaning, such as the existence of "borders," as a problem of perspective, one which not only implicitly alters the experience of the world, but occludes the potential for understanding other potentialities, including the reality of the natural world.

Similarly, when Takeda's narrator prefaces his "discovery" of the incident of cannibalism in Rausu, he directly problematizes this metropolitan perspective as a subjectival lens which, by nature of its political character, renders the "discovery" of an incident of cannibalism by

Japanese soldiers effectively impossible, despite this incident being a clear fact of public record. Takeda writes, “This is about an incident that occurred in a season of severe winter; before I tell of this strange incident, we must keep this mind. Since the inhabitants of cities are quite likely to overlook the importance of factors like landscape and climate as factors that ultimately determine the course of events that become an incident.”<sup>138</sup> In this sense, it becomes apparent that, for Takeda, the “discovery” of landscape within Rausu is not truly a novel exploration as such, but a “re-discovery” of the terms of subjective engagement with reality, the way in which sociopolitical realities are formed by the development of a linguistic “interior” that eliminates the potential for voices of alterity to emerge. Takeda does this, quite masterfully I would argue, by using the space of fiction to allow for the consideration of various historical “legacies,” normally separated by distinctions of the temporal order, to exist side by side forming an otherwise “impossible” political landscape, in which the Japanese “border,” the violence and terror of the Pacific war in its “extremity,” and the violent displacement of the Ainu people from the Hokkaidō “frontier,” create a sociopolitical geography normally invisible to those who inhabit the “interior” of Japanese civilization, particularly the Tokyo metropole. It is the discovery, or “re-discovery,” of this landscape, that allows Takeda to form a critique of the violence perpetuated by this “civilized” cohort in its ideological extermination of “othered” historical legacies.

Perhaps the most prominent of these legacies in the introductory section of the tale, however, is the legacy of the Ainu people native to Hokkaidō, many of whom were violently displaced in the Japanese colonization of the northern territory in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Takeda’s narrator travels by the various landmarks of the Hokkaidō frontier, he unpacks the “meaning” of these

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<sup>138</sup> Takeda, *Hikarigoke*, 172.

places' names by way of an Ainu-language dictionary, which he references quite frequently over the course of his travelogue:

Rausu refers to the Ainu word *raushi*. When the Ainu people hunted deer and bear, they always slaughtered them here, and Rausu takes its name from the place where they would scatter the organs and bones (...) Shibetsu (*sibetsu*) means a large river and Chūru (*chūru*), where the bus stops next, refers to the Ainu word "*kun'nebetsu*" meaning place with a black river; Uebetsu refers to the Ainu word "*uebetsu*" and means a bad river. That they named it bad river must have been because someone met an untimely end there, or because there was an outbreak of contagion, or perhaps because the water quality was poor. (...) With an Ainu language dictionary in hand, one can know the terrain and the features of the land along the line in advance of seeing them.<sup>139</sup>

The gradual "unfolding" of this landscape, explicitly linked with the landscape contained in the "gaze" of the present-day onlooker, presents a development that both calls into question the "reality" of the natural landscape in its "unseen" linguistic mediation, and the authority/agency of the individual subject, whom, in observing the present-day Hokkaidō landscape, overlooks the "unseen" landscape of the Ainu peoples' conceptions of the land. This "unfolding" of landscape is accomplished, as Karatani indicates, in the realm of language, but here Takeda adds the innovation of a linguistic simultaneity that bridges the gap between the linguistic Ainu "exterior" and the familiar vistas of Japanese place names. Though the shift is somewhat lost in translation, in the above passage, Takeda first cites the name of each place in the Japanese kanji reading, which he then places against a more unfamiliar, simplified katakana reading of the place name, which he then clarifies further by placing these two next to the katakana phoneticization of the original Ainu word. The linguistic repetitions (and contrasts) here can hardly be taken as happenstance, rather it appears as though Takeda explicitly explores the "translation" and associated linguistic power structure of the local scenery by way of textual mediation. Each example begins with the "official" kanji character name, a name, which by nature of both its pictorial meaning and position within the Japanese linguistic hegemony, purports a specific

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<sup>139</sup> Takeda, 172.

signification of place by consideration of its locative meaning. Takeda breaks down this surface-level hegemonic/familiar position, however, by first explicating the place name in katakana (reserved primarily for foreign loan words), thus translating this into a rough approximation of a foreign language, but still “familiar” by way of its almost spectral Japanese phonetic structure. And then, in a further step, the narrator explicates the “original” meaning of the place name (though this itself is presented as a kind of human-instanced mediation in the narrator’s theorization of the meaning of place names) by describing the meaning of the root Ainu word. In this sense, the scenery that emerges, scenery that is “known” before it is “seen,” is created from this constantly shifting series of relations among several distinct linguistic registers, each of which has only a partial claim to the “meaning” or “actuality” of the natural world, which slips from register to register as the subject looks on with amazement at the landscape before him. While, certainly, the emergence of this landscape is beholden to the subjective perspective, to act of taking dictionary in hand and “reading” through the landscape, there is no ontological certainty that emerges from this insecure linguistic vista. Rather, different voices, different speech for the land, unfold the reality that appears before one with increasing complexity, all the while obfuscating what the “correct” way to encounter this landscape is (if such a thing exists).

Additionally, this landscape, this series of relations among linguistic registers, is not exterior to the subjectivity of the narrator, but rather calls into question the means by which this subject (and others, by way of mentioning both Hokkaidō locals, who appear largely oblivious to this particular sociopolitical valence, and the inhabitants of the Tokyo metropole, who receive an even more distant and heavily ideological version of Hokkaidō) encounter the “world” always through the mediation of particular forces, in this case, linguistic. It is precisely by means of juxtaposing various human “subjectivities” against the emergent linguistic “landscape” of

Hokkaidō that the human subject, supposedly central in its predominance over the Hokkaidō frontier, is repositioned by way of a kind of fragmentary polyvocality. None of the readings of place names Takeda describes can be considered singularly, they are interdependent even in their contradiction; without the Japanese text, there is no historical erasure, without the Ainu word, there is no history, without the katakana intertext, there is no translation. No single readings, only an assemblage.

However, Takeda is quite clear that this diverse and complex linguistic “landscape” is hardly the status quo for contemporary Japanese conceptions of Hokkaidō and, indeed, the characterization of Ainu people. Once Takeda’s narrator is alerted to the occurrence of an incident of cannibalism in Hokkaidō, he immediately recalls his colleague, “Mr. M,” whom he met at a conference in Sapporo some days prior and enters a lengthy description of their encounter. At the time of their meeting, Mr. M is quite excitable since, a few days earlier, at a scholarly conference on Ainu culture, another scholar casually asserted that an ancient Ainu tribe had practiced cannibalism and this sends Mr. M into a frenzy, demanding justification for this casual assertion. Takeda’s narrator, initially oblivious to the source of Mr. M’s distress, gains clarity after experiencing the linguistic “landscape” of Hokkaidō for himself. Takeda writes,

At that time, I was unable to adequately understand why a report that one member of a certain tribe (or alternatively several members or even scores of them) had once eaten human flesh, should have enraged Mr. M so. Rather it was the suffocated expression of this highest intellectual of Ainu descent, filled with a combination of disgust, isolation, and sorrow, when he said, “There are also Ainu scholars who have to live concealing that they are Ainu, you know.” If only Mr. M had the complete picture of the tragedy of the Pekin Promontory Incident, he could have definitely made the frontal counterattack that there was a man who ate human flesh, not of the Ainu race, but among the unmistakably Japanese, the non-Ainu Japanese, the “pure” (?) Japanese from “among the people under the glorious reign of the Emperor” when “their war spirit was at its zenith!”<sup>140</sup>

“Landscape,” though it finds its origin in linguistic expression, is never merely a matter of representation; the establishment of subject-object relations that occurs in the “perception” of

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<sup>140</sup> Takeda, 179.

landscape always holds implications of sociopolitical power. The landscape of Hokkaidō that Takeda's narrator encounters, in which the Ainu linguistic roots of place names have been buried or erased in their subsumption into a larger Japanese ethnolinguistic framework, is here linked to the racial violence of scapegoating the Ainu ethnic group as the culprits of the crime of cannibalism. In reality, the actual incident of cannibalism was a product of the whitewashed violence of the Japanese Imperial regime at its ideological zenith, which forced countless soldiers into death by starvation. Takeda explicitly links together the linguistic "unearthing" of the Hokkaidō landscape, the incident of cannibalism, the political space of the "border," and the Japanese deflection of cannibalism in order to deconstruct the political landscape of "postwar" Japan, which operates on the ideological assemblage of erasing or displacing its own violent past even as it continues forms of violence acceptable within the larger social order. Interestingly, Karatani too, in his analysis of the emergence of "modern landscape" in Japan, explicitly mentions the "discovery" of the Hokkaidō landscape as a historical turning point that allowed this element of modern consciousness to develop. Karatani writes,

What I have called the "discovery of landscape" was not merely an "internal" event: it was accompanied by the discovery of a landscape that was new in actuality and not enveloped in any way by ancient texts. This landscape was that of Hokkaidō, the northern island which, until the Meiji period, had been inhabited by Japanese only on its southern tip. Hokkaidō became a new territory for colonists, created by driving its indigenous people, the Ainu, off their lands and forcibly assimilating them. In this way the Meiji government was able to provide large numbers of unemployed members of the samurai class with new lives as pioneer farmers. With the agricultural school established in Sapporo as its center, Hokkaidō became the prototype for the colonial agricultural policy later applied by Japan to Taiwan and Korea. (...) Seen in this context, the "discovery of landscape" in the Meiji period was a discovery-if we refer to Kant's distinction-not of the beautiful but of the sublime. For the vast wilderness of Hokkaidō inspired awe in human beings, unlike the mainland which had been regulated for centuries and enveloped by literary texts. But in order to grasp this territory as sublime it was necessary, as Uchimura said, to take on the Christian attitude which regards nature as the handiwork of God.<sup>141</sup>

With this, we gain a greater insight into the historical state of relations that Takeda seeks to critique in his focus on the Hokkaidō frontier. The current metropolitan conception of Hokkaidō

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<sup>141</sup> Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 40-41.

as a political borderspace is clarified, both in Takeda's linguistic excavation of the place names of the area, and in the "rediscovery" of Ainu ethnography, to be merely the most recent iteration of an ongoing historical process of "bordermaking" in which the Hokkaidō frontier was established as an "other" to the literary subjectivities of the Tokyo metropole. Thus, historically, Hokkaidō presents an area that was deliberately un-encapsulated by the metropolitan subjectivity so that it could form a site for the development of a larger sociopolitical Japanese subjectivity in its "otherized" relation to epistemological meaning. In this sense, Hokkaidō became, in the setting of prewar Japan, an epistemological constellation, not unlike Imperial Japan's various satellite colonies in its colonial period. Both of these present "others" incorporated into the larger Japanese subjectival landscape, but only as objects to clarify the central political subjectivity. In all of these examples, however, in Karatani's "modern" Hokkaidō, in the colonies of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, and in Takeda's contemporary Hokkaidō border, the establishment of this "constellation" is not an "internal" event either in its conception or in its praxis; each of these examples involved the violent displacement and annihilation of peoples, cultures, and identities for the purposes of establishing subjectivity in these areas as a stable ontological "other" against which the imperial core could develop by way of various manipulations and exploitations. This point finds fruition later in the text when Takeda directly levies a criticism against the implicit violence found within the sociopolitical entity of "civilization," but suffice to say for now that it is explicitly by nature of approaching the problem of landscape, both by constructing "alternative" landscapes in the correlation of various historical traumas in the same literary space, and by deconstructing "unseen" landscapes of the contemporary order by examining them within the space of literature, that this particular criticism becomes possible.

On a temporal level, Takeda's travelogue essentially reaches its terminus after he finds the titular luminous moss in a sea cave with a local schoolteacher. However, it is precisely at this point, where the narrator's physical journey ends, that he discovers, by way of a quite off-handed comment from one of the locals, that there was an incident of cannibalism in Rausu less than a decade prior. This revelation marks the end of Takeda's travels through the "physical" landscape of Hokkaidō and the beginning of his journey through a "textual" landscape, as he seeks to "re-discover" the historical event of cannibalism by way of various textual records. However, as Takeda quickly makes clear in his circuitous and discursive approach to the "record" of this historical event, there is not so much an ontological reality to be discovered here as there yet is another series of mediating relations: one found on the level of textual recording and representation.

### **Textual Landscapes: Intertextuality and Polyvocal "Recording"**

It is perhaps unsurprising, given Takeda's circuitous and ambling introduction to the assumedly "central" event of cannibalism, that the reader's introduction to the incident by way of Takeda's narration is almost as labyrinthine. Indeed, in terms of narratological structure, Takeda's "account" of the Pekin Promontory Incident is perhaps the most complex section of the story, blurring normally clear lines of textual quotation, commentary, hearsay, and direct reports taken from individuals witness to the incident. From the very first, it is the precarity of this narrative that resonates most strongly with Takeda's narrator, its potential to not be told at all. And, yet, it is this same narrative instability that allows for a new series of relations, a "textual" landscape, to form out of the incident. Takeda writes:

For that reason, it was only after I met with the youth S on the headmaster's introduction and I received a copy of *The History of the Village of Rausu* that this Mr. S had compiled, that I first was able to glean some concrete information about the incident.

Had the compiler not been the young Mr. S, he almost certainly would not have written that

creepy, tragic incident into the record of his hometown. Since, putting aside that the place where the incident originated was not Rausu, nor was the criminal captain a native of Rausu, recording that kind of incident would give the impression that the village was uncivilized and barbaric, and would hardly do the place much good. Moreover, as for Rausu itself, there was absolutely nothing murderous or dismal about its appearance to suggest anything of this incident. To the contrary, it is such a peaceful village, with hardly anything worth recording, that one is almost tempted to insert a chapter entitled, 'The Incident of a Shipwrecked Captain's Cannibalism.'

'The Great East Asia War is in full swing. Early in the morning of December 3, 1944, the 'Akatsuki Squadron' is charged with an urgent task, and by way of the Shiretoko Peninsula, leaves Port Nemuro heading for Otaru'

Mr. S's painstaking account of the incident begins thus, with a novelistic flair.<sup>142</sup>

From this first passage, we can glean several notable elements of Takeda's play with narrative structure in his "telling" of the incident. Takeda's description of the incident contains three distinct narratological voices: quotation taken directly from Mr. S's historical record, a synopsis of the general events of the history provided by the narrator, and the narrator's commentary, both on the idiosyncrasies of Mr. S's style of writing and the events depicted. Dedicated readers of Takeda's work may notice here a style not dissimilar to the much earlier *Sima Qian*, in which Takeda selectively cited, summarized, and deconstructed the text of the Han historian's "world." However, in contrast to this earlier work in which Takeda sought to establish a larger "landscape" of the human subject, in this interesting passage, Takeda actively deconstructs the historical record, drawing the reader to question both the "facts" of the incident being represented and the supposed "narrator" who is delivering this information to us.

Reading passages like the one above, which liberally mixes quotation, the narrator's gist, and his opinions, the lines between these three different narrators quickly become blurred. Certainly, one could endeavor to painstakingly demarcate where the sections directly quoting the *History* end and Takeda's narration begins, but how can one be certain that either Takeda's quotations or Mr. S's compiled "recording" of the incident, taken, it appears, largely from hearsay, partial records, and Mr. S's own liberal deductions, is accurate? Takeda's telling deliberately renders

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<sup>142</sup> Takeda, *Hikarigoke*, 179-180.

such inquiries impossible, while simultaneously demonstrating the fragmented, conversational construction of historical narrative itself, a process which is always mediated in the process of “telling” from one subject to another and thus, behind the oft worn façade of empirical reality, is actually nothing more than mediated perspective, one with an implicit political structure. Just as in the prior example in which Takeda “deconstructs” the Hokkaidō landscape by way of linguistic play, Takeda here renders the seemingly solid realm of the historical fact of cannibalism permeable by way of manipulating the material construction of text. By emphasizing the inextricable relationality of these of different “voices,” these collaborative perspectives that underlie the reception and transmission of historical record, Takeda reveals a hidden polyvocality, and thus, precarity, that exists always even within the most complete and seemingly unquestionable records.

