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# The Modernist Dilemma in Japanese Poetry

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Toshiko Ellis
(student ID no. 10738053)

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**Summary**

The aim of this thesis is to examine the significance of modernism in Japanese poetry in the context of Japan's social and cultural modernization. The term "modernism" will be defined broadly to refer to various general, social, cultural, and literary inclinations responding to the process of modernization. The focus of discussion concerns the inherent dilemma of Japanese modernity, and how various manifestations of modernism, particularly in poetry, reveal the different approaches to this dilemma. The main body of the thesis consists of the reading of poetic texts written in the 1920s and the 1930s, which will be analysed in relation to this issue.

In Chapter One I present a general discussion of the meaning and significance of modernism in Japanese poetry, focusing on its relationship to the question of Japanese modernity. After presenting my understanding of the term, I will outline the historical context that prompted the emergence of Japanese modernity and set the framework for the discussions on the various streams of poetic modernism to follow. The contents of Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five roughly follow a chronological order. Beginning in Chapter Two with an examination of Hagiwara Sakutaro's poetic evolution, which represents a symbolic case of the Japanese poets' encounters with the modern, I move on in Chapter Three to a study of the Japanese avant-garde movements of the early 1920s. Three poets with different poetic inclinations, Takahashi Shinkichi, Ogata Kamenosuke and Hagiwara Kyojiro, will be discussed. Chapter Four deals with a broader group of modernists active in the late 1920s, whose works are characterised by a drive for either a "poetic revolution" or "revolutionary poetry". Finally, in Chapter Five, I discuss a new cultural trend which emerged in the early 1930s, known as Japan's "cultural renaissance", and which critically looked at the preceding modernist attempts and brought to focus the fundamental dilemma embedded in the construction of modern Japanese cultural identity. Two poets representing the two dominant streams of the time, Ito Shizuo and Miyoshi Tatsuji, will be

discussed. By mapping out the relationship between these various poetic groups in the historical context of the 1920s and the 1930s, I wish to present my understanding of modernism and modernity in the Japanese context and its relevance to our understanding of contemporary Japan.

I certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution.

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

[redacted]

Toshiko Ellis

23/2/2002

Date

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I would also like to mention how much I owe to my friends, colleagues and students at the University of Tokyo, especially William Gardner, who was at the University of Tokyo for a year to undertake his research in Japanese avant-garde poetry. It was a rewarding experience to have a student with a common interest as mine, with brilliant ideas, which he was willing to share.

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## Introduction

A number of studies have been devoted to the investigation of various aspects of modernism in the Japanese context. The term has prevailed in academic and popular discourse for many years, resulting in the publication of numerous works dealing with Japanese literature and culture of the 1920s and the 1930s. Especially with successive publications in urban studies in the 1980s, a renewed interest has been given to exploring the social and cultural topography of modern Tokyo, particularly of its formative period.[1] Based on detailed historical investigations of social, political and cultural factors contributing to the making of modern Tokyo and often applying semiotic approaches to the reading of the newly created socio-cultural space, these studies have revealed the institutionalizing powers at work behind Japan's modernization process, presenting original readings of literary texts in relation to them. The popularity of the term "modern" gained ascendency as a result of this development in this new area of research, as this was the term that lay at the core of the topographic changes that brought about the birth of the city. The accompanying term "modernism" also gained popularity, though its use has been rather idiosyncratic, being referred in diverse ways to a variety of social and cultural representations related to the advent of the modern age and to the emergence of Tokyo as a modern city.

In Japanese literary history, the term "modernism" has generally been used in a rather restricted sense, referring to a specific group of writers and poets active in the 1920s and the 1930s. The studies on the literature of this period in Japan has been predominantly author/poet centered, and there have been a general lack of interest in examining the significance of literary activities in a larger socio-

[1] Some of the representative works investigating the social and cultural topography of modern Tokyo are: Maeda Ai, *Toshi kukan no naka no bungaku* [Literature in urban space], Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1982; Un'no Hiroshi, *Modan toshi Tokyo* [Tokyo the modern city], Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1988; Isoda Koichi, *Shiso to shite no Tokyo: gendai bungakushiron noto* [Tokyo as thought: notes on modern literary history], Tokyo: Kodansha, 1990.

cultural context and in looking into the implications of the very term that has been so often, and so easily, associated with certain poets who were active during this period.

The primary aim of this thesis is to examine a number of poets of the pre-1945 period within a working framework of what I will call "modernism" in a broad sense. Moving away from the common use of the term to refer to a particular literary movement, I wish to go back to the basic meaning of the word as deriving from the adjective "modern" and see it as a general social, cultural, and literary inclination responding to the process of modernization. Placing the focus on poetic activities in particular, this study attempts to map out various poetic movements that unfolded in Japan in the 1920s and the 1930s, and by examining the activities of some of the major poets of the respective streams, bring to light how the poets in different groups grappled in different ways with the emergence of Japanese modernity, which, as I will discuss in Chapter One, embraced at its foundation an unsoluble dilemma. An examination of the characteristic inclinations of each poetic group and of the differences in their ways of self-positioning against Japan's social and cultural situation should contribute at least partly to an acquisition of a broader vision of what were the possible cultural responses to the intrusion of modernity into a non-Western state, for which the implantation of a modern socio-political system and the introduction of modern ideas and lifestyles immediately brought forth a conflict with the native tradition.

To my knowledge, this is the first major attempt to present an overview of Japanese poetic modernism against the context of Japanese modernity. Looking at the literature written in Japanese, in addition to the recent studies on the configuration of urban modernism mentioned above, there is a breadth of studies on modern Japanese poetry covering many of the poetic groups discussed in this thesis. An extensive investigation of the Japanese poetic avant-garde movements was carried out in as early as the 1970s by Nakano Kaichi, who had been personally involved in one of the avant-garde groups in the 1930s, and who, after years of painstaking research of primary sources, put together an invaluable study that includes essential information on how the major avant-garde groups were

formed and what they produced.[2] More recently, Chiba Sen'ichi produced a detailed study on various modernist movements in Japanese poetry, looking into the nature of the movements largely from the perspective of comparative literature.[3] There are a few other works on various modernist movements, beginning with Ooka Makoto's insightful analysis of the poetic scene during the second decade of Showa, and more recently in the publications of Suzuki Sadami, Wada Hirofumi, Sawa Masahiro, Kurihara Yukio and others.[4] Apart from these works, which deal with Japan's modern

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[2] Nakano Kaichi, *Zen'eishi undoshi no kenkyu* [A study of the history of avant-garde poetic movements], Tokyo: Ohara Shinseisha, 1975; *Modanizumu shi no jidai* [The age of modernist poetry], Tokyo: Hobunkan Shuppan, 1986. Nakano was a member of *Rien* (1929-1936), started by several poets who broke away from *Shi to Shiron* [Poetry and poetics] in pursuit of surrealistic poetry that revealed a strongly Marxist inclination toward the creation of revolutionary poetry.

[3] Chiba Sen'ichi, *Gendai bungaku no hikaku bungaku teki kenkyu: modanizumu no shiteki dotai* [A comparative study of modern literature: the historical dynamics of modernism], Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1978; *Modanizumu no hikaku bungakuteki kenkyu* [A study of modernism: from the perspective of comparative literature], Tokyo. Ofusha, 1998.

[4] Ooka Makoto, *Chogenjitsu to jojo: showa 10 nendai no shiseishin* [Surrealism and lyricism: the poetic spirit in the second decade of Showa], Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1965; Suzuki Sadami (ed), *Modan toshi bungaku: toshi no shishu* [Literature of the modern city: urban poetry], Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1991; Suzuki Sadami, *Modan toshi no hyogen: jiko, genso, josei* [Expressions of the modern city: the self, illlusion, women]. Tokyo: Hakuchisha, 1992; Sawa Masahiro and Wada Hirofumi (eds), *Nihon no shuururearizumu* [Surrealism in Japan], Tokyo: Sekai Shisosha, 1995; Sawa Masahiro and Wada Hirofumi (eds), *Toshi modanizumu no honryu: shi to shiron no esupuri nubo* [Currents of urban modernism: l'esprit nouveau of *Poetry and Poetics*], Tokyo: Kanrin Shobo, 1996; Kurihara Yukio (ed), *Geijutsu no kakumei/kakumei no geijutsu* [The revolution of art / the art of revolution], Tokyo: Shakai Hyoron-sha, 1990; Kurihara Yukio (ed), *Haikyo no kanosei: gendai bungaku no tanjo* [The possibility of the ruins: the birth of contemporary literature], Tokyo: Inpakuto Shuppankai, 1997.

Ooka's work is one of the earliest attempts to examine the significance of modernist poetry in Japan's historical context. Suzuki's works do not deal directly with modernist poetic movements but his broadly-based study on the meaning of the modern in the Japanese context make frequent references to the poetic endeavours of the 1920s. Sawa and Wada have consistently produced works with a particular focus on the "l'esprit nouveau" and surrealist poets. Kurihara's contribution should also be noted in elucidating the historical context of the emergence of revolutionary poetry in Japan and in compiling a substantial amount of materials related to the Japanese proletarian movement.

poetic movements in one way or other, there is a vast amount of research done on individual poets as well as numerous surveys presenting a literary-historical introduction to the works of many of the poets dealt with in the following chapters. Besides the contribution of the studies on various modernist movements *per se*, this thesis is also greatly indebted to the biographical studies of individual poets, which have provided an informative background to my understanding of how individual poets came to perceive their own position in relation to the socio-cultural environment of their time. Although biographical informationis kept to a minimum in the following chapters, I have drawn selectively from the abundant sources of information on the poets' lives.

Recent works on modern Japanese poetry written in English have also provided me with ideas that have had an essential influence on the development of the discussions in this thesis. Even though none of the materials I have come across deal with the concept of modernism in Japan and its relation to Japanese modernity in the broad context that I present here, many of the works on artistic and literary modernism in Japan written in English make references to the contextual framework within which the artistic or literary activity took place, thereby relating the discussion on modernism directly or indirectly to the question of Japanese modernity. Kevin Doak's study of the Japan Romantic School was inspiring not only because it presents an in-depth examination of the poetic endeavours of Hagiwara Sakutaro and Ito Shizuo, but also because it centrally deals with the question of the relationship between modernity and the formulation of a new cultural consciousness in the Japanese context.[5] I have also drawn much from William Gardner's study on Japanese modernist poetry, as his interest in deciphering the complex relationship between avant-garde/modernist literature and the issues of social and historical modernity significantly overlaps with my own interest, and also because Gardner has presented what I found was one of the most revealing *explication de texte* of

[5] Kevin Michael Doak, *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and the Crisis of Modernity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

the poetic works of Hagiwara Kyojiro and Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, whom I will deal with in the coming chapters.[6] Other recent studies on Japanese modernist poetry in English include works by John Solt, Hosea Hirata, and Miryam Sas, respectively focusing on Kitasono Katsue, Nishiwaki Junzaburo and the Japanese dada and surrealist poets, chiefly Takiguchi, Nishiwaki and Kitasono.[7] Following an intricate analysis of the formalistic innovations of Nishiwaki Junzaburo presented within a rigidly theoretical framework of post-structuralist criticism, Hirata presents a brief overview of the modernist poetic movements in Japan, the structure of which appears largely the same as the way I have laid out the relationship between the different poetic movements in the following chapters.

While this thesis thus owes a considerable debt to the existing literature on modern/modernist Japanese poetry both in Japanese and in English, I wish to claim that none of the abovementioned literature has attempted to string together the diverse movements in the manner I present in this thesis.

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[6] William Ogden Gardner, "Avant-Garde Literature and the New City: Tokyo 1923-1931", Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the Department of Asian Languages, Stanford University, 1999; "Shi to shin-media: Hagiwara Kyojiro no 'Kokokuto' wo chushin nishita 1920 nendai no avangyarudo ronko" ["Poetry and the new media: A study on the avant-garde of the 1920s centring on Hagiwara Kyojiro's "Kokokuto"], *Hikaku bungaku hikaku bunka ronshu*, no.16, 1999, Tokyodaigaku Hikaku Bungaku Bunka Kenkyukai: 28-41; "Colonialism and the avant-garde: Kitagawa Fuyuhiko's Manchurian Railway", in *Stanford Humanities Review*, vol.7, no.1, "Movements of the Avant-garde", winter, 1999.

[7] John Peter Solt, "Shredding the tapestry of meaning: The poetry and poetics of Kitasono Katsue (1902-1978)", Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Harvard University, 1989, Ann Arbor, Michigan: U.M.I. Dissertation Services facsimile; Hosea Hirata, *The Poetry and Poetics of Nishiwaki Junzaburo: Modernism in Translation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993; Myriam Belle Sas, "Cultural Memory and Literary Movements: Dada and Surrealism in Japan", Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University, 1995, Ann Arbor, Michigan: U.M.I. Dissertation Services facsimile. Although the author's major concern lies more in the theoretical question of Japanese social modernity than the literary significance of the poet's works, Myriam Sliverberg's study on Nakano Shigeharu should also be noted: Myriam Silverberg, *Changing Song: The Marxist Manifestos of Nakano Shigeharu*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990; see also "Constructing the Japanese Ethnography of Modernity", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.51, no.1 (February 1992): 30-54.

The major intention of this thesis is to display a basic context from which various poetic movements arose, and by delineating the characteristic inclinations of each movement in defining its position in the socio-cultural environment of the time, illustrate several distinct types of responses to the dilemma of Japanese modernity.

In such an approach, which aims to lay out the historical context of diverse poetic activities, there is always the accompanying risk of reducing the significance of what is a fundamentally multi-faceted exercise of literary production into a limited, often uni-dimensional, meaning. I am aware of the risk and have tried as much as possible to avoid making definitive statements regarding the position of each poet, and instead, have tried to focus on the process in which each poet acquired a vision of his society and created works accordingly.[8] At the same time, given the fact that the purpose of this thesis is to present a structural framework of the types of thought of a particular period, a certain framing of the different types of poetic activities is necessary.

The discussions to follow will be centred around individual poets. My selection of the poets was based on the degree of relevance to the main concern of this thesis; in other words, the poets were not necessarily chosen because of their "importance" in Japanese literary history or because they were the most influential poets of the time. Rather, I chose to discuss the poets who, I believe, created texts that most clearly represented the nature and inclination of the stream in question. This also means that I had to exclude from this thesis a number of poets whose position could not be easily associated with any of the major streams presented here. Poets such as Miyazawa Kenji, Nakahara Chuya, Kaneko Mitsuharu and Kusano Shinpei, the significance of whose works in Japanese literary history is undeniably great, had to be left out of the picture. Although this may lead to the questioning of the validity of the present framework itself, I do hope that the following discussions will be convincing enough to show that this framework does have a *raison d'etre* at least for the present.

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[8] All the poets I deal with in this thesis are men. A further note on this will be made later.

Another point to be noted is that the poets whom I deal with in the following chapters are all males. This does not mean that there were no female poets at the time, but it does largely reflect the reality of the time, that most of the active writers of modern Japanese free-verse poetry were male. There was a female poet, Hayashi Fumiko, who did immerse herself in the poetic avant-garde movement at an early stage of her literary career before turning to writing prose, but the overall number of female poets in free-verse poetry of pre-1945 Japan was extremely small.[9]

As I indicate in Chapter Two, three major styles of poetry constituted the Japanese poetic scene of the 1920s and the 1930s. Apart from the modern free-verse poetry, which will be the focus of examination in this thesis, there were two traditional poetic forms, *tanka* and *haiku*, which survived through the drastic socio-cultural changes in Japan and attracted many poets. Notably, a significant number of female poets chose to write in the *tanka* style. The reason for this is not simple, and requires a careful examination of the relationship between gender roles and literary creation and of the impact of the socio-historical texture of the age. Despite the fact that *tanka* is the oldest of the Japanese poetic styles, and therefore burdened with a number of restrictions in form and the choice of poetic diction, some of the most radical expressions of the modern sensibility were written in *tanka*, particularly those written by the leading female poet at the turn of the century, Yosano Akiko and her partner Yosano Tekkan. As Leith Morton points out, it would be unjust not to acknowledge their poetic feats in discussing the birth of modernism in Japanese poetry.[10] While agreeing with Morton

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[9] To my knowledge, William Gardner's work on Hayashi Fumiko is the first attempt to deal thoroughly with Hayashi's involvement in Japan's avant-garde poetic movement. Despite the fact that Hayashi has long been regarded as one of the principal female writers of modern Japan, the study of this aspect of Hayashi's career had been extremely limited in the past. See William Gardner, *Op. Cit.*

[10] Leith Morton, "The aesthetics of modernism: the case of fin-de-siecle Japanese poetry", unpublished paper given at the Comparative Literature and Culture Seminar at the University of Tokyo, September 4, 2001. Yosano Akiko's first major *tanka* collection, *Midaregami* [Tangled

on the need to properly evaluate the contribution of their romantic endeavours to the formation of modernist thought, in this thesis I will concentrate on the development of free-verse poetry, particularly of the 1920s onwards. It would be helpful, however, if a study of modern *tanka* and *haiku* were to be carried out in a similar context to that which I have laid out for free-verse poetry here, so as to acquire a more balanced view of the entire poetic scene of Japan's early modern period. The question of gender imbalance will then inevitably come into view, and the intricate relationships between the different poetic genres in the formation of modernism will be illuminated. Together with Yosano Akiko, we find a large number of female *tanka* poets including Yamakawa Tomiko, Okamoto Kanoko, Ishigami Tsuyuko, Nakajo Fumiko and Mikajima Yoshiko, whose original approaches to literature as well as visions of society and culture and their position in it, abundantly reveal the various forces at work in the making of modern Japan and in the establishment of modern Japanese cultural values.

Finally, in terms of my approach to the poets dealt with in this thesis, the main part of my discussion will consist of analyses of the poetic texts. Apart from the sections where references are made to the general socio-cultural background of the time, the discussions in the following chapters will be unfolded through the reading of the poetic texts rather than through investigations of the poets' lives, their thought, or their writings other than poetry, including theoretical writings which reflect the poets' own vision of their poetic enterprise. Even though I believe that a poet's explication

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Hair], was published in 1901. Yosano Tekkan had already published three collections including both *tanka* and free-verse poetry by then, but his fourth collection, *Murasaki* [Violet], published in the same year as *Midaregami*, was particularly influential in disseminating, together with Akiko's works, the new values of the modern individual as expressed in the assertion of free love. Morton argues that the fin-de-siecle romanticism as can be seen incarnated in their works played a critical role in forging the modern sensibilities of the individual, and that the acknowledgement of the siginificance of their contribution is germane to our understanding of modernism, as various aspects of what was later to be called "modernism" are already apparent in their works.

Both Yosano Akiko and Yosano Tekkan wrote some pieces in the free-verse style as well, but especially for Akiko, considering the overwhelming number of *tanka* she produced as opposed to free-verse poetry, she can be safely called a *tanka* poet and not otherwise.

of his own stance has a certain literary value and often provides ample suggestions for understanding the meaning of his poetic texts, it is also important to note that what the poet says about his texts is not necessarily projected in the actual poems themselves. Indeed, this gap between the two different types of texts is itself an interesting object of literary investigation. As an examination of such a gap is not of essential importance to achieving the main aim of this thesis, my investigation will by and large consist of the reading of the poems *per se*, and of them, the published versions only and not the unpublished variants. Again, an examination of the unpublished variants can sometimes be of seminal importance in exploring the creative process of certain poets, but the inclusion of such an examination is beyond the scope of this thesis and is not crucial as far as the object of this study is concerned.

This thesis consists of five chapters. In Chapter One, I present my own understanding of Japanese poetic modernism. As noted earlier, the chief interest of this thesis lies in exploring the relationship between modernism and modernity in the Japanese context. In order to pursue this, it is first necessary to clarify what is meant by modernism in the context of this study and identify its essential aspects which have relevance to our understanding of its relationship to modernity. I will begin by discussing various implications of the term "modernism" in Japanese literary discourse, and then move on to briefly discuss certain concepts such as tradition and nationalism, which, I believe, are crucially related to the understanding of modernism. The last part of this chapter will delineate the historical structure that brought about the fundamental dilemma in the founding of Japanese modernity, and consequently in the pursuit of Japanese modernism.

Following the framework given in Chapter One, I will proceed from Chapter Two onwards to examine individual poets and movements central to my understanding of Japanese poetic modernism. Firstly, in Chapter Two, my discussion will focus on Hagiwara Sakutaro, who I regard as the precursor of modernism in Japanese poetry. Born in 1886, approximately half-way through the Meiji period, Hagiwara produced a series of poems illustrative of his struggle to come to terms with "the

shock" of the modern. His confrontation with modernity is exemplified most clearly in the way he tackles the problem of the split between the self and the outside world. It was a struggle that accompanied the discovery of a poetic self, and simultaneously, the discovery of a modern landscape. The dramatic shifting of perception that characterises the evolution of his works reflects the bewildering changes that were taking place in Japan's cultural scene during the first two decades of the twentieth century; finally in the late 1930s, after publishing four major collections of poetry, Hagiwara called for a "return to Japan". In a sense, Hagiwara's poetic career in its entirety is a suggestive miniature of Japan's first modern trajectory and its dead-end.

In Chapter Three, I will first introduce the launching of the Japanese poetic avant-garde, which almost coincided with the occurrence of the Great Kanto Earthquake. With some explanation on the background to the birth of futurism and dadaism in Japan, I will proceed to examine the works of three poets, Takahashi Shinkichi, Ogata Kamenosuke and Hagiwara Kyojiro. Takahashi is most widely known for his first collection, *Dadaisuto Shinkichi no Shi* [The poems of Dadaist Shinkichi], which is generally said to have been responsible for spreading a dadaist fervour in Japan, though its influence was more or less sporadic, never developing into a coherent movement of any sort. Takahashi's eventual conversion to Zen Buddhism leaves us with interesting questions as regards the possibilites and limitations of dadaism in an environment where the social modernization project was anything but complete. Ogata's career painfully illustrates the impossibility of being an avant-garde poet in Japan in the 1920s. In a different way to Hagiwara Sakutaro's abandonment of his pursuit of the self, Ogata gave up all attempts to create a modern self through poetry, choosing to eradicate the notion of the self altogether. Of the three poets discussed in this chapter, Hagiwara Kyojiro took the most radical approach in his attempt to break down the preceding poetic conventions and to celebrate the birth of a new age in which the relationship between art and life would be newly defined in the new environment of the city. The dramatic change in the style of Hagiwara's works over the years, however, illustrates how he, too, was caught in the dilemma of Japanese modernity,

which was most clearly highlighted in the ambivalent relationship he maintained with the rural life of his hometown. Following the examination of these three poets, I will briefly touch on the significance of the Japanese "surrealist" movement. Even though the poets associated with this movement worked in close relationship with the "l'esprit nouveau" poets, or have been regarded by some literary historians as the "l'esprit nouveau" poets, in this thesis the discussion on these "surrealist" poets is included in Chapter Three, as they symbolically represent another possibility impossibility of carrying out an avant-garde project in Japan in the 1920s.

Chapter Four will deal with the two major "revolutionary" groups that dominated the Japanese poetic scene in the late 1920s and survived through to the first part of the 1930s: those who aimed at a "poetic revolution" through innovations in poetic representation, and those who strove to create "revolutionary poetry", using the poetic form as a means for expressing their political ideology. Of the first group, I will concentrate mainly on the works of two representative "l'esprit nouveau" poets, Anzai Fuyue and Kitagawa Fuyuhiko. Even though they are generally regarded as representing the height of aesthetic modernism in Japanese poetry, it will be shown that their endeavour to create new poetry cannot be reduced simply to the problem of aesthetics. Their awareness of the social and political situation of Japan at the time deeply affected their poetic creation. The ambiguity of the implicitly political themes in their poetic works can be read as a reflection of their understanding of the ambiguous and conflicting situation of Japanese modernity.