It is notable that Mr. S’s record of the event is “incomplete,” however, missing details about both the period during which the cannibal captain and his crew were stranded and the captain’s trial after his crime was discovered. Takeda seizes on this fact to demonstrate another important point about the “landscape” of texts. In spite of the captain’s confession to the crime of cannibalism and the “fact” of his crewmates’ eventual fates, seemingly irrefutable historical realities, neither of these facts can render to us the subjectivities of these players, the captain included, for his emotions and decisions leading to the incident are never fully explained. Thus, though the characters and events of the incident are “given” to the reader in their recording, they are foreclosed in the recording of the event’s end, the captain’s sentencing. This glaring gap between the “recording” and the “event” leads both Mr. S and Takeda to engage in what Mr. S refers to as “frightful imaginations” as to both the psychology of these historical players and the various possibilities that might have occurred in the periods omitted from historical record. After

covering Mr. S's version of the event, Takeda's narrator notes that he himself has been agonizing for the past month on how to incorporate the events he has witnessed into a novel (presumably the very novel the reader himself is currently reading, although Takeda makes no such claim and, in fact, the literary expression Takeda eventually hits on is a different breed from the narrative the reader has been engaged with thus far). As a result of this anxiety, Takeda begins his own "frightful imaginations" by examining, not the incident itself, but the vein of Japanese literature searching for other examples of works relating to cannibalism, hoping to find some elucidation as to how to "capture" the feelings of "nausea" this event draws out of him. Tellingly, it is "representation" that Takeda looks to "discover" the event, not the history itself. Takeda writes,

Ms. Nogami Yaeko's *The Kaijin Maru* also finely depicts a murderous drama enacted by seamen with death right before their eyes as they are on the brink of starvation on the high seas. In *The Kaijin Maru*, one sailor kills another with the aim of eating their flesh, but ultimately does not eat. This is because the captain of *The Kaijin Maru*, unlike the captain in the Pekin Promontory episode, ethically commanded the other men and prohibited cannibalism. Although the crime of murder was committed, the fact that the crime of cannibalism was not forms a so-called "salvation" for the novel.

In Ōoka Shōhei's *Fires on the Plain*, too, the protagonist, a starving soldier, puts human meat (meat of a Japanese soldier) given to him by his compatriot into his mouth, but, ultimately, he is not able to swallow it down his throat. Although this soldier is a man who shoots and killing a native woman for no reason, he reflects quite ethically to himself, "I killed, but I did not eat."

By assembling and organizing the Pekin Promontory incident, *The Kaijin Maru*, and *Fires on the Plain*, the crimes that may be committed by men who reach the limits of starvation, but are absolutely unable to escape from this situation, become as follows.

One, simple murder. Two, murder for the purpose of eating human flesh. Three, after one murders for the purpose of cannibalism, they do not eat. Four, after one murders for the purpose of cannibalism, one eats human flesh. Five, one does not kill and eats human flesh that has died of natural causes.

When we compare these five crimes, the crime of (2) seems more serious than (1), and (4) appears more serious than (3). But when it comes to determining which is the greater crime: (1), in other words, simple murder, or (5), in other words, not killing and eating human flesh that died of natural causes, the problem is so difficult that such a comparison seems absurd.<sup>143</sup>

Here Takeda constructs a kind of textual landscape, a "constellation" of literary texts that establishes a clear hierarchy of the "criminality" reflective of the material demands of the larger political structure of Japanese "civilization," a subjective "interior" that determines what is unacceptable for human subjects, and what is merely an acceptable "part" of human society.

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<sup>143</sup> Takeda, 183-184.

Though Takeda's inquiry appears to take us further and further from the "event" of interest in its historical incidence, in delineating the "reception" of incidents of historical cannibalism by Japanese writers and readers, Takeda actually hits on the source of the "nausea" that the event elicits, a source normally obscured by predominant social narratives. As Takeda demonstrates in his correlation of these texts, the incident of cannibalism is not a standalone event, either in its supposedly aberrant nature (as there are other literary examples) or its foreclosed historicity (as the perception of the aberrant nature of cannibalism is built into social narratives and serves a political function). The particularity of the event and its cultural integration is reflective of the contemporary "landscape" of Japanese subjectivity, an assemblage that delineates what is recognized as part of being a member of Japanese society, and that which falls outside of this society, forming a barbarous, uncivilized other. As Takeda goes on to argue, however, this distinction (which he deconstructs into five distinct "crimes") is contradictory, but it is not arbitrary. Rather, it is deeply bound to the political praxis of the ruling elite. The contradictory nature of this political praxis is no more clearly apparent, Takeda argues, than in the conviction of the crime of cannibalism within a society engaged in organized killing on an increasingly massive scale. Takeda writes,

Tools of murder grandly boast the might of civilization as the state of their mass production is put on public display, featured even in newsreels. Cooking utensils for human flesh, on the other hand, can no longer be seen either in the flatware sections of department stores or in the special exhibit rooms of museums. Only one of these two types of criminal tools have successfully won popular support and is steadily advancing; the other is on the verge of being erased from memory as a secret weapon whose recollection gives one a shudder of horror. Though public opinion polls on these two crimes reveal an ever-increasing popularity for the one, a rapid decline for the other, this is all simply due to the fact while election posters and propaganda cars and platforms of the advocates of the former camp have reached into the corners of every street, while candidates for the latter party have been incarcerated long before election day.<sup>144</sup>

Here Takeda brings the assemblage formed by the "landscape" of Japanese subjectivity, developed along the temporal period of the interwar and postwar, to its logical conclusion. This

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<sup>144</sup> Takeda, 185.

assemblage operates by increasingly exteriorizing forms of violence that threaten the ontological fixity of Japanese subjectivity as “civilized,” as a means of concealing forms of violence that allow for the increasing power and privilege of the civilizational/metropolitan center, by externalizing its own violence against an otherized exterior. The steady, violent creep of imperial borders is thus transformed into a testament to “the might of civilization.” Again, the revelation of this contradiction is explicitly made possible through a manipulation of the space of literature, which allows for the fragmentation and reorganization of dominant “landscapes” of meaning into new and diverse forms. As Takeda demonstrates, however, this particular kind of “landscape” which forms an unbroken, logical map or constellation of the contemporary Japanese subjectivity, is only one “mode” of individuation, one predicated on the establishment of an ontological fixity of interior subject and external object, which forecloses the potentials of the latter in order to situate the former. There is another mode, another plane, which occurs in the movement, the slippage of these political actors. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in their conception of haecceity,

It should not be thought that a haecceity consists simply consists simply of a décor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold people and things to the ground. It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity; it is this assemblage that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of form and subjects, which belong to another plane.<sup>145</sup>

How do we conceive of identity, of subjectival interrelationality outside the traditional realm of “subject-object” relations? If linguistic representation always gives ontological form to affect and movement, how can we properly express this “movement” (and its alterity) in language, when language always ties these down, even in its deconstruction? Reading Takeda’s postwar fiction, it becomes apparent that this is a problem of increasing concern for the writer, even as he sought to introduce greater degrees of polyvocality and dialogical relations into his fiction. The product of

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<sup>145</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 262.

this tension, I would argue, is an increase in the “experimental” fiction Takeda produced, as he began to actively blend and fuse various narratological forms and textual genres. A prime example of this striking move toward experimentation emerges in the second half of *Luminous Moss*, as Takeda attempts to “reclaim” the alterity of the subjects of the Pekin Promontory incident from historical oblivion, forming a kind of “haecceity” that clarifies subjectivity as an interrelated process of perception.

### **Reclaimed Landscapes: Historical Potentiality and Polyvocality in the Dramatic Form**

Following Takeda’s explorations of the extant historical records of the Pekin Promontory

Incident, the second “half” of the text takes the form of a two-act play in which he, quite interestingly, creates his own version of the events of the incident, effectively “filling” the gaps left by Mr. S’s portrayal of the events. Takeda is not alone in this creative venture, however, as at the drama’s outset, he directly addresses the reader, making them party to the process of “writing” these historical characters:

At any rate, I had to somehow give literary expression to this Pekin Promontory Incident, which the “civilized” folks would no doubt judge as strange and cruel, and which these readers would hardly be able to welcome as a topic. As a final resort, I humbly devised to express this incident in the form of a single play. I finally resorted to the strategy of setting the event down as a play. Since, the form of a “closet drama,” as a form relatively unbound by the strictures of realism, in other words, a relatively less vivid and raw representation, would allow readers’ various everyday feelings to enter into and obliquely connect with the incident through innumerable channels. In addition, I would like for the reader of this unstageable “play,” while still acting as the reader, to act as the producer as well, staging the play in his own individual style as he reads.<sup>146</sup>

What do we make of this appeal to the reader? What does Takeda’s address to each of us encountering this text accomplish? I would advance the argument that, as in other postwar fictions of Takeda’s, the inclusion of the reader into the text here is indicative of Takeda’s conception of literature as a co-poietic activity, one reliant on the interrelated processes of “writing” and “reading” amongst several “partial-subjects” who contribute to the signification of

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<sup>146</sup> Takeda, *Hikarigoke*, 185.

the text by way of different, partial contributions. Whereas in *Judgment*, I would argue that there exists a kind of implied co-poietic activity, in which the assemblage of the characters, the writer, and the reader are engaged in a cooperative process of “remembering.” In *Luminous Moss*, however, this activity is made explicit as Takeda actively calls on the reader to contribute, by way of their particular imagination of the textual space, to the development of the “recording” or, more accurately, “witnessing” of the sailors’ plight.

This begs the further question, however, of what exactly is being represented in this drama, what we are meant to be “witnessing.” If we accept both that Takeda is “filling in the gaps” of the historical narrative, a narrative already precarious in its mediation by various, conflicting voices that form a kind of textual landscape, and that this is not even truly Takeda’s sole “version” of the events per se (as the reader is explicitly handed responsibility for the manner in which this “unstageable” play will take shape), what can we say is actually being represented here? To answer this question, it is perhaps helpful to say that instead of “filling in gaps,” which implies there is a complete story to be had, Takeda is representing here “event without witness,” traumatic events which we know to have occurred, a “tragedy” (惨劇 *sangeki*) as Takeda refers to it, but one which cannot be “remembered” or “represented” directly as it has been foreclosed by history and was seen only by “others” now vanished. In this sense, what is being represented is not so much a “version” of historical events, as it is an expression of alterity formed by the lacuna of historical record and ideological mediation. The dramatic form rejects the perspective of “interiority” advanced in these narratives, and instead summons the network of “Others” lost in the monolithic, “historical” representation of the Captain-figure. That this figure is given voice by the reader, working in conjunction with Takeda’s text, means this voice, this exteriority emerges from within us. Who is speaking? Whose words are these? Takeda leaves this question

open to us, merely giving these voices a kind of textual space to inhabit.

So, what is being represented here? In terms of writing, perhaps not very much: potentially an interpretation of historical events. But, in terms of “reading,” perhaps everything; by handing agency and, with it, responsibility, for the telling of the events to the reader, Takeda opens the lacuna of the historical record to the infinitude of polyvocal perception. Takeda may advise us to think of the captain in the first act as the most villainous man imaginable, or Nishikawa as a fair and attractive man, but what these words mean to the individual reader and the shape the drama takes as a result can assume a truly limitless variety of forms. In the setting of this co-poietic activity, Takeda’s language, taken through the fragmenting and formative lens of readership, adopts a kind of individuation that finds its complement in the assemblage of language and readerly imagination; the characters depicted are not linguistically “fixed” forms, but become movements within their readership.

Let us turn, then, to the characters themselves. The first act of the play, which depicts the events between the fateful shipwreck and the captain’s exodus from the wilderness to Rausu, focuses on the plight of the sailors faced with the problem of cannibalism. There are four characters in the first act: the captain, referred to only by this moniker, his first mate, Nishikawa, and two other sailors, Gosuke and Hachizo. While one approach to the analysis of these characters might be to analyze them in terms of their individual characters, this would, in some sense, defeat the purpose; we know that Takeda has just as much access to the interiority of these characters as the reader does, which is to say none. Rather, a better question to ask might be in what way do these characters move? What latitudes and longitudes do they traverse? Is there a haecceity here?

In Japanese critic Itō Hiroko’s analysis of *Luminous Moss*, in response to the question of the

“ethical” nature of the character of the captain in this play, particularly in the character’s continuously repeated, enigmatic statement of “I am enduring” (我慢している *gamanshiteiru*), makes the somewhat equivocal statement that, when he makes this statement, the captain is not so much attempting to justify or explain his behavior, but to express the relative inevitability of his position by nature of a larger causality.<sup>147</sup> According to Itō, if we examine the structure of the first act of the play retroactively in the context of the second, we can observe that each of the sailors depicted in the play do not so much constitute a “complete” subject unto themselves, but complement each other as various “subjectivities” or potential means of reaction to the problem of cannibalism which clarify the meaning of the event in its encounter. In Ito’s reckoning, each of the four sailors forms a different potential “response” or “movement” in response to the material conditions of the disaster of the shipwreck and resulting starvation: Gosuke is dead to begin with, the potential for no survivors to exist at all, Hachizo refuses to eat outright and does not budge at all, Nishikawa wavers between the two options, eating but then refusing to continue on, and the captain presents a continuous commitment to eating. Each a different speed, a different latitude and longitude, so to speak. However, as is clarified by the course of the events in the story, it is only the choice expressed by the character of the captain, who survives by nature of this choice, that reaches the setting of the present and thus achieves a state of ontological fixity in its perception by others. In this sense, the captain’s subjectivity becomes inseparable from the reality of eating as it is only this that ensures the survival of his subjectivity, preventing its erasure in death. In this sense, when the captain says, “I am enduring,” he is speaking quite literally, he is continuing to exist and to survive in a manner that continues the existence of his own subjective trajectory. Were he to stop, this movement, and thus the captain

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<sup>147</sup> Itō Hiroko 伊藤博子, *Saikai Takeda Taijun* さいかい武田泰淳, (Tokyo: Kisōsha 希窓社, 2009), 22.

himself, would cease to be.

As Itō maps out the development of these characters' progressions, it becomes clear that it is only the stance of the captain that can "survive" given the conditions presented and, it is precisely by nature of this continuity that any narrative of the incident exists at all. Let us consider this problem of subjectival narrative as it manifests within the first act of the play:

CAPTAIN: You're scared you'll become a bad person. Since if you eat, you wouldn't be no ordinary man. That's what scares you. You're scared to be called a man that survived by eating human flesh. That scares you so much you think you can save face just by not eating any."

(...)

CAPTAIN: There's no way I'm letting you float him out! As Captain, I'm tellin' you. As Captain, I'm telling you because I'm looking out for you. We ain't cannibals. We're full-blooded Japanese. It's just human to not want to eat a shipmate. But just see how long we can hold onto that human feeling. Just wait and see how long we can hold onto it.<sup>148</sup>

And,

"CAPTAIN: If you don't endure, it's simple. Enduring isn't easy. Since someone else enduring will never be your enduring. Since there's no rule of what you ought to endure or how much. Not knowing what you're enduring for and still doing it anyway, that's enduring.

NISHIKAWA: How can we endure when we don't know what we're enduring for?

CAPTAIN: Yeah I get it. But tell me, can you yourself tell what's painful? Is it bein' frozen that's painful, or being hungry that is painful, or is it eating your comrade's flesh that's painful, or is it that there's no hope of us being rescued, can you tell? You can't tell. There's no way that you should be able to. Everything's mixed up with everything else. What's painful is so painful that you can't tell what's painful. That's how it is with me. As for me, I'm enduring so much that I can't tell what I'm enduring.<sup>149</sup>

As in Takeda's rendering of the events of Mr. S's recording, the problem here is one of precarity; every narrative that emerges as historical "fact" by nature of its perceived ontological reality is surrounded and, indeed, "mediated" by the influence of various other potentialities, subjectivities that do not achieve a state of fixity, but which find encounter in the confluence of their movement. In other words, the captain's survival, though it is taken as a singularity, is the product of a confluence of movement, of forces: a haecceity. It is precisely this "movement" which the dramatic form allows Takeda to depict, the subjectivities that emerge and develop "in

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<sup>148</sup> Takeda, *Hikarigoke*, 190-191.

<sup>149</sup> Takeda, 197. Emphasis added.

response” to the potential for their own non-being, a moment of becoming, among subjectivities, rather than within a single observer. To that point, it is again the form of the “closet drama” that is precisely what allows this scene to occur, for the form of the drama simultaneously implies both private and communal viewings, an audience of individuals and individuals as an audience. There are also no actors on the stage, only movements, only positions, affects, that move around forces, natural, textual, and otherwise. The “unstageable” nature of the drama Takeda references is thus not a reference to production values or unimaginable vistas, but to the nature of co-poietic activity that pushes always at the boundaries of the individual in the introduction of “others.”

Takeda expands this play in the second act of the play in which, within the setting of the captain’s trial, the orientation of the events depicted is reversed, as the captain is interrogated as to the nature of his crime by several “authorities” representing the general assemblage of civilization: a prosecutor, a judge, and a defense attorney. Interestingly, the discourse in this second act is directed far more heavily toward the problems of “Japanese” subjectivity, a problematic that appears several times in the first act, but which forms the clear and abiding concern for these “civilized” characters who attempt to distance the captain from this identification in terms of the supposedly aberrant nature of his crime. As the prosecutor asserts in rebutting the defense’s argument for the captain’s patriotism, for example,

And although the defense has given the example of a case in which peasants of the Edo period, during a time of famine, mutually exchanged their children and ate their meat, this event took place more than two hundred years ago. There are no eye witnesses, nor is there any evidence, it is nothing more than an old record. Thus, we must conclude it has no possible relevance to this trial.

Finally, as for the defendant's patriotism, or some such thing, on which the defense has rested its case, it is utterly laughable. Not to mention, it is a flagrant outrage against the concept of patriotism. If, as the defense has advocated, cannibalism ought to be permitted for the purpose of survival at any cost in order to carry out one's patriotic duties, why did our loyal and brave soldiers, those hundreds and thousands of men who had exhausted their rations, why did they have to starve to death in distant battlefields overseas? (Applause) Never must any comparison be permitted in the same breath between those loyal war dead who fought the hardest and starved to death for the sake of our country and this detestable, egocentric defendant! (Applause)”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Takeda, 199-200. Emphasis added.

And,

PROSECUTOR: What you've done is mar the dignity of the Japanese people! It degrades the dignity of the nation! Having committed such a crime, don't you think it a disgrace to the emperor?

CAPTAIN: ... I do not think he and I are different as human beings.

PROSECUTOR: What are you saying!

CAPTAIN: Is he not also enduring?

[The court is in uproar. The Judge furiously bangs with his gavel.]

JUDGE: I forbid the defendant to speak!

[The air-raid siren rings throughout the court. The crowd onstage runs back and forth. Before one realizes it, the echo of the siren changes into the sound of a snowstorm. As the courtroom dims, the stage comes more and more to resemble the rock-cave].<sup>151</sup>

The prosecutor's attempt at separating the captain from the realm of Japanese subjectivity both in its historical conception (the possible incident of cannibalism in the Edo) period and in its contemporary political praxis/narrativization ("patriotism" as the honorable, but inevitable, starvation of soldiers on the front en masse), not only establish the acceptable boundaries within which the Japanese subjectivity can exist, it also establishes a larger hierarchy of what sorts of information are admissible into the "recording" of subjective interiority, an abiding problem within Takeda's intellectual project. The insistence on the incompleteness of the physical evidence, of "eye-witnesses" demonstrates a clear preoccupation with forms of historical "record" that support the deployment of the Japanese ruling ideology, records which cannot be substantiated, thus allowing for the erasure of this potential historical reality for the preservation of a consistently pure and honorable Japanese ethnonational identity, in which "uncivilized" crimes such as cannibalism do not exist.

The prosecutor's attempts at separating the captain from "Japaneseness" flounder as the trial progresses, however, as it becomes clear that these two characters are essentially speaking a different language, one clarified in the reading of the development of the term "to endure" (*gaman*) in the first act. Whereas in the case of the prosecutor, Japanese identity is clearly

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<sup>151</sup> Takeda, 204.

defined along lines of a uniform and historically “foreclosed” subjectivity (encapsulated in terms of a heroic sacrifice), the Captain affirms that is precisely by nature of the continued movement of subjects along the course of the trajectory of survival (the captain in his affirmation of his crime, and the emperor, in his silence on the war) that allows for these subjectivities to exist at all. Putting judgments of value aside, on a material level, if humans cease to “endure,” then there is no existence, no lineage of the individual to exist or be examined within the context of the present. The slippage between these two realities, the supposedly foreclosed existence of Japanese subjectivity with the annihilation of the troops in the war, and the material fact of the continued “endurance” of the captain and the emperor, two figures that continue to exist “tragically” across this gap, no longer within the comfort of subjective interiority, not only undermines the material validity of this historical disruption, it implicates the other participants of Japanese society as sharing the same fate, as “enduring” legacies of interwar Japan, displaced within the present.

Interestingly this linguistic clash is accompanied by the development of a novel kind of “landscape” that enters the courtroom; the supposedly sanctified space of the courtroom becomes invaded with air raid sirens that gradually transform into phantasmogoric images and elements of the snow cave in which the incident of cannibalism occurs. With the challenging of the structured order of civilized subject and barbaric object, the landscape itself moves out of bounds, making the courtroom a spatial confluence of temporally and politically “separate” individuations, forces, emerges. The terror of the fire bombings, the criminality of the Tokyo war tribunals, and the desperation of the Pekin Promontory all converge as the boundaries between victim and victimizer begin to blur as these subjects become associated, not with the distinction of their closeness to a particular socioethnic position, but their proximity to the affective experience of

the marginalized violences of the war, the vistas of violence supposedly foreclosed and buried with the conclusion of the war. The reality, which Takeda hints at here, however, is that the traumatic, the marginalized returns. These traumas do not “exist” fixed as ontological realities within the past. They are affective encounters that can fragment, converge, and move through individuals, who experience these traumatic vistas through the spectral resonance of emotive connection.

The movement of this landscape out of bounds, similar to the co-poietic experience of the traumatic Takeda describes within texts like *Judgment* is not merely a “personal” experience, but evinces an understanding of our co-responsibility as subjects for the traumatic, our inextricable involvedness in the manner in which elements of society are marginalized. Takeda conceptualizes this responsibility in terms of a material culpability, as the attendants at the trial begin to glow with the same mark of guilt that surrounds those who have eaten human flesh and which also surrounds the captain. Takeda writes,

CAPTAIN: No, that’s not it. You’re not a person like that who would eat human flesh. You’re a prosecutor. You’re a fine person. All the people here are fine people without exception. The one who ate was I alone. I’m the only one who ate. No other person has eaten.

[As the Captain is speaking, the darkness on the stage deepens, and the sound of the snowstorm grows in intensity. The music played at the end of the first act begins to sound again.]

CAPTAIN: You can clearly distinguish between yourselves and me. There’s a ring of light behind my neck. Look closely. You can see it right away if you look closely. It’s part of the evidence after all.

[A ring of light illuminates behind the Prosecutor’s neck. One by one, rings of light appear on the judge, the defense attorney, and the men and women spectating. No one notices this on themselves or on each other. The people in the crowd wearing rings of light behind their necks, are still running right and left]<sup>152</sup>

In this final scene, we find Takeda’s “landscape” of Hokkaidō presented in its full force, the haecceity of the snowstorm in the Hokkaidō wilderness and the terror of the violence of the air raids fuse within the setting of the court room, a clear reference to the Tokyo war tribunals. Where “historically” the culpability for the war violence was assigned and foreclosed to the

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<sup>152</sup> Takeda, 205.

individual, in the co-poiesis of historical reimagination, a “re-discovery” of this event, a new reckoning of communal victimization and of responsibility, a responsibility always precarious in its spectral appearance, is voiced as the exteriority of repressed communal memory reasserts itself within the interior, literally emerging from the bodies of both the prosecutor and prosecuted. The captain’s final appeal for everyone to “please, look at me” as they gather around him marks a point in which the “object,” the seemingly static point of differentiation, discovered within the historical rupture of the defeat, that forms a point of “departure” for Japanese subjectivity in the setting of the postwar, seemingly divorced from the “savage” violence of the past, gains a voice, one which it never was permitted in reality, that reaches out, begging the “viewer” to discover their similarity, their interrelation.<sup>153</sup>

### **Conclusions: Landscape, the Borders of Subjectivity, and Ethical Resonance**

This analysis has attempted to demonstrate how Takeda engaged with the problem of “landscape” in the setting of his postwar literary expression. As I have endeavored to demonstrate here, the “discovery of landscape” for Takeda was not so much a sudden revelation that occurred with the defeat (in the manner of Karatani’s modern revelations), but a complex movement that was informed by Takeda’s continuing inquiry into the problematiqués of history, language, memory, and expression in the context of a subjective “responsibility” to these problematics. In this sense, *Luminous Moss*, I argue, presents an attempt to both problematize previous assemblages of subject-object relations, assemblages of perception, in their deconstruction and rearrangement, and to make a bid, in the later extremities of the text, for the development of a new kind of representation that presents an alternative to these pervasive and problematic means of self-formation. But was Takeda successful in this quite ambitious project?

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<sup>153</sup> Takeda, 206.

More to the point, what would “success” in this instance look like?

In “The Discovery of Landscape,” Karatani explicitly pairs the examples of Kunikida Doppo and Natsume Sōseki in order to provide the contrast of a writer who immersed himself within the emergent modern style of naturalism with another who recognized it and attempted to resist it. Karatani is quite clear, however, that Sōseki’s “resistance” toward the development of modern “landscape” and the trends of naturalism were only successful insofar as he was able to recognize these trends; when it comes to how well Sōseki himself was able to move “beyond” these trends or to formulate expressions outside of them is another, far less clear matter. As Karatani writes, “Insofar as “literature” was something that encompassed them (modern writers), the kind of doubt Sōseki harbored could not arise.”<sup>154</sup> There is a larger problem at work here, and it is the problem of formulating alternatives to ideological conceptions of subjectivity when, in reality, all approaches to reality are inherently ideological and political acts. Thus, to claim independence from ideological expression, as in the case of Sōseki and Western thought, is a double-bind; all escape routes from “landscape” find us within a different one, erasing our passage to some extent. Thus, if we define “success” in terms of an escape from “landscape,” a complete divorce from former models of subject-object relations, then I believe we must consider Takeda’s attempt a resounding failure. Though Takeda offers us a kind of alternative in the development of haecceities, these themselves emerge from the deconstruction of dominant social landscapes, a point of departure which, even if it can be denied in terms of abstraction, cannot be denied in material reality.

It is worth noting that Takeda’s literary experiments do not end with *Luminous Moss*; a few years later, in July of 1957, Takeda published the short work “Who Will We Leave on the Ark?”

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<sup>154</sup> Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 12.

a piece which demonstrates many similar structural and thematic similarities to *Luminous Moss*, but directing his focus to narratives in which others must be annihilated in order to preserve one group of survivors. Though the text is largely an analysis of various media, analyzing several disaster films before culminating in another fascinating “closet drama” surrounding the biblical “tragedy” of the cursing of Ham by Noah, one cannot help but connect the points Takeda advances about the operation of humanism in extremity via more ancient expressions, to the social problematics of the present day as nuclear proliferation in the Cold War advanced. In this sense, what this experimentation may offer, is not so much an “alternative” to ideological landscapes, but a humanization of elements of human history that fall into the “othered” territory of social landscapes, a humanization which leads us to “re-discover” an ethical responsibility which has always existed, but to which we have not attended.

In other words, the nature of this “re-discovery” is not the establishment of a new series of relations (as the material enactment of this landscape goes beyond the boundaries of the text and any one narrative no matter how complex), so much as it is a “discovery” of how such “landscapes” are formed and what political legacies (and violence) they permit. In the discovery of the process by which “subject” and “object” come to be determined, we also gain perspective into the political mechanisms of subjectivity and the elements of alterity within ourselves and others that are silenced in these social representations. I would argue that it is this revelation, of the potential for a discovery of alterity in literature that compelled Takeda to attempt to bring new voices, marginalized voices from various corners of foreclosed histories, into the space of contemporary discourse.

## CONCLUSION

In 1968, when the experience of the war and the conditions of the Japanese defeat were already but a memory, the publisher Chikumashobō released the third volume of their series on postwar writers and intellectuals, the *Compendium of Postwar Japanese Thought* (戦後日本思想体系 *Sengo nihon shisō taikai*), edited by the famous literary critic Umehara Takeshi (梅原 猛), which is designated by the simple katakana title: 「ニヒリズム」. The compendium contains several famous entries that one might expect; “Theory of Decadence” (墮落論 *Darakuron*, 1947) by Sakaguchi Ango (坂口安吾), Ishikawa Jun’s (石川淳) *Christ of the Conflagration* (焼跡のイエス *Yakeato no iesu*, 1946), and Haniya Yutaka’s “Sorrow of the Eternal Revolutionary” (永久革命者の悲哀 *Eikyuu kakumeisha no hiai*, 1956). However, among these famous examples of postwar criticism, most of them fixed firmly within the scenes of devastation that accompanied the Japanese defeat, is a little-known essay by Takeda Taijun entitled “Myself and Communism” (私と共産主義 *Watashi to kyōsanshugi* 1956).

The essay begins with Takeda describing his introduction to Marxist thought as a young man, as he read the works of Marx and Lenin during summer holidays as a teenager when his father sent him to study at the small monastery of an acquaintance monk. Takeda’s interim caretaker proves a truly terrifying guardian, however, as he drinks and gambles away all of the money Takeda’s father sends to him and, living within a state of terrible destitution, Takeda and his loathsome guardian resort to hunting dogs in the neighborhood for sustenance. And here something strange happens. Despite a fervent belief in the Marxist-Leninist literature he reads, whenever Takeda flips through the pages of the book, he is struck with the phantasmic sound of

a dog he cornered and murdered crying in his ears. Unable to continue reading, Takeda closes the book in horror.

The narration jumps several years. Takeda is now in prison, arrested for leftist activities. Having spent all of his money on printing costs for various propaganda materials, Takeda is emaciated and languishes in his cell. Despite the depths of his sacrifice, the purity of his spirit, he is troubled; one of his comrades, a handsome young man, is visited regularly by his girlfriend who brings him home-cooked meals and tends to him as Takeda looks on. He is jealous of this man and his envy, his lust, his moral weakness, cheapens his sacrifice; he cannot coalesce the earthly desires of this piteous self with the ideals for which that same self is being sacrificed.

It is now the present-day. Takeda considers the state of the world, the horror of the Korean War, the growing resurgence of Japan under the banner of capitalism and, on the other side, the Soviet Union, flourishing now as an image of success and wealth under communism. Takeda falters, however, having read *The Accused* by Alexander Weissberg-Cybulski regarding the Stalinist purges. He determines that all authorities end in the abuse of power, regardless of their purity of intent. Collapse.

In this apocryphal tale, we find everything of Takeda: the redemptive promise of Marxism, the oppression of ascetics, the self-effacing poverty of the soul, the spectral voice, victim and victimizer, annihilation, the problematics of gender, self-loathing, powerlessness, equivocation, failure. As the title of the collection in which this essay appeared likely clarifies, there has been and continues to be, a strong vein of Takeda scholarship that considers him to be a political nihilist, a writer convinced by the experience of the defeat that there is no meaning in social organization as it is doomed to a cycle of annihilation. There is no redemption, nor the “will” to redeem oneself, in much of Takeda’s fiction, true, but is this all that can be said of it?