The discussion of the poets who aimed at "revolutionary poetry" will be rather brief, firstly because a comprehensive picture of the complex structure of the Japanese proletarian movement is far beyond the scope of this study. Secondly, many of the works produced by the "proletarian poets" were written for the purpose of diffusing revolutionary ideology, and demand little stylistic analysis. For instance, the editors of the representative Marxist journal, *Senki*, made a conscious decision to subjugate aesthetic qualities to the expression of ideology, and in 1931 the cessation of the journal was announced, with the chief editor declaring that the members of the journal should immediately

engage in a nationwide proletarian movement centred around urban factories and rural villages. I will focus only on one poet, Oguma Hideo, who emerged in the proletarian literary scene in its last phase, in the early 1930s. Oguma's works provide us with interesting, and often shocking, examples of how a poet strove to retain his right to "speak" at a time when speaking was literally becoming an increasingly difficult task.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I will discuss the poetic activities related to what came to be called the "cultural renaissance" of the 1930s. Although some references will be made to its ideologue, Yasuda Yojuro, my main focus will be on two poets, Ito Shizuo and Miyoshi Tatsuji, who were active contributors to the major poetic journals representing this stream. "Cultural renaissance" was a term given to a variety of literary and philosophical movements that expressed a certain kind of skepticism toward Japan's modernization process and its outcome, and demonstrated a willingness to reassess and re-evaluate Japan's traditional values. We shall see, however, that the works of the two poets associated with the representative poetic journals of this trend are anything but traditional in the narrow sense of the word. My aim is to re-contexualise these works in the modernist framework and to read them as examples of one significant type of response to Japanese modernity.

These five chapters will be followed by a brief concluding section bringing the discussion back to the question of the relationship between modernism and modernity in the Japanese context. After confirming some of the main points in the study, I will briefly outline the major poetic movements in the immediate postwar period, look at the relationship between the prewar poetic movements and those of the post-1945 period, and consider the relevance of the modernist question to our understanding of Japan's postwar developments, and of Japan today, seventy years later.

All Japanese names referred to in this thesis are written in accordance with the Japanese convention, surname first, followed by given name. In referring to the titles of individual poetic pieces, the English translation will appear in the main text, with the original Japanese title in romanised writing in brackets immediately after the poem is referred to for the first time. With regard

to the titles of poetic collections, the romanised Japanese title will be given when it is referred to for the first time, which will be followed by its English translation written in brackets. From the second time the reference is made to the same poetic collection, only the English translation will be given unless the repetition of the original Japanese title is regarded as more appropriate in the context of the discussion. Translations of the poems cited are mine unless indicated otherwise in the footnote. In translating the poems, I have placed priority on presenting a literal translation rather than on considering its literary or aesthetic quality. The intention is to convey the meaning of the original poem as much as possible.

## Chapter One:

## Setting the framework

### 1) The understanding of modernism in Japanese literary history

The significance of discussing "modernism" in Japanese literature can be argued from several viewpoints. Firstly, because of the breadth and ambiguity in the understanding of the term modernism in general, the term has been applied to discussions of modern Japanese literature and culture in a variety of contexts without sufficient examination of its specific implications. Related to this is the fact that modernism is a term closely linked to the Western concept of modernity, which assumes a particular stage of a historical development of a broadly European-centred culture with its roots in a tradition significantly different from that of Japan or other non-European cultures. The discussion of Japanese modernism requires an examination of the fundamental conditions of the Japanese experience of modernity and how those conditions affected the creative activities of those who lived through the time of radical social and cultural changes uniquely experienced by a nation which embarked on the project of modernization by breaking with its own cultural traditions. This suggests in turn that a mere technical, factual or historical comparison of Western modernism and Japanese modernism either as an artistic style, an artistic movement or a cultural phenomenon would have little meaning if it did not take into consideration the broader context of Japanese-Western relations in the modern era. Despite the fact that the term modernism has penetrated into the Japanese vocabulary since its entry in the 1920s and has been in frequent use in academic and popular discourse, the implications of the significance of modernism as a concept paired with modernity in the specifically Japanese socio-cultural context have hardly been explored.

In Japanese literary history, the term modernism has been applied in a relatively narrow sense,

either with reference to certain poets or novelists whose works show traces of a direct influence of Western literary modernism or in discussions on the emergence of the urban culture of the 1920s which signified a dramatic change of popular consciousness as a result of the rapid Westernization of Japanese culture. The latter understanding of modernism makes references to various cultural phenomena characterising the Tokyo-centred urban lifestyle of that era, including fashion, a "new" style of living as seen in a variety of activities propagated by the growing urban youth population, who turned their back against traditional values in order to become "modern".

In poetry, in particular, the most commmon approach in literary history has been to apply the term modernism to the activities of a particular group of poets active in the late 1920s and the early 1930s who were directly involved in implanting Western modernism into the modern tradition of Japanese literature. Some of their individual works have been incorporated into the history of modern Japanese literature as achievements in the exploration of new poetic forms that opened the path for "contemporary" poetry to come later. However, there has been a general lack of interest in making an overall assessment of the activities of these poets, reflecting a distinctive historical reason. As has been widely discussed in studies of Japanese history, culture and society, the total defeat of Japan in World War II divided the Showa era into two parts in the collective consciousness of the Japanese people.[1] In congruence with the popular sentiment that aspired for the beginning of a new era which would leave behind the bitter memories of the immediate past, the post-1945 poetic movement was launched with the intent to mark a new era of Japanese poetry. The poets of the *Arechi* [Wasteland] journal, who were to occupy a central position in the postwar Japanese poetic scene, adamantly rejected the poetic endeavours of the immediate pre-war period and claimed that they would work

[1] See Carol Gluck, "The Idea of Showa", *Daedalus*, vol.119, no.3, (Summer 1990): 1-26. Gluck discusses how "a tale of two Showas", splitting the era into the somber "prewar past" and the bright "postwar", has dominated the popular discourse in Japan, as was typically observed in the style and presentation of numerous television documentaries shown immediately after the death of the Showa Emperor.

towards "the recovery of meaning" in poetry. This slogan, advanced by the group's leader, Ayukawa Nobuo, was an explicit attack on the so-called modernist poetry of the 1920s and the 1930s, which, the poets thought, neglected the essential function of poetry because of its excessively formalistic concerns. Another poet of the *Arechi* group, Nakagiri Masao, criticised prewar modernist poetry by saying that it failed to "question the position of man in today's technology-based civilization as well as the position of man in our capitalist society". According to Nakagiri, Western modernism attempted to provide an answer to these questions whereas Japanese modernism failed to go beyond "experiments in placing one image next to another and in experimenting with different ways of combining the images".[2]

It was chiefly through these criticisms and the subsequent activities of the *Arechi* group, which was more or less successful in creating a new history of "contemporary poetry", that "modernism" came to be regarded as a product of the past mingled with the shadowy memories of the pre-war period. In this sense, the splitting of the Showa era was successfully achieved in Japanese poetic history, as works written after 1945 eventually came to be called "contemporary poetry" (*gendaishi*), reserving the name "modern poetry" (*kindaishi*) for all the works written between 1868 and 1945.

What is of particular relevance to our discussion is that this stance taken by the "contemporary" poets of breaking with the past also resulted in obscuring the discussion of the meaning of "modernism". The *Arechi* poets' usage of the term made a clear reference to a group of poets who deliberately used the works of Western literary modernism as the model for their writing. While introducing translations of contemporary English, French and German poetry in their journal, these modernists endeavoured to apply their techniques to the creation of their own works in Japanese. Partly because the major concern of these poets lay in the formalistic innovativeness of poetic

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[2] Cited in Ooka Makoto, *Chogenjitsu to jojo* [Surrealism and lyricism], Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1965: 44-45.

language, and partly because, for them, the West was a point of reference and therefore, in theory, a model that could not be surpassed, they were unable to sustain firm ground for their activities when the cultural climate of Japan rapidly changed in the 1930s. With the rise of the *Arechi* movement after the war and the resulting separation of the pre-1945 era from their postwar present, there appeared to be little reason for examining the further meaning of "modernism" in Japanese poetry. Since then, the *Arechi* poets' association of the term with the activities of these self-conscious modernists determined the general understanding of modernism in Japanese literature.[3] Unlike "naturalism" or "romanticism", for which there is respectively an equivalent word in Japanese, "modernism" came to be known as *modanizumu* in its direct phonetic transcription. The fact that its direct Japanese translation *kindai-shugi*(modern + ism) did not permeate into the Japanese literary vocabulary is indicative of the tendency to look at modernism as an imported concept that was not fully integrated into the Japanese soil.

2) Reviewing modernism from the present

The principal aim of this study is to examine Japanese modernism as *kindai-shugi* (modern+ism) in the broader sense of the word. As a concept that is inseparable from the process and achievement of social modernization and the emergence of the idea of modernity, it should be appropriate to look

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[3] The term "modernism" is also applied to the works of certain novelists such as Kawabata Yasunari, Yokomitsu Riichi, Tanizaki Jun'ichiro and Hayashi Fumiko, and the implication here is again slightly different. Many of these works deal with the "modern" life of Tokyo of the 1920s, and here the use of the term corresponds to the second understanding of the term discussed earlier, i.e. in reference to the new forms of urban life that characterised the Tokyo cultural scene during the Taisho and early Showa periods. The term is also used sometimes in reference to the writing styles of these novelists, particularly those of Kawabata and Yokomitsu, known as advocates of the "Neo-perceptionist School". In this case, the technical characteristics of the writing styles are stressed as a major attribute of modernism.

for a broader meaning of modernism in the larger context of Japan's modern history. Furthermore, the prevalence of the idea of postmodernity in recent academic discourse has shed new light on the concept of modernity, allowing us to look at the historical and geo-political implications of this concept born out of the specifically late nineteenth century configuration of the world. Any attempt to discuss postmodernity in the Japanese context inevitably faces the question of what modernity meant for a country like Japan which thrust itself into the project of modernization at a belated stage, from a non-Western, peripheral position in the world system. Modernism as the social, political or cultural projection of modernity also needs to be re-examined and re-defined in a broader historical and inter-cultural context. The emergence of the postmodernism debate has provided us with a new perspective to examine the concept of modernism in a non-Western culture, bringing to light the nature of the inherent contradictions in the term due to Japanese culture's particular geographical and historical setting. Unlike the *Arechi* poets or those who followed their position, we are no longer bound by a historical consciousness where a certain interpretation of the past will threaten or enhance one's own historical identity. We are now interested in a viewpoint from which the question of Japanese modernity can be examined in a broader context of world history, and through which we will be able to assess the relative positions of all those who strove to define their place in a culture that was undergoing a dramatic process of establishing a new identity in the modern world.

To say that we can now look at modernism from a postmodern perspective does not necessarily mean that Japan as the object of examination has now surpassed the modern. Even though we find in Japanese society today certain symptoms of a late-capitalist, post-industrial society, the critical approach taken in the recent postmodernist debate has in fact highlighted how the dilemma of Japanese modernity has remained unresolved. The Western discourse on postmodernism which attempts to provide a critique of its own socio-cultural foundation by probing into the assumptions behind the modern construction has shed light on the changing state of world culture where the applicability of the binary principle of the modern West versus the pre-modern non-West has been

called into question. The redrawing of the map of the global economy in recent years as a result of the significant accumulation of capital in certain non-Western countries as well as the flourishing of an information-based culture, one centre of which is Tokyo, has brought Japan into the discussion on postmodernism.[4] At the same time, the attempts to examine certain postmodern traits in Japanese society and culture have served to underline the ambiguities of Japanese modernism, which are directly linked to the conflicting status of Japanese modernity. The all-out thrust for modernization of the Meiji period, having paved the way for imperialism and ended in an overall defeat, led Japan in 1945 to embark on the creation of a "new" history through the appropriation of a new set of social and cultural norms provided by the victor states of the West. The relative success of economic rebuilding and democratization and the resulting emergence of a relatively affluent capitalist society may have worked in the popular consciousness to blur the darker memories of the first half of the Showa period. With the dynamic powers of accumulating wealth and the institutional framework for a democratic society having to a large extent been established, one can witness today a relatively stable configuration of modernization in Japan that has realised the primary condition for modernity. This, however, does not necessarily mean that Japan is now free from the historical predicament that accompanied the process of forging a new cultural identity under the threat of Western colonization, significantly relinquishing in the process the concern for its own cultural integrity. What has become possible now, rather, is to examine the nature of this predicament against the history of Japanese modernity in its full historical span. With the Showa period already more than a decade behind us, there is now enough distance to look back on this problematic era in its entirety. With the complete period visible in retrospect, we can re-examine the nature of the relationship between the "two halves"

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[4] See Toshiko Ellis, "Questioning Modernism and Postmodernism in Japanese Literature", Yoshio Sugimoto and Johann Arnason (eds), *Japanese Encounters with Postmodernity*, London: Kegan Paul International, 1995: 133-153.

of Showa.[5] Furthermore, we can now embrace a vision that encompasses the entire picture of Japan's modernization process from Meiji, Taisho to Showa, which, in turn, I believe, will also provide a new perspective for understanding Japan's contemporary social and cultural situation.

The perspective taken in this study is based on a general understanding of Japanese modernism as responses and reactions to the process of modernization. Poetic modernism, which will be our focus, will be viewed as one of the modernisms which represents the path of aesthetic self-projection against the rapid societal and cultural transformation that took place in Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other modernisms, whether political, social or philosophical, found expressions in their respective areas of activity, all of which reflect the struggle to cope with the newly emerging environment that abounded in elements symptomatic of the overall societal urge to break with its own traditions. There are parallels as well as tensions within these different areas of modernism, as all show a certain common tendency in reorientating themselves against the drastic circumstantial and ideological changes, and at the same time placing values in different areas that reflect their distinctive relevance to the process of modernization and the emergence of modernity. Even within aesthetic modernism, we can observe parallels and tensions between artistic and literary modernisms, and the same could be said about modernisms in prose and poetry within literary modernism. Although occasional references will be made to these varying modernisms, the central concern of this study will be limited to poetic modernism.

An examination of poetic modernism provides us with a working vision in mapping out the

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[5] Gluck, *Op.Cit.*, 18-19. Gluck introduces two scenarios explaining the place of prewar Showa in the entire process of Japan's modernization. The first is the "root theory", which contends that the modernity brought about by the Meiji government was deeply flawed, being unmodern at its very roots, and that postwar Japan had to start from scratch. The second scenario, the "stumble theory" sees a continuity in the whole process. According to this theory, Japan pushed itself along the track toward modernization, was "derailed" in the 1930s, "imperialistically tripping" over China, but was back on its track in the postwar era. Gluck notes that the second scenario has been gaining currency in recent years.

different types of modernist responses, particularly because most poets presented their works through coterie journals, which, seen in relation to one another, reveal the tensions among the conflicting self-projections within modernism. This can be seen more clearly in poetry than in prose, not only because of various poets' links with certain journals but also because works of poetry reflect in a more concise and direct way the poets' attitudes toward language and representation, which are closely linked to their understanding of the socio-cultural conditions in which their activities are pursued. It is also indicative of the poets' understanding of the significance of their position in relation to the larger historical context of their time.

Thus, I will be referring to modernism in the broadest sense of the term. As is discussed in the survey of the literature by Bradbury and McFarlane, the term modernism has been applied in a variety of contexts in a variety of different ways, as a mode of thinking, popular consciousness, particular artistic movements, particular stylistic devices, or even as a name given to a historical period.[6] As we have seen, the term has been applied in Japanese literary history in a rather arbitrary way, sometimes referring to a particular group of self-conscious modernists who were directly influenced by Western poetic modernism, sometimes used in reference to the mainly urban social and cultural trends in Japan in the 1920s and the 1930s. In the discussions to follow, I will use the term broadly to delineate the varying responses and reactions by Japanese poets of the 1920s and the 1930s to the process and the consequences of Japan's modernization and the cultural transformation that accompanied it.

It is significant to note here that this cultural transformation was not self-contained but, since the late nineteenth century, had been linked to the dynamics of the global intercultural configuration. The Japanese poets who sought for a new means of expression and a new self-identity in a culture in transition had to define themselves not only against their own society and culture but also against the world outside, which, as will be discussed later, predominantly meant the West, which had become

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[6] Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, "Name and nature of modernism", M.Bradbury and J.McFarlane (eds), *Modernism 1890-1930*, London: Penguin, 1976: 19-57.

the unavoidable "Other" to modern Japanese society and culture.

3) On the concept of modernism

In discussing poetic modernism, it is useful to consider what kinds of response are conceivable as a means of self-projection against the process and the institutionalization of social and cultural dernization. As Eysteinsson argues in his *Concept of Modernism*, there is an inherent tension between the two poles of interpretation of the concept of modernism: one view emphasises a revolutionary approach to language and innovations in artistic style, while the other views modernism as a new form of artistic consciousness linked to a new social awareness.[7] The former view, which has its roots in New Criticism, is predominant in the Anglo-Saxon modernist criticism centring around studies of the works of such theorists and poets as T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis, and of movements such as imagism and vorticism. According to this view, modernist works challenge the traditional understanding of the function of language, which assumes it to be a mere means of representing reality -- in other words, a system that follows and represents reality rather than precedes it. Modernists attempted to contest this assumption by constructing an autonomous realm of language through formalistic innovation. Their ultimate aim, therefore, was the liberation of art from reality and history. By contrast, the latter view of modernism places modernist poets at the point of contact between art and history, and assesses their activities in relation to the societal conditions in which they were undertaken. It does not look at modernist art as a product of society, for this would reduce its significance to a mere reflection of certain social conditions. Instead, it sees such art as a force working against existing societal and cultural values. Therefore, this view stresses the power of negation and resistance as the essential attribute of the modernist aesthetic. It also

[7] Astradur Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1992, Chapter Four "The avant-garde as/or modernism?": 143-178.

makes reference to the role of art in history, and questions the position of the artist in society. In other words, the social and historical dimension of art is its central concern. This view of modernism is commonly applied to the studies of avant-garde artistic movements such as futurism and dadaism that swept across the European continent in the 1920s.

That there is a fundamental tension between these two views of modernism is obvious. Whereas the first view with its emphasis on aesthetic autonomy sees successful works of modernism as pure formal constructions belonging to an ahistorical dimension, the principal concern of the second view is to situate modernism in history. Eysteinsson points out that it is more often in accordance with the first view that the word "modernism" is used, and that the term "avant-garde" is more commonly applied to the study of modernism based on the second understanding of the term. In his attempt to define the relationship between these contrasting views, Eysteinsson interprets the avant-garde as the "cutting edge" of modernism. It points toward the future, is constantly absorbed into the present, and becomes "modernism" as it ceases to be itself. At the same time, since he is reluctant to have the avant-garde viewed merely as a preparatory stage for modernism, Eysteinsson concludes his discussion by suggesting the possibility of locating certain aspects of the avant-garde -- which he refers to as "salient motors of modernism" -- in all modernist works. In short, he argues against any attempt to rigidly separate the two views.

In fact, although there is tension between these two understandings of modernism, they do not fundamentally contradict one another. The attempt to break down the communicative and semiotic norms of language in a quest for a new verbal construction unconstrained by reality, as emphasised in the first view, can be seen as an expression of a kind of cultural subversion stemming from a sense of crisis that the social and cultural order that has governed reality up to the present is being invalidated. On the other hand, the avant-garde artistic movements which embarked on projects to destroy the governing principles of the reigning social order also explored new ways of using the language, and thus demonstrated strong formalistic concerns, to express the chaos of the world and to present their

vision of the future. The desire to create a new form of language and the sense of crisis toward one's social and cultural environment are intertwined. The driving force for both of these movements lay in a shared awareness that their world was undergoing a transformation on a dramatic scale through which the very foundation of their civilization was being undermined. Both approaches reflect a sense of crisis about contemporary society, which was linked to a historical consciousness that the present period was a culmination of the past as well as a point in time where the disintegration of the past had become an irreversable reality and where a new beginning of the future would be marked.

Modernism in art, therefore, can be generally understood as a variety of aesthetic responses to social modernization, all of which in one way or other reflect the artistic vision of the social and cultural present as well as the artists' desire to realise a future which is imminent and yet uncertain by throwing themselves into the transitional process of their society. It is an aesthetic expression directly linked to social consciousness based on acute historical awareness. Even when the artists themselves are not conscious of the link between their work and the social conditions in which they are produced, in our definition of modernism, the work is inescapably a representation of the artists' understanding of society and of the manner in which they envisage their own position in it.

4) Modernism and tradition/modernism and nationalism

In order to clarify the specific link between modernism and modernization, a brief discussion on the relationship between modernism and tradition, and modernism and nationalism is called for. The link between these concepts will be of particular relevance to the discussion of modernism in the Japanese context.

Modernism, as is suggested by the name itself, is a concept that assumes a certain understanding of the relationship between the traditional and the modern. Saying that the modernists were those who sought to find an expression of the modern by revolting against tradition does not explain how

the tradition was negated or what exactly it was that was negated in the name of tradition. If tradition is understood to simply mean the prevailing social or cultural order or the dominant mode of expression of the time as seen in a certain artistic style or form, many other 'isms' preceding modernism could also be said to have established their identity by negating the specific tradition that governed their time. Is it possible, then, to say that modernism attempted to break with all the traditions of the past? Even this explanation is not entirely satisfactory, as this does not exclude the possibility that other artistic trends, that stressed the newness of their expression, have held a similar assumption. Neither does it explain what exactly constitutes the concept of tradition. It must first be noted that tradition does not necessarily mean a static set of values, and that it should rather be understood as a dynamic force which is constantly evolving and is being recreated as new works are produced. To draw from Eysteinsson's argument once again, this view of tradition, as eloquently expressed in T.S.Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent", seems effective in approaching the modernist attitude toward tradition, which is characterised by its concern for the concept of tradition itself. Evaluating Eliot's insightful view of tradition, Eysteinsson goes further by criticising Eliot's view as being too narrow in that his understanding of literary tradition isolates literature from other modes of consciousness and fails to look at literature in the larger context of cultural processes in history. A broader view of tradition, therefore, would see it as a historical force constituting varying modes of consciousness at varying levels of the cultural process, which functions as a constraining power in the genesis of new art. In concluding his explication on the concept of tradition, Eysteinsson introduces Raymond Williams' view of tradition, which emphasises that this historical force is not simply a product of the cultural process in general but that its production and reproduction are closely tied to the hegemonic powers of the society in question. In other words, what is referred to as tradition is always a selective tradition, that is, "an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present", which applies ideological pressure on the self-defining process of that

society.[8]

The above understanding of the concept of tradition is effective in defining the nature of the relationship between modernism and tradition. The characteristic aspect of the modernist rejection of tradition appears to lie in the way modernist art questioned the very meaning of tradition. What it strove to break down was not so much particular social or cultural values, that limited the freedom of its creative activities, but rather a broader historical force shaped by the dominant social and cultural ideology that worked to incorporate the new into the process of the creation of historical continuity. In this regard, modernism can be seen as a consciousness that strove to cut itself off from the force of history that shaped the past, imposed its values on the present and constrained the formation of the future. It was an attempt to break the continuity of the historical process of cultural formation and to create an entirely new history that responded to, and at the same time went beyond, the ruling construction of tradition. Whichever direction it pointed towards, the modernist world vision was a re-vision of the present, projected towards a future which promised an emancipation from all traditional forces.

Looking at the relationship between modernism and tradition in this way is useful in understanding the particular significance of tradition in the context of modern Japan. As I will discuss later, the Japanese modernists had to deal with tradition on two different levels, that is, the tradition that shaped Japanese society and culture up to the opening of the nation in the Meiji period, and the new modern tradition that exercised an overwhelming power on the framing of the nation's social and cultural identity in post-1868 Japan, which was a source of inspiration for the Japanese modernists as well as a threat to their self-integrity.