This study has sought to elucidate the variegated manner in which Takeda Taijun's early works approach the problem of subjectivity in the context of historical trauma and the necessity of formulating an "ethical praxis" in response. As this study has hopefully demonstrated, Takeda's approach to the problematics of history, memory, and landscape in the context of the event of the defeat, both demonstrates the incredible point of transformation that this historical event offered to writers within Japan while, at the same time, demonstrating the manner in which the defeat merely marked the beginning of a new cycle of historical development, one which necessitated a "forgetting" of the pre-defeat Japanese Imperial violence in order to preserve and maintain a subjectivity that continually renews itself in the "annihilation" of alterity. This phenomenon is by no means limited to Japan and, indeed, it is largely due to the aid of the American Occupation, eager to reform Japan into a capitalist democracy that could be utilized for larger imperial campaigns of terror in the Pacific and greater Asia, that this project was successful at all. However, as Takeda demonstrates, it is precisely by nature of this precarious socio-political position which Japan inhabited, that larger inquiries into the nature of this violent and recursive political assemblage became possible. By deconstructing the Japanese subjectivity at the point of its fissure, the uneasy break between the Japan of the Chinese conquest and the peaceful democratic victimhood of the Occupation, Takeda opens a crypt of memory; memories of indistinct origin or belonging which incite us to realize that, despite our perceived differences, along lines of affective resonance and affective responsibility, we are the same. It is the discovery of these voices, of these alternatives, within the space of fiction, that forms an ethical imperative for Takeda, even if it offers no redemption.

This begs the question, however, of what good Takeda's "ethics" are if they are not able to produce material effects, playing both sides as it were, willing to tear down Stalin just as soon as

he would Hitler. This is to say nothing of Takeda's own incredibly problematic conceptions of gender, which saw little change from his stance prior to defeat, if not an outright worsening. In many ways Takeda's own politics resemble that of the captain's in *Luminous Moss*, merely "enduring" (*gamanshiteiru*), through the recognition of his own inevitability, the continuance of a self that cannot be erased or altered significantly by the vicissitudes of time, or a veneer of social reconstruction. Though I would maintain it is both incorrect and unproductive to assign Takeda to the position of nihilism, there is a lesson here about ethics, and, I would argue, its impossibility within certain social constructions. Though Takeda critiques the Soviet Union, he does so from a place of self-imposed exile. He is unable to pursue its ideals, not due to a sense of disbelief, but a sense of self-hatred incited from the very conditions in which he lives, conditions which he can perceive in terms of both Japanese particularity and a greater "humanity," but which he cannot organize in the context of praxis of the reality of human materiality, despite its faults. In this sense, we can observe, as Karatani Kōjin does in his conception of Takeda, that he practiced a "material Buddhism," but we must also accept that this came at the cost of a "religious Marxism," a displacement of ideals from the realm of material action that foreclosed their possibility. It is in this sense that Takeda's ethics fail, not in listening, but in speaking. Though Takeda discovers the voice of alterity, and even listens, contemplates, he does not act, except to record, and in this ultimate misapprehension, the cry falters and goes silent.

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## APPENDIX A: SELECTED TRANSLATIONS

*Judgment* (1947)  
by Takeda Taijun

I think that I would like to tell the story of an unfortunate youth I met in Shanghai after the war. I feel as though contemplating the misfortune of this young man also means contemplating the misfortune we all share. At the very least, for myself as an individual, it is not as if his dark fate is the unrelated affair of a stranger. As the time I met him was directly after the war, and the place was an international city, his arrival appeared as a kind of revelation, one seemingly fraught with deep significance.

No more than a month after the war, looking out over the unkempt garden of a western house left to the wild growth of the summer grass, I was occupying my time thinking through things in my own way. Aside from occasionally going out shopping at the market in front of Jessfield Park, I spent the oppressive hours lying in bed on the second floor or on the sofa in the parlor. The scene of the town reflected in my eyes as I made the shopping trip there and back was already changing with a rapidity completely unrelated to me. The newspapers and fliers posted beneath the flag of the Kuomintang intimidated me, rebuked me and, on top of that, the sneering complaints increased every day. The wonton shop where I was a regular, the neighborhood gatekeeper, and the bicycle repair boy all greeted me in the same gentle manner as always, but already I was no longer a customer or a fellow citizen to them; they treated me like a foreigner surrounded by a special kind of sadness.

“I think those Jewish bastards are really something,” a friend of mine had said. I frequently found myself being compared to the Jews and the White Russians, to the lot of those peoples without a homeland making their living in the city of Shanghai. After all, if from now on I was to continue living without the protection of a nation, I could not help but think of these peoples I

had once gawked at as curiosities, now as great mentors rich with experience. The Japanese, particularly the Japanese that were residing in the vicinity of Shanghai, were already clearly equivalent to criminals in China. Not only in China; you could say they had been marked as criminals by the world. Rather than brooding with frustration for the loss of the war, my status and place in the world had, with an overwhelming clarity, a clarity unlike anything I had experienced since the time I was born, been demonstrated to me, and all became vaguely frightful. This Shanghai was, in other words, the world, and the people of an eastern nation, ravaged by the winds of this world's judgment, crushed in defeat, stood absolutely motionless there, unable to erase their unsightly forms. Such wretchedness. The active will to repent or to atone did not stir within me. Day and night I was enveloped in the intense feeling that the fate of the Jewish people, who had been annihilated, or of the White Russians, bearing the burden of a heavy sin, had become my own.

“From now on there'll be no military or consular police. We're free.” Even though I nodded at these words as my friend spoke them, it is not as though there was any way for those words to rid me of the shock of seeing history or tradition crumbling in front of my eyes, and the world or space suddenly hemming me in on all sides.

“Things'll get interesting from here on out. I'll find a way to lay low and stay on in Shanghai. I could always try for Portuguese citizenship.” My friend, who was living with a German Jewish woman, flashed a brazen smile and spoke energetically. I myself had a fondness for that thorough attitude of his. There were times when I would get worked up thinking that, if I could manage it, perhaps I'd become a waiter in a foreigner's household and could remain living as I was in the French concession. It would not have seemed the least bit strange if I, who had no wife and child in my native land, were to become a drifter and join up with the Jewish people. “If

it's Mr. Sugi, he could easily pass for a Chinese. If you became Chinese you wouldn't have a thing to worry about," I was told by the aforementioned Miss Ama. But, for whatever reason, I was not willing to become Chinese. But still, I felt both a bottomless sense of freedom and a bottomless sense of anxiety from the manner in which talk of renouncing life as Japanese people casually gained currency. Though I decided for the time being to make the problem of my own life my prime concern, when I asked myself "Just what the hell will come of it all?" this was, after all, proof that the figures and movement of the Japanese now struggling to scrape by somewhere in the world weighed on my mind. And no matter how favorably one looked upon those figures and that movement, they appeared to be shrouded in the mist of hell and hounded by the tremors of ruin.

It was in such a depressed state that I was reading the Bible. The Bible was one I had borrowed from an old Japanese teacher who lived on the third floor of the Western house. Each time the old teacher ran into me, he would tell me about selling some goods he had on hand. "That damn gatekeeper, he still won't fork over the cash for the soap," he would click his tongue, all fired up. Whether it was sugar or wheat flour, or even a metal bed frame, he was always at great pains to pass it off to the gatekeeper for some cash. I was utterly astounded by the zeal of this old Christian who seemed resolved to sell everything at his disposal, even down to his powers of concentration. "A Bible, is it? Here." When the old man handed over the book, he gave an odd, wry grin. "Do you know how much sugar costs right now? Who knows when it'll go down? Damn it, if only I'd bought some earlier," he said seriously while he stroked his bald head. (This old man's son is the unfortunate youth I have decided to tell you of, you see.)

I spent the rainy month of August reading that Bible. I read on to the "Book of Revelation," and when I reached the section concerning the calamity that descends upon the earth

accompanied by the trumpets sounded by the seven angels, I felt that it was this very thing that had befallen the land of Japan in reality. In particular, it seemed as if the terror of the quite recent atomic bombings had become ancient letters and was depicted here with vivid clarity.

“When the first angel sounded his trumpet, hail and fire mixed with blood was hurled down on the earth and a third of the earth was burned up and a third of the trees were burned up and all of the green grass was burned up as well. When the second angel sounded his trumpet, something like a great mountain ablaze with fire was hurled into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of living creatures in the sea died and a third of the ships were destroyed. When the third angel sounded his trumpet, a great star blazing like a torch fell from the sky, and it fell upon a third of the rivers and the springs of water. The name of this star is *wormwood*. A third of the waters became as bitter as *wormwood*, and many people died from the waters that became bitter. When the fourth angel sounded his trumpet, a third of the sun, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were all struck and those thirds all became dark and a third of the day lost its light and so did the night; and as I watched, a lone eagle flew through the center of the sky and I heard it cry in a loud voice, ‘Hark, with the sounding of the trumpets of the remaining three angels, those that live upon the earth shall know great woe, great woe, great woe.’”

Since I was in Shanghai where the bombings were few, I could only imagine the disastrous scene of the mainland, but there was no doubt that the description in Revelations reproduced it perfectly. Perhaps it was not only the first trumpet that had been sounded over Japan. The great massacre of the Revelations continues from the first trumpet to the seventh; and, when I considered that mightn't the cataclysms of beasts, poisonous insects, fire, smoke, and brimstone be next, and that state of limitless agony arose beneath my eyelids, I remember a terrible chill ran

down my spine and eventually I fell into an eerie calmness. I did not believe in the final judgment, but I could not deny that a reality closely resembling the final judgment had been wrought upon the earth. Nor did I think that the ruin of Japan was God's judgment, but, even so, I felt that I had made a new discovery with the realization that the description of the Revelations fit seamlessly to Japan as it was now. The ruin of nations has been repeated over and over countless times throughout the course of history and this is no more than one of them; to see this demonstrated here, not in theory, but in raw pictures, I could not help but feel a sense of sorrowful awe. And as I reread this painting-like passage again and again with unceasing interest, the question of just what the hell would become of it all started to change from an exasperated, surface-level feeling of hopelessness to a rather deep and settled state of despair.

When Jirō, the son of the old master, was discharged from the military and returned home to his father's room on the third floor, this was essentially my state of mind.

I had heard stories about the son stationed at the front from the old man many times. About how he had quit his studies partway through to enlist, about how there was a young woman in Shanghai he was engaged to, about how he had recently been wounded and hospitalized; the old man spoke about all of it, neither complaining nor boasting. It got to the point where I myself was eagerly anticipating the young man's return to this house. Because I imagined that he, being a young student, would likely have plenty of worries to talk about, all the more so for living through the defeat.

The old man's much-vaunted son was certainly a splendid young man. Rather, he was too splendid, almost shockingly so. When he was scolded by his seedy old father with, "Jirō, quickly get dinner ready, won't you," his obedient ministrations were almost uncanny; he was a tall, mild-mannered, and mature young man. In his dress, in his cooking, and in every other minute

detail, he always respected his father's wishes; by all accounts he appeared to be a model son. He had no desire to speak of either the suffering or the foolishness he encountered in his life as soldier, and he seldom, if ever, expressed his impressions concerning the defeat. Even when the three of us were chatting at the dinner table, the old man would read aloud the highlights from a Chinese newspaper and, saddened, would wear an expression of bitter disappointment, but Jirō, seeming completely unconcerned with such dizzying changes, would only occasionally grunt in agreement, nothing more. I myself, for a time, was somewhat dissatisfied with Jirō's seasoned apathy. If he doesn't think the defeat is anything important, he might either be a dyed-in-the-wool defeatist, or could he be an incredibly frivolous child, just deciding things on the spot? I played around with various theories like that. However, Jirō never gave any opinions on politics, he never showed feelings of sadness; he would just do the laundry or prepare food as usual, all the while giving no sign that he intended to say what was really on his mind. There were times when he and I would go to the market, or to the park, or just kill time for no reason at all. On these occasions, too, Jirō, giving no sign that he had something to discuss with me, would merely turn his sights to the hustle and bustle of the market, or to the Western-style copse casting a shadow above the tall summer grass, or toward the lake, covered in a layer of algae floating on the surface. Although I say we often went to the market or the park, the Japanese who had until now domineered over these places were now humbled in the dust and were acting just like stray dogs and, even if the public chose not to see them in that light, it remained a dark insecurity deep within my own heart that often set my nerves on edge. But I was lured in by Jirō's unflappable attitude and, in time, my tension relaxed, just as though I was a fish swimming along with the current. If he had either some kind of long-term philosophical perspective or religious faith, or rather, simply provided he was not incredibly insensitive, the suffering of the defeat is something

that people should want to share with one another; this is what aroused my suspicions.

Suspicious as I was, though, I enjoyed Jirō's tranquility, I envied it, and, gradually, I could not help but come to like him. I even tried steering the conversation to the question of whether he had surrendered himself to the salvation of Christianity. I also tried to convey to him my impression from the day when I read the passage from the Revelations.

“What do you think? Ultimately, hasn't Japan suffered the destruction of this final judgment? I wonder if we won't hear the sounding of trumpets many more times from now on, eh?”

“Maybe so,” Jirō flatly agreed. Then he briefly made to rub his long legs stretched out on the lawn. Slowly mulling things over before giving an answer was something of a habit of Jirō's.

“That is, Mr. Sugi, It's something I've been thinking about a lot myself recently,” he said in a rare display of opinion. “There are certainly times when we suffer destruction. Like everyone swept away by the great flood. There are certainly times when we receive punishment. But, can we say that each of those people receives that punishment equally? It's that point that I doubt,” Jirō said gently without strengthening his tone as one making an argument might.

“Well naturally that's true. I don't think that the punishment is equal or anything like that. Like right now with the bombings, some houses were burned and others weren't. Where one family is completely wiped out, with another there'll be survivors.” I spoke lightly as though I was joking, but Jirō merely flashed a small smile and did not to go along with my blithe tone. I quickly added to this. “What I'm talking about here is just the intensity of the destruction. By that I don't mean god's judgment or an impartial annihilation. But what I am saying is that Japan's destruction is just as the final judgment. Whether it's a punishment or a judgment, that's a different problem.”

“I understand that that's what you mean, Mr. Sugi,” Jirō slowly spoke. “In my case I can't say with any certainty that this destruction is God's judgment. It's just that I personally have recently only been thinking about judgment, that's all,” at that, Jirō shut his mouth and laid down on the lawn. The summer sun pierced through a fissure in the clouds, and perhaps it was because the whole of the lawn suddenly darkened, but Jirō's expression in profile appeared as though it had sunk into darkness.

After our conversation that day, I knew that Jirō was definitely not living by way of some childish indifference. Additionally, I also understood that he was not living peacefully in the knowledge of Christian salvation. However, when it came to what problems he had and how he was thinking about them, I still hadn't the faintest idea.

Although I was forgetful about everything and, from the beginning, had always scorned my own emotions, the suffering and the sorrow granted by the defeat still would not leave me well. Oppressed by these feelings, unable to move a muscle, I was pathetic and I wanted somehow to move or, at the very least, wanting to move was what was on my mind. That and the resolute desire to be saved. For that reason, I was also really in no position to wager a guess as to Jirō's feelings. Even though the terror of the scene of destruction in the Revelations was carved into my heart, I, being unable to enter the world of faith, simply told myself that, compared to the terror of the Revelations, the reality before the eyes of the Japanese was still as nothing, though this itself was nothing more than a kind of comfort to my desperation. I both invented various iterations of that sort of fleeting comfort myself and also sought to hear it from friends. And, when that failed, I would be weighed down with shame and despair, even physiologically so. It seems that another method people used was to find a more sorrowful and agonizing truth than the fact of the defeat that was closer to home, and to distract themselves with that. However, it's not

like you can just quickly get a hold of something like that. I even thought to myself, if only I was a leper or lovelorn, I could at least go without being stricken by the darkness of the defeat, even though I would be distraught as lepers and the lovelorn are. However, I didn't have either of the two on hand.