The question of the link between modernism and nationalism is more straightforward, as nationalism is closely tied to the process of modernization. The process of modernization is

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[8] *Ibid.*, 63-34. The quote is taken from Raymond Williams' *Marxism and Literature*.

inseparable from the emergence of a centralised state, which provides the framework for accumulating wealth and power to be utilised for its project of nation-building. In the case of Japan, the Meiji government's embarkation on the modernization of Japan was founded on the principle of *fukoku-kyohei*, which, literally translated, means "to prosper the nation and strengthen the military". In order to achieve this aim, the Meiji government laid out an institutional framework for education, economic development, social control and military conscription, by which the reach and efficiency of national power were delineated. At the same time, efforts were made to nurture a national consciousness amongst its people, so as to provide the people with a new national identity as opposed to the traditional mode of self-identification with one's local community. As Benedict Anderson argues, one of the crucial factors in the emergence of a modern state is the transferring of allegience from one's local community to the imagined community of the nation.[9] The people of Japan in the pre-Meiji period shared a relatively weak sense of national consciousness, as their lives were largely defined by the stratified constitution of the feudal state, within which social and political power was allocated to the individual lords of the administrative jurisdictions called *han*, who in turn exercised their power over the people. Despite efforts made by the Tokugawa regime to unite the nation by institutionalising the link between the individual *han* and the central government through, for example, the enforcement of the *sankin-kotai* system (all feudal lords had to spend alternate years in Edo where the central government was located) and the development of the infrastructure for transport and nationwide commerce, the social and political allegiance of the people largely remained with the local lords, through whom they defined their social position and identity.

As the sharing of a common national consciousness was seen to be essential to successfully establishing a modern nation, the Meiji government took various measures to achieve a national

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[9] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983.

identity. One of the most important in the process was the implementation of a syncretic-religious system which utilised the indigenous Shinto tradition, placing the emperor at the top of the social hierarchy to symbolically mark the central axis of the people's national consciousness.

Language was another issue central to the building of a modern nation and the nurturing of the people's national consciousness. From the very beginning of the launching of the modernization project, certain influential members of the Meiji government made various proposals to rationalize the language so as to create a "national language". A rather radical idea presented in 1872 by Mori Arinori, who was later to become the first minister of education, was to dispense with the Japanese language altogether and adopt English. Other proposals included the abolition or simplification of the *kanji* Chinese characters, using the Japanese *kana* syllabery or the romanized syllabery instead, the adoption of Esperanto etc.[10] Connected to this was the issue of how to fill the gap between the written/classic language and the spoken/vernacular language(s). Though various proposals were made by government-linked intellectuals in this regard as well, the actual attempts to fuse the two, which predominantly meant a positive application of the vernacular forms in the written language, were made by writers who were striving to give birth to a new kind of writing, to which the term *kindai bungaku* [modern literature] was later applied. This movement to fuse the two styles commonly came to be known as the *genbun'itchi* [unification of the spoken and written] movement and is generally seen to span over half a century, from the beginning of the Meiji period to the early 1920s when the colloquial style in writing was fully realized. A prose piece entitled *Ukigumo* [The drifting clouds] published between 1887 and 1889 by a writer deeply influenced by Russian literature, Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909), is generally regarded as a landmark in the advancement of this movement. It was about a decade after this, in the late 1890s, that government-linked

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[10] For details on the shifting language policies of modern Japan and their ideological implications, see Lee Yeounsuk, *Kokugo to iu shiso* [An ideology called national language], Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996.

intellectuals and influential linguists started to make serious attempts to incorporate this movement in the systematization of the national language. An awareness came to be shared that the unification of the written and spoken languages was essential for a successful operation of the modern state. It was also around this time that the "Tokyo language" came to be regarded as the most appropriate for providing the standard for the national language.[11] The consequences of the *genbun'itchi* movement on the Japanese literary scene will be examined in the following chapter.

What is worth noting in the present context is that the growing consciousness directed to the realization of a new national language emerged concurrently with an increasing awareness of a necessity to form a national culture. The word ***bunka***, a translation of the German word ***Kultur***, appeared for the first time in print in 1888, in an article written by Kuga Katsunan in *Tokyo Denpo*, a newspaper published mainly for the purpose of voicing a critical stance toward Westernization.[12] Notably, the word was used for the first time in a compound form, as ***kokumin-bunka*** [national culture]. The concept of "national culture" assumes as its opposite "foreign culture". The idea of a national culture distinctly different from various other cultures was beginning to permeate, but it was not until a little later that the word ***nihon-bunka*** [Japanese culture] came into general use. At this stage, what exactly constituted "national culture" was not clear, and the conception of "Japanese culture" in its totality was yet to be created.[13]

In literature as well, the term ***kokumin-bungaku*** [national literature] was commonly used before the notion of ***nihon-bungaku*** [Japanese literature] was established. It is significant, however, that as

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[11] *Ibid.*, 3-71.

[12] Only ten months after its first publication it was discontinued by Kuga, as he started another newspaper, *Nihon*, in 1889. *Nihon* continued its publication for 25 years.

[13] See Nishikawa Nagao, *Kokkyo no koekata* [How to cross national boundaries], Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1992: 172-205, 212-230.

early as 1890 the first attempt was made to write a "history of Japanese literature".[14] Entitled *Nihon bungaku-shi*, this two-volume publication opens with a discussion on "the origins" of Japanese literature, followed by references to a variety of writings in prose and verse in chronological order, considered by the author to be of major importance in the development of "literature" in Japan.[15]

I have thus far illustrated how the modernization process was accompanied by the growth of a national consciousness. This did not only mean the strengthening of a sense of nationhood. The growing sense of one's allegiance to the nation almost inevitably led to a search for a national identity, and the endeavours toward a creation of a national identity were always accompanied by the idea of cultural distinctiveness in relation to other cultures. Hence the inseparable relationship between modernism and nationalism. If we consider modernism as a response and reaction to this developmental process of a modern nation, intrinsic in this concept of modernism is the urge to define its qualities not only within the boundaries of the native soil but also against the wider world in which the nation is striving to establish its place.

In this sense, the modernisms of different parts of the non-Western world are invariably linked to nationalism. It is probably not coincidental, then, that modernist movements found more vivid expressions in the countries where the need for nation-building was felt more strongly, due to their belated launching of the modernization project. This study focuses on the Japanese case in particular,

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[14] *Nihon bungaku-shi* by Mikami Sanji and Takatsu Sukisaburo. For a detailed analysis of the publications dealing with Japanese "literary history", see Suzuki Sadami, *Nihon no bungaku wo kangaeru* [Thinking about Japanese literature], Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1994: 80-101.

[15] It should also be noted that the use of the word *bungaku* to mean "literature" can be traced to around this time. Even though the word had existed since the Tokugawa era, it had a much broader meaning and was used in reference to what is generally termed the "humanities" today. The first case of the contemporary use of the word can be traced back to the founding of "the Department of English Literature" and "the Department of German Literature" at Tokyo Imperial University in 1887. See Suzuki, *Ibid.*, 61-75.

but as I suggest in the following section, an examination of various modernisms in other East Asian cultures should provide an interesting comparison in this matter.

5) The Japanese encounter with modernity and its dilemma

Having broadly defined the concept of modernism and outlined the nature of its essential features, we can now proceed to examine modernism and its specific implications in the Japanese context. Because of modernism's close link with the process of nation-building, the modernist developments in various parts of the world differed significantly in their origin, the nature of their development and their modes of expression, depending on the nation's unique historical conditions. As Bradbury and McFarlane show, even within Europe, modernism takes on quite different characteristics and is also chronologically diverse if one compares modernism viewed from the New York-London-Paris axis and the modernisms centring around cities such as Berlin, Vienna, Copenhagen, Prague or St. Petersburg.[16] Naturally, modernism viewed from the Tokyo-Seoul-Peking axis would exhibit quite a different profile, not only because of their common belated embarkation on the modernization project but more significantly because the modernists in these cities were compelled to deal with another essential factor in their pursuit of modernist activities, that is, their culture's relationship with "the West". I am not equipped with sufficient knowledge to examine the conditions for modernist movements in Seoul, Peking or in other cities of Asia, but an examination of Japanese modernism will gain from studies on modernism in other cultures of Asia. Such a comparative approach will help formulate a wider interpretation of modernism approached from a non-European point of view.

As recent studies on the question of Japanese modernity have shown, the foundation for the Japanese experience of modernity was largely prepared during the latter half of the Edo Period. It is

[16] Bradbury and Mc Farlane, 1976 *Op.Cit.*, "Name and Nature of Modernism": 36.

safe to say, however, that Japan's decisive encounter with modernity, which triggered off the modernization process in all areas and at all strata of society, took place in the Meiji period when Japan opened itself to the Western world. With the clear objective of realising the transformation of Japan into a modern nation that would possess sufficient wealth and power to compete with the advanced nations of the West, the Meiji government initiated the institutionalization of modern social, political and economic systems based on Western models. The modernization project was enforced almost immediately after the inauguration of the new government in 1868 and, as noted earlier, was efficiently pursued in line with the central objective of "prospering the nation and strengthening the military". Being a nation with a non-Western tradition, embarking on a project which demanded the transformation of society into one that would possess the essential elements of advanced Western nations, Japan was compelled to present itself as a rapidly Westernizing nation devoting its energies to learning from and catching up with Western models. Much of the traditional aspects of Japanese society and culture were consciously left behind, at least on the institutional level, and tremendous efforts were made to restructure the entire nation socially, politically and economically. Paralleling this material and technical process of transformation, a new national consciousness was systematically implanted amongst the citizens. Though it drew on traditional beliefs and cultural sentiments, the emperor system and the state Shinto ideology were clearly modern constructs, which utilized the indigenous sources to facilitate the centralised nation-building process.

The question of relevance to the present study, which is often raised in recent discussions on Japan's encounter with modernity, concerns the relationship between Japan's modernization and the geo-political configuration of the world of the late nineteenth century, which set out the conditions for Japan's modernizing project. As has been widely argued, the notion of the modern is not simply a concept contrasted with the notion of the premodern in order to indicate a temporal transition from one state to another in accordance with a linear progression of history. The term modern has also functioned to delineate a distinctly nineteenth century Western perception of the world, which

assumed the division of the world into the modern and the non-modern, the West being the representation of the former and the entire ensemble of non-Western cultures falling into the latter category. Similarly, another assumption behind this dichotomous division of the world was that the West was to serve as the universal point of reference in relation to which all non-Western nations would recognise themselves as particulars. As Sakai Naoki has pointed out in his analysis of the concept of modernity, there is no inherent reason why this binary opposition between West and non-West should determine the geographic perspective of modernity other than the following reason: "that it definitely serves to establish the putative unity of the West, a nebulous but commanding p ositivity."[17] Despite the fact that the West is itself an arbitrary construction which embraces a limitless number of geographic particularities, it has become "a name for a subject which gathers itself in discourse" as well as "an object constituted discursively". Sakai thus argues:

> [The West] claims that it is capable of sustaining, if not actually transcending, an impulse to transcend all the particularizations. Which is to say that the West is never content with what it is recognized as by its others; it is always urged to approach others in order to ceaselessly transform its self-image; it continually seeks itself in the midst of interaction with the Other; it would never be satisfied with being recognized but would wish to recognize others; it would rather be a supplier of recognition than a receiver thereof.[18]

Hence, through its constant effort to be its own self by continually striving to transform itself "reflectively" through its interaction with the Other, the West came to believe that it represented "the moment of the universal under which particulars are subsumed". Sakai calls this process "a ceaseless process of self-recentering by the West".[19]

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[17] Sakai Naoki, "Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol .87, no.3, 1988: 476.

[18] *Ibid.*, 477.

[19] *Ibid.*, 497.

Japan in the late nineteenth century emerged on the world scene as a rapidly industrialising nation, aspiring to overcome its status as a latecomer. Its devotion to absorbing and adopting Western models of modernization as efficiently as possible came from a fear that it would be frozen into the sphere of the Other, as viewed from the dominant West. There lay a fundamental weakness in this scheme, however, as this way of competing with the West by adopting the means of modernization provided by the West left no room for Japan to pursue its own course for achieving modernity, that is, a course capable of integrating its indigenous social and cultural values nurtured through the centuries up to the opening of the nation. And yet, as the dominance of Western modernity and the geo-political configuration of the modern world had already been established, Japan had in reality no option but to carry out the modernization project within the framework of Western modernity. Consequently, the question of cultural integrity and historical continuity had to be suspended.

Naturally, this issue came to constitute one of the central concerns for Japanese intellectuals in the years to follow. How could Japan achieve modernization, using the models provided by the West, and stand on equal footing with the advanced Western powers without being caught in the Western order of modernity? As has been widely argued, the symbolic culmination of this concern is seen in the controversial "Overcoming of the Modern" conference of 1942, when a group of intellectuals attempted to overcome the very idea of modernity with all its contradictions, and thus to overcome Western dominance, which, in reality, led to a tacit agreement on intellectual support and cooperation with the state's imperialistic efforts. It is beyond the scope of the present study to analyse in detail the complex implications of this conference. For the purpose of the present discussion, I will simply point out that the limitations of this conference lay in the fact that these Japanese intellectuals failed to realise that they were working within the theoretical framework of the modern West and disregarded the fact that their theory would not threaten the "ubiquitous" existence of the West unless Japan "stood outside of the West". Drawing on Sakai's argument once again, the resistance shown by

non-Western nations to stop the expansion of the West was doomed to fail as this very resistance contributed to the completion of a Eurocentric and monistic world history. With the following quotation from Sakai's discussion on the historical significance of "the Orient", I will move on to explicate the main theme of this study and clarify the implications of the foregoing discussion for our understanding of the nature of Japanese modernism.

> The Orient is neither a cultural, religious, or linguistic unity, nor a unified world. The principle of its identity lies outside itself: what endows it with some vague sense of unity is that the Orient is that which is excluded and objectified by the West in the service of its historical progress. From the outset, the Orient is a shadow of the West. If the West did not exist, the Orient would not exist either...For the non-West, modernity means, above all, the state of being deprived of its own subjectivity.[20]

6) An overview of Japanese modernist movements

We have thus far seen how Japanese modernism was conditioned by specific historical and geographic factors related to Japan's position in the modern world. Whereas the central concern in Western modernism lay in its relationship with history and tradition, the main concern for Japanese modernists revolved around the question regarding the treatment of Japan's indigenous history and tradition in the process of social and cultural modernization.

The central aim of this study is to present a redefinition of Japanese modernism in the context provided above and to examine the works of some poets representing the major cultural trends of the time, with a particular focus on how they express the poets' vision of Japanese modernity. This does not necessarily require a detailed examination of the poets' personal accounts of their view of Japan's social, cultural or political situation. In many cases, the poets were not particularly conscious of their stance in relation to such matters, and it is often the case indeed that being a poet saved them from

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[20] *Ibid.*, 499.

having to articulate their views and make explicit their social, cultural, and particularly political, position. Yet, since no poet produces in a vacuum -- that is, without constantly engaging in the process of defining their position vis-a-vis wider society -- we can say that even those poets who spoke little of social or political affairs were expressing a clearly political attitude by the very fact that they showed indifference to politics. Similarly, with regard to those poets who did base their activities on a certain political vision, attention will be given not so much to what they actually said or tried to claim but rather to the aspects of their activities of which they were less aware, namely their position in the overall context of the poetic movements of the time and in relation to the dilemma of Japanese modernity.

This study will focus on the poets who were most active in the 1920s and the 1930s, a period where I find the dynamics of Japanese modernism working in the most illustrative way. Prior to the discussion on the individual poets, in the following section I will present an overview of the Japanese poetic scene of the 1920s and the 1930s to indicate how the inherent contradictions of Japanese modernity were demonstrated through the dynamic relationships between the different groups of poets, who strove to seek a solution to the problematic situation of their culture in varying ways.

The 1920s and the 1930s in Japan, roughly the late Taisho and early Showa periods, are known for the emergence of an urban mass culture of an unprecedented scale centred around the rapidly growing city of Tokyo. This was led by the generation born at the turn of the century, the second post-Meiji Restoration generation, who were more closely in touch with contemporary changes in Europe and North America than the generation before them. Various elements of everyday life newly introduced from the West, including Western fashions, customs and ideas, were quickly absorbed and integrated into the lives of the urban populace. As regards literature, first-hand knowledge of literary events as well as works freshly produced in the West became easily available through the development of a variety of media. Particularly important was the significant growth in commercial publishing, which promptly circulated information among the urban cultural circles.

The social position of poets and writers had also changed, as they were no longer tied to the privileged class of the well-educated, and had lost their status as cultural elites. "Literature" had rapidly developed into a self-generating and a self-regulating system, the dynamics of which centred on coteries founded around different journals. These literary groupings were rapidly growing in number, each responding idiosyncratically to the drastic changes in the social, political and cultural climate of Japan at the time. It should be noted, however, that the relationships between these coteries were by no means fixed. Not only were merging, renaming and dividing integral factors reinforcing the dynamism of these coteries, but with regard to membership as well, it often happened that the same poet's name appeared in more than one journal; furthermore, the "conversion" of a member from one coterie to another was also a common occurence.

One of the major streams is represented by the journals that advocated "l'esprit nouveau". In 1924, a journal called *A* was founded in Manchuria by Anzai Fuyue and his group.[21] The journal, produced in a land detached from traditional Japanese culture and started at a time when the significance of Manchuria for Japan was still vague enough for the poets to enjoy a sense of exoticism without linking it to the realities of imperialist aggression, sought to explore a new sensibility toward the external world through the experimental combination of non-traditional images. The last issue was published in 1927, four years before the Manchurian Incident. Four of the active contributors to the journal met again in Tokyo together with others in 1929, when the first issue of *Shi to Shiron* [Poetry and Poetics] was published. Advocating "l'esprit nouveau", the members of this journal devoted their energies to introducing avant-garde works from contemporary Europe and applying the ideas contained in them to their own works. Included in each issue of this journal were poems by its contributors representing imagist, surrealist, and cine-poetic attempts in Japanese poetry, as well as a large number of essays and articles on recent trends in art and literature in the

[21] The symbolic meaning of *A* will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

West. After a split that occurred within the group in 1932, when some of its members criticised the journal's orientation as representing petit-bourgeois ideology and lacking political awareness, *Shi to Shiron* changed its name to ***Bungaku*** [Literature] and continued until 1941.

The decade of the 1920s was also important for the rapid growth of proletarian thought in Japan. The "Japan Proletarian Literary Association" was founded in 1925 and was reorganised as "NAPF" [Nippona Artista Proleta Federacio] in 1928. Through its journal, *Senki* [The Fighting Flag], published between 1928 and 1931, the writers and poets of NAPF attempted to disseminate bolshevist ideology in Japan. Despite the government's repeated banning of its issues (eighteen times in total), the journal achieved a remarkable circulation figure of twenty-six thousand at its peak.

There was also a group of poets who can be broadly classified as anarchists. Though loosely knit, they formed a stream that rejected Marxist poetry's monolithic ideological vision, and its inclination to subordinate aesthetics to ideology. *Aka to Kuro* [Red and Black] and other journals were published in the early 1920s, and although most of them were relatively short-lived, they formed a significant counter-position to the Marxist-oriented forces.

Another notable poetic movement of the time was instigated by some poets who proclaimed the advent of futurism and dadaism in Japan. Their activities were rather sporadic in nature and did not develop into an organised and coherent program of any sort. Yet the dramatic impact of some of the futurists and dadaists on the Japanese cultural scene fuelled the "revolutionary" sentiment of the time. Of special importance was "MAVO", an avant-garde association of artists and poets, which was established in July 1923. The group's manifesto, prepared for the opening of their first exhibition, starts with the lines: "We are standing at the cutting edge. And will forever stand at the cutting edge. We are unrestrained. We are radical. We will revolutionalize. We will advance...". In 1924, amidst the ruins of the Great Kanto Earthquake, that had destroyed much of the city of Tokyo the previous year, the group launched the journal *MAVO*. Each of its seven issues was designed to shock readers

through its experimental approach to material, printing, layout, etc., breaking down the conventions of literary and art journals by combining poetry, paintings, and photographs in radically unconventional ways.

Apart from these various streams, which can be seen as expressing different responses to contemporary artistic movements in the West, there was also a movement created by poets who were more skeptical about the entire process of the adaptation of Western thought to Japan, and whose interest lay rather in reassessing traditional Japanese ideas, perceptions and sensibilities. Slightly later in time, in the early 1930s, many of these poets gathered around the journals that were eventually seen to represent Japan's "cultural renaissance". The first issue of *Cogito* appeared in 1932 and by the time of its demise in 1944, it had produced 146 issues. *Shiki* [The Four Seasons] was launched in 1933, and *Nihon Romanha* [Japan Romantic School] was published between 1935 and 1938.

Of the groups mentioned above, past and current discussions on modernism in Japanese poetry, especially in Japan, have concentrated on *A* as the forerunner of modernism and on *Shi to Shiron* [Poetry and Poetics] as its culmination. As I noted above, it has often been the case in Japanese literary history that the term "modernism" was applied specifically to the poets who pursued their creative activities under the direct influence of Western literary modernism. Many of the poets involved in *A* and *Shi to Shiron* were such poets, although, as we shall see later, they were not simply making Japanese versions of Western modernist poems but were struggling in varying ways to give authenticity to their works produced in an environment so different from that of their Western counterparts.

My contention is that all of these groups, including those who called for a return to tradition, were engaged in the process of presenting their own understanding of Japanese modernity. Common to all was an awareness that there was no longer a secure place for them to work in the existing social

or cultural system; that they themselves had to redefine their position and role in society as writers and poets. In doing so, there also arose an urgent need for them to come to an understanding of the position of Japan in the international context.[22]

The poets belonging to the first stream mentioned above, who called for "l'esprit nouveau" in Japanese poetry and who fervently produced Japanese versions of new poetic forms born in the West, seem to have shared a strong sense of contemporaneity with their Western counterparts. This does not mean, however, that their works were mere imitations of Western models: once their movement had taken off in Japan, it followed its own course, developing its own aesthetic standards and principles. For these poets, the dilemma of the modern had already been resolved: they felt they were working the same ground as their Western counterparts and producing works that were just as innovative and revolutionary. This sense of temporal contemporaneity was accompanied by a sense of spatial internationalism; for them, overcoming the cultural "time lag" suggested overcoming the notion of geographic distance.

This sense of contemporaneity and internationalism was also shared by the poets belonging to the proletarian streams, particularly the Marxist poets. Their major concern was to join in the international movement for the realization of a proletarian revolution. For them as well, the fact that Japan belonged to the non-Western bloc within the global system was of little concern. Intentionally or unintentionally, by cutting themselves off from the constraints of Japan's cultural past, many of the proletarian poets assumed a certain international identity. However, in the last stage of the movement, the problem of politics and culture became one of the central issues, and limited attempts

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22 The above discussion as well as the related discussion on the framework of Japanese modernity has appeared in Toshiko Ellis, "Nihon modanizumu no saiteigi: 1930 nendai sekai no bunmyaku no nakade"{"Redefining Japanese modernism in the international context of the 1930s"], *Modanizumu Kenkyu* [Studies on modernism], Hamada Akira (ed), Tokyo: Shichosha, 1994: 544-573; Toshiko Ellis, "The Japanese Avant-Garde of the 1920s: The poetic struggle with the dilemma of the modern", *Poetics Today*, vol.20, no.4 (Winter,1999): 723-741.

were made to pursue Marxist ideology through a form of cultural criticism.

Even though the "l'esprit nouveau" poets and the proletarian poets appear to represent opposing positions in their attitude toward poetic creation -- one aiming for poetic freedom of form through poetic revolution; the other advocating poetic engagement in society through revolutionary poetry -- they were strikingly similar in the way they defined themselves vis-a-vis the world at large. For each group, Japan's recent emergence from a cultural tradition fundamentally different from that of the West was not an impediment to their avant-garde project. By rejecting tradition, they negated not only the modernity of the post-Meiji period but also the entire cultural history of pre-modern Japan. Among the avant-garde groups, the dadaists and some of the anarchists were less concerned with the internationality of their activities, but they too were undismayed by the fact that modern Japan had been founded on an extremely precarious base constructed over a period of a little more than fifty years, and that beneath that base lay a long and deeply-rooted cultural tradition.

In sharp contrast to these avant-garde poets, who expressed little concern over the fact that the premodern tradition of their culture was being surrendered for the sake of a successful modernization, those poets who became associated with Japan's so-called "cultural renaissance" were more critical about the path Japan's modernization had taken. Their works exemplify a complex process of reestablishing traditional values in an environment which had already lost its historical continuity. The popularity of their journals in the early 1930s is commonly understood as reflecting the public's general swing back to traditionalism, associated with the upsurge of militarism. Yet, the double-edged nature of their view of Japanese tradition must not be underestimated. Many of the poets publishing in *Cogito*, *Shiki* [The Four Seasons] and *Nihon Romanha* [Japan Romantic School] were fully aware of the futility of any attempt to revitalise the past: as critical modernists, they sought for a means to evoke a lapsed tradition which they knew could not be regained. To follow the modern way suggested losing one's cultural identity; at the same time, trying to move backward only meant further subjugation to the modernizing ideology. In response, they diligently acquired the essentials of the

Western model while refusing to assimilate to it. The only option left for them, therefore, was to put on "a mask" of traditionalism, as a leading advocate of the movement put it, in order to present a critique of Japan's modernity. Many of their works are characterised by a strong sense of irony, evoking a hollow mirage of the lost tradition, or an image of the modern self captive in an unfamiliar landscape.

It is not conventional to include this last stream in the modernist framework. Their efforts were directed to searching for a means for resisting modernity. It is clear, however, that they were not simple traditionalists who believed in the possibility of going back to tradition. In a sense, they were more acutely aware of the impossiblity of emancipating themselves from the modern ideology than some of the Westernizers who had little doubts that the pursuit of modernization, and Westernization in the case of Japan, would lead to progress, liberation and the creation of a new world. It is also worth noting that this very act of questioning modernity can be seen to have a certain link with the general change in the social and cultural climate of Europe in the 1920s. In discussing the background to the rise of the Japan Romantic School -- the body responsible for the publication of the journal *Nihon romanha* -- Kevin Doak argues that the resurgence of interest in romanticism and ethnicity in Japan during the 1930s was closely related to the questioning of modernity that was occurring throughout Europe in the years following World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution.[23] It is also not coincidental that the advocates of Japan's "cultural renaissance" expressed a particular interest in the German romantics, who they saw as fighting against a threat of cultural hegemony, of France in particular, and striving to work towards a creation of a unified national culture.[24] In short,

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[23] Kevin Michael Doak, *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and the Crisis of Modernity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994: xx.

[24] *Ibid.*, xxxvi.

the attempt to present a critique of modernity itself has a "modern" origin, and in this sense, the Japanese poets belonging to this stream were indisputably anti-modern modernists.

It should be clear, then, why the high point of Japanese modernist movements should be located around this period when the second post-Meiji Restoration generation was most active. By this time, especially after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, there was a shared feeling among the people that the initial stage of modernization led by the Meiji government had been successfully completed. The basic infrastructure for a modern nation having been built, Japan had irreversibly become modern. At the same time, the devastating scene of Tokyo after the earthquake symbolically revealed the precarious nature of the entire process, quickly spreading among the people a sense of disillusion in the belief in progress, which had driven the entire nation toward modernization since the beginning of the Meiji period. It was also a time when it could no longer be denied that this initial success in modernizing the nation brought with it innumerable problems and contradictions. In other words, it was a time of self-reflection for Japanese, who could now look back on the fifty years of rapid social and cultural transformation and re-define the position of their society and culture. Hence, from the latter half of the 1920s through to the end of the 1930s, we see a variety of responses by poets and writers to the problematic situation of Japan's modernity. In relation to the point made earlier about the relationship between modernism and nationalism, this was a time when responses to the state-nationalism that dominated the Meiji period were most prevalent, which, in turn, promoted a kind of ethnic nationalism, or more broadly, a range of responses and reactions to the state of Japanese society and culture based on the newly founded idea of a national culture.[25]

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[25] On the relationship between state-nationalism and ethnic nationalism, see Doak, *Op.Cit.*, 1994: xv. Referring to Carol Gluck's analysis of the language of Meiji nationalism Doak aruges that whereas in the Meiji period, the terms ***kokka*** (state) and ***kokumin*** (nation) were inseparable in the sense that "invocations of nation included the effort to draw all the people to the state", by the early Showa period, from the late 1920s onwards, the two terms began to present distinctly different connotations, often causing a tension between them.

## Chapter Two:

## Hagiwara Sakutaro and the discovery of the modern landscape

### 1) The founding of the modern poetic tradition

As is the case in any area of cultural production, the break with traditional forms and styles in Japanese poetry went through several stages during the Meiji period. After the initial turmoil following the institutional and governmental changes of the Meiji Restoration subsided, efforts were made from around the early 1880s to translate works written in European languages into Japanese as well as to create original works in Japanese based on those models. The 1882 publication of *Shintaishi-sho* [A selection of new-style poetry] marked the beginning of "modern poetry" in Japan. This collection was compiled by three academics who held teaching positions at Tokyo Imperial University, none of them in areas related to literature but who shared a common interest in Herbert Spencer's theory of evolution. The collection consisted of nineteen poems, fourteen of them translations from English, American and French poems and five originally composed by the editors. Also in the 1880s, we see the publication of two collections of translations of Christian hymns, and another collection of translations of European poems (Goethe, Heine, Shakespeare, Byron etc.) entitled *Omokage* [Vestiges] by Mori Ogai, who was then becoming one of the leading figures in the newly emerging literary circles. This last collection was received with much higher praise than the first, particularly for its graceful style, and inspired many younger budding poets to create works in a similar style.

The most significant aspect of these publications lies in the fact that the poems, whether original or translated, were written not in the traditional *tanka* (31 syllables) or *haiku* (17 syllables) style but in the "new style", the main feature of which was freedom in length. There did exist longer forms of

poetry in the pre-Meiji period as well, *choka* and *kanshi*, but the composers of "new-style poetry" were reluctant to apply these forms to their works, even though certain traces of these styles can be seen in the works they produced.[1]

The reason why the two dominant traditional poetic forms, *tanka* and *haiku*, were abandoned as a possible base for the development of modern poetry requires no explanation: it was simply impossible to render into Japanese even the basic content of Western poems in such a restricted form. The issue, rather, was whether or not to abandon the traditional forms altogether and concentrate only on writing poems in the "new style". As a discussion on the relationship between the three poetic styles is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will only mention that through an active reform movement, both *tanka* and *haiku* were successfully revitalised, and still hold a significant place in the Japanese poetic scene today.[2]

As *tanka* and *haiku* retained their traditional names, "new-style poetry" eventually came to be simply called "poetry"[*shi*]. By around the turn of the century, many original works in the new style were being produced. The publication of Shimazaki Toson's *Wakanashu* [Collection of young leaves] in 1897 contributed greatly to the establishment of new poetry as an independent genre. This collection fascinated many young Japanese with its lyrical tone and was highly praised for what seemed then an astonishing mastery of style, with each line consisting of a pair combination of seven and five syllables.

If the above can be considered the first stage in the development of modern Japanese poetry, in

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[1] *Choka* (meaning long poem) is a poetic form dating back to the eighth century, which gradually lost popularity as *tanka* became more and more dominant. *Kanshi* refers to poems in classical Chinese, which had maintained their place in Japan's poetic tradition throughout the centuries.

[2] I have touched on this point in the Introduction as well, particularly with regard to the point that many of the prominent female poets wrote in the *tanka* style.

the next stage various attempts were made in exploring new forms, new rhythmic styles and new themes. Experiments with syllabic structures free from the classical pairing of seven and five syllables gave birth to a variety of poems with unconventional rhythmic structures. As regards poetic forms, some poets seriously explored the possibility of creating sonnets and ballads in Japanese. However, probably the most important contribution to determining the direction of modern Japanese poetry can be attributed to the publication of *Kaichoon* [Sound of the tide] by Ueda Bin in 1905. This is a collection consisting of fifty-seven translations of works by twenty-nine parnassian and symbolist poets, fourteen of them French, and the impact it had on the Japanese poetic scene was enormous. Symbolism quickly came to constitute the dominant stream in Japanese poetry, bringing to the fore poets such as Kanbara Ariake, Miki Rofu, Susukida Kyukin and Kitahara Hakushu.[3]

By the time works by these poets were appearing, around 1910, the idea of "modern poetry" had sufficiently penetrated into the Japanese literary vocabulary to establish the validity of its existence as opposed to the traditional forms of *tanka* and *haiku*. It had now emerged as an independent genre, and it was a matter of choice whether to become a *tanka* poet, a *haiku* poet, or simply a poet, that is, a "modern" poet.[4] With the end of the Meiji period in 1912, a general sense began to prevail, especially in the urban areas, that the period of state-controlled modernization supported by a rigidly structured social system with a strong government at the top was coming to a close. With various channels for receiving information on Western cultural trends opening up at a dramatic speed, the

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[3] It is beyond the intention of this thesis to examine the works of these "symbolist" poets. It should be mentioned, however, that the understanding of what constituted symbolist poetry diverged greatly, and accordingly, the resulting products of these poets reveal significant differences in style, thematic construction and approach to language. Despite its overwhelming popularity among the poets, symbolism in Japan never developed into an organised movement.

[4] As we shall see in the case of some modernist poets, it was quite common for a poet to start as a *tanka* or *haiku* poet and switch over to modern poetry at some early stage in his career. It was quite exceptional in those days, however, for a poet to be engaged in the creation of more than one style of poetry at the same time.

younger generation experienced much less the shock of the newness and foreignness of the products of "modern" Western culture compared to those who had lived through the Restoration. In terms of Japan's position in the world, Japan was by then thoroughly incorporated into the modern world system: not only had the fear of being colonized diminished to a large extent; by this time Japan had experienced victories in two external wars and was beginning to present itself as a nation eager to follow the principles of modernity -- and imperialism, as one major form of its manifestation. In short, the fifteen years of the Taisho period, from 1912 to 1926, can be characterised by the dramatic spread of a liberal atmosphere at the level of popular culture, and a steady build-up of an imperialistic national consciousness at another level, the bearers of which were as yet unclear.

It is against such a background that we observe the next stage of development in modern Japanese poetry. The period of learning and absorbing was gradually being concluded. The new poetic style had sufficiently taken root in the modern tradition of Japanese poetry, and the poets' interest shifted from simply bringing in models from the West and experimenting with how they could be applied to create a new kind of poetry, to a more self-initiated search for the creation of an indigenous modern poetic form.

We should bear in mind here that the *genbun'itchi* movement [the movement for the unification of written/classical language and the spoken/vernacular language(s)] which I explained briefly in the previous chapter, was coming to the fore at this time. Under the influence of the Japanese version of naturalism, which was then gaining ascendency among prose writers, some poets were trying to write in the style of the spoken language, with a free syllabic structure and graphically realistic images.

Hagiwara Sakutaro (1886-1942) emerged in the modern Japanese poetic scene around this time. Since his high school days, he had been writing *tanka* poetry for more than ten years. In 1913 he compiled his *tanka* works into a small handmade volume and switched over to modern poetry.

Hagiwara's reason for giving up *tanka* is not clear, but his contact with modern poetry through certain literary journals must have been one factor. He made his first attempt to write modern poetry, and the first five pieces he wrote, all in the classical literary language but with a free syllabic structure, were accepted with enthusiasm by some of the contemporary poets, one of whom was Kitahara Hakushu, one of the followers of the symbolist trend in modern Japanese poetry. In the following year Hagiwara was already freely using the colloquial style in his works, and with the publication of his first collection, *Tsuki ni hoeru* [Howling at the moon], in 1917, he found himself at the centre of attention in the contemporary poetic circles as "the new poet" of the age. *Howling at the Moon*, together with his second collection, *Aoneko* [The blue cat], published in 1923, ensured Hagiwara Sakutaro's lasting reputation as the founder of free-verse, colloquial poetry in Japanese.

In this chapter I will focus on the poetic works of Hagiwara Sakutaro, but it is not because he perfected this new poetic style. The stage reached in the development of modern Japanese poetry in the late 1910s not only meant maturity of form and style but also, and more importantly, we find around this time a fundamental turn in the mode of perception -- what I might refer to as an internalization of modernity -- and this, I believe, was achieved by Hagiwara.

2) Hagiwara Sakutaro's discovery of the modern self

Let us begin with one of Hagiwara's earliest pieces. Though written in the classical language, the theme dealt with in this short piece is definitely modern. The piece is entitled "Still life" ["Seibutsu"] and appeared in a literary journal in 1914.[5]

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[5] "Seibutsu" first appeared in *Sosaku*, vol.4, no.7 in July, 1914 and was included in *Junjo shokyoku-shu* [A Collection of Innocent Tunes] published in 1925. *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu* [Complete works of Hagiwara Sakutaro], Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1975, vol. 2: 17. All the citations of Hagiwara's work are taken from this collection.

The heart of the still life is burning with anger
Its surface is sad
Reflected on the white eye of this vessel
The green near the window side looks cold.

Partly for its brevity and probably partly because it is such a puzzling piece, this poem never attracted much attention either from Hagiwara's contemporaries or from later critics.

What is being described here is obviously not the emotion of a white vessel placed near the window. The vessel sits quietly near the window in front of the poet, and the green of the trees outside is reflected on its white surface. But what about the anger and sadness? The reason why one feels puzzled on the first reading of this poem is because there is a confusion in the relationship between the observer and the observed: the vessel which is the object of perception, takes over, for a moment, the position of the subject. The anger and sadness belongs to the one who is observing the vessel; so does the "heart" and "surface" opposition. It would not make sense to say that the vessel has been personified and that the poet is trying to express the emotions of the vessel in its place. Rather, it is the relationship between the two which constitutes the central theme of this poem. It is trying to grasp the moment of shock when the subject/object relationship becomes conscious. In this poem, because the poet-observer becomes so conscious of his observing self, he feels that he is being watched by the vessel -- hence the vessel has "eye(s)". As he continues to stare at the vessel, he sees in it, or in the process, the entire projection of his observing self, with its dual heart/surface structure and its respective emotions, the anger inside and the sadness outside.

It is suggestive that the piece is entitled "Still life". Interestingly, "still life" in English implies that something innately animate is frozen into stillness; similarly in French, "la nature morte" can be read as "dead nature". "*Seibutsu*", the word for "still life" in Japanese -- which was a word created after the importation of Western artistic terms -- directly translated means "still thing" (*sei*=still,

*butsu*=thing), but Hagiwara aptly read in it the implication that it is an object of gaze: the artist's eye is fixed on the object as he tries to grasp its form in its stillness; and in the process of representation faces his own inner self.

In sum, this is a poem about the discovery of the modern subject. Hagiwara has found in himself the eyes of a modern man who separates himself from the outside world. Furthermore, he recognises that this subjective self has an interior, and that tension is created between the "surface" and the "heart". Strictly speaking, such a sense of the subject was unknown in the premodern Japanese literary tradition. Before going into this point further, I will introduce one more poem by Hagiwara, which eloquently expresses the shock of the discovery of the modern subject.

The piece is entitled "The reason why the man inside looks like a disfigured invalid" ["Naibu ni iru hito ga kikei na byonin ni mieru riyu"] and is included in *Howling at the Moon*.

I am standing by the window behind the lace curtain,
that's the reason why my face is looking a little blurred.
I have a telescope in my hand,
and with it I am looking far away.
Dogs and sheep made of nickel,
and the grove where the bald-headed children are walking,
that's the reason why my eyes are looking somewhat hazy.
I ate too many cabbage dishes this morning.
On top of that this window glass is very coarsely made,
that's the reason why my face looks so terribly distorted.
To tell you the truth,
I am in fact too healthy indeed,
but why, why are you staring at me from over there?
Why are you laughing at me in such an eerie way?
Ah, if it's about the part of me below the waist,
if you are saying that that part of me is not so clear,
it's a rather ridiculous question but,
of course, that is, because along the wall of this pale window,

I am standing in the interior of the house.[6]

The entire piece resists the flow of a smooth, lyrical rhythm and is consciously made prosaic; and towards the end, after line 13 ("but why, why are you staring at me...), the rhythm is somewhat precipitated, as if to express the "I"'s bewilderment at the notion of someone looking back at him.

After reading "Still life", it is easy to see why this second poem had to be written by Hagiwara, and why it was produced at the moment when modern Japanese poetry was undergoing a fundamental shift in the use of language and the mode of representation. The whole piece is about the sense of awkwardness in "I"'s discovery that by trying to observe, he is alienated from the outside world. "I", who is standing inside the house, is separated from his own vision: the lace curtain, a telescope, the coarsely-made glass, all stand in the way of "I" establishing a transparent relationship with the outside world. He tries to see, but his eyes are "somewhat hazy", and the scene outside is completely defamiliarised: dogs and sheep are "made of nickel", the children walking in the grove are "bald-headed". Furthermore, he comes to realise that it is not only the objects of his perception that have come to take on an unfamiliar appearance but that his own situation is somewhat strange. He has eaten too many "cabbage dishes", whatever they are (in the earliest version it is "shellfish dishes"), and is feeling not quite like his normal self; his face is "a little blurred" -- in fact looks "terribly distorted". And at that moment, he finds that there is someone looking at him intensely from the other side of the window. This is probably a projection of his own self, conscious of the existence of the subjective "inner self" that feels hopelessly alienated from the world outside. He feels extremely uneasy about the whole situation and hastily explains with a rather humorous and clumsy logic that all this confusion comes from the fact that he is "standing in the interior of the

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[6] The piece first appeared in *ARS*, vol.1, no.3, June 1915. *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.1: 49-50.

house". The poet has consciously chosen the word "interior" (*naibu*) in the title and the last line instead of simply saying "inside" (*naka*). It suggests that this piece is not about the physical separation of the man from the outside world but that this sense of dissociation is rather of an ontological nature.

Karatani Kojin in his widely read *Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen* [The Origins of Modern Japanese Literature] argues that there was a decisive "epistemological shift" (or a "semiotic inversion") in Japanese literature around the end of the nineteenth century.[7] He calls this "the discovery of landscape". By this he means that around this time "the exterior" was discovered for the first time in Japanese literature, which occurred simultaneously with the discovery of "the interior" -- or "the inner man". Karatani refers in particular to a prose piece by Kunikida Doppo entitled *Wasureenu hitobito* [Unforgettable people], published in 1898, as marking the decisive moment in this epistemological turn.[8] In this piece a man finds a nameless man in a distant landscape "unforgettable", as he senses a decisive distance and at the same time an inexplicable feeling of closeness to an existence so detached from his own. The scene, which would otherwise have passed in front of his eyes unrecognised, becomes defamiliarised and manifests itself as something totally new, stirring his deeper emotions. This was in fact the moment when the observing man found his inner self separated from the exterior world: in other words, subjectivity was "discovered". According to Karatani, the establishment of this subject/object relationship was only made possible through the invention of a mode of perception that grasps the exterior as "landscape", that is, as something that stands in its own right, unrelated to the subjective self, as a defamiliarised object. This, he contends, lies at the base of the Western notion of modernity, its origin going back to the

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[7] Karatani Kojin, *Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen* [The origins of modern Japanese literature], Tokyo: Kodansha, 1988, Chapter One, "The Discovery of Landscape": 9-50.

[8] *Ibid.*, 24-29.

invention of the geometrical perspective in the wake of the fall of the medieval perception of the world. In Japan, such a mode of perception had to be newly discovered with the advent of modernity. Though the anticipatory shifts can be traced to as early as the late Edo period, it was around the turn of the century that this new mode of perception found its means of expression in literature. The programme of the *genbun'itchi* movement, that allowed writers to create a new written language free from the conventions of the writing styles of the pre-Meiji period, no doubt had an effect in prompting this shift. The decisive shift was first observed in prose. And it was around the time that Hagiwara wrote the above poems that this fundamental epistemological inversion occurred in poetry. I see this as the moment when modernity was internalised in Japanese poetry.[9]

As a supplementary discussion on the above point, I will briefly describe what had been the dominant mode of literary representation in Japan in the premodern period. This in fact has relevance to our later discussion on Japanese modernists as well, as we will observe that in the late 1930s, in increasingly constricting social circumstances, many modernists switched back to this traditional mode of representation; a change which can be interpreted as marking the abandonment of the effort to retain one's subjectivity in the face of the emergence of an oppressive cultural climate that urged the individuals to speak in a monolithic voice.

Essentially, the traditional mode of representation relied on topics, or established poetic images,

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[9] Many poets before Hagiwara wrote works that contain expressions embodying the modern notion of the self. As Leith Morton argues, modernity is manifested in the works of fin-de-siecle poets such as Yosano Akiko and Yosano Tekkan, who proudly expressed their individuality in their *tanka* poems centring on the theme of free love. See Morton, Leith Douglas, "The aesthetics of modernism: the case of fin-de-siecle Japanese poetry", unpublished paper given at the Comparative Literature and Culture Seminar at the University of Tokyo, September 4, 2001. A similar argument can be made with regard to a number of other free-verse poets before Hagiwara, including his immediate predecessor, Kitahara Hakushu. I wish to stress, however, that the epistemological shift in the idea of the subject as described here did not occur until around this time and was closely linked to the invention of the colloquial free-verse style. It is not coincidental, then, that similar features can be observed in the works of another poet known for the creation of the colloquial free-verse style, Kawaji Ryuko, whose earliest pieces were written at around the same time as Hagiwara's.

which constituted an extensive set of rhetorical codes for poets to draw on in creating the *tanka* of their own age. The reliability of this set of codes is secured by constant references back to their past usages. Every time a familiar topic is re-activated in the literary context of a certain age, it is echoed by innumerable references to the past works which dealt with a similar topic. Various contexts of the past usages are revived; consequently, the poet finds himself working amidst an intense network of citations, and the individual poet's "here" and "now" are instantly dispersed and intermingled with the experiences of countless poets of the past. The poets' efforts were thus concentrated on seeking new sensibilities and expressions within existing topics by making the most effective use of associations and connotations related to the topic. The presentation of an unmediated response to the object of perception had no relevance in Japanese literary tradition.[10]

Having looked at one of the fundamental characteristics of classical Japanese poetry, it should now be easy to see why the discovery of the modern landscape was so essential to the development of modern Japanese poetry. Certainly, "landscapes" abounded in traditional Japanese literature and also in paintings, too. But in the traditional mode of representation the landscapes existed before the poet found them; that is, the poet would employ the most appropriate "landscape topic" available in expressing a particular emotion or sensibility. Each landscape was a concept, rich in connotations, which presented itself in a highly stylised manner. Take, for example, a scene of a bamboo grove: it always consisted of a group of bamboos; no poet ever looked at how a single bamboo stood on the ground, or at the individual shape or colour of its leaves. And when there was a bamboo grove

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[10] For further reading on the development of this tradition in Japanese poetry, see Kawamoto Koji, *Nihon shiika no dento: shichi to go no shigaku* [The tradition of Japanese poetry: the poetics of seven and five syllables], Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991, Chapter One, "Autumn Dusk". The English translation is *The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure, Meter* (translated by Stephen Collington, Kevin Collins, and Gustav Heldt), Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 2000. Kawamoto presents a detailed and systematic analysis of the fundamental structure of classical Japanese poetry by examining the evolution in the connotative meaning of "autumn dusk", one of the most important topics in Japanese poetic tradition.

nearby, one would expect to hear the sound of the wind rustling through the leaves. Furthermore, the tone of the sound would always be low, and almost without exception evoke a certain sense of loneliness. By contrast, in the case of a "modern landscape" the poet exists before the landscape. It is the poet who creates the landscape to give it meaning. What had been nothing but a "scene" before the poet's eyes suddenly becomes a "landscape" when the poet places his subjective self at the centre of perception. The poet's individual gaze constitutes the subjective focus of the entire vision, and the creation of a new reality. It is an original reality that comes into existence the moment the observer defamiliarises it, as we saw in Karatani's example of the discovery of the modern landscape.