My friends, being my friends and thus in much the same state as I was, were all eager to somehow resolve their distress. I was able to surmise as much from their words here and there. When we looked closely at one another it was there, in the impossible bluff and the pained smile that covered an ill-fitting resolve (Jirō was an exception of course). Even so, whenever anyone pointed out that useless bluff or resolve, none of them would stop greedily stroking the faded label of “expatriate Japanese.” My friend cohabiting with the German-Jewish woman, for example, one day brought up an argument concerning the Indestructibility of Energy Theory. “There's nothing to fret about,” he explained as though he was trying to cheer himself up just as much as he was me. According to this theory, Japan's destruction was no great loss; if you look at the world as a whole, the conclusion that follows is that it was a small event of no real significance.

“That's just what this world of mankind's is,” he said while brushing his shaggy hair. “From the very start, it's something that's continued by the destruction of many countries. Those nation bastards are things that will all inevitably perish at some point. Sparta, Carthage, Rome, it was the same for all of them. And with *Shina*, the nation from the age of Spring and Autumn Wars perished leaving nothing behind.<sup>155</sup> Because of their destruction, other nations go on without

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<sup>155</sup> Sugi's friend uses the katakana word *Shina* (シナ) here to refer to China, a largely derogatory term based on the phonetic reading of the English word for the country that usurped the more standard Japanese kanji word for China, *chūgoku* (中国), in the course of Japan's colonial ventures in China. Takeda himself was somewhat famous for his early opposition to this term in his work in Chinese studies prior to his conscription in the Japanese army, after which he used the term *Shina* for several years before returning to the more acceptable term after the defeat for political reasons. As such, it is difficult to imagine that the distinction between these terms and the political valence

falling into ruin. Those countries that do not perish and live on, when their time arrives, will fall too without fail. In any case, the whole of this world of humankind is sustained because of each nation's destruction, from one to the next, and so it continues on. The ruin of a nation may appear as though it is the disappearance of its energy itself, but the truth is that the energy of humanity as a whole is indestructible. When you look at it on a physical level, the energy of the universe is indestructible; this is exactly the same. That's why Japan's destruction doesn't surprise me in the slightest. When Japan or Germany goes under, the energy of the whole of humanity doesn't so much as quiver; it's constant. Of course, there's no such thing as something that goes on forever. It is only under the law of human physics that this is the case. Since a huge number of those nation bastards are all standing side by side, there's absolutely no way all of them could possibly survive. In other words, that's why there's no way for there to be something that will absolutely persist. After all, the annihilation of each individual country actually serves the purpose of nourishing the world, and the absorption of those nutrients is like to ensure the survival of the whole of humanity.”

I, who was listening, was of course overwhelmed by this strange argument. My friend, who was speaking, seemed overpowered by the moronically huge scale of this conversation in spite of himself, and was feigning excitement in his delivery. If one takes only a single country and considers its destruction temporally, they would have no choice but to sink into sorrow and pain. That is actually the unbearable thing for the Japanese today, so if one views the whole world spatially, and thinks of its continuance as a kind of whole, they will be at ease; that was the basis of his argument. I wasn't sure about it myself, but I felt as though some of the tension in my shoulders relaxed slightly with this explanation.

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of their difference would be lost on Takeda and, as I argue in the second chapter, his deployment of the term here is intentional in order to demonstrate the particular political blind-spots of expatriate Japanese at this juncture.

At that time, Jirō also happened to present. Jirō, as always, quietly listened to his companions' opinions. Occasionally he would sigh as though in wonder. Then, when my friend finished his explanation, Jirō questioned him, as though forcing himself to articulate his words despite his hesitation to speak.

“The destruction of Japan is not a matter of great concern; I understand that much very well.” Jirō's manner of speaking was gentle, as though he were trying not to offend my friend. However, a youthful passion was quite prominent in his voice. “Can you really settle everything with just that?”

“Huh? Well, you probably could *settle* things with that. But that's not what I'm saying. All I'm saying is that until now we have been unable to think of things in this way. I'm saying that even if we did think of it, we couldn't bear the weight of that thought. If we could just hold onto it in everyday life, I bet these tiny little worries of the Japanese would disappear in an instant,” my friend asserted.

“Yeah, that may be so. But, I mean, on the basis of each individual Japanese person... What becomes of each person as an individual?” Though hesitant after my friend's assertion, Jirō continued to speak. “There are some things that aren't cleared up with that explanation, aren't there? That is to say, in the case of Japan's destruction, or no, regardless of whether it's destroyed or it isn't, there are things like particular concerns that only one as an individual possesses; I think those things cannot be grasped well at all with that explanation. It's the relationship between those sorts of worries and the fact of the destruction of the nation. Although, it's not as if I really understand that point well myself. If you look at things from the position of those sorts of worries, even an explanation like “the destruction of a nation is nothing at all” is itself already

nothing; it's that sort of worry, I mean. I think that there are those that hold that sort of thing, even among the Japanese.”

“And what the hell is ‘that,’ exactly? Is there such a thing, what kind of thing, for example?”

“For example, well, something like the judgment given to an individual.”

“Judgment? What do you mean by judgment? The judgment of the law? Or maybe the judgment of God?”

“Yeah, whatever the shape of it, it's the problem of a judgment handed down from above oneself.”

“I really don't get what you're saying. As for me, well, I think that once you become able to think it through to this point, there are no problems, regardless of judgment or whatever. I mean, for us in the present, we can't even think of anything else, can we? Only what we decide to worry about and how to go about it,” my friend cut off the discussion with that, as though he were annoyed by the whole thing. Jirō, too, did not press him by asking anything further. But I could tell that he was struggling to wrap his mind around something and was seemingly at a loss. Though, naturally, there was no way for me to know the nature of his doubts.

I still did not think of Jirō as such an unfortunate man at this point. When compared with his father, that wretched old codger and his bewildered manner, you could say that such a promising young man had been overly blessed. In particular, he had a truly beautiful fiancée. When his love, Ms. Suzuko, first came to visit, it was a somewhat shocking thing. When even in the Hongkō district the sight of a woman walking alone drew all sorts of attention, I was impressed by the fact that this beautiful girl, who captured the eyes of all onlookers with a jolt, had come all the way (by herself) to the outskirts of the French quarter. It was probably because she loved Jirō that much. And I could tell from the way that they talked at that time that Jirō felt the same way.

The image of the two of them happily talking together was filled with a refreshing light that liberated me from my mood of gloomy darkness. In Jirō's gently smiling visage, one could not see anything like of the shadow of a secret. Ms. Suzuko, perhaps because her father managed a kindergarten and she made her living caring for many children, was always friendly and bright, the type of person no one could help but grow fond of. In this dismal season, I felt a deep and terrible jealousy of Jirō, who was loved by such a beautiful maiden. Apparently the engagement had been arranged based on the relationship of their fathers, who were both Christians, and, no matter how you looked at it, their relationship appeared as purity itself.

When October arrived, by order from the Chinese side, we all converged in Hongkō.<sup>156</sup> Jirō took up residence with his father in the home of his father's school acquaintance. However, he still came by to visit me without fail two or three times a week. At the same time, it wasn't just Jirō; maybe it was because socializing became convenient as a result of the reorganization, but there were always two or three of my friends crammed together in the small back room I lived in. I had lodgers practically every night and I myself would go stay over with friends here and there. There were many days when I would drink all day from sun-up, and I passed the time in selfish, idle conversation. There were a few times when Jirō would bring Suzuko along to these gatherings. I often spied the sight of the two of them out happily walking together in the neighborhood. The two of them already had the appearance of a young married couple.

Personally, I was hard-pressed for cash at this time and, on the recommendation of the downstairs landlord, I began notarizing Chinese documents. The number of documents to submit to the Chinese side was sizable, and business as a notary was unexpectedly profitable. Jobs for factory closings, seizures of businesses, and repatriation procedures were never in short supply.

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<sup>156</sup> The "Chinese side" here refers to the Chinese government authorities of Shanghai.

And then that business had a strange influence on me. After I moved to Hongkō, I was surrounded entirely by Japanese seemingly sharing the same fate as me, and besides that, my mental state from the lonely time I lived in the French quarter changed considerably. At some point my resignation became a bold impudence, and the solemn despair tinged with frantic desperation gradually began to fade.

Both my friends' complaints and laments were generally running out, and my previously stupefied literary comrades once again started busily working their minds. Hongkō was certainly a mess, a cramped residential society. At first, the return of the long-absent boisterousness to my Japanese compatriots was unpleasant. Even so, I eventually became used to it. I became able to accept both the gaudiness of the repulsive cramped district and the various problems that arose amongst ourselves. Although there was a sharp bitterness in smelling each other's body odor all day long, we acquired the habit of accepting it as the smell we fermented in our own bodies. Even in totally piss-poor selfish conversations, there was the easy comprehensibility of blood-relatives, and I quickly became unable to go without listening in. It turns out I was not a nomad; not only could I not obtain the thorough attitude of the Jews and White Russians, but there was nothing I could do besides fall in with these compatriots of mine. And, though it's embarrassing to admit, I even thought that, if beneath those dreadful flames of the annihilation of the last judgment, an unexpectedly cool space remained, wouldn't it be alright if I used that space to continue my petty existence, the same as it ever was? Additionally, many of those requesting notary work were merchants, and their vitality to live life by the mantra of 'if you lose, you lose,' was not something I could easily make light of. Their confidence to match the machinations of the world overwhelmed me. The lively manner in which they carried themselves seemed disconnected from the sorrow of a ruined country. And then one day I too, swamped by that

atmosphere, became unable to stop my once solemn mood from beginning to fade away. I was like a man who knows how superficial he looks when he smirks, but can't stop grinning all the same; I could do nothing to deal with the changes I was undergoing, I could only bitterly watch them happen.

“Those human bastards, no matter what miserable circumstances they find themselves in, they'll find a way to adapt to it and live on, eh?” I had turned and said to Jirō once, as though sulking. “These days, my deep hopelessness has pretty much vanished. Even though I dislike it myself, I am living quite happily now.”

“Is that so?” Jirō said. “To the contrary, these days I've actually come to think about things quite seriously. I guess that might just be because I'm in love, though,” his tone had none of the aforementioned awkwardness of my compatriots and was deeply thoughtful.

Now that I think of it, a shadow of serious melancholy had deepened in Jirō's expression since before New Year's. Although he got along well enough with the one he loved, there was no conviviality there. Even if this was a product of his peculiar personality, it could not only be thought of as such. On New Year's, I visited Suzuko's family together with Jirō, but at that time too I could see there was something a bit abnormal in his attitude. Suzuko's father had run a medicine business in Shanghai for over twenty years now and was a fervent Christian. Although he was Protestant, his full white hair and beard and severe expression was befitting a Catholic priest. Both of Suzuko's parents had deeply carved features and ruddy complexions like those you often see in people from the snowy countryside of Tōhoku. It was a harmonious household. Amidst the festive New Year's mood, Suzuko's mother spoke of her home town: “When winter came, we'd load lots of salmon on the sled and pull it with a creeeak, creeeak.” Suzuko's mother, who was down with a cold, spoke in a slow and easy tone from her bed, seemingly lost in her

memories of New Year's in the distant snow country. The sound of her mimicking “creeeak creeeak” in her leisurely tone held the landscape of Tōhoku behind her words. The novelty of it caused Suzuko to snicker, “Hee hee,” and her father, carried away by it as well, added, while laughing, “That's how it was.” It had been a long time since I had felt so relaxed, with no talk of the rising price of goods or the uncertainty of life after repatriation, so it left a rather deep impression on me. However, Jirō alone maintained a brooding expression out of step with the mood of the place.

“Even if you fret over everything like your father, it won't do you any good. Things in this world work themselves out whether you fuss over them like that or not,” Suzuko's father had advised, turning to Jirō. Rather than criticizing Jirō's father, there was something in his tone that made his statement seem directed squarely at Jirō himself. “There's nothing to do but leave it to God.” Suzuko's father spoke kindly as though trying to soothe Jirō. Jirō made no real objection to this. Instead, he showed an apathy such that one had to doubt if those words had even reached his ears. That apathy was so intense that I, who was at his side, thought that there was no way I could make his expression budge even an inch. It seemed as though he was lost in his own thoughts, gripped by some difficult object as though he were facing down a solid stone wall; this appeared to be the reason for his apathy.

I was witness to this apathy again the time we went to church together. That day neither of us had planned on going to church. But, walking through the raging winter wind on the Kushan road, the two of us suddenly found ourselves standing in front of a church. We had stopped because a chorus of hymns was seeping out from within the old red brick building. As we did, a middle-aged Chinese woman standing on the stone stairway took my arm and quietly ascended the stone stairs, leading me up to the entrance. An usher within guided us in the same way and

seated us in the rear of the church. The faithful all wore simple clothing and were sitting meekly. The young men and women who wore new and gaudy clothing that stood out even among city dwellers, and the laborers and merchants who violently swore and yelled, were all extraordinarily silent. When the song ended, the old priest delivered his sermon. He made both the children and the old folks laugh with his eloquent delivery, but I had the feeling that it was a bit too eloquent. There was again a song and when the priest rose, there was the confession. The men and women, young and old, each began whispering their confessions in low voices. As though they were sobbing, as though they were but a wind passing lightly by, the voices filled the hall. Everyone was likely speaking in the Shanghai dialect, but rather than words, I could only hear them as sighs and stirrings. When it ended, in a single loud voice, the priest asked, "Do you believe in Jesus?" The crowd answered as one, "We believe," raising their right hands. I carelessly did not raise my hand. Jirō did not raise his either. The old priest cast a glance in our direction. Then he recited the words to a prayer and once again called up the chorus. Then, again he asked, "Do you believe in Jesus?" Imitating the crowd, I raised my hand. As before, Jirō did not raise his. The old priest, as though stretching out toward us, stared in our direction and then asked sharply, "Does that Japanese there believe in Jesus?" As he did, a young man dressed in ordinary Chinese clothing answered on his behalf, "Yes, he believes," in a Shanghai dialect. The priest did not press the matter any further. Jirō remained motionless, apathetically looking downward as though none of this had anything at all to do with him. "You're a stubborn one alright. In the end you didn't raise your hand at all, huh," I said to him once we were outside. "It's not that I didn't do it out of stubbornness. I just had other things on my mind, that's all," he replied without concern.

In February, I heard from Jirō himself that he had essentially called off his engagement to Suzuko. He did not tell me any real reason why. He merely said that it was difficult to explain. As it would be immature to ask further, I let it pass. When I met Suzuko in town and mentioned Jirō, she would give a hurried, almost frightened response and change the subject. I also met with Jirō's old father, but he merely said in an ornery way, "I can't understand the things young people do. There's nothing for it at all," so he didn't know the truth of the matter either. At that time, Jirō's father told me that the two of them planned to take the next ship back to Japan. This was completely unexpected for me. Until now, Jirō had not so much as hinted at an intention to repatriate. Why he would suddenly decide to return before the rest of us was a complete mystery to me. Around that time, Jirō had already stopped showing his face around my room. Even if I wanted to ascertain his feelings, there was no opportunity for me to do so. Since it was Jirō, it wasn't as though I could just leave things up in the air, and I was a bit anxious about it. After staying at the house of a friend at Yang Shu Pu Lu for no more than two days, I returned home, and, when I did, the downstairs landlord handed me a bulky letter. It was from Jirō. I quickly tore open the envelope. As I read it, I did not feel the chill of my small back room. When I finished reading, I leaned back against the cool wall; I had no will to move my arms or legs. Then I threw on a blanket and, beneath the light of a lantern, I slowly read the letter once more.

#### Jirō's Letter

"I have decided to write this all down and leave it with you. You may already be aware of this, but it has come to pass that tomorrow my father and I will return to Japan. However, this letter is not intended as a message of farewell to you before I repatriate. I have decided, for a certain reason, that I alone will not repatriate. My father has no knowledge of this at all.

Tomorrow, I intend to disappear from the place where the repatriates are scheduled to gather. For that reason, even though I will not repatriate, I also certainly will never meet with you again. If you read this letter, you will likely come to understand the reason why I will not repatriate. This is a problem that has occupied my mind ever since the end of the war. In other words, this is an explanation of the cause of my attitude of which, I daresay, you must have harbored doubts. You could also say it was the reason why I was so troubled by the concept of judgment. Whether or not there is such a thing as judgment, I still do not know. But since it weighs on my mind, perhaps it's better to say that there is. I committed murder on the battlefield. Since it is war, killing the enemy on the battlefield is nothing particularly worth mentioning. It's only natural behavior for a soldier. However, my murder was a murder committed by myself, as an individual. In the end it was a murder that I deliberately committed, not as the 'I' who was a soldier, but as 'I' myself. Naturally, not once in my life did I ever dream that I would possibly kill a person with my own hands. Even after I became a soldier, at first, being taught only methods to kill men and training every day for the sole purpose of doing so seemed utterly bizarre to me. Now and again, as I wiped down the scabbard of my sword or ran my hand along the barrel of my Type 38 rifle, I would often try to take stock the self who was to kill a man with these things. That self who was raised by his mother's hand, who had received higher education; it was this self, the same now as ever. However, the army is the army through and through, and killing is necessary to it. No matter how you look at it, I was just a city boy, and I was ashamed of my unsoldierly bearing. I made a great effort to be the sort of man who could violently kill his enemies. It had appeared to me then that acquiring bravery, sacrifice, dedication, selflessness, and all the other myriad virtues that call to the hearts of young men, was the same as killing the enemy without fear of death. As we were untrained reservists, it was impossible for us to become

true soldiers, and we were essentially useless as soldiers. We had an internal discipline that was strict even by standards of active duty, but when it came to my case, even though I could not do the work of one man, I had more than one man's share of greed and selfishness. Although their wives and children at home must have been living admirably, on the battlefield there were a great many soldiers who had none of the moral ethics that guided me. They insulted the natives, struck them, stole things, raped the women, burned houses, and ruined the fields. All of this was carried out quite naturally without reservation. I was not able to hit the natives or to rape any of the women. However, there were many times when I would take away pigs and chickens without permission. I also saw the scenes of needless killings countless times. All of you living a normal life can't possibly imagine what people with practically no intellectual training will start doing in a situation where you can handle weapons as freely as you like and there is not a single person to reign you in. A place where neither the power of the law nor the judgment of God has currency; it is a place governed only by violence. Doing only what we wanted to do, there was no responsibility. When I got that uncanny feeling in this savage place, the act of killing which normally I would keep far away from quickly came to pass. The year before last, around April, I was at a rural village in 'A' province. There wasn't a battlefield there, nor was there a supply train, and so the listless days continued on. One day, the squad leader took no more than twenty of us with him and went to the outskirts of the village. There were almost no people in the village. Once in a while, a farmer from the neighboring area would show himself, but that was it. As it was the dry season, white dust had piled up on the roads and the scent of the rotting corpses of horses and cows filled the air. Our mission was to scavenge for provisions, but we more or less had fun walking around fielded lands with some greenery. Additionally, we also had the objective of 'suppression,' so we set fire to the warehouse of a match factory, and we'd start fires

next to wooden bridges that were no more than some cross-linked boards, so we were also more or less vigilant of our surroundings. And whether this tactic was a result of the negligence of Japanese troops or just plain arson was a fact as easy to grab hold of as a cloud, and it was doubtful whether our reservist's unit would be able to do anything at all if we ran up against an enemy unit. It would be better to say we were playing at adventure. An affluent farmer's house surrounded by a brick wall, a temple painted red and green; all were desolate without even the shadow of a person. Around where the road met the widespread withered spring fields, two men who appeared to be farmers came walking in our direction. When they noticed our figures, they stopped for a moment, but then came walking quickly toward us again. One had a small paper *hinomaru* flag. We all stood there and waited. When the two of them came by us, they greeted us all with a smile. The squad leader took a strip of paper one of them held out to him and read it. It was a certificate from a Japanese squad leader that the two of them had been using. It read that they were good farmers who had often worked for the squad leader's own corps and were now returning to their original village, and so he desired that they be protected by Japanese troops along the way. Our own squad leader was a sergeant-major from a vocational school. The son of a big land owner from Ōsaka, he was an occasionally quite shrewd, and occasionally quite egotistical, large man. 'Sure, sure,' he said as he handed it back to them and told them they were fine to pass. After they both bowed their heads many times, they happily walked off. As they walked on, the squad leader whispered, 'Let's get 'em' with an evil grin to the soldier at his side. 'Into position!' muffling his voice, he gave the order. The soldiers each hurriedly readied their guns. The two men's backs, clad in heavy indigo clothing, were facing toward us; as the paper *hinomaru* fluttered in the wind, they walked off, completely oblivious. 'Wonder if we'll hit 'em,' the soldiers grumbled, smiling bitterly or twisting up their faces as they waited for the order to

fire just as though they were at target practice. I also took aim down the muzzle of my rifle. Since they were still within two hundred or three hundred meters, no matter how many reservists' bullets there were, it was a foregone conclusion that someone's would hit. I thought maybe I'll throw the shot. I thought maybe I just won't shoot. However, in the next instant, suddenly the terrifying thought 'Why can't you kill a person?' flit through my skull with a flash. It was completely unexpected, even to me. As I stared steadily at the bodies of the two peasants moments from being killed moving bit by bit into the distance, and my ears had the premonition of the sound of a shot within the air and that deviant thought flashed, silent as death. After it vanished, what remained had neither human emotion nor morality; it was a thing like the vacuum of space, as insensitive as lead. Both the idea: human emotions are soft, such things are of no use; and the thought: this killing is merely one small count among the tens of thousands of people being killed; and all other things approximating thought disappeared. Then, I could feel only the thickness of the peasants' flesh, its softness, the color of the darkly shining muzzle of the gun, and the coolness of the mud beneath my knees; the voice of the order, the voice of countless continuous gunshots, and then I also fired. One of them fell like a stick. The other fell to a knee, but then let out a scream of 'hiee' and turned to face us. I could see his witless face twisted up with sadness for a moment, but then the upper half of his body quickly fell to the ground. The soldiers scattered and walked off. I felt as though one of my bullets had definitely pierced the flesh of one of them. The arms and legs of one of the men were still twitching. The hole where the bullet entered was small and narrowed, whereas the hole it left from gaped widely. The bullets that hit his legs and chest ate sideways into the flesh; the tears in the flesh, several times larger than the muzzle of the gun, blushed a light red. The muzzle of a gun was placed against the fallen body, a finishing blow of still two or three more shots was fired. I heard after, that

among the soldiers, four or five either didn't fire or purposefully missed the target. The soldier sleeping in the same small room as me confessed, 'I couldn't fake that kind of thing. No way, no way.' Before falling asleep, he asked me, 'Did you shoot?' As I replied, 'I shot,' he was shocked and his expression revealed he had not expected that. 'I shot him. Why can't you kill a person, eh,' I added. The color of his face changed slightly, and he crawled under his blankets wearing an uncomfortable look. I noticed in the light of the lamp that my own face had assumed a dark and difficult— to exaggerate— a frightening look. But I did not consider myself a cruel man. I was so exhausted by the movements of the corps and the endless work day to day, night to night, that I forgot the act of killing, not to mention the face of the man that I killed. Then, soon after, I killed another by myself, without the group, so the impression of that time faded all the more. Perhaps the only time humans can think seriously about murder, and about the killing of living things as well, is in the moment of killing. I remember I once shot a toad with an air rifle when I was around fourteen or fifteen. Ever since I was a child, I had actually hated teasing cats and dogs and killing living things. I was timid and a coward. However, at that time, I was studying physics and the theory that all matter was composed of atoms dominated my mind. In other words, if you bring everything down to the level of atoms, there would be no living things or anything else. For me, the thought that even sacred life, when disassembled into particles, is merely a 'thing,' had a strange impact on my own style. There is nothing remotely frightening in determining how to deal with something that is nothing more than a 'thing.' If even killing things is not evil, then there can also be no punishment; it's only a matter of disassembling them, I thought. However, this was merely a thought, and my emotions would always resist this thought. Killing was as awful to me as ever. Then, one day, I shot at the ugly body of a toad croaking in a spring pond. And, of course, some shuddering-looking thing ran off in response. When I

continued and missed with the second and third shot, the toad did not die. Wearing a serious expression, as though deliberately putting my theory to the test, I stifled my emotions and shot a lead bullet into the belly of that toad, which rose eerily like a yellow foam. I was determined to rule my own emotions, or I felt the urge overcome the impossible. When I shot the peasant's back, too, there was a kind of impossible feeling very much like that one. Only the sensation of the time I embraced that feeling remained. Before long, we advanced to the former front line, a region where wheat fields stood as far as we could see. A thin supply line ran from village to village here, piercing through the vast plains. That road was also marked with the almost imperceptible tracks made by the wheels of the truck corps running over the dry soil of the wheat fields and, after the transfer of the front-line corps from this place ended, there were only fifty soldiers left behind in our little hamlet. The houses, the walls, and the bulwark surrounding the village were all made of mud. Only the village head's house was made of stone; there was a watchtower there made of stacked stone, and when you climbed it in the early morning, you could see the wheat fields hazy with purple light stretching out far off into the distance. In the back of the village the curly sorghum extended its slightly blue leaves and on the side of a knoll there were vines of green grapes. Beyond that, only a flat skin of soil continued on in all directions. The soldiers there would chase around Berkshire pigs from somewhere, or swing around a spear with a red tassel they found in the back of a barn; outside of gambling, there was nothing for them to do. As there was no sign of the locals, it was almost as if we were nomads left behind in the desert. When it became night, we could hear the howling of dogs calling out from a faraway village. Once, when the howls had gradually drawn closer to a nearby village, the sound of the shot of a Czech rifle went off with a *pyoon*, just as though someone had remembered to shoot, and it hit the stone wall. One day, I went together with a corporal from

logistics headquarters and four or five other soldiers to a quite distant neighboring hamlet. Our objective was to scavenge for daikon and turnips. The corporal loved booze, and after he became drunk, I learned that he had originally been a leftist. That hamlet sitting on top of a low hill was a ruin, razed by our own hands the day prior in order to prevent infiltration from spies. However, there were a few small huts that remained after the burning, and we set fire to these again. Even after we had removed the daikon-looking things from the fields the other men had drained, the corporal and I were strolling around the area. As we did, we discovered a single small hut behind the others — it was truly a miserable little hut— standing unburned. And in front of that hut, two old people were squatting down. It was a white-haired old couple. They might have been unable to move; the two of them were huddled together and squatting down on the ground. The row of thatched huts on top of the hill had already burned down so they were no longer spitting up red flames, only a burnt smoke flowed down toward us. The old man was blind. His wife appeared to be deaf. Whether I determined she was deaf because I spoke to her and she did not give an answer, or because that was simply the feeling I got from her, I do not remember. Their small bodies, wrapped in terribly ragged Chinese clothing, were so exhausted that it seemed as though they were already dead, but they were clearly trembling out of an instinctual fear. It seems that the villagers had not taken them along when they fled after the burning yesterday and left them behind instead. I have forgotten their faces now, but I recall that they both looked refined. The corporal said 'Oh, what's this, there's still people here? What happened? I guess they were abandoned. They'll die, at any rate, if they're left here that is.' Then, clicking his tongue with a 'tut-tut,' he quickly left, seeming to not want to look at them any longer. I remained where I was, still staring at the old couple. 'They'll die at any rate, huh,' I thought to myself as I tightened my grip around my rifle. 'They'll almost certainly starve if they're left here. Wouldn't it be better if

they were to die before it came to that?' The will to rescue the old couple did not stir within me. I had only the vague feeling that these two were just waiting like this to die. Before long, the vacuum state that visited me before, that state of leaden insensitivity, once again rose up within me. 'Shall we kill them?' suddenly something whispered to me. 'Try killing 'em. You can just pick up your gun and shoot. It seems you still don't know what sort of thing killing is. Try it. It's nothing at all. Especially in this kind of situation, you practically don't even have to suppress your emotions. It seems quite unlikely that you wouldn't be able to kill someone with your own hands. So you should just do it. It all depends on one's will. There's no need for any grief outside of that.' After the corporal departed, it was absolutely silent, as though the old couple and I were the last three people left on the face of the earth. It was the afternoon of May 20<sup>th</sup>. The earth sank slightly beneath the soles of my shoes, the wind seemed to be blowing through the area around my gaitered feet. I assumed the standing fire position. I aimed at the old man's head. The two of them do not make a sound. They do not move. The coolness of trigger touched my finger. I knew that whether or not I could pull this trigger rested on a single impulse of my heart. If I stop, nothing will happen. If I pull the trigger, I will become an 'I' that is not the former 'I.' All the while, only the determination to do the impossible began working within me, and it was this that would decide things. To try and become what was not the former 'I,' that is what beckoned me. When I fired, the old man moved his head with a jerk, and then he quickly lowered his head with a flop. The old woman's shoulders and face twitched. It was a dull, reflexive movement, as though a sleeping cow was hit on the forehead by a nut fallen from the branch of a tree. 'You've finally done it, eh,' at some point the corporal had returned, and was standing in a spot no more than five paces away from me. 'I don't understand you young people,' On his dark, stern face a good-natured, weak smile had emerged. And just like that, without so much as looking back, I

descended the slope of the hill where the hut stood. The exhaustion of having tested a certain theory and the heavy sensation of having finally done something, enveloped my limbs. At that time too, I did not think of myself as a cruel human being. I only had the feeling that I was somehow a special human being who intentionally did that thing. Even after I returned to the corps, I did not speak with anyone. The corporal would not touch on the matter either. After that, I went to various places, and I met with the eyes of people on the verge of death countless times, which is why, in the year and a half between then and the defeat, I had almost no time at all to seriously recall my actions from then. Only occasionally, at times when I was alone in an isolated place, like at night, did I test whether or not I could remember the face of the old man. I still can't remember a thing. I feel like it was a small face. I can only remember that, when he died, I couldn't see any pain in his expression. I also sometimes think about why I don't feel any fear. I do not know. On this occasion too, there is no anxiety or fear left. Since the defeat, I've been reading articles about the war trials what seems like most every day. I cannot deny it; I never thought the day would come when I would be judged by the guilty ferreted out in those trials. I never once thought for a second that the hand of judgment would reach down from above me or, no, I never even thought of judgment, judgment in any form at all. If I had, I could never have committed such incredibly cruel acts of killing. If it's a crime without punishment, humans will commit it without concern. However, a punishment was handed down. The day when the killer was punished came. I thought about it. The second time, I more or less committed a completely unnecessary murder. Even though the first time I was part of a group and I had received orders, the second time was entirely of my own volition and it was done between one person and another. Moreover, I killed an unresisting old man. I am a criminal, I am a human who should be judged, I thought. And yet, I myself had to be shocked by my own calmness. It

was because I knew that there was no way my crime would ever be discovered. The corporal died about six months ago in an army hospital. The only one on the face of the earth who knows of that murder is me. And as for that person, he does not even know the victim's name or identity; he does not even remember the victim's face. At this point, everything is obscured. After all, a stone thrown into a pond will sink, and the ripples also disappear with time, and then it is as smooth as if nothing happened to the surface of the pond. I was also confident that I would, at any rate, slip out of the precise list of war criminals. The sole solitary trace of the act, the only clue, the sole condition that would be suitable to constitute a criminal case from this act, is the fact that I am alive. The problem only exists within me. As you've likely noticed, I have occasionally spoken about judgment. However, even then, I had the detestable peace of mind that I would absolutely not be judged myself. I had Suzuko. Suzuko and I had loved each other. Since we had been separated for nearly two years, our love burned furiously. Even in the chaos immediately after the war, we continued with our rendezvous. Though the wildly excited Chinese population was swarming through Hongkō, the French Quarter, and everywhere in between, to the two of us, that might as well have been a different world. The despair-laden, gray flow of time must have made our small fortunes seem all the brighter. 'As long as you are with me, I am not frightened of anything,' she would say, drawing close to me; I thought she was absolutely adorable. After we moved to Hongkō, we had even discussed that if we could delay repatriating, we would get our parents' permission and live together in a back room somewhere. The two of us often talked about the fun we would have after moving in together. Even though our only source of income was selling off our few possessions, she would say, 'It's alright. If we work at it together, it'll be fine,' speaking cheerfully. When I came down with a fever, she would sit at my bedside for half the day and say, 'Be good and go to sleep now. Here I'll give you a