If we look at the development of modern Japanese poetry during the Meiji period, we find that in spite of the vigorous attempts to import new forms and styles in order to create a new tradition of modern Japanese poetry, the fundamental mode of representation changed little for the first few decades. Even when some poets experimented with new and "modern" themes in their works, it was often the case that the themes were quickly reduced to the familiar "topics" of the past literary tradition and were represented together with the traditional images of connotation-rich landscapes. The situation changed somewhat with the introduction of symbolist poetry, but much of the energy of Japanese symbolist poets was poured into the experimentation with the function of language, and the problem of the self as subject did not arise as their major concern.

As noted earlier, Hagiwara made a sensational debut with the publication of *Howling at the Moon*. But in fact, in some of his earliest poems, written just after he abandoned writing *tanka* and before he started writing the pieces that would later be compiled into *Howling at the Moon*, there are examples of his use of the traditional rhetorical devices to express his emotions. In "At the beach" ["Hamabe"], for example, we [illegible] wing lines:

The afternoon when the sky is clear with the hue of blue
The sea is moist with my tears

The moist waves undulate to and fro

(...)

A seagull goes past beyond the horizon afar.[11]

This is definitely not a modern landscape. The image of the undulating waves at the seaside had been used by countless poets of the past to evoke a feeling of sadness and loneliness; as had the rhetorical device of superimposing the image of one's tears on the sea waters. To complete this rhetorical chain of images, Hagiwara places the image of a bird flying over the sea, one of the most favoured "landscape topics" in the *tanka* tradition for presenting a scene filled with a sense of desolation.

While still writing a poem such as this, Hagiwara was experimenting with a poem like "Still life", through which he tried to tackle the problem of the modern subject. Hagiwara's poetic activities span the early years of Taisho to the end of the first decade of Showa, respectively marked by *Howling at the Moon* of 1917 and *Hyoto* [*Iceland*] of 1934.[12] He was active in the literary circles of the late 1930s as well, but he devoted his energies to writing aphorisms, essays and literary criticisms and never went back to writing poetry. I will not be able to present a comprehensive picture of his poetic career, but will confine myself to a few examples of his works, which mark the turning points in the evolution of his poetry and are of particular relevance to the present study, because they correspond to the changes in Hagiwara's relationship with modernity. Hagiwara's entire poetic career can be seen as a record of his struggle to come to terms with modernity, the gradual but steady exhaustion in the attempt, and the final decision to withdraw from it. The poets I will be discussing in the following chapters, particularly those who were active in the early 1930s, started from the point where Hagiwara failed. Even the dadaists of the early 1920s would not have written the works they

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[11] This poem first appeared in Sosaku, vol.3, no.4 in November 1913. *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.2: 21-22.

[12] A direct translation of *Hyoto* would be "Ice Island". Hagiwara, however, used the English title "Iceland" on the front cover of the collection when it first came out.

did had Hagiwara's experiments with the representation of the modern self in poetry not preceded their awakening.

3) Hagiwara Sakutaro's struggle with the modern landscape and his eventual retreat

In light of the previous discussion on Hagiwara's discovery of the modern landscape, I will cite two examples to illustrate the typically "modern" features of his landscape. Firstly, "Bamboos" ["Take"], taken from *Howling at the Moon*:

From the gleaming earth surface bamboos grow,
Green bamboos grow,
Under the earth grow bamboo roots,
Roots gradually becoming finer,
From the root tips cilia grow,
Cilia faintly blurry grow,
Faintly trembling.

From the hard earth surface bamboos grow,
Sharp on the ground bamboos grow,
Straight at full speed bamboos grow,
The frozen joints with force and elegance,
Under the blue sky bamboos grow,
Bamboos, bamboos, bamboos grow.[13]

This is a piece which is particularsly hard to render into another language, for the effect of the

[13] For the translation of this poem, I have referred to Sato Hiroaki, *Howling at the Moon*, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1978. There are two other major translations of Hagiwara's poetry into English, which are: *Face at the Bottom of the Earth and Other Poems*, translated by Graeme Wilson, Rutland; Tokyo: C.E. Tuttle, 1969, and *Rat's Nests: The Poetry of Hagiwara Sakutaro*, translated with detailed notes by Robert Epp, UNESCO Collection of Representative Works; Japanese Series, Stanwood WA: Yakusha, 1999. The original text is from *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.1: 21-22.

entire poem depends heavily on its rhythm created by a carefully structured pattern of rhyming and alliteration. We can tell immediately, however, that there is a striking feature which makes this poem distinctly different from numerous other bamboo poems written before it: the poet has concentrated on the bamboos in motion. Of course, the bamboos are not actually sprouting and growing in front of the poet. But in his gaze, the poet has "seen" the intrinsic energy and drive in the bamboos to shoot up. Bamboos are known for their speed of growth, as can also be seen in the etymological origin of the word: a shortened form of *taka-hae*, that is, "grow high".[14] As I noted earlier, bamboos were a commonly used image in traditional Japanese poetry and were most typically recognised in their collective form, as a grove. It was a favoured backdrop for a lonely landscape in which the sound of the rustling leaves heightened the sense of bleakness. No one before Hagiwara had seen a bamboo as a plant bursting with energy to grow. Cutting himself off from the traditional mode of perception, Hagiwara "saw" the bamboos for the first time, in other words, the scene of a bamboo grove was defamiliarised and became a landscape. It might also be mentioned that a trace of Hagiwara's interest in futurism can be seen here. Futurism had already come to attract the attention of some poets around this time, and Hagiwara was one of them. His repeated attempts to represent an object of perception in motion in many of the pieces written around this time (though most of them were excluded from the compilation of *Howling at the Moon*) demonstrate his interest in applying one of its techniques to his poetry.[15]

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[14] For a detailed analysis of this and the following poem, see Kishida Toshiko, *Hagiwara Sakutaro: Shiteki Imeeji no kosei* [Hagiwara Sakutaro: the composition of poetic images], Tokyo: Chusekisha, 1986.

[15] The influence of futurism on Hagiwara's early works is also discussed in Toshiko Kishida, *Ibid.*. Also, for a more detailed discussion on this piece, particularly on the relationship between Hagiwara's use of the image of bamboos and the emergence of nationalism, see Ellis Toshiko, "Shiteki kindai no sohatsu: Hagiwara Sakutaro ni okeru shi no araware" ["The creation of poetic modernity: the emergence of poetry in Hagiwara Sakutaro"], *Sohatsu-teki Gengotai* [Autopoiesis],

The point I emphasised in the previous section -- that the discovery of a modern landscape went together with the discovery of the modern self -- can be seen, albeit indirectly, in this poem as well. The last half of the first stanza, where references are made to the trembling growth of bamboo roots, has often perplexed literary critics. Because of the frequent use of this kind of image, Hagiwara has often been called a visionary. However, in line with the previous discussion on the heightening of self-consciousness as a result of the discovery of the exterior, we can read these lines as a metaphorical expression of the interior, that is, as a reflection of the poet's sharpened sense of his inner state, condensed in the image of trembling nerves. In another well-known piece entitled "A Sick Face on the Bottom of the Earth" ["Jimen no soko no byouki no kao"], written at around the same time, a morbid image of fine, trembling hair surrounding a sick man's face reflecting on the earth dominates the vision. Also in "Dawn" ["Ariake"], the central image consists of a figure of a man whose face is covered with cobwebs and from whose body grassy plants are growing. His hands are "rotten" (*kusare*) and his whole body is "a complete mess" (*jitsuni mechakucha ni nari*). In traditional Japanese poetry, there is virtually no example of a description of a human body.[16] A poem such as "Dawn" is an unmistakably "modern" product, which could have been written only after one had become conscious of the existence of the "inner man" in himself. Moreover, it is of interest that this image of a man's face covered with cobwebs, rapidly on its way to a complete disintegration, shows a striking anticipation of some of the images in the works by French surrealists, particularly those of Andre Masson.

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Fujii Sadakazu and Ellis Toshiko (eds), Shiriizu Gengotai [Praxis of language], vol.2, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2001: 97-116. See also Tsuboi Hideto, *Hagiwara Sakutaro-ron: "Shi" wo hiraku* [Hagiwara Sakutaro: unfolding "poetry"], Tokyo: Izumi Shoin, 1989: 57-92.

[16] I have also discussed the relationship between the poetic expression of the body and the emergence of modernity in Ellis Toshiko, *Ibid.*, 2001.

"The substance of spring" ["*Haru no jittai*"], also from *Howling at the Moon*, demonstrates how radically the traditionally favoured images were broken down in the early works of Hagiwara, creating a completely original landscape of nature.

With myriads and myriads of insect eggs,
The spring has swollen full,
Really, if you look around,
It's packed with eggs of this sort, everywhere.
Have a look at the cherry blossoms,
You see in them too, these transparent eggs spread all over,
In the willow branches too, of course,
Even the creatures like moths and butterflies,
Their thin wings are shaped by these eggs,
And so they glitter and glitter, brightly like that.
Oh, these imperceptible,
Faint existence of eggs, are elliptical in shape,
Squeezing and pushing each other through the entire space,
Having spread and filled the air,
It's become hard like a fully blown up rubber ball,
Poke it carefully with your finger tip,
The substance of what is called spring lies somewhere around here more or less.[17]

The most typical features of spring -- cherry blossoms, willow trees, butterflies -- are all present. However, they are deprived of their traditional contextual meaning and are reflected in the poet's eyes as something totally strange, even grotesque. The traditional connotation of cherry blossoms as delicate and frail, the falling petals reminding humans of the brevity and evanescence of their existence, is completely absent. These cherry blossoms, instead of shedding their petals, are permeating the still air of spring. The warmth and heaviness of the air filled with moisture is reinforced by the image of the soft and slimy, transparent insect eggs that fill the entire space. Unlike the common connotation of spring in Western literary tradition as the time of rebirth and reanimation, the dominant images of spring in the Japanese literary tradition have often been associated with a

[17] *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.1: 60-61.

pensive and melancholic mood (although poems celebrating the freshness of a new season do exist). In that sense, Hagiwara's image of spring as characterised by the suffocating fullness of the air -- so dense to the extent that it can be felt by the tip of a finger -- is building partly on the traditional association of spring with a languid atmosphere. But the way it is represented is completely different. The cherry blossoms are no longer a symbolic reminder of the transient nature of human existence but are being intensely "looked at" by the poet. Just as the reference to the nervous trembling of the bamboo roots did not mean that the poet actually saw it, in this poem, the poet is by no means analytically observing the texture, the shape and the feel of the cherry petals. The point is that here the image of the cherry blossoms is foregrounded and presented in its own right, bursting the limits of the traditional nature topics. This kind of defamiliarization of traditional images was achieved not only by Hagiwara but was also seen in works by many other authors and poets writing after the discovery of the modern landscape. It is thus not a coincidence that Kajii Motojiro, a novelist often referred to as a modernist for the original style of his prose, wrote a short piece in 1928 entitled "Under a Cherry Tree".[18] In the opening line, the narrator states: "Under a cherry tree, corpses are buried". It is implied in a later passage that the morbid, pinkish-white colour of the moist petals of cherry blossoms come from the juice of the human corpses sucked through the roots of the tree.[19]

Overall, the works compiled in *Howling at the Moon* reflect the highly strung mental state of the

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[18] Kajii was close to some of the "l'esprit nouveau" modernist poets. This piece, "Sakura no ki no shita niwa", first appeared in their journal *Shi to Shiron* [Poetry and poetics], vol.2, Dec.1928: 166-172.

[19] Probably because the image of cherry blossoms had been given such a central place in the traditional network of poetic imagery, the re-visioning of this particular flower even became a trend among certain poets and novelists. Muro Saisei, a poet and a close friend of Hagiwara, referred to cherry blossoms as "flowers which look syphilitic -- dirty and bright". See Kubo Tadao, "Supplementary Notes" 153, *Hagiwara Sakutaro*, Nihon Kindai Bungaku Taikei, vol.37, edited by Kubo Tadao, Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1971: 422.

poet who was striving to achieve a new poetic vision through his encounter with modernity. As we have seen, some poems deal directly with the tension arising at the moment when the subject/object duality shuts subjectivity off from the external world. Others deal with the sense of fear that this newly discovered subjectivity is on the verge of breaking down, or quickly decaying, as we saw in the image of the disintegrating human figure in "Dawn".[20] Still others illustrate Hagiwara's attempt to represent in poetry some features of the modern landscape as discovered by the self-conscious subject, who recognises the other, independent life and energy of nature in its defamiliarised form. What we can claim as the most characteristic feature of this collection is that behind many of the works we sense the penetrating power of the eye, i.e. the subjectivity of the modern human, who has embarked on the almost self-inflicted project of creating a totally new kind of poetic space that is free from all the conventions of traditional poetic practices.

Shortly after compiling his first collection, Hagiwara stopped publishing poetry for almost three years. The next collection, *The Blue Cat*, came out six years after the first, and we find that Hagiwara's approach to language had undergone a significant change in the meantime. The tense relationship between the observing subject and the discovered landscape is no longer there. Instead, the poetic world of *The Blue Cat* is characterised by a fantastic, almost dreamlike, vision. It is as if one poetic image is calling for another, creating an autonomous world of images. As the self-multiplication of images gains pace, it no longer becomes possible to link the appearance of this newly created poetic space to the distinct moment of the poet's subjective confrontation with the external world. In other words, the subjective power of the poet to grasp, transform and create a new reality -- or landscape -- has weakened, giving way to the creation of the autonomous reality of poetic language. Here is an example of how the images propagate themselves:

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[20] The images of rottening organic creatures and corroding metallic objects dominate the poetic space of *Howling at the Moon*. See Kishida Toshiko, *Op.Cit.*, *Hagiwara Sakutaro: Shiteki imeeji no kosei*, Chapter Three.

In the vacant house the pine trees grow
And loquat, peach, black pine, sasanqua, cherry trees and all that kind
Thriving trees, the branches spreading out all around
And behind the leaves of the tangling branches, plants that sprout and speedily grow
Ferns, bracken, osmund, sundew and all that kind
Overlapping with one another, crawling about all over the ground
The life of those blue creatures
(...)
And around the damp hedges
I see the uncanny shapes of those wet and sticky slugs, snakes, frogs, lizards and all that kind
Over this world shrouded in profound mystery
The pale moonlight shines at night
The moonlight comes gently flowing from around the thicket near the gate.[21]
(...)

This piece is entitled "The secrets of the garden of the vacant house I dream" ["Yume ni miru akiya no niwa no himitsu"]. Similar images are repeated in the second half of the poem, too, reinforcing the picture of this dense and proliferating dreamlike world.

In *The Blue Cat* we find poems of a different kind as well, for instance, those dealing with the solitude of living in the city -- a typically Baudelairian theme with which Hagiwara sympathised greatly --, and some that may be called philosophical poems, that deal with the encroaching sense of ennui in a more or less philosophical manner. As it is not my intention to present an extensive analysis of Hagiwara's works, I will only mention that this was a period when Hagiwara's works present active correspondences with various trends in Western art and literature. As noted in the previous chapter, the late 1910s and the early 1920s was a period characterised by a great influx of information on Western culture through a variety of media, and its quick circulation and absorption at the popular level. In literature as well, we see kaleidoscopic resonances of various trends in Western art and literature during this period.

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[21] *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.1: 157-158.

In the poem quoted above, we can observe an echo of the imagery typical of some of the art-nouveau paintings -- those by Mucha and Annesley Voysey, for example -- characterised by the repetitious flow of creeping lines and the abundant use of plant and reptile images. We also find in Hagiwara's works of this period repeated appearances of an image of a thin, phantom-like woman who wanders in dim light dragging the hem of a long dress. Many critics have indicated the influence of Edgar Allan Poe in this image (particularly of Ulalume, as the woman in some of the poems is called Ula), but there is no need to restrict the source of the image to a particular writer or to a particular piece of work.[22] The images of mysteriously erotic, unearthly women abounded also in Western paintings of this period, as can be seen in the works of Maurice Denis, or Paul Delvaux a little later. Rather than tracing the relationships of "influence", it would be more meaningful to note the fact that by this time the Japanese literary (and artistic) scene was becoming extremely receptive to contemporary trends in the West, and that in many cases, poets and artists were creating works that show a strong resonance to the works being produced in the West, often without being conscious of it themselves. In Hagiwara's case, this was the period when he was most susceptible to Western art and literature, freely adopting its themes and its stylistic characteristics. The initial shock of the encounter with the modern subjectivity is not as prominently expressed as in his earlier works.

The next major turn in Hagiwara's poetic career can be seen in the works generally grouped as the

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[22] On the influence of Poe on Hagiwara, see, for example, Fujikawa Hideo, *Hagiwara Sakutaro Zasshi* [Miscellaneous thoughts on Hagiwara Sakutaro], Tokyo: Ozawa Shoten, 1979. A number of works have been written on the influence of Baudelaire as well; see, for example, Sekigawa Sakio, *Boodoreeru, Bocho, Sakutaro no Shiho Keiretsu* [The poetics linking Baudelaire, Bocho and Sakutaro], Tokyo: Showa Shuppansha, 1982. For a detailed reading of the origins and characteristics of Hagiwara's poetic imagery, see Naka Taro, *Hagiwara Sakutaro sonota* [Hagiwara Sakutaro and others] Tokyo: Ozawa Shoten, 1976; Naka Taro, *Hagiwara Sakutaro shi shikai* [A personal reading of Hagiwara Sakutaro], Tokyo: Ozawa Shoten, 1977; Naka Taro, *Utsu no Ongaku* [Melancholic music], Tokyo: Ozawa Shoten, 1977; Ooka Makoto, *Hagiwara Sakutaro*, Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1994 (First edition: *Hagiwara Sakutaro: kindai nihon shijinsen*, vol.10, Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1981), etc.

"Poems after *The Blue Cat*" ["Aoneko igo"]. Although this series of poems was never compiled into an independent collection, we can find a distinct characteristic in the poems written between 1923 and 1928, that is, during the five years after the publication of *The Blue Cat*.[23] The most dramatic change that occurred in Hagiwara's approach to poetry during these years, in the context of the present study, is that the poet's willingness to "see" rapidly declines. In fact, in one of the poems the poetic subject even announces that his eyes have stopped functioning: "And my eyes have opened wider and wider / and have turned into strangely transparent glass balls" ("Shooting a Cannon" ["Taiho wo Utsu"]).

If we regard the first phase of Hagiwara's poetic activity as characterised by the traces of his struggle to establish a modern subjectivity, resulting in a poetic vision created by the penetrating power of the eye, and the second phase to be characterised by the slackening of tension between the creating subject and the created object, leading to an autonomous multiplication of poetic images, in this third phase we find that the poetic subject has abandoned the will to grasp the exterior altogether. The subject is completely cut off from his vision; and when there is no organic relationship between the two, the vision takes on a uniquely "foreign" appearance. Interestingly, as we shall see, in the absence of the perceiving subject, we find in many of these poems an image of a stranger roaming in the streets of this foreign landscape, completely forlorn and detached from his surroundings.

For an examination of the features of this third phase, I will introduce one poem entitled "The Song of a *matroos*" [Madorosu no Uta"]. The first eleven lines are:

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[23] In the meanwhile, Hagiwara published a collection entitled *Cho wo yumemu* [Dreaming of a butterfly] six months after the publication of *The Blue Cat*, and another collection entitled *Junjo shokyoku-shu* [A Collection of short tunes of pure emotion] in 1925. I will not go into a detailed discussion of these collections here, as *Dreaming of a Butterfly* can be read along the line of *The Blue Cat*, and the new works included in *Junjo shokyoku-shu* can be read as foreshadowing the characteristics of the works in *The Iceland* to come later; therefore, neither requires independent attention in the context of the present study.

Looking like a stupid seabird
I will walk through a port town filled with roof tiles and paving stones.
Broken covered-wagons in procession
They form a cone-shaped congestion and come approaching this way, recklessly, incessantly.
Street stalls on top of one another
What a street full of a dirty confusion of men and cattle.
Looking afar, beyond the old dial of a big clock
The lonely winter seascape is crying.
Shedding tears on the street stones
I will walk like a Chinese with my queue hanging down my back.
Where is this dim light coming from?[24]
(...)

In this poem there are certain distinct features of this third phase which are immediately noticeable. Firstly, the span of vision has significantly widened. Not only can we see the street scenes with wagons, stalls and buildings (more references to buildings are found in the lines following the part quoted above), but for the first time in Hagiwara's poetry the backdrop appears: behind a big clock tower stretches a "seascape". Other poems of this period are also characterised by the appearance of the sea or the sky reflecting the dim, pale light that covers the entire picture of this foreign-looking landscape.

Another distinct feature is the inorganic nature of the objects described. Despite the scene being crowded with objects, and despite the references to moving objects such as wagons, people and cattle, one receives the impression that the whole picture has been frozen -- a piercing sense of stillness dominates the scene. This is suggested not only by the mention of the clock being "old", but in the latter part of the poem, the stranger even mumbles, "Why take a photo of such a miserable 'time' ?", urging the reader to look at the entire scene as an old photograph. Images of a broken clock and references to time having been stopped are found in other poems as well. Looking at the objects actually described, we notice that everything looks dry and dusty as if having been abandoned

[24] *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.2: 192-193.

for countless years. When we consider that bamboos, insect eggs, rotting cherry blossoms, plants and reptiles flourished in the earlier works, it cannot be mere accident that stones and roof tiles set the scene in this piece. In other poems of this group, too, we come across many images of hard and dry objects such as rusty fragments of old cannon balls, tin hats left untouched on old bay windows, and even something that looks like a fossilized sea turtle floating in "the Paleozoic Sea".[25]

Thirdly, the scene is presented as something totally unfamiliar to the human figure who is walking through it. In this poem, the stranger is a "*matroos*" (a word for sailor in Dutch, written in Japanese as a foreign word). The description of him with a hanging queue and walking like "a Chinese" also highlights the foreignness of the stranger against the landscape.[26]

It has also often been noted by critics that the poems of this period are characterised by the clarity of the minute details of the elements that construct the picture.[27] The contours of each object are strikingly clear. Doak describes this as "an ironic form of realism", and quoting Ooka, says that they seek to "relate to the reader, through an insistence on the formal accuracy of details, the vividness of the psychological pressure of the 'external world' ".[28] Thus, ironically, when Hagiwara gave up the

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[25] "Aru fukei no naikaku kara" ["From the interior of a landscape"], *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.2: 196.

[26] It is probably not coincidental that this central figure is described firstly as "looking like a seabird", then as walking "like a Chinese" with his queue hanging down his back. Judging from the imagery of a "seabird" in other poems of the same period, a seabird in Hagiwara's poems is associated with the image of a penguin. And a penguin in his works is invariably associated with a sense of being caught in a barren landscape, unable to fly, standing still and looking upwards or walking with its useless wings drooping down its back.

[27] See, for example, Ooka, *Op.Cit.*, *Hagiwara Sakutaro:* 215-235.

[28] See Kevin Michael Doak, *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and the Crisis of Modernity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994: 40; Ooka, *Ibid.*, 220.

attempt to construct the exterior from the point of view of the observing subject, the eyes that have stopped to function and turned into "glass balls" have started to work somewhat like the lens of a camera.[29] The separation between the point of perception and the perceived world has become so complete that it paradoxically reverses, so that the scene of this fictitious world unfolds with intense reality in the eyes of the detached observer. The alienated observer sees at the same time the alienated image of himself thrown into this foreign landscape. Obviously suggesting the image of the poet himself, the human figure in this poem cries out in the latter half of the poem: "Where? There is no longer even a place to go". All he can do is wander from one foreign land to another. In the very last line, the *matroos* decides to leave this port town, saying that he will visit another port "where memories are gradually fading away".