kiss,' as though she was already my wife. One day, while I was sleeping, I was thinking about the two of us, loving each other like this, living together, and then finally growing old together. Both of us healthy, and happy, and now finally old, and then... I had savored my own pleasure. At that time, suddenly I remembered the old couple I had shot to death. And then I realized that I had only killed the husband and afterwards had left the old wife behind. The old woman likely died some days later. There was no way she could have survived, but she probably had no intention of surviving either. In any case, it was a miserable fate. They may have lived happily together originally. They may have loved each other and gotten married. Conceivably, even as they were clinging to the ground, huddled together in a corner of that burning and smoldering village, they may have loved each other still. It may have been that even as they felt the approach of a terrifying omen, in holding each other close, they were giving one another a final comfort. What if it had been us instead, I thought. And as I did, I was tightly gripped by the feeling that wouldn't we also become like the old couple? We are old, I become blind, Suzuko becomes deaf. Then our village is set ablaze, the two of us are sitting alone on the ground. And then I can hear footsteps, a human voice. A soldier from some other country soon arrives. However, I am terrified and cannot move a muscle. And then, the foreign soldier, who closely resembles the former 'I,' casually picks up his rifle. What I think then is the same as what I thought before. The same shot. The bullet hits my head. Suzuko who has become the old woman moves her shoulders and face with a twitch. Without making a sound, she remains there staring. Night comes. There is not a single person who comes to save her. That scene floated clearly in front of my eyes. It may become like that, I said to myself. However, I did not entertain any sense of fear. Although I had recalled then with a bitter smile that, because of my severe myopia, the doctor had warned me that when I become old, I may well go blind. But when I thought of Suzuko's position, I would

suddenly feel as though cold water had been poured over me. That had the power to threaten me. Even though I thought it was foolish, afterwards, when I would meet with Suzuko, the shadow of this thought would suddenly strike. Even if I could live with no responsibility for my own life, I could not stand to make Suzuko unhappy. This caused me to darken. Suzuko loved me selflessly, but she did not know the truth about me. I thought that even if I didn't tell her the truth, the two of us could continue getting on well. However, there was a voice that said, it would be better if you told her. In 'telling' there was the impossible, there was resistance. However, the feeling of wanting to do it moved within me always. It was the same just before I killed the toad, just before I aimed at the old man's head and pulled the trigger. If I didn't speak, things would remain as they were. But there was a strange impulse that told me I could not stay with things as they were. When I went together with you to church, when I visited Suzuko's family, I was obsessed with this thought. I took the tension that this thought brought with it upon myself. For that reason, I unintentionally became quite expressionless and confused. Following New Year's, Suzuko and I went to see a movie. It was an American Technicolor film called *Iō-tō*.<sup>157</sup> The color of the sea, the color of the sand, the color of blood, all had a searing vividness; they were incredible pictures. Of course, it was real footage. The American landing crafts crowd the shoreline, casualties are covered in blood and carried on their comrades' shoulders; facing the holes in the sand, the terrifying blaze of flamethrowers flows out over them. Japanese soldiers in horribly burned clothes come rolling backwards off the sandy slope. Suzuko gasps and her nails claw into the flesh of my arm. It's a modern fighting scene demonstrating the power of technology. Soon the battle ends. A strange white smoke hangs over *Iō-tō*, smashed boats and

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<sup>157</sup> Takeda is likely referring to the American film: *To the Shores of Iwo Jima* (1945), which is the first color film that depicted the events of the battle including the famous scene of the raising of the flag over the battlefield. As Jirō describes, the film was a propaganda short edited together from real footage taken at the battle.

guns are washed by the raging waters of the sea. The American soldiers covered in sweat and mud gather on a sandy plain. A soldier stands and reads from the Bible. The soldiers listen attentively in silence. Their naked arms and shoulders illuminated by the southern sun. It left me with a serious impression. Then, the vacuum of the soul and the leaden insensitivity both emerged, just as they had that day. The sun descended; on the bustling town street, the lanterns shine coolly. At some point I became filled with an intense emotion you might call ruthlessness. Surprised from having been made to see the truth with her own eyes, Suzuko was thoroughly frightened. I chose a road following a creek I normally didn't walk by. There is a slaughterhouse, eerie like a prison, on that road and the meat transporters wearing blood-stained aprons are all clustered up together there. The creek into which the blood flows melts into the black-green waters, forming a striped pattern, and further down a boat piled high with a great number of coffins is docked in the same place it has been for days. It is a road I had avoided until now so as not to frighten her. But, for some reason my feet moved toward this street. Once something is a fact, it's a fact to the bitter end; it's something that won't disappear easily. Some such aphoristic thought stuck in my mind. I determined that I would have to 'tell' Suzuko the aforementioned thing. 'There's something I have to tell you, no matter what,' I said. 'What's that?' Suzuko walked leaning her shoulder against mine, shrinking her body in like she was cold. 'Let's find somewhere to warm ourselves up' 'No, it's better we do it while we're walking. It's somewhat difficult to talk about, you see.' I stopped and looked directly into her face. 'It's about how I killed a person.' 'Whaaat? Stop it, to suddenly say that sort of... That's a good one.' She laughed with a frightened expression. After explaining that this was a serious matter, I rattled on nonstop. She was clinging to my arm. Once, partway through, she pleaded, 'No, please stop.' However, I spoke without heed until the end, exposing the very depths of my feelings. As accurately as possible, with great

care. I could easily tell that she was struggling with her fear and disgust. 'What do you think?' I asked her. 'I'm scared.' Her voice was hoarse. 'Why would you do something like that? I can't believe it.' 'Even as I think about it now, I don't know why I had to do that kind of thing. But a fact is a fact, to the bitter end. And that's why I'd say— this is what I imagine, it's just my imagination, you see—but you can't say something that happens once won't happen a second time. I regret it even now. I don't think it will happen again. But that's because there is the judgment of the law, and I am in a society where consequences exist. If I am placed in that same sort of situation again, I cannot guarantee that I won't do it again.' 'You... are you really that horrible? I don't think there's any way that's true.' 'Well, as for me, I don't think I'm that frightful of a human being. But I definitely did do it once, so...' 'Stop it already!' she cried in a sorrowful voice. It was heart-rending, like the cry of a young girl being bullied, or an abandoned infant's cry. I knew that it had given me a much stronger blow than I had imagined possible. After I finished telling her, I had intended to ask, 'Will you still love me, in spite of this?' And then after I received the reply, 'I will love you,' I had intended to consider the matter well enough resolved. But, seeing her state of shock, that too was impossible. Something that can't be cleaned up with sweet words, something that can't be held together with kind affections, something like a frozen stone or burning iron; it is just the same as if I had placed this thing with my own hands in between the two of us. When I delivered the battered and dejected Suzuko to her home, I hurriedly said my goodbyes and just as quickly left from there. That night, I could imagine how disturbed she must have looked sitting in front of her parents. As she looked at her own elderly mother and father, she would remember the old couple huddled in front of the muzzle of my rifle, and then, shocked beyond belief by me, who had stolen the lives of the old couple, she would arrive with horror at the fact that she herself was engaged to be married to this criminal.

But she would probably tell herself that she had no choice but to love me. If she didn't, she would feel pity for me. She would have to hate me. If there were something that she had to protect, she would work herself to the bone. And if we were to meet tomorrow, she would probably make a point of quickly consoling me. However, that would already not be the person she had been until now. Would it not be the same as a gallant nurse watching over a patient who doesn't know if he will see the next day, or a goodly mother who comforts a detestable brat? Truth together with craftiness and, not love, but an enduring patience would support her. The figure of myself pressing the muzzle of a rifle to the old man's head will never disappear from within her eyes. I hate the thought of making a sacrifice of her. Living together with a wife who is both my judge and my attorney, how unbearable would that be? For the entire night I worried and agonized. After three days she came by to visit out of worry. However, neither of us was able to speak to the other properly. When I said that it was over between us, tears welled up in her eyes as she said, 'No, that is....,' to appease me. However, her voice was that of someone thoroughly exhausted. Her spirit was just on the point of breaking. I realized now that I had been judged. I thought to myself that I had been judged by my own hand. Losing Suzuko is fatal. However, it's not as though I could do without losing her. I conveyed my intention to officially break off my engagement with Suzuko. Along with the sorrow of losing Suzuko, I had the sharp awareness that I had again done this deliberately. And then I noticed a clear self-awareness of sin, absent until now, being born. I began to think that the awareness of sin, the awareness of an indelible sin, was my only salvation. 'If I lose even that, what will become of me?' and anxieties of that sort grew stronger within me. I wonder if I go on living, without killing myself, without receiving the penalty of death, could it be there was nothing but this left for me? After about a month I saw Suzuko's father. He told me he heard the particulars from Suzuko. 'I understand

your suffering well. If you wish to break your engagement to Suzuko, then you may break it.'

And then he asked what I planned to do now. I answered that I planned to remain in China. If I return to Japan, and again welcome back the everyday life of the past, I will once again lose my awareness of myself. It is not merely the distance of a single ocean that separates this place from Japan, since, on the other side, an everyday life that causes the loss of awareness awaits. I want to remain in the place of my crime and live looking at the faces of the countrymen of the old man I killed. Since that should be useful for keeping awake my awareness which otherwise is like to become dull. Judgment is not a one-time occurrence. It happens again and again, it is ever-present. However, people do not notice it. Only when they are dragged to the place of judgment are they shocked into awareness of it. From now on, I will walk the land of my judgment. I do not think that even in doing this that I will make up for my sin. However, I cannot go on without doing it. Although my spirit to atone is weak, my spirit to see my judgment through on my own is strong. Life where every day the evidence of my sin is thrust in front of me; there's no doubt that it will be another life altogether. And I don't know what will ultimately become of it. But is it alright if even one Japanese, one with my sorts of thoughts, remains in China? Hearing my reply, Suzuko's father lightly smiled. Then, he told me, 'You make the third Japanese person who has made a confession like yours to me. Their methods may be different, but all of them have committed to defending their awareness,' and, so saying, Suzuko's father returned home. I was glad to know that I am not alone. I think it's strange I didn't notice until now that I have comrades who, in whatever foolish or clumsy way, are working to judge themselves. You once spoke to me about the final judgment. And I do not know what the present condition of Japan is. But in my present condition, it's exactly as if the first trumpet has sounded, and the calamity of the first angel has descended. The second and the third will no doubt fall as well. And I am eternally

grateful to have had you as a friend I could report all of this to. Since I am sure many of our comrades do not have another to report to, and even now are silent behind the darkness.”

“On Annihilation” (1947)  
by Takeda Taijun

It appears that the minds of writers everywhere these days are fixated on the word “annihilation,” or fears surrounding annihilation, or the expectation of annihilation, or feelings of sympathy toward the annihilated. Since long ago, there have been many tales of tragedy that center on annihilation in one form or another but, recently, I get the feeling that the number of works that give off the scent of it, even if they do not talk about it, is increasing. Furthermore, this trend is not limited just to literature.

Though there is no doubt that what originally lured me in to these sorts of thoughts was an effect of my weakness of spirit that bred a fear of the reality of Japan that had lost the war and was left in the dead end of defeat with the suspension of the war, in the end, it was the *kanji* for “annihilation” (滅亡) that attracted my heart, and while I knew it was base and weak of me, these two characters arose within my chest as though I was dosing myself with anesthetic and, little by little, it became habitual for me to think about things from this perspective. And, even though that exceedingly individualistic, ever-lacking in thorough thinking, ambiguous psychology of defeat was, in my own case, never so transparent a thing as that which Kawabata Yasunari called the “eyes in their last extremity,” it was still deeply muddled with worldly thoughts and desires, and bound up with the greediness of making a go at living just as long as one could.<sup>158</sup> But, even so, in the present day, where it has become a kind of pleasure to now and then use annihilation to shock oneself, to unsettle oneself, and, afterwards, contemplate it, we

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<sup>158</sup> Takeda alludes to Kawabata's 1933 essay, the title of which, in turn, quotes Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's suicide note, “Letter to an Old Friend” (或旧友へ送る手記 *Aru kyūyū e okuru shuki*) written in 1927. The phrase “eyes in their last extremity” (末期の眼 *matsugo no me*) refers to a state of mind that occurs when one is close to death. Akutagawa originally used the phrase to describe a heightened aesthetic appreciation of nature that occurred to him with his awareness of the impending nature of his own suicide, but Kawabata rejects the notion that enlightenment can be born from suicide, instead citing the Zen Buddhist concept of mindlessness or selflessness that accompanies the revelation of one's own mortality as the key to aesthetic fulfillment. Takeda appears to be describing the idealized and ascetic nature of this ‘selflessness’ as a kind of “transparency” that he attributes to Kawabata's words.

have reached the point where one has no choice but to try and forcibly discover such dark shadows within the literature of the world.

We sit down within the peaceful darkness of the movie theater and can comfortably watch the final day of the ancient Pompeii as it is destroyed by volcanic eruption, or watch as a skyscraper crashes down from overhead in the blink of an eye, or see the ground beneath one's feet yawning open and swallowing people whole in the San Francisco earthquake. One can witness the collapse of a massive dam, or the fury of a hurricane with one's own eyes and then simply return home. We take delight in attending the scene of innumerable groups of Indians or aboriginals or local rebels being exterminated like insects. Not just in melodramas or Westerns. One can see the scene of the frozen corpses of German and Russian soldiers heaped in piles on the white snow at the Battle of Stalingrad, and watch with perfect clarity up until the moment when, with the white smoke of gunfire, the torsos of German war criminals with both arms bound fall forward with a lurch. This is not merely something one can watch; it *is* what we watch. These things we watch are by no means something we are made to watch. We intentionally watch these things.

In this way, entrusting one's body to a secure seat and slowly savoring the sensation granted by a great annihilation, a severe annihilation, may be a special privilege granted only to modern people; but, when one considers that this practice is prevalent in many places, not just in the movie theater, it may be that my saying that I am going to speak "On Annihilation" is not all that personally prejudiced, really. To the contrary, I myself am actually behind the times. While my own out-of-date, *Tale of Heike*-esque admiration is fixated on this sort of theme, annihilation advances in all directions, and the modern people who meet it with a crazed enthusiasm and are tickled senseless by it, survive without concern.

This is just my own experience, but even though I might carelessly remark that I do not really care if I die, in the end, I do not actually want to die. As far as I am concerned, any sort of auspicious prophecy is preferable to an ominous one. Even though I might think happiness is untenable, absolute misfortune is terrifying. Feeling annihilation and anticipating tragedy are therefore both serious and philosophical, and because they are serious and philosophical, I wish to indulge further in these sorts of thoughts. But, in spite of that, no matter how small the annihilation or tragedy, from a slight scratch on one's face to a tapeworm in one's gut, it weighs heavy on the mind. And yet, what is it about this inauspicious word that draws me to it? What is it about this situation, like that of spectators in the movie theater, that makes us want to witness it, to be confronted with it?

Two or three days after the end of the war, I was distracted by the roar of the crowds on the Nanjing Road and bands waving flags, so the loss of the war had not yet truly sunk in; but when I visited my friend living outside of the French quarter, his anguished expression was such that, no matter how I tried to play innocent, when my face met that now-distorted expression on his own, I could not help but sink into a hollow stillness, so silent that I felt as though I could gradually hear each beat of my heart, one by one.<sup>159</sup>

Since my friend's apartment building where he lived together with a Jewish woman of German descent was full of Russians and Chinese, everyone else there was celebrating the victory, and the neighboring rooms were noisy from early in the morning with the sound of records playing. The American planes swooped down countless, countless times, as they flaunted their bluish-black hulls. As the sound of those bombings grew closer, a golden-haired girl on the green lawn below screamed with delight as she waved a flag looking up toward the sky. At the

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<sup>159</sup> The Nanjing Road is a famous highway in Shanghai, the setting where Takeda and his colleagues experienced the end of the war.

ten-story apartment building which could be seen directly across from our room, the windows were all open and the figures of men and women of various nations wearing brilliant clothing wedged between the lavish furniture within the room could be seen clear as day waving their hands and handkerchiefs. The sounds of firecrackers, cheers, not to mention the feverish air of a foreign city, enveloped the hollow stillness within my chest.