It has been suggested in a number of biographical studies on Hagiwara that this theme of being lost in a foreign land comes from Hagiwara's disillusionment both with the city life of Tokyo and the constrictive life in the country town of Maebashi, where he was born and brought up. I will touch on this point later, but in the present context, I would like to bring the discussion back to the question of modern subjectivity. Having lost his "point of view", and thus no longer having a place to stand, this modern self is aware that there is no place where his subjectivity can be positively secured. And this loss of the stable position from which the subject creates his vision, in turn, opens the possiblity for a composition of the external world free from the dominant subject, allowing the objects to present themselves in their own right, in their pure detached objectivity. However, now that it is permanently deprived of the revitalising gaze of the subject, the scene is fossilized; hence the recurring images of deserted towns where even the "memories" of human activities are "fading away".

There is another dimension to this world of "Poems after *The Blue Cat*" which should be noted. By closely focusing on the techniques used for creating the images, we notice that the scene depicted

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[29] "Taiho o utsu" ["Shooting a cannon"], *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.2: 231-232.

here is not simply photographic in the sense that it resembles a picture fixed on a two-dimensional plate. Let us look, for instance, at lines 3 and 4: "Broken covered-wagons in procession / They form a cone-shaped congestion and come approaching this way, recklessly, incessantly". What does "a cone-shaped congestion" mean? This is a vision that looks at the long line of approaching wagons in its entirety. We can read this as an application of the geometrical perspective from the point of view of the stranger in the scene who stands at the middle of the road looking into the depth of the scenery, that is, to the far end of the road. In that case, the furthest point at the tip of the "cone" where the wagon looks no bigger than a dot is the vanishing point. However, reading the next line, we are led to realise that probably the vision presented here is not based on geometrical perspective in a strict sense; a closer correspondence to the image can be found in futurist or cubist paintings: "Street stalls on top of one another / What a street full of a dirty confusion of men and cattle". As noted earlier in our examination of "The Bamboos", there is clear evidence that Hagiwara was interested in futurism, and in fact it was two years before this poem was written that the "Japan Futurist Manifesto" was announced by Hirato Renkichi.[30] Rather than looking at the "cone" as the triangle used for the composition of the geometrical perspective, we are urged to see it in its three-dimensional form. The image of the rolling wagons almost toppling over one another reminds us of some futurist paintings -- particularly those by artists such as Boccioni, Sevelini or Dottori -- that are intended to present a dynamic picture of the objects in motion. The image of the street stalls looking as if they were piled up on top of another and maintaining a subtle balance also gives the reader an impression of a three-dimensional space. It is comparable to the images in some cubist paintings such as those by Braque or Leger. This kind of image that assumes a certain resemblance to cubist paintings is frequently found in "The Poems after *The Blue Cat*". I will give just one more example. The following lines are taken from "The Ancient Exposition"["Kofu na hakurankai"]:

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[30] I will discuss further the futurist movement in Japan in Chapter Three.

In a place filled with sad and dim light
One dome on top of another dome
Extends to the mountain ranges far away
(...)
Lots of strange constructions are grappling with one another
The arms of these constructions are clutched together[31]
(...)

The perspective used here is exactly the same as that in "The Song of the *Matroos*". In this poem there is no image of a wandering human figure, but there is a reference to frozen time as expressed in the following line: "I crept into a secret passage that no one knows, inside the womb of 'time' ".

I hope that I have been able to indicate the complex nature of this phase of development in Hagiwara's poetry. On the one hand, we can witness clear signs of the weakening and the eventual abandonment of the will to uphold the position of the subject. Hagiwara's struggle to establish a modern vision -- creating a landscape from the point of view of the subject -- underwent a major turn, and its result was the creation of a subject-less exterior. The theme of temporal and spatial distance dominates, and the vision acquires an intense atmosphere of strangeness, its effect reinforced by the description of the minute details of disconnected objects. On the other hand, we can observe in this phase traces of an active experimenting with the application of the vision characteristic of the contemporary trends in Western art. Once again, I believe that discussing "influences" in concrete terms would be of little significance in this case. Although I was able to point to a certain resonance to futurist and cubist art in the examination of "The Song of the *Matroos*", other works of this period urge us to look for comparisons with the works of a whole range of contemporary European artists -- those by surrealists such as Ernst, Tanguy, Dali and Vallotton; or the landscape paintings by Hodler; and significantly, though not so much in technique as in content, a strong echo of the themes of death

[31] *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.2: 191-192.

and solitude characteristic of Munch's works is unmistakable.

In this sense, it is probably inappropriate to observe only the signs of regression in Hagiwara's attempt to tackle modernity in these poems. Throughout his career, Hagiwara had an extremely sensitive antenna stretched to receive information on the various trends in art and literature inside and outside Japan. He did not respond to them intellectually, but rather, reacted to them most probably unconsciously, producing works that reveal a shared sensibility with other artists and poets of his time.

The most interesting point in this regard is that in Hagiwara's case, his retreat from a positive engagement in establishing a subjectivity, fundamental to Western modernity, resulted in works that demonstrate close correspondences with the artistic trends in the West, which emerged as a result of an increasing doubt as to the absolute nature of modern subjectivity. Common to the artistic trends in Europe of the first two decades of the twentieth century was the drive to question the self-sufficient subject. Ironically, by abandoning the endeavour to integrate the core element of modernity in the constructive process of his works, Hagiwara was able to "catch up" with the foremost trends of modernism in Europe. Another way of looking at this would be to say that within the time span of just over ten years, Hagiwara recapitulated the entire history of modern European culture, experiencing the struggle both to establish and break down the modern subject.

As can be expected, the next phase in Hagiwara's poetic career demonstrates a turn of quite a different nature. Whereas up to this stage Hagiwara had expressed little concern about the cultural context of his work, the question of cultural identity begins to take on heavier weight in his consciousness. Notably, this was a time when the call for Japan's "cultural renaissance" was starting to attract the attention of poets and writers.

4) Hagiwara Sakutaro's "return to Japan"

I will not go into a detailed discussion on this last phase of Hagiwara's poetic career, as the topic of "return to Japan" will be examined in Chapter Five. I will just list some of the major features of his last poetic collection, *Hyoto* [*The Iceland*], published in 1934, and touch briefly on the background to Hagiwara's theory of "return to Japan".

It is well known that Hagiwara himself said in an essay written soon after the publication of *The Iceland*, that the collection demonstrated a "poetic retreat".[32] In making this statement, he was referring basically to the language of *The Iceland*, which is written in the pseudo-classical style, abounding in Chinese vocabulary and Chinese characters. For a poet who had devoted his energies to achieving a modern vision through the use of colloquial language, it is natural to see this as a radical turn backwards. At the same time, however, we shall see that it was an inevitable turn, since for the poet who had attained the state of mind that we saw in the poems of "After *The Blue Cat*", little was left for him to express in modern, colloquial language. We should also take into account the fact that Hagiwara was sharply antagonistic to the poetic movements of the late 1920s represented by the "l'esprit nouveau" poets and the "proletarian" poets. He criticised the former for their "pedantic" approach to poetry, referring to them as "dilettantes", who satisfy themselves only with exotic interests, and the latter for their total lack of understanding in art, "intoxicating themselves with pathetic sentiments and a belief in justice".[33] It must also be added that Hagiwara's antagonism was

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[32] "Hyoto no shigo ni tsuite" ["On the language of *The Iceland*"], in a collection of essays entitled *Shijin no Shimei* [The poet's mission], published in 1937. *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol. 10: 30.

[33] "Interi izen no nihon shidan" ["The unintellectual nature of Japanese poetic groups], in *Shijin no shimei* [The poet's mission] (1937), *Hagiwara Sakutaro Zenshu*, vol.10: 45-51. Hagiwara wrote a number of essays criticising the new poetic trends of the 1920s. See also, "Shinpo shicho no handosei" ["The reactionary nature of progressive thought"] in *Mu kara no koso* [Fighting from nothingness] (1937), *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.10: 390-393.

equally directed to another group of poets leading the so-called "minshu-shi" [people's poetry] movement, producing a significant number of poems written in easy-to-read language, placing utmost value on the "democratic" content of poetry rather than its form.[34]

But for Hagiwara, the more significant reason for the "retreat" into the classical language lay elsewhere. As Doak points out, the abundant use of Chinese vocabulary, together with the grammatical structure of the verses that created a rhythm somewhat similar to that of old Chinese poetry -- thereby giving his poems a kind of "foreign" impression -- allowed Hagiwara "to suggest the possibility of a language *exterior to* and more perfect than native forms of expression, while at the same time calling into question the very existence of such a language" (italics are mine).[35] This sense of "exteriority" had a crucial role to play in the formation of the central themes of *The Iceland*.

In the "Foreword" to *The Iceland*, Hagiwara says that he is "'an eternal wanderer' who has no home (*kakyo*) to stay", and that in his heart he sees "the dull and dreary sky of the polar regions" and hears "the screeching voice of the iceland wind that tears open the soul". The poetic collection *Iceland*, according to Hagiwara, is "a diary of this painful life"[36]. Although I have consciously avoided references to Hagiwara's biographical details in the foregoing examination of his poetic

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[34] The "minshu-shi" poets, strongly influenced by the so-called Taisho democracy of the 1910s, aimed at creating poetic works that expressed the everyday sentiments of the people, written in approachable, straightforward language. Hagiwara's criticism of these poets is particularly harsh. Relating them to the naturalist stream in the Japanese prose, he refers to their style as "rubbish colloquialism" and their work as nothing but "pretended" free verse poetry. See, for example, "Uso to bungaku" ["Lie and literature"] in *Mu kara no koso*" (1937), *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.10:326-329.

[35] Doak, *Op.Cit.*, *Dreams of Difference*: 42.

[36] "Foreword" to *The Iceland*, *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.2: 103-104. The word translated here as "home" is *kakyo* in Japanese, which has a distinctly abstract connotation of a place of final return, and is different from either "home" or "hometown" in the common usage.

evolution. one point should be mentioned for an understanding of the essential element in the development of his poetic themes: at the root of Hagiwara's drive for writing poetry lay the sense of bitterness he felt toward his hometown, Maebashi, where, as the first son of a well-established doctor unable to live up to the expectations of his family, he felt pressured to see himself as a failure. Life in Tokyo lured him, but the several attempts he made to establish himself independently in Tokyo ended in disaster. The corroding sense of uneasiness toward the constraints of traditions at Maebashi and the repeated disillusionment with Tokyo life gradually led Hagiwara to identify himself as an outsider who belonged nowhere. Most of the poems included in *The Iceland* were written soon after his wife ran off with a "modern" young man, leaving their two girls with him; having no means to raise them by himself, he was forced to go back to Maebashi, feeling miserable, deserted and helpless.

In the context of the present study, this aspect of Hagiwara's personal life has a major significance. Such a sense of not having a place to belong eventually fused in the poet's mind with his view of Japan as being dislocated and rootless in the modern world. In a sense, the tension between the contrasting life styles in Maebashi and Tokyo represented the tension between the traditional and modern values that persisted throughout the process of the founding of modern Japan. And as I noted earlier, the cultural climate in Japan in the early 1930s was moving toward a renewed awareness of such a tension. For Hagiwara, the impinging sense of "exteriority" was not only personal; he began to see the whole situation of Japanese culture as suffering from this predicament. In an annotation to one of his prose poems written around this time Hagiwara wrote:

> Contemporary Japan is precisely a "desolate region". The old traditional culture is in ruins, and the new one has not yet emerged. Japanese people of our age are standing in the vast devastation of cultural ruins, where there is nothing to see, nothing to hear , no colour, no scent, no taste, and no

elegance.[37]

In *The Iceland* we find recurring images of these scenes of desolation. Unlike "The Poems after *The Blue Cat*", which were characterised by an imaginary vision of a foreign land, the scenes in this collection contain specific references to either Maebashi or Tokyo. Furthermore, instead of placing an imaginary stranger amidst this desolate landscape, Hagiwara places a life-size image of the poet himself in these scenes. In fact, as early as 1925, a few years before he published "The Poems after *The Blue Cat*", Hagiwara compiled a series entitled *Junjo Shokyoku-shu* [*A Collection of Short Tunes of Pure Emotion*], in which this tendency was already evident. The new poems included in this collection were also written in pseudo-classical language.[38] After one more attempt to create an imaginary world with the rhythm and flow of the modern colloquial style by writing the poems to be included in "The Poems after *The Blue Cat*", Hagiwara made a decisive shift. And in *The Iceland*, which marks the very last phase of his poetic career, he drew in the "real" landscape of his personal life and spoke "directly" of his own sentiment. The tension between the poetic subject and the observed world, which supported the dynamics of his poetic evolution, was thus dissolved. I believe that this last turn in his poetic activity was taken not only as a result of the internal development of his poetic world; more importantly, the personal as well as the social and cultural circumstances of the time compelled him to take this step, whether understood as a step forward or a "retreat".

The central irony of this phase in regard to poetic language is that such a personal voice was

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[37] "Koryo taru chiho deno kaiwa: jichu" ["Conversation in a desolate region: self-annotation], in *Shukumei* [Fate], a collection of prose poems published in September, 1939. *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.2: 270.

[38] Hagiwara was clearly conscious of the continued progression from *The Collection of Short Tunes of Pure Emotion* to *The Iceland* and included four poems from the section entitled "Hopeful Views of the Homeland" from the former collection in the latter.

expressed in an outdated classical style. The abundant use of old Chinese vocabulary and the rhythm of the verses created by pseudo-classical grammar made the poems sound foreign and remote from the reality of contemporary Japanese culture. This artificial language effectively worked to strengthen the impression that this personal voice was destined to be rejected. It was the voice of an "eternal wanderer", who was thoroughly uprooted from his own culture and had nowhere to return. The impact of this dislocated language was reinforced by the fact that Hagiwara was speaking not only for himself but for the entire condition of his culture and society.

Before concluding this chapter with a brief discussion of Hagiwara's theory of "return to Japan", I will cite a few lines from three pieces in *The Iceland* to provide some idea of the style and tone of this collection.[39]

You, wanderer!
Coming from the past and going beyond the future
One who pursues the eternal nostalgia.
...
You, man of loneliness
Climbing up the hill where the sun sadly sets
Wandering along the precipice of will-lessness
Where, ever, should you find your home.
Your home will never, ever exist!
("The Song of the Wanderer" ["Hyohakusha no uta"])

The past extends to the valley of loneliness
And the future stretches toward the shore of despair.
How my life is like sand and pebbles!

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[39] *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.2: 106-115. It is virtually impossible to render the style of the poems in *The Iceland* into a foreign language. The hard and weighty rhythm of the classical language cannot be reproduced, and the effect of the abundant use of Chinese vocabulary which endows a rigid and compelling tone to the poems are also untranslatable. For making the translations I have referredto Kevin Doak, *Op.Cit.*, 43-45; Robert Epp, *Op.Cit.*, 220-222. My translation for the three citations is intended to convey a word-to-word meaning of each line at the expense of the overall poetic effect.

("Homecoming" ["Kikyo" ])[40]

Already weary of the illusion of life
And yet I am starving like a beast of burden.
I have lost nothing
And I have thoroughly lost everything.
("The Nogizaka Club" ["Nogizaka kurabu"])

Many critics have pointed to the influence of Nietzsche in the image of the wanderer, as can be seen in the first poem.[41] That this wandering is destined to be eternal is suggested in both the first and the second citations: the destination -- the eternal home -- does not, and will never, exist. The grammar of the last two lines of the first poem is forcefully twisted. To give a more literal translation, it would be something like: "Where is your home (eternal hometown) should not ever exist / Your home (eternal hometown) should not ever exist!"[42]. This conviction, which almost sounds like a determination, together with the other conviction as suggested in the third citation, that nothing -- and everything -- has been lost, form the core theme of *The Iceland* poems as well as the prose poems and essays written around this time.

If we recall Hagiwara's words on the state of Japanese culture which I cited earlier, we can see how the poet's vision of his inner life overlapped with his view of contemporary Japanese society

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[40]*Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.2:

[41] Fujikawa Hideo, *Op.Cit.*, *Hagiwara Sakutaro zasshi*, 1979; Kanno Akimasa, "Kakyo Shokei" [Longing for home] in *Shigaku sozo* (Tokyo: Shueisha), 1984: 222-257; and others.

[42] These last two lines, though bearing a crucial weight in the thematic effect of the poem, have often been the object of controversy for their grammatical inaccuracy. Some of Hagiwara's critics deem this forceful twisting of the classical grammar to be unacceptable, whereas others stress that it is this very artificiality and awkwardness of the expression that allows the poem to have such a powerful impact.

and culture. Even though he says in the passage quoted that the new culture of Japan has "not yet" emerged, other writings of this time confirm that Hagiwara never seriously believed in the emergence of a promising new culture to replace the old. It is possible to argue that this kind of shift of vision into a different dimension -- that is, from the personal to the social and cultural -- was merely incidental and does not provide a sufficient explanation for Hagiwara's total withdrawal from writing poetry. We can say, however, that after drawing the reality of his life into his poetry and integrating the speculative vision of the alienated self into that reality, it was no longer possible for Hagiwara to go back to the creation of fictitious worlds from which the poet could remain detached. Hagiwara's interest in and concern for the state of Japanese society and culture increased dramatically after this period, and together with the publication of studies and criticism of other poets and writers of his time and of the past, he became a prolific writer of aphorisms, essays, and social and cultural criticism. After all, it was the state of his society and culture that deprived him of the possibility of pursuing his poetic activity any further.[43]

Hagiwara began writing the essays to be included in *Return to Japan* [*Nihon eno Kaiki*] in 1934, the year *The Iceland* was published. This collection of essays appeared in 1938. It will suffice to mention that his vision of Japanese culture and society as being in a state of irrevocable loss constitutes the central theme of Hagiwara's argument, and that this vision found a strong correspondence with that presented by the advocates of Japan's "cultural renaissance". In a word, it was a theory of return to "Japan as irony".[44]

The essay which bears the title of the whole collection starts with the following sentence: "Until

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[43] On the link between Hagiwara's departure from poetry and his newly-gained interest in broader cultural affairs, see Ooka Makoto, *Op.Cit.*, 260-262; Kanno Akimasa, *Op.Cit.*, 253-256.

[44] This is a well-known phrase used by the leading advocate of the Japan Romantic School, Yasuda Yojuro. The idea behind the use of this phrase will be discussed in Chapter Five.

just recently, the West was our home". Hagiwara goes on to say:

I once wrote in a poem,

"I have lost nothing
And I have thoroughly lost everything."

Truly, today, in the emptiness following the collapse of culture, the only song that we poets can sing is a nihilistic song of a wanderer, based on the rhythm of antinomy such as this one.[45]

Also in the foreword to another collection of essays entitled *Kikyosha* [*One Who Comes Home*], published two years later in 1940, Hagiwara notes:

On the day that we found out that the West, which was once the home of our soul and the utopia we longed for, was nothing but an illusion -- a mirage, we had to wander back in loneliness to our old home, holding in our hands a casket filled with nothing. When we came home, things we used to know were no longer there. Everything that used to be there -- all the beauiful things of Japan, the memorable things, those things of good taste -- were all gone, without leaving a trace.[46]

These words well express the essence of Hagiwara's return to Japan. The disillusion with the West urged him to come back "home". But when he did return, there was nothing comparable to a "home". Thus, all he can do is sing a "nihilistic song of a wanderer" who has "lost nothing" but has "thoroughly lost everything". If there were substance to what had been lost, there might remain a possibility to regain it; but the loss that Hagiwara is grieving over is not retrievable by any means, because it took place at such a fundamental level that the original basis of the loss is no longer known. It looks as if nothing has been lost; and yet, the sense that everything has been lost is overwhelming. Even if one turns away from the West, "Japan" no longer exists as an alternative.

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[45] "Nihon e no kaiki" ["A return to Japan"], in *Nihon e no kaiki*, *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol. 10: 485, 487-488.

[46] "Kikyosha" ["One who comes home"], in *Kikyosha*. *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.11: 5.

The "return" is an eternal attempt which will never be achieved -- the object of return as well as the gesture of returning could be nothing more than ironic.

It requires little explanation why Hagiwara readily expressed his sympathy toward the advocates of Japan's "cultural renaissance". They, too, were more than aware that Japanese culture was so thoroughly embedded in modernity that it was no longer possible to retrieve it. Hagiwara became an official member of The Japan Romantic School in 1936, and for the following few years he mixed actively with the young poets and writers of *The Four Seasons* [*Shiki*], *Cogito* and *Japan Romantic School* [*Nihon Romanha*], whom I will discuss in the last chapter. Hagiwara died in 1942 at the age of fifty-seven.

Chapter **Three:**

## The avant-garde enterprise and its silent demise: The poetic trajectories of Takahashi Shinkichi, Ogata Kamenosuke and Hagiwara Kyojiro

### 1. Toward new poetry

The trajectory of Hagiwara Sakutaro's poetic career illustrates the occurrence and the ensuing developments of a fundamental shift in the mode of representation in Japanese poetry. Whereas his early works demonstrated the shock of discovering the modern subject, and consequentially, the modern "landscape", the evolution of his later works reflected how the newly discovered landscape disintegrated as the subjective will to objectify the exterior world weakened. The enervation of the perceiving eye resulted in the breakdown of the autonomous poetic space, which ran parallel with the poet's increasing awareness of the problematic situation of Japanese modernity. Hagiwara saw that the nation's thrust into modernization accompanied by the dissemination of modern ideas and values in all aspects of social and cultural life had left Japan thoroughly dispossessed of its traditional roots with no prospect of a new culture to replace it. The dominant image of the poetic subject in his latest works was that of an alienated man permanently deprived of his "home", which could be read as a metaphorical expression of Hagiwara's vision of the state of contemporary Japanese culture.

The works of the poets I will deal with in this chapter represent a new phase in the development of modern Japanese poetry. The three poets I will be focusing on were all born at around the turn of the century, about fifteen years after Hagiwara Sakutaro. They started writing poetry in the early 1920s in response to the introduction of the avant-garde artistic movements in contemporary Europe. Hagiwara Sakutaro's *Howling at the Moon* had been published only a few years earlier in 1917. Notably, however, whereas for Hagiwara Sakutaro, in his early thirties by this time, the publication

of *Howling at the Moon* signified the result of an epistemological struggle with the idea of the modern subject, for these younger poets the question of the modern subject no longer occupied a central place in their drive for poetic creation. What urged them to write was a desire to create "new" poetry in Japan, free from all the existing norms of literature in style as well as in content. For them, Hagiwara Sakutaro was the representative poet of the older generation carrying the burden of Japan's modernization process and struggling without success to free himself from Japan's historical past. These younger poets, at least at the initial stage of their career, were more than ready to disclaim their allegiance to Japan's literary traditions, both premodern and modern. Through their exposure to the European avant-garde movements, they embarked on writing poetry which marked a radical break with all the poetic activities of the preceding half century.

As noted in Chapter One, the Japanese cultural scene was undergoing a dramatic shift in the early 1920s. The rigidly controlled Meiji regime having ended in 1912, the social and cultural climate of the Taisho era came to be characterised by a distinct kind of openness. Socially, this period was characterised by the emergence of a movement toward democracy, which also gave rise to the women's liberation movement, and eventually the proletarian movement. Culturally, the channels for exchange of cultural information between Japan and the West significantly broadened with the increase of contacts at all levels of society, and the newly introduced ideas from the West were quickly dispersed among the Japanese populace as a result of the rapid development of the printed media. Another point to note is that these social and cultural developments gave birth to the concept of "the mass" for the first time in Japan's cultural discourse.

It was in such a cultural climate that we see the traces of the first "avant-garde" movements in Japanese poetry. The poets to be discussed in this chapter were those who, at least at the beginning of their poetic careers, were directly involved in the launching of the earliest Japanese avant-garde poetic movements, namely futurism and dadaism. This chapter will first present a brief overview of the avant-garde poetic and artistic scenes in Japan in the early 1920s. I will then proceed to an

examination of the trajectory of three poets who began writing poetry in response to their exposure to the avant-garde: Takahashi Shinkichi (1901-1987), Ogata Kamenosuke (1900-1942), and Hagiwara Kyojiro (1899-1938). These three cases represent three different reactions to the "new" art of Europe. Also, by examining the way in which all three poets retreated from avant-gardism at a certain stage of their career, I hope to highlight how the poets' understanding of the notion of the modern self played a pivotal role in their engagement in and the eventual retreat from the avant-garde movement.

2) The age of manifestos: the awakening of the Japanese avant-garde

The early 1920s in the Japanese literary scene saw an outbreak of the publication of little magazines. By 1926 there were more than one hundred and sixty different coterie magazines on the market, although there are few extant copies and the circulation of many of them was possibly relatively small.[1] Another notable feature of the period was that a number of manifestos on literature and art were presented by writers and artists, either in these coterie magazines or at the opening events of art exhibitions.[2] Compared to a decade before when literary activities were more or less represented by major literary journals published in Tokyo, the emergence of a large number of coterie magazines and the active articulation of beliefs and principles by writers and artists suggest a significant shift in the position and nature of literature and art in relation to society. It not only

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[1] In *Showa bungaku seisuishi* [The rise and decline of Showa literature], Takami Jun introduces a list of literary journals which appeared in the April 1926 issue of *Bungei shijo* [Literary market]. The list includes one hundred and sixty-four journals. Approximately half of the journals were published in Tokyo. Takami Jun, *Showa bungaku seisuishi*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1965: 60-61.

[2] There were frequent exchanges between artists and poets, and they often worked together in publishing coterie journals. The publication of the avant-garde journal *MAVO* and Hagiwara Kyojiro's *Death Sentence*, which I will discuss in this chapter, are typical examples of this.

reflects the far-ranging effects of the development of the print media around this time, which allowed literature to function as a self-regulating system within society, but is also indicative of the change in the consciousness of writers and artists, who were driven by a certain sense of urgency to articulate and declare their respective positions. Unmistakably, the introduction of contemporary avant-garde artistic movements in Europe provided the impetus for such a change in consciousness. It should be noted, however, that a mere knowledge of a new artistic movement overseas was not sufficient to start off the same movement in Japan. Artistic creation arises from an artistic awareness rooted in the particular social and cultural circumstances of the time, and it was only in the 1920s, much later than the initial introduction of futurism, that the setting for the launching of avant-garde artistic movements in Japan was prepared.

The first translation of Marinetti's Futurist manifesto appeared in a literary journal *Subaru* [The Pleiades] as early as May 1909, only three months after its appearance in *Le Figaro*. The introduction of futurism through the translations of the manifesto and subsequent articles on its activities in Europe as well as the translation of some of its poems did attract the attention of certain Japanese poets such as Yamamura Bocho and Hagiwara Sakutaro as well as someone like Kanbara Tai, who felt an immediate urge to produce similar works in Japanese, but its impact did not extend much beyond attempts made by individual poets.[3]

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[3] Four different translations of Marinetti's manifesto appeared before the establishment of the Futurist Art Association [Miraiha bijutsu kyokai] in 1920. The earliest translation of futurist poetry was Marinetti's "Car race" by Yosano Hiroshi, which was included in Yosano's collection of translated works from contemporary European poetry, *Lila no hana* [Lilac Flowers], published in November 1914. A poet/artist Kanbara Tai wrote a poem entitled "Car's power-motion" ["Jidosha no rikido"] in 1917. This piece is widely recognised as the first futurist poem in Japan. The poem was subtitled "Late-cubism" and appeared in the August issue of a literary journal *Shincho* [New currents]. It consisted of words evoking images of the fast movement of cars creating confusion of sound and light. The phrase "acute angle" is repeated eleven times to suggest the sweeping motion of moving objects. On the reception of futurist poetry in Japan, see Kishida Toshiko, *Hagiwara Sakutaro: Shiteki Imeeji no kosei* [Hagiwara Sakutaro: the composition of poetic imagery], Tokyo: Chusekisha, 1986: 24-31. Further details are in Nakano Kaichi, *Zen'eishi undoshi no kenkyu* [A

In 1920 a group of artists began organising themselves to engage in a conscious attempt to embark on a new type of artistic movement which went against the existing streams of modern art. When *Nika-kai*, an established modern artists' organisation of the time, rejected his work, Fumon Akatsuki founded the Futurist Art Association [*Miraiha bijutsu kyokai*] in September 1920, and organised the first futurist art exhibition in Japan, which included thirty-four works by twenty-one artists.

The founding of the Futurist Art Association in 1920 symbolised the artists' growing urge to embark on a new type of art that neglected the particularities of cultural history and represented a shared sense of awareness in belonging to a new age in which cultural and historical differences were overshadowed by the rapid developments of cities throughout modernizing countries. The Japanese cities were starting to take on a similar appearance to that of major Western cities in regard to their demographic composition, infrastructure, the lifestyle of their residents, etc. Such a drive for contemporaneity and internationality among Japanese artists was also accelerated by certain incidents dated around this time, the most notable being the arrival of a Russian Futurist Davidouich Burliuk in 1920. Burliuk and two other artists from Russia held an exhibition in Tokyo introducing 150 works of Russian Futurism. Fumon Akatsuki and Kinoshita Shuichiro, who was later to co-publish a book on futurism with Burliuk, went to the exhibition and met the Russian artists. As Fumon left the Futurist movement and re-joined the *Nika-kai* almost immediately after this, Kinoshita took over the Futurist Art Association and organised the second Futurist Art Exhibition under the direction of Burliuk. The second Futurist Art Exhibition was held in Tokyo in October 1921 and consisted of seventy works by thirty-one artists including five artists from Russia. Burliuk presented seventeen of

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study of the history of avant-garde poetic movements], Tokyo: Ohara Shinseisha, 1975, Chapter Three "Nihon miraiha sengen undo: Hirato Renkichi to Kanbara Tai" ["Japanese futurist manifesto movement: Hirato Renkichi and Kanbara Tai]: 40-55.

his paintings.[4] Due to the direct influence of a contemporary overseas avant-garde movement combined with an influx of information on other contemporary artistic activities in the West through the rapidly developing printed media, Japanese artists and poets began to respond actively to the avant-garde spirit of their Western counterparts, attempting to launch a similar movement in Japan.

Of the many manifestos presented by artists and poets around this time, one of the earliest was the well-known futurist manifesto written by Hirato Renkichi in December, 1921. Hirato, who was a poet and a member of the Japanese Futurist Association, handed out "The Japanese Futurist Manifesto Movement (*Mouvement Futuriste Japonais, Par R-Hyrato*)" on the streets of Hibiya, one of the central districts of Tokyo. The first part of the manifesto read as follows:

> The trembling heart of God, the centering active energy of humanity emanates from the core of collective living. The core is the *dynamo-electric*.
>
> God's instinct has been transferred to the city, and the *dynamo-electric* of the city will shake the fundamental instinct of humanity out of sleep, awaken it, and directly appeal to the power [of humanity] to run headlong.
>
> Much of the cemetery is already useless. Libraries, art museums and the academy have no more value than the sound of a car speeding on the street. To attest this, smell the abominable smell of book piles. In comparison, how fresh and superior is the smell of the gasoline![5]

Hirato Renkichi published poems representing various attempts to implant futurism in Japan, but died suddenly of pneumonia in 1922 at the age of twenty-eight. His works demonstrate the poet's eagerness to break from traditional poetry both in form and content. These poems were compiled and

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[4] The details of the Futurist art exhibitions and Burliuk's involvement in them are introduced in Akimoto Kiyoshi, *Hyoden: Ogata Kamenosuke* [A critical biography of Ogata Kamenosuke], Tokyo: Tojusha, 1979, Chapter 4: 169-216.

[5] Quoted in Komata Yusuke, *Zen'eishi no jidai* [The age of avant-garde poetry: Japan in the 1920s], Tokyo: Soseisha, 1992: 26-28.

published posthumously by his friend, a later dadaist, Tsuji Jun. Though it was brief, Hirato's activities left a significant impact on Japan's poetic scene in the 1920s.

In October 1922, a few months after Hirato's death, the official manifesto of the Futurist Art Association entitled "Wake up, Comrades" [Tomo yo, same yo] was published in an art magazine *Mizue*. The two central ideas presented in this fifty-six line manifesto are the desire for total freedom and the aspiration for speed and energy, as can be observed in the following lines:

We hate constriction.
We must, in all conditions, be free.
(...)
Stagnation, embarrassment, jealousy, hesitation of any kind nurtures moss on the human soul.
Futurism is a constant state of metempsychosis -- is fresh --is a straight push forward -- is collision -- is destruction --
It is a valuable ... divine speed and energy, which aims for the creation of a new age.[6]

One can easily discern echoes from Marinetti's 1909 manifesto in both Hirato's leaflet and "Wake up Comrades", e.g. the denial of the art of the past, the fervent appraisal of city life and its surging energy, most explicitly represented by the image of motor cars and their sweeping movements. It should be noted at the same time, however, that some of the essential elements of futurism presented by Marinetti were not reflected in the Japanese version, notably its political aspect with specific reference to war as "the only cure for the world". Similarly, the Italian futurists' concern for bringing about fundamental innovation in architecture, theatre, photography, fashion and other aspects of everyday life bore little relevance to the Japanese futurists.

Burliuk left Japan and moved to the United States in 1922. In January 1923, a few months after the third Futurist Exhibition was held, a young artist Murayama Tomoyoshi, who had spent twelve months in Berlin, came back to Japan to launch a new and total artistic movement in Japan.

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[6] Quoted from Akimoto Kiyoshi, *Op.Cit.*, 211-214.

Murayama had initially gone to Berlin to study early Christianity at Berlin University, but almost immediately abandoned his academic interests and immersed himself in the new artistic activities in Europe, particularly German Expressionism and Constructivism. Two of his works were selected in the Munich World Art Exhibition of autumn 1923. Murayama's interest lay not only in visual art and literature but also in dance and stage setting. Calling his style "conscious constructivism", Murayama held a one-man exhibition in Tokyo in May 1923, and by July had become the central figure in the Japanese avant-garde scene. Together with some of the active members of the Futurist Art Association, Murayama organised a new group called *MAVO*, and the Futurist Art Association was dissolved. The *MAVO* manifesto read as follows:

> We are standing at the cutting edge. And will forever stand at the cutting edge. We are unrestrained. We are radical. We will revolutionalise. We will advance. We will create. We will assert and negate. We are *alive* in every sense of the word, to the extent that nothing else can be compared.[7]

The first *MAVO* exhibition was held in July 1923, and in August another exhibition named "A travelling exhibition to welcome the paintings rejected by *Nika*" was organised by the group. At this exhibition the paintings that were not accepted in the *Nika-kai* Exhibition were loaded on several pushcarts, and with a music band at the top, were to be paraded through the streets of Tokyo from Ueno (where *Nika-kai* exhibitions were held) to Ginza. The parade was stopped by the police as soon as it had started, but the incident carried a symbolic meaning in that it was the first organised attempt by Japanese avant-garde artists to make a public statement of revolt against established art.

The *MAVO* group also published the first major avant-garde art magazine *MAVO* in Japan. Seven issues appeared between July 1923 and August 1924, all of which featured various attempts to break down the conventions of literary/artistic journals. Words were printed in different sizes, arranged

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[7] Quoted from Akimoto Kiyoshi, *Ibid.*, 210.

and presented in a variety of ways. The magazine also incorporated photos of dance and theatrical performances, and works in lino-print were pasted on to newspaper scraps. For its seventh issue, five different types of paper were used for binding.

It was in September 1923, just after the first two issues of *MAVO* appeared, that the Great Kanto Earthquake hit Tokyo. The earthquake destroyed about half of Tokyo, took approximately one hundred and forty thousand lives (99,000 dead were reported dead and 44,000 were reported missing), completely destroyed more than one hundred and twenty thousand houses and burnt down more than forty-four thousand houses.[8] The physically devastated landscape of Tokyo provided a suitable setting for the Japanese avant-garde artists to carry out their project of destruction, innovation and re-creation. An often noted incident is the organisation of the "Barrack Design Company" by a group of artists, who went around painting pictures on the temporary shacks built around the city, symbolically turning the entire city into one big canvas.

Around this time when *MAVO* gathered artists with futurist inclinations and was fanfaring the beginning of an organised artistic protest against established social and cultural values, another stream of the avant-garde, dadaism, was also starting to attract the attention of some Japanese poets. One year before the establishment of the Futurist Art Association, in August 1920, the word "dada" appeared in print for the first time in a Japanese newspaper. Two articles and a copy of two drawings occupied a large part of a page in *Yorozu Choho*, one of the major newspapers in Tokyo at the time. The first article entitled "The latest art of hedonism: Dadaism welcomed in the postwar period"

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[8] The figures are cited from Wada Tadahiko, "Zen'ei geijutsu no nettowaku" ["The network of avant-garde art"] in Kurihara Yukio (ed), *Haikyo no kanosei: gendai bungaku no tanjo* [The possibility of the ruins: the birth of contemporary literature], Tokyo, Inpakuto Shuppankai, 1997: p.79. A general discussion on the impact of the Great Kanto Earthuquake on Japanese poets can be found in Nishi Sugio, "Geijutsu kakumeiki no shijintachi: kanto daishinsai wo hasamu shiteki doko" ["The poets in the age of artistic revolution: the poetic trends around the time of the Great Kanto Earthquake"] in *Shakai Bungaku* [Social literature], no.8, Nihon Shakai Bungakukai, special issue, "Kanto daishinsai to bungaku" [Literature and the Great Kanto Earthquake]: pp.14-24.

["Kyorakushugi no saishin geijutsu: sengo ni kangei saretsutsuaru dadaizumu"] is a general introduction of the Zurich dadaist movement combined with some comments by the author. The author's stance toward the movement is rather negative. He states that the movement suggests a certain kind of insanity and lacks seriousness, criticising the dadaists as "dilettantes", who "regard art as a type of play". The dadaists are also referred to as "extreme hedonists, naturalists, total individualists, nihilists, realists" and as "mad destroyers", who "wish to destroy love, philosophy, literature and everything else". The author concludes that from the manifestos and other articles he has seen in English, American and French journals, dadaism appears to have no particular claims and is only interested in seeking novelty.

The second article in the paper, "A Glance at Dadaism" ["Dadaizumu ichimenkan"], is less impressionistic and more informative. After referring to dadaism as "an offshoot of futurism which went to the extreme", the author of this article briefly discusses the reason for the extraordinary popularity of dadaism in Europe, conjecturing that the sudden swirl of dadaism across Europe is linked to the European artists' disappointment in Marinetti's futurism, which was caught in the Italian nationalist movement and had lost its vision as an artistic movement. Regarding the content of dadaism, the author quotes from Tristan Tzara's "Dada Manifesto 1918" and argues that at the core of dadaism lies "the idea of negating everything", and it is therefore a type of "literary nihilism which abandons hope for the future and concentrates on the present", adding that because of this emphasis on the present the movement has a "strongly hedonistic flavor to it". The article makes reference to a number of journals in Europe and America that supported the dadaist movement, and also includes a partial translation of works by Serner and Huelsenbeck. In concluding the article, this author, too, expresses his doubts as to whether anything can be expected to come out of the dadaist movement. Noting that some articles in English and American journals are confusing Dadaism with German Expressionism, the author states:

Dadaism cannot even be compared to recent Expressionism which has Berkeley's Spiritualism and Kant's Idealism as its background, regards Holderlin as a representative poet of the past, and has produced a number of masterworks. The fundamental difference between Expressionism and Dadaism is that whereas the former is an idealism that places emphasis on the progress of human culture, the latter is only a type of hedonism born out of a capricious spirit of those poets of feeble mentality.[9]

These articles, though far from being a comprehensive introduction to the dadaist movement in Europe, were sufficient to awaken a dadaist interest in some Japanese poets. Whereas the importation of futurism into Japan did not immediately lead to the production of futurist poetry as such --- it was more than ten years later that Hirato proclaimed himself a Japanese futurist poet --- the above-mentioned articles on dadaism found responses in the poetic circles almost as soon as they were published. During the following few years, together with further essays and introductory notes on dadaism in a number of literary journals, various attempts were made by Japanese poets to create dadaist works.

Before proceeding to examine the works of individual poets, I will briefly make one more reference to another manifesto of the time, presented by the poets of another literary magazine, *Aka to kuro* [Red and black]. The four issues and a supplement of this magazine were published between January 1923 and June 1924. The well-known manifesto appeared on the cover page of the first three issues.

What is poetry? Who are poets? We abandon all the past concepts and boldly assert! "Poetry is a bomb! Poets are black criminals who throw the bomb on the hard walls and doors of prison![10]

The format of *Red and Black* was anything but elaborate. Indeed *Red and Black* could be hardly

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[9] *Yorozu choho*, August 15, 1920 (microfilm, University of Tokyo Shinbunken Library).

[10] Quoted from Komata Yusuke, *Op.Cit.*, p.43.

considered a magazine as far as its material make-up was concerned. The first issue consisted of twenty-four pages, the second and the third of only eight pages, the fourth of sixteen pages and the extra issue, four. Despite its meager presentation, the publication of this magazine caused a considerable sensation in the literary world and shocked poets, old and young alike. The older generation saw the poets of *Red and Black* as "the terrorists of the poetic world".[11] The principal idea behind the publication of this magazine was to openly uphold the poets' power to "negate"[12]. The poets of *Red and Black* also made clear their intention to liberate poetic creation from the private realm and to create an avenue for poetry to possess a public value. Just as Hirato and Murayama made attempts to move into the streets, these poets held the first poetry exhibition in Tokyo, and all of their works were confiscated by the police. They also held public lectures in Tokyo, Maebashi and Isezaki with the intent to disseminate the avant-garde spirit nationwide.[13] The impact of the emergence of the *Red and Black* poets can be seen in its influence on the *MAVO* group as well. In *MAVO*'s third issue (published in September 1924), a new manifesto was written by Murayama, which includes the following lines: "*MAVO* is a group of ghastly criminals wearing black glasses on red faces...[*MAVO*] fires the last bomb to intelligent criminals (the gentlemen clique)". There is no room to doubt that the references to "criminals" and the "bomb" are directly echoing *Red and Black*.

*Red and Black* represented a mixture of dadaist and anarchist sentiments. Four out of six of its members, including Hagiwara Kyojiro, moved toward anarchism soon after the magazine was

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[11] Takami Jun's words. Takami Jun, *Op.Cit.*, p.34.

[12] Another manifesto including the lines, "Negate! Negate! Negate! Let us devote all our energies to negate!" appears in the magazine's fourth issue.

[13] *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten* [Encyclopaedia of modern Japanese literature], Kodansha, 1977, vol.5: 6.

concluded and developed an interest in linking poetry to politics.[14] It might be worth noting that a potential interest in political themes is found in *MAVO* as well. In its second issue, Murayama included two poems from *The Swallow Book* by Ernst Toller. Even though as a magazine, *MAVO* did not openly deal with politics *per se*, Murayama did not conceal his sympathy toward a revolutionary poet like Toller, and also published the entire translation of *The Swallow Book* in April 1925.[15]

Having presented a sketch of the avant-garde scene of the early 1920s, I will move on to examine the works of three poets, whose poetic careers began amidst the swirl of these avant-garde movements. Takahashi Shinkichi is known as the first "dada" poet in Japan. Ogata Kamenosuke participated in the avant-garde movement as one of the founding members of *MAVO*, although, as we shall see, his involvement in the movement was extremely brief. Hagiwara Kyojiro was a poet of *Red and Black* and was also involved in the founding of *MAVO*. Of these three, Hagiwara was the only poet who did not disclaim his position as an avant-garde for the greater part of his career. We shall see, however, that even his case reflected the fundamental difficulty of being an avant-garde in a society whose cultural base had been thoroughly uprooted. How the poetic trajectories of these three poets reflect an essential aspect of Japanese modernity will be discussed later in this chapter.

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[14] *Red and Black* was initially started by the four members, Hagiwara Kyojiro, Tsuboi Shigeji, Okamoto Jun and Kawasaki Chotaro. Two more poets, Ono Tosaburo and Hayashi Masao joined later, and there were also four other poets who contributed to the journal without becoming members.

[15] See Komata Yusuke, *Op.Cit.*, 116-118.

3) Takahashi Shinkichi: The birth of a Japanese dadaist and his rediscovery of tradition[16]

Takahashi Shinkichi (1901-1986) was a young poet of nineteen when he came across the above-mentioned newspaper articles on dadaism. He was "enormously shocked", proclaimed himself a dadaist and immediately embarked on creating dadaist poetry in Japanese.[17] In September, 1922, his dadaist manifesto, "Dagabaji's Assertion" ["Dagabaji dangen"] appeared in a weekly journal *Shukan Nihon* [Japan weekly], and in November of the same year, his first poetic works entitled "Three Dadaist Poems" ["Dada no shi mittsu"] appeared in another literary journal *Kaizo* [Reform].[18] The following is the first part of Takahashi's manifesto, which was retitled "Assertion is Dadaist" ["Dangen wa dadaisuto"] and included in *The Poems of Dadaist Shinkichi* [Dadaisuto shinkichi no shi], published in February, 1923.

*DADA* asserts everything and negates everything.
Infinity and nothingness -- they sound the same as cigarettes, petticoats or a word.
Everything that emerges in imagination exists.
The entire past is enclosed in the future of fermented soybeans.
Things that are beyond human imagination, ladles and cats imagine that they can be imagined by stones and sardine heads.
*DADA* sees the ego in everything.
In the vibration of the air, in the hatred of bacteria, in the smell of the word 'ego', it sees the ego.
Everything is one and the same. From Buddha's enlightened vision, the phrase everything is everything emerges.

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[16] A part of this section on Takahashi Shinkichi and the next section on Ogata Kamenosuke have appeared in Toshiko Ellis, "The Japanese avant-garde of the 1920s: the poetic struggle with the dilemma of the modern", *Poetics Today*, Duke University Press, vol.20, no.4, Winter, 1999: 723-741

[17] Takahashi's own words, quoted from "Dada kara bukkyo e" ["From dada to buddhism"], *Takahashi Shinkichi zenshu* [Complete works of Takahashi Shinkichi], vol.4, Seidosha, 1982: 208. All the citations of Takahashi's work are taken from this collection.

[18] "Dagabaaji's Asssertion" was originally written in 1921.

One sees everything in everything.
Assertion is everything.

The universe is a bar of soap. A bar of soap is a pair of trousers.
Everything is possible.
Strands of seaweed jelly wrote a love letter to Christ pasted on a fan.
Everything and anything is true.
Is it possible for a nonsmoking *Mr. God* to imagine something that cannot be asserted?

The manifesto is sixty-two lines long and is concluded by the following lines in which a personified "DADA" appears.

There is nothing more perverse than *DADA*. Because he hangs from his hips a fierce fighting spirit, at every moment he explodes, crashes, and destroys.
Everything is *DADA*'s enemy.
He curses and kills everything,, burns everything to bits, and hangs out the still unfulfilled tongue like an eternal proletariat.[19]

At the time Takahashi was living in Ehime prefecture in Western Japan and had just started writing poetry. Inspired by the newspaper articles on dadaism, he made a trip to Tokyo to meet Tsuji Jun, with whom he had previous literary contacts, and who was also to become known as a dada poet a few years later. Takahashi made a sensational debut with *The poems of Dadaist Shinkichi*, and is generally regarded as one of the few figures most responsible for spreading the "dada" sentiment among young poets and novelists. Takahashi himself, however, moved away from dadaism only a few years after his debut. His second collection, *Gion Matsuri* [The gion festival], published in 1926, already shows a clear change in his poetic style, and after publishing his third collection, *Takahashi Shinkichi Shishu* [Takahashi Shinkichi's poetic works] in 1928, Takahashi commenced zazen (zen meditation) training at a zen temple and began to take a serious interest in zen

[19] In producing this translation I have referred to Makoto Ueda's translation in *Modern Japanese Poets*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983: 337-338. The original text is in *Takahashi Shikichi zenshu*, vol.1: 50-52.

buddhism. Over ten volumes of poetic works published since then are referred to as "zen" poetry by the poet.

The very briefness of Takahashi's interest in dada poetry is suggestive of the nature of the reception of Western avant-garde poetry in Japan. The new artistic movement in Europe captured the interest of a young Japanese poet, as it appeared to provide him with a means to create works that would be totally new and free from conventional poetic practices. By calling himself a dadaist and writing a piece in the form of a manifesto, he was able to set a stage for his debut as the leader of an all-destructive dadaist movement in Japan. His works found immediate responses among the fellow poets who shared a similar aspiration for creating a new type of art that broke away from the conventions of earlier poetic forms, both traditional and modern. The implications in the *Yorozu Choho* newspaper articles on European dadaism, that the movement represented not only a new form of art but a new conception of the artist as a liberated individual in society, also attracted the young poets who were struggling to establish a new identity against the social and cultural conventions that restricted individual freedom. It was clear, however, that pursuing a radical poetic style by merely combining unconventional images would not establish a sufficient foundation for a movement that could affect the values of society at large. For that, the rationale behind this all-destroying movement was as yet too uncertain. In the case of Takahashi, after a period of experimenting with various means to "shock" the public, his interest in dadaism declined. He sought a new poetic identity that had a firmer ground in Japanese tradition, yet which did not contradict the principles of his dadaist pursuit. In fact, Takahashi later came to perceive dada as "an off-shoot of zen", going as far as to claim that dada was "an elementary form of zen".[20]

Let us come back to the "manifesto" quoted earlier and see what we can read from it. Firstly, it

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[20] Takahashi wrote several essays explaining the reasons for his conversion from dada to zen. This particular quotation is taken from "Dada kara bukkyo e" ["From dada to buddhism"], *Takahashi Shinkichi zenshu*, *Op.Cit.*, vol.4: 208-211.

shows that Takahashi had little interest in breaking down the signifying function of language. The syntax of a sentence is rarely broken and the chain of words are arranged to produce and retain a certain meaning. One of the central features of the dadaist works in Europe, those of Tzara's in particular, lay in the attempt to question the relationship between a word and its signifying concept, hence creating delirious verbal constructions that negated the production of meaning. None of this is seen in Takahashi's manifeso. Indeed, a closer reading of the manifesto reveals that the entire piece revolves around one central message.

That message is already suggested in its title. The fact that the original title, "Dagabaji's assertion", was changed to "Assertion is dadaist" in its later publication suggests that the manifesto was not meant to be Takahashi's personal assertion but that "the act of asserting" was by itself the unifying principle of dadaism according to Takahashi. The manifesto does reflect much of the idea introduced in the *Yorozu Choho* newspaper article of the dadaists as "total individualists, nihilists ... and mad destroyers", who have the desire "to negate everything.[21] However, as in line one, that negation is coupled with assertion, and as is emphasised by Makoto Ueda in his analysis of Takahashi's work, the tone of this manifesto is overwhelmingly affirmative.[22] In fact, Takahashi's manifesto does not negate all values but goes beyond negation to assert them all. Phrases such as "everything that emerges in imagination exists", "Assertion is everything", "Everything and anything is true", "*DADA* sees the ego in everything", suggest that the poet is ready to accept virtually anything, including his own ego.

To follow Ueda's analysis further, what is being negated is not the existence of things themselves or their meaning but the distinction between them -- that is, between the abstract and the concrete;

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[21] Apart from the very first line in which the poet asserts and negates everything, the phrase "*DADA* negates everything" appears in line 19, which is not quoted here.

[22] Makoto Ueda, ***Modern Japanese Poets***, Stanford: Stanford University Press: 338-339.

between unfathomable existence and small objects; between the sublime and the quotidien, and so on. In fact, there is a reason that "infinity" should sound the same as something so finite as "cigarettes" or "petticoats"; why "the entire past" can be of an equivalent size to something as petty as "the future of fermented soybeans"; or why "the universe" and "a bar of soap", or "a pair of trousers", can be connected by an "is". What Takahashi is attempting to do here is transcend any kind of "difference" that exists in this universe by juxtaposing properties or objects that represent the two extremes of a certain attribute.[23]

The repeated appearance of the word "ego" should also be noted. As expressed in the phrase "*DADA* sees the ego in everything", Takahashi's "ego" is linked to the idea of an omnipresent self that is inseparable from all other existences -- a self which does not exist as an independent entity but is integrated into the universe and is one with it.

In a short poem in "The 1911 Collection" ["1911 nenshu"] included in *The Poems of Dadaist Shinkichi*, Takahashi writes:

Isn't it a bit small?
Your 'ego'?
Take it off,
it looks like a vest.[24]

The "ego" is not something one wears, like "a vest". Rather, according to Takahashi, it is something much bigger, that extends beyond the boundaries of an individual.

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[23] Ueda, *ibid.*

[24] *Takahashi Shinkichi Zenshu*, vol.1: 38. This poem was included in Takahashi's earliest hand-made collection entitled *Makuwauri Shishu* published in 1921. About twenty or thirty copies were made but none was sold. Many of these earliest poems, including this one, reappeared in *The Poems of Dadaist Shinkichi* in the section "1911 nenshu". "1911" was apparently a mistype for "1921". See "Kaidai" in *Takahashi Shinkichi zenshu*, vol.1: 716-717.

Takahashi's belief in the meaninglessness of making distinctions between words, as we saw in the manifesto, is expressed in another short poem in "The 1911 Collection", which reads:

Such word as "thank you" and something called "conscience"
Are they different?
I thought
They both referred to a native's petticoat.[25]

This kind of contempt for "meaning" is consistently expressed in Takahashi's works. The fundamental paradox for Takahashi, though, was that he expressed little reservation for using words to convey this message.

In the next poem included in the same collection, the inter-relatedness and the one-ness of all things, which were also suggested in the manifesto, are shown through the presentation of images that conflict, collide with one another, and eventually merge into one.

The intercourse between the clouds and a pond
Washing the lotus root
A military ship at anchor
The discharge from the eyes of an ox has made my chest congested
    A withered pampas
    A muddy ditch
    There is no chair in a destroyed landscape
The sound of the cannon
    Came to prepare a bed. [26]

The first two lines bring the sky and the pond together, suggesting the one-ness of the natural existence. The insertion of the image of a military ship in the third line is probably related to the potential "war" to be started by the poet, breaking the peace and harmony of the natural landscape. At the same time, it is shown that the ship, placed parallel with the lotus root, constitutes a part of nature

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[25] *Takahashi Shinkichi zenshu*, vol.1: 38.

[26] *Takahashi Shinkichi zenshu*, vol.1: 74.

and is inseparable from it. The fourth line suggests that lifeblood --- including in itself a cause of death --- is flowing among all living creatures. The last five lines present an image of a devastated landscape. Whether the devastation was a result of the intrusion of the military ship into the landscape or was caused by the discharge from the eyes of an ox is not known. In place of the lotus roots is a withered pampas, and the pond has turned into a muddy ditch. The poem concludes with an image of a cannon releasing a hollow sound that fills the landscape deprived of life. The positive tone as we saw in the manifesto is totally absent here, but we can observe once again the idea that there is no fundamental difference in all the elements that constitute the universe, that nothing can exist in its own right and that everything is interrelated. And further, in this poem is a suggestion that everything is in flux and is therefore in a process of change, eventually leading itself to nothingness.

We can thus see from the brief examination of Takahashi's early works that for Takahashi, moving from dadaism to zen buddhism was a natural course. The strongly assertive tone of the manifesto quickly disappeard as the initial interest in embarking on a new poetic project waned, and the themes inherent in the earliest works found a new ground for development in a tradition that had lain at the base of Japanese culture for more than five hundred years.

It must be noted, however, that what Takahashi refers to as "zen" should not be taken as zen buddhist philosophy in a strict sense. His father's family religion being zen, Takahashi had developed a sense of affinity with zen buddhism since his childhood, and after his encounter with a zen master Ashikaga Shizan at the age of twenty-six, Takahashi enthusiastically read the zen texts, attending lectures and practising *zazen* training. Yet, whether we should look at Takahashi's "zen poetry" as an adequate representation of the zen religious philosophy is another question. This chapter does not intend to examine Takahashi's zen poetry, but a general comment can be made that many of the elements which characterise Takahashi's "zen" poetry, for instance, the mutability, transience and interchangeablity of all things, constitute a crucial part of the doctrines of other

buddhist sects as well. We can assume that certain aspects that are emphasised particularly in zen buddhism, such as the fundamental disbelief in rationality, the denial of the process of conceptualization, and the belief in intuitive understanding encouraging spontaneity of action, are those that attracted Takahashi most strongly and those that have an apparent affinity to dadaism.

As we saw earlier, the avant-garde artistic movements in Europe were enthusiastically introduced into Japan in the early 1920s and found wider reception in the period immediately following the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. The fundamental difference in the cultural context meant, however, that the significance of the avant-garde acquired quite a different dimension once it was placed in the Japanese cultural scene. In Europe, the dadaist movement emerged out of the growing conviction that its civilization, founded on a belief in reason, rationality and human progress, was entering into crisis. With the devastating experience of the First World War, this conviction was strengthened, for many poets and artists saw the war as a symbolic projection of the debacle of older ideas and values. Putting aside the incomparable difference in scale, the shattered landscape of the city of Tokyo after the earthquake had a similar impact on Japanese poets and artists in that many witnessed in it a symbolic ending of their old culture. Notably, however, the implication of "old culture" was double-edged. On the surface, what was swept away by the earthquake was the "modern" Tokyo that had a history of just over half a century. At the same time, the ruins of the city of Tokyo also signified the end of the traditional Edo culture that had been nurtured in that city for more than 250 years. For the young Japanese poets who were prepared to acclaim the death of the old culture with a certain conviction that their culture was to be redefined in the international context of the modern world, the physical devastation of the old capital, where the traces of both the premodern and modern traditions had been instantly removed, marked not so much a loss as an exciting beginning of their activities.

The strongly affirmative tone of Takahashi's manifesto reflects the young poet's aspiration for creating a new reality that was no longer bound by conventional perceptions. At the same time, Takahashi's case suggests that a mere celebration of freedom from conventional values could not

serve as a sustainable theme for poetic creation. The radical newness of dadaism might have given Takahashi the inspiration to embark on something new that would allow him to escape from the constructions of conventional visions of culture and society. But such an infatuation with newness was all too quickly exhausted. The deep scepticism in the potential of human experience that had contributed to the founding of the modern world, which lay at the base of the avant-garde movements in Europe, had little relevance for the Japanese dadaists. In the 1920s, for example, the institutions of bourgeois civil society, the target of the avant-garde movements in Europe, were still under construction in Japan. The concept of the "self", which was called into question by the Western avant-garde, was also too fresh an idea to become the target of negation. In fact, the whole idea of individualism, with its belief in the autonomy of the self, was something that Japanese writers and poets had been struggling to grasp during the fifty years since its introduction from the West. Is it surprising, then, that the gesture of destruction had little effect when the target to be destroyed was as yet so vaguely defined?

Takahashi himself was apparently not unaware of this contradiction. We find in other works of his dadaist phase expressions of his frustration in realising the futility of the whole idea of "destruction". The following is the last part of a well-known poem, also included in "The 1921 Collection".

Dissolve life into water
in a cooled-down stew pot
Boredom floats
Smash the plates
When you smash the plates
The echo of ennui will be released[27]

This untitled poem came to be known as one of Takahashi's representative works for the impact of its

[27] *Takahashi Shinkichi zenshu*, vol.1: 38: 81-82.

first line where the word "sara"(plates) is repeated twenty-two times, presenting a visual and auditory image of the instability of plates piled up high in the kitchen. For the present discussion I will focus on the last part of the poem where the poetic subject expresses his desire to smash the plates all to pieces, knowing that even if he did so, all he can create is a hollow sound of "ennui". The main motif of the poem is "boredom". The image of a "cooled-down stew pot" is associated with the image of thinness, coldness, flatness and tastelessness, which all suggest the poetic subject's frustration with reality. But what can he do to tear down this reality? The further frustration rests in the fact that the act of destruction is pre-empted of its meaning when the object to be destroyed is such a feeble construct --- it will create a sound, but the echo of the sound will only bring back a stronger sense of "ennui", and nothing more.

Takahashi's quick conversion to "zen" poetry suggests that in order for him to continue his poetic pursuit, he needed a firmer foundation for his activities. It should be noted in this regard that even when Takahashi embarked on writing poetry by identifying himself as a "mad destroyer", his target of destruction never extended to Japan's premodern cultural tradition. On the contrary, his encounter with zen provided him with a means to rediscover and reappropriate the lost tradition. Irretrievable though it might have been, Takahashi devoted the rest of his life to an attempt to recover zen ideals in new, modern poetic forms.

Notwithstanding the fact that Takahashi's example only represents one case of the Japanese reception of dadaism, his case highlights the nature of the fundamental dilemma experienced by many Japanese avant-garde poets, and also suggests why dadaism stopped short of developing into any kind of a collaborative, organised movement in Japan. In this context I will briefly note that another representative figure in the Japanese dadaist scene, Tsuji Jun, also pursued his poetic career at a strictly personal level, expressing little concern for extending his poetic endeavours to encompass wider questions of society and culture. His works are characterised by their affinity with the

traditional notion of *fukyo*(風狂 =wind + madness), which celebrated eccentricity, wit and nonchalance in relation to worldly affairs.

The proclamation of dadaism by Takahashi and Tsuji did, however, have a lasting effect on the Japanese literary scene. For example, another young poet of sixteen, Yoshiyuki Eisuke, living in Okayama prefecture in Western Japan, was inspired by the works of Takahashi and Tsuji and started his own magazine, *Dadaizumu* [Dadaism], in December 1922. After publishing three issues, he found a collaborator in Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, then living in Nagano prefecture to the northeast of Tokyo, and started another magazine *Baichishuubun* [Selling shame and ugly words] in April 1924. The magazine published six issues during the next six months. In the few years that followed, a number of magazines that reflected the dadaist influence were published, and dadaist sensitivity permeated among a large number of young artists, poets and novelists.[28]

As mentioned earlier, the introduction of dadaism coincided with the proclamation of futurism by Hirato Renkichi. The year *The Poems of Dadaist Shinkichi* was published also marked the publication of the first issue of *Red and Black* and the founding of the group MAVO. The first issue of *MAVO* came out the year after.

Despite the differences in interpretation and representation demonstrated among the poets, dadaist attempts contributed significantly to laying the ground-work for further avant-garde activities to follow. To put it differently, it set free the avant-garde sentiment shared by the young poets who were looking for a means to embark on poetic creation that was suitable to the age of rapid urbanization. The process by which the urban themes --- both constructive and destructive --- was incorporated in poetic creation will be examined in works by Hagiwara Kyojiro, whom I will take up

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[28] It is well known that Nakahara Chuya was deeply moved by Takahashi's poems and decided to become a poet. Nakahara eventually became one of the representative poets of *Shiki* [The four seasons], which I will discuss in Chapter Five (Nakahara himself will not be examined in detail in this thesis).

later in this chapter. In the following section I will focus on Ogata Kamenosuke, whose approach to Japanese poetic modernity is characterised by a sudden withdrawal from avant-gardism and a persistent refusal to take any action and to stay immobile, poetically and literally.

4) Ogata Kamenosuke: An avant-garde retreat into silence

Unlike Takahashi Shinkichi who was able to redirect his poetic interests toward the rediscovery of a traditional cultural identity once he came to a realization that the newly imported idea of the European avant-garde did not quite "work" in the Japanese context, Ogata Kamenosuke (1900-1942) was a poet who resolved to pursue the dilemma of Japanese modernity. He did this at the price of giving up poetry itself, and virtually, his self-identification as a modern man. The evolution of Ogata's poetry reflects the mental struggle of a Japanese poet whose brief contact with the European avant-garde resulted not in a belief in social and cultural emancipation but in a desperate realization that no action, or ultimately, expression, was possible in a culture that had lost its roots.

Born in 1900 in the city of Sendai in far northeastern Japan, Ogata grew up as the eldest son of a successful entrepreneur in the region. In his high school years, he joined a literary circle and actively participated in compiling the traditional *tanka* poetry magazines, *Fumie* and *Gendo*. Through *Gendo*, Ogata became acquainted with Ishihara Jun, a young physicist and the translator of Einstein's *Origin of Physics*. Later, Ogata started painting, and married the niece of Kinoshita Shuichiro, who, as noted earlier, was one of the central figures in the founding of the Japanese Futurist Art Association. He moved to Tokyo and joined the Futurist Art Association in 1922. When Murayama Tomoyoshi came back from Berlin, Ogata joined his group and became one of the founding members

of *MAVO*. For its first exhibition, he presented fifty of his own paintings.[29]

Ogata's contact with the avant-garde movements abruptly stops here, however. Only a year later, Ogata left the ***MAVO*** group and gave up painting. He started to write poetry, and published some of his works in literary journals such as *A*, *Shi to Shiron* [Poetry and poetics] and *Dora* [The Gong], but never played an active role in any of their activities. At the age of thirty-three, after publishing three poetic collections, Ogata abandoned the cultural excitement of Tokyo and returned to his hometown. He spent the last ten years of his life intermittently writing poems and essays, working as a clerk in the Sendai city office for the last four years.[30]

Of Ogata's three poetic collections, the first collection entitled *Irogarasu no machi* [The city of coloured glass] was published in 1925, the year after Ogata left the *MAVO* group. Reading it, we can see how Ogata attempted to create a new kind of poetry by experimenting with different poetic forms and dealing with new types of poetic themes. The following piece entitled "Receiving a visitor" ["Aru raihosha eno settai"] consists solely of onomatopaeia and is written in the phonetic *hiragana* syllabary.

dotedotetotetatetetetteta
tatetote
tereteretokotokoto
taranpipipipi pi
tottentotonopu
n
nnnn n

taturetopontotopore

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[29] The first *MAVO* exhibition was held in July, 1923. In the second exhibition held in November of the same year, Ogata apparently presented only two works. See Akimoto Kiyoshi, *Op.Cit.*, 179.

[30] For Ogata's biographical details, see Akimoto Kiyoshi, *Op.Cit.*

mimimi
rarara
rakarakarakara
gontorotororo
peropentotarurute[31]

There is probably little to be gained in trying to analyse this piece in detail. Suffice it to say that one can "hear" in this poem the sounds of people rushing about and talking, as they prepare to serve a guest who has just arrived.

One notable characteristic of Ogata's early poems is the recurring interest in the sense of time and space, which is probably related to the popularization of Einstein's theory in Japan. Since his visit to Japan in 1922, Einstein's name had become widely known, and his theory of relativity was quickly popularised, exerting a wide influence on the fine arts, drama and literature of the 1920s.[32]

Ogata's interest in the popularised theory of relativity is reflected in his poems, particularly in the pieces dealing with the idea of a sudden twist in the relationship between time and space. The following is a section from the preface to *The City of Coloured Glass*, entitled "A cigarette is my travelling friend" ["Tabako wa watashi no tabibito de aru"].

This is a city with no person

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[31] Experiments with different types of syllabary are seen in other works as well. "Illness" ["Byoki"] presents a combination of *katakana* phonetic syallabary with Chinese characters; "Rain rain"["Ame ame"] is written in the Roman alphabet with the last four lines in the ordinary Japanese syllabic system. The original text is from *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu* [Complete works of Ogata Kamenosuke], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1999: 39-40. All the citations of Ogata's work are taken from this collection.

[32] On the details of Einstein's visit to Japan and the popularization of Einstein's theory, see Kaneko Tsutomu, *Ainshutain shokku: Taisho nihon o yurugaseta 43 nichikan* [Einstein shock: the 43 days that shook Taisho Japan] , vol.1, and *Ainshutain shokku: nihon no bunka to shiso no shogeki* [Einstein shock: its impact on Japanese culture and thought], vol.2, Tokyo: Kawade Shobo, 1981.

It is an eerie city, as if someone has brought a midnight city where not a single man is walking, not even a dog
The trees aren't green, and the stone pavement looks old, covered by something like a mist, the city looks somewhat like a face
It is a flat city with the smell of a rotten flower, which has no wind, no rain, no sun, and perhaps not even a sky
It is a city that no one knows when humans vanished, and why they vanished[33]

Here, time has apparently been warped, and the poetic subject has been left behind in a timeless space. The idea of timeless space is expressed by the image of the city as being "flat" and without a sky, deprived of volume.

The following piece entitled "An afternoon with no sound" ["Oto no shinai hiru no fukei"] deals with a similar theme.

A factory chimney, and
Finding another chimney far away
The line drawn towards that chimney will...

A mute, is a city
As if I have met a mute friend[34]

This short poem suggests how Ogata used his painter's eye in his early works. In the first three lines the landscape is perceived visually: one point in the distance is connected with another point further away. The third line is left incomplete, suggesting the unknown beyond that further point. As the reader wonders what lies beyond, he is brought into a different dimension where space takes on the nature of silence. The landscape presented spatially in the first part of the poem is extended in the last two lines, where the sense of unknown distance is converted to an image of infinite stillness. Instead of describing the stillness in spatial terms, the poet uses the word "mute", as space with no movement

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[33] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 24-25.

[34] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 27.

can create no sound. Reading this poem together with the previous one, we can assume that space dominated by stillness is also space without time.

These works taken from Ogata's first collection reveal that his poetic career began as an extension of his interest in the innovative artistic directions pursued by the futurists. The piece written in onomatopoeia is reminiscent of the futurists' obsession with speed in their attempt to grasp objects in motion. The challenge to the traditional notion of time and space was also one of the futurists' concerns, as is seen in their effort to express movement in painting through the simultaneous presence of an object in plural spaces. Although not necessarily radical in appearance, Ogata's earliest works contain elements that clearly indicate the traces of his brief involvement in the avant-garde artistic scene.

Yet we find even in these earliest pieces some of the features that were to characterise his later works. One is the dominant stillness and quietness of the images. The two poems related to the theme of time quoted here are symptomatic in the sense that they contain few or no sound images, and the stillness of the entire space is suggested by its soundlessness or timelessness. One feels the insecure position of the poetic subject, a sense of uneasiness about its relation to the outside world. In some other examples of Ogata's early works we find this sense of insecurity expressed through the subject's distinct sensitivity to the presence of his body.

The following are some lines taken from the pieces in *The City of Coloured Glass*, and his second collection, ***Ame ni naru asa*** [The morning turning into rain], published in 1929, in which the poetic subject refers to a sense of uneasiness about the physical presence of his body.

When the evening comes, I feel the presence of my face
I feel the presence of my nose at the centre of my face
("An autumn day is quiet" ["Aki no hi wa shizuka"], *The City of Coloured Glass* )[35]

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[35] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 60.

Midday
When I press my face against the floor and close my eyes
My body is uselessly big
("The sad May" ["kanashimeru gogatsu"], *The Morning Turning into Rain*)[36]

I realised that my feet are too small for walking
("The city at daytime is too big" ["Hiru no machi wa ookisugiru"]), *The Morning Turning into Rain*)[37]

These lines can be read as an expression of the poetic subject's excessive physical consciousness: whether immobile or in motion, he feels that his body is not quite in harmony with the exterior world; that it is a kind of an excess. Even in the last example, in which the smallness of his feet is emphasised, it is the large size of the body attached to the small feet that causes the poet to feel so awkward about walking. In the following example, this excessive self-consciousness is expressed from a different angle, as a fear that physical presence can at any time be changed into absence.

I feel that it could suddenly happen that,
When I touched it it certainly wasn't there.
At night, sometimes when I leave the room,
I feel that my face has vanished the moment I turned off the switch.
(Published in *Dora* [The Gong] no.8, 1926)[38]

This is the first part of a piece entitled "I have no face" ["Kao ga nai"], which appeared in a literary journal a year after the publication of Ogata's first collection. The last part of this poem reads: "Recently, at daytime I am often struck by the premonition that my face will vanish. I don't think this

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[36] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 12[illegible]

[37] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 1[illegible]

[38] This piece appeared in *Dora