The German woman was pacing nervously around the room. “What a wicked month, may it quickly be gone,” she said in English. My friend and I just looked at each other’s faces awkwardly. Even if a wicked month passes, wicked days and wicked years will still come. And even if the days and months do not turn wicked, our own wickedness will not change. Because now we are criminals. Because we are criminals judged by the world. To repel the consciousness of that fact, we force a smile, and put on a brave face. And we, made outcasts from the delighted celebration, were contemplating within a cold stillness, the stillness of we who had lost sight of all the normality of everyday life, what sort of notion we could somehow cling to. And, as I did, what came to my mind, almost like a blow, was the word “annihilation.”

I recalled the prideful heroes, the prosperous nations, and the blossoming cultural meccas that were all destroyed, and the historical phenomena that vanished into oblivion from one to the next. I opened the Bible and read about the descent of the destruction of the world in “Revelations.” I open *The Scribe's Records* and read the brutal, short record of the destruction of the era of the Spring and Fall Warring States, recorded in only a few hundred characters.<sup>160</sup> I imagined and remembered every possible tragedy, every possible hell. A thing like a massive

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<sup>160</sup> Sima Qian's historical record of Chinese history written in the Han dynasty, referred to in Japan as *Shiki*. Takeda describes the nature of Sima Qian’s approach to “annihilation” as a historical event at length in his work *Sima Qian: The World of Shiki*, which forms the focus of the first chapter of this project.

sponge that sucks in all morality, all justice, existing without a sound. A thing like the ironic smile of God watching the life and death of all humanity, its visage completely unfeeling.

I forcibly devised those forms of severe annihilation, so intense as to make me completely forget my current humiliation, my weakness; I savored them. And, as I did, my nerves were slightly calmed.

Annihilation is not only our fate. It is the fate of all that exists. The nations of the world have all been annihilated at some time. The peoples of the world have all been annihilated at some time. And these, the nations that have annihilated many nations, the peoples of the world that have annihilated many peoples, will ultimately be annihilated. Annihilation is absolutely not an individual tragedy that ought to be admired or lamented. It is more material, more in keeping with the laws of space in the world; a precise fact. Just the same as the movements of the stars, or the maturation of plants, it is no more than an overwhelmingly precise, recurring fact. Just as individual humans take the lives of individual animals and plants, chew and swallow them, and digest them and absorb their nutrients for themselves, the great structure known as the world is a thing that annihilates a certain people or a certain nation and takes it as nourishment to sustain itself.

A nation being annihilated by war and vanishing from the face of the earth is but a small digestive function in the body of the organism called the world, or its menstruation, or merely a yawn. Within the womb of the world, several, or rather several scores of people battle and annihilate each other, but to the world this is nothing more than the internal movements of organs to aid the circulation of blood through the body. Without this movement, the world itself would weaken, and would likely have no choice but to perish. Thanks to our instinct to preserve ourselves as individuals, and the instinct to preserve our race that this prior instinct develops and

to which it gives birth, we humans detest this sort of ominous truth, and due to the intensity of this instinct, inseparable from everyday life, we end up forgetting the universality of annihilation. However, there is no possible way for us to deny that it exists. The world itself is well aware of the physiological needs of its own body. Therefore, to him, the annihilation of individuals and peoples within its womb is not a particularly dark or gloomy phenomenon. (Does any one among us lament the digestion of food he has eaten?) Rather, it is an exceedingly ordinary, serene, and practically unconscious activity.

I quibbled with these sorts of impertinent, dangerous thoughts and deliberately used them as a personal comfort. There's no denying it; I was like a schoolboy who has lost at sumo, or the 100-meter dash, or cards, or failed a math test, sulking in the corner of the athletic field in the rain, sickly eyes bloodshot, sniffing at the scent radiating from his playfully frolicking classmates, as he whispers to himself the un-childlike truth he has discovered, "Feh, they all stink like dogs."

At that time, to this boy and, accordingly, to me as well, absolute winners, absolute losers, and all other kinds of absolute existence were unbearable. I was useless, and that uselessness was set, recorded, and became my reputation among my fellows, but there were also existences that were not useless. Not only that, their existence was widely recognized and their playful frolicking was unbearable. Even if they noticed my existence and walked by my side, speaking kindly to me, this pathetic schoolboy would turn the other way and, gritting his teeth as he held back the tears, merely click his tongue with a "Feh."

In all likelihood, thinking about annihilation is nothing more than this kind of pitiable click of the tongue.

It is perversion, it is envy, it is jealousy. It is not a normal provision, but an abnormal distortion of the heart. However, I wonder; isn't it exceedingly rare for a person to end their life without occasionally being assailed by that sort of jealousy, that sort of distortion of the heart?

In my own case, I recall that when Futabayama, who is the same age as I, was on his winning streak, I could never be at peace.<sup>161</sup> He was the greatest in Japan, an undefeated titan; not only that, he was faultless, and majestic. I envied him, who had nothing to do with me, for that reason alone. How much did I pray at that time to see the *Kokugikan* going up in flames or Futabayama's frustration; in other words, to see some fragile part of the absolute, a sign that it would eventually collapse?<sup>162</sup> To victors, monopolizers, even the tiniest failure, a single setback, means the complete annihilation of their lives, and it is for that reason that we unconsciously hope these absolutes will suffer even the slightest anxiety that they are not truly the first among us.

The true meaning of annihilation is found in total annihilation. Its essence is exactly as it is portrayed in the Revelation, a thorough annihilation brought forth by sulfur and fire and smoke and poisonous beasts and snakes. Compared to that great annihilation, the current annihilation is smaller in scale, and that alone is a comfort to the destroyed. Only two atomic bombs were dropped on Japanese soil and, for that reason, we were left alive; those are the terms of departure

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<sup>161</sup> Futabayama Sadaji, a famous sumo wrestler. Futabayama won a total of twelve top division championships and had a winning streak of sixty-nine consecutive matches, an all-time record. Takeda's reference to Futabayama is likely due to his incredible strength and popularity, but also due to the dramatic nature of his retirement. During the June 1945 tournament, which took place in the heavily damaged Ryōgoku Kokugikan stadium, Futabayama refused to participate, and during the November 1945 tournament, the first officially permitted by the American Occupation Forces, he announced his retirement, supposedly in opposition to the Occupation forces' forcibly enlarging the traditional size of the sumo ring (土俵 *dohyō*). The image of Futabayama's frustration and the ruined Kokugikan in the context of the end of the war likely appealed to Takeda to some degree, or at least formed a compelling image of the defeat.

<sup>162</sup> The Ryōgoku Kokugikan, also called the Ryōgoku Sumo Hall, is a famous indoor sports arena in the Sumida Ward in Tokyo. Built in 1909 to accommodate the increasing popularity of professional sumo, the Kokugikan remains an iconic building in Tokyo, but was heavily damaged by fire-bombing in the Pacific War, to the extent that professional sumo bouts were moved from the Kokugikan to Tokyo's Meiji Shrine from 1946 to 1954.

for the Japanese going forward. If it had been ten bombs, there would be no need for awe or regret or democratization; all that would remain is ash. Seen from the eyes of “the world,” Japan's quite partial annihilation, and the remaining survivors that were therefore exempt from it, might be akin to sinewy, unpleasant food that cannot be broken down by digestion and remains. However, even just this destruction has succeeded in attributing a completely new, completely unprecedented look to annihilation, for both Japanese history and the history of the Japanese people's sensation of annihilation.

In the history of Japanese annihilation, one can clearly see that what has tended to be prominently championed has been the annihilation of a hero or of a clan. The death of Yoshitsune or the fall of the Abe clan; due to the significance that these deaths hold, they are crystallized in literature, and a particular archetype of pathos is created. Records of the annihilation of a great clan, and the ruin of a stronghold, were crafted into two blind tales by Tanizaki, and the terribly sad fate of the women of the *Sengoku* era was told with both piteousness and poignancy.<sup>163</sup> Ōgai's wit, or Tanizaki's inventiveness, and in the old times the admiration of the *biwa hōshi* reciting *Tale of the Heike*, are all nothing more than each of them analyzing and expressing the meaning of annihilation in their own way.<sup>164</sup> These writers, every

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<sup>163</sup> Takeda refers to the work of the Japanese novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichirō here. Two of Tanizaki's novels are told by blind narrators who “witness” a historical tragedy. The novel *A Blind Tale* (盲目物語 *Mōmoku monogatari*) centers on the tragedy of Oda Nobunaga's younger sister Oichi and the destruction of their stronghold as told by a blind masseuse. And *A Portrait of Shunkin* (春琴抄 *Shunkinshō*) focuses on the tragic family drama surrounding a blind koto player.

The “sad fate of women” mentioned here is potentially a reference to Tanizaki's novel, *The Secret History of Lord Musashi* (武州公秘話 *Bushukō hiwa*), a parodical account of a young samurai boy during Japan's Warring States period (戦国時代 *Sengoku jidai*) in the 16th century, who becomes unnaturally fixated on women grooming the severed heads of his father's enemies. Typical of Tanizaki's work, the novel excels in the intermingling of raw sexual desire of the protagonist with the grotesque and pitiable nature of the women's unpleasant task.

<sup>164</sup> Takeda refers to the Japanese writer Mori Ōgai (森鷗外). A predecessor of Tanizaki, Ōgai is well-known for setting his novels within pre-modern Japan to explore more modern themes of Romanticism.

*Biwa hōshi*, or “lute priests,” were a type of traveling performer in Japan. The first *biwa hōshi* are generally thought to have been blind Buddhist priests in the 13<sup>th</sup> century who played the *biwa* to accompany their narrations of

one of them, dealt with these annihilations long after the annihilation itself, or rather, within a psychological state completely inaccessible to annihilation. Even if they anticipated the same fate for themselves, they had the margin to complete their stories within the present; that is, they were able to live on to a secure time and place. In the end, it is not so much that they were the ones singing dirges of a ruined nation, as it was that they were on the side of those listening to the dirges of a ruined nation. This is simply for the reason that, for the Japanese literati, annihilation is still a very partial thing. Even now, they are essentially virgins to annihilation. Even if they are not virgins, they have been shielded in that their only experience of intercourse is within their own family.

Taken in contrast to this, however, in China, the experience of absolute annihilation appears to run quite deep. China appears as a woman's body that has cultivated a complex and mature sexuality by way of countless divorces and countless affairs. You could say that the origin of the Chinese people's non-resistant resistance is in this mature confidence of a womanly body, completely independent of men. Their culture is a thing born from a great many annihilations, a thing conceived by the destroyed; any and all Chinese wisdom is rich with this experience, to an extent the Japanese cannot comprehend.

All cultures, and above else all religions, hold some relation to the annihilation of a certain thing. It is just as if they are born from the desire for salvation from annihilation, or rather a salvation they pray for because they were annihilated. As long as annihilation is a partial annihilation, it will urge on the partial renewal of the individual and, as the individual grows closer by degrees to total annihilation, it will become a kind of completely unknown thing, and in the event it is not annihilated, there is also the case that it will give birth to a singular shining

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legends, histories, and war stories. The *biwa hōshi* are perhaps most famously known as the first performers of *The Tale of the Heike*, a practice Takeda references here.

crystallization which holds a totally new atomic value. That individual cannot choose the form of that thing that he gives birth to, nor can he himself even mark expectation that it will be born. Rather, it is just as if it is born with the individual as reluctant as ever, with no relation to one's will.

However, in terms of its original meaning, it is impossible to say that annihilation gives birth to culture. In the aforementioned birth of culture, there is no doubt that there is an undestroyed lineage, incredibly fine, almost indiscernible. Up until now there has certainly been this line. Clearly, this line has been generally allowed by the world. However, I wonder if it will be permitted to continue from here on? Today, when there is a tendency in the character of modern war, repeating twice, three times, and on, where more and more it approaches absolute annihilation, there is no doubt that science has finally succeeded in making the formerly partial, established form of annihilation, such as the destruction of one clan, of one fortress, a thing of the past. There is the possibility that a phenomenon similar to an instantaneous, sudden mutation could occur. Just as the native communities who had never touched a gun were attacked by foreigners holding guns and, not even given the time to understand what had happened to them, met their end in an instantaneous, sudden annihilation, the world from now on could, on an infinitely wider scale than these communities, be completely eradicated before our eyes can even register it.

At that time, whatever sort of configuration humanism holds, will it be able to confront this? And with what expression will literature, literature which always has the potential to confer new content to humanism, welcome this annihilation? And above all else, with what kindness, what ferocity, what trembling flesh, will the Japanese literati, blanched with the loss of their virginity, receive this heretofore unseen "male" violence?

The tension of my time in postwar Shanghai when, able only to plug my ears in response to the joyful voices of the peoples of the various nations of the world, I thought about annihilation in the aforementioned way, has now completely relaxed and sags low. Even my abnormal change of heart eventually changed to fit the provisions of normality. The matter of payment for manuscripts, the matter of the price of beef, the matter of my own novels, matters of egoism, matters without any depth, without any futurity, with only the quick cadence of petty journalism, are, without mistake, with an appropriate level of smoothness, languidly settled. But is this alright, I wonder? That I stopped thinking about annihilation was simply a product of my laziness, my cowardice, my propensity for forgetfulness. The fact that the depth which annihilation possesses is too deep for me is merely because I cannot bear the feeling of dizziness that accompanies standing on that inherent precipice and tracing back the course of culture. Because standing on that precipice, and enduring the fog and smoke of anxiety that comes bubbling up, is clearly a different practice from sitting in a luxuriant chair and enjoying a crisis reflected on the screen.

I, being worried about the life and death of myself and the members of my family, will consider a world war only to the extent that it falls into a range related to that life and death, and will not take the long view to roughly grasp the death of the individual called the world. An annihilation not merely limited to the multitudes the world holds, an annihilation that goes beyond as far as one can see; this enormous time and space is all but forgotten. But, occasionally, when we touch the edge of that annihilation, this enormous time and space, previously a thing unrelated to us, immediately returns to us. (Considering annihilation includes the effect of causing one to think of something larger, something longer, something more complete than this kind of thing.)

In the Buddhist scripture passed down from the South, “The Jātaka Tales,” three signs (proclamations) preceding the appearance of the Buddha are noted.<sup>165</sup> The first of these signs is annihilation. This annihilation is brought about by devas belonging to the sensual world called *Loka-byūhā* (worldly multitudes). The devas, with unbound, wild hair, their weeping faces wet with tears, wear crimson robes and have terribly strange bodies, and they loiter around the human world. And then they cry, “Everyone, one hundred thousand years from now, a new dispensation will begin. At that time, this world will be destroyed, the great ocean will dry up, this great earth together with Mount Meru will be burned up, and all the world up to the immaterial heavens will end.”<sup>166</sup> Everyone, act mercifully! Practice sympathy, compassion, and selflessness!”

Here too, annihilation is foretold as encompassing a time and place that exceeds common sense. “One hundred thousand years,” “Together with the mountain Meru,” “To the immaterial heavens,” the strange devas cry, wearing their crimson robes. The warning of impending annihilation faces the *Loka-byūhā*, it takes leave of the provisions of normalcy and demands that one make an abnormal change of heart. The fact that the first sign necessary for the emergence of a great wisdom is annihilation, demonstrates the great function and the great opportunity that annihilation holds.

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<sup>165</sup> By “the South,” Takeda is referring to India, traditionally recognized in Japanese Buddhist discourse simply as “the south” (南 *minami*) or as the “southern lands” (南国 *nangoku*).

“The Jātaka Tales,” are a series of early stories and myths from India, most of them describing the previous lives of the Buddha. It is referred to in Japan as the *Honjōgyō* (本常行).

<sup>166</sup> Also called Sineru, or Sumeru, Mt. Meru is a sacred mountain in Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist cosmology which is the center of the physical, metaphysical, and spiritual universes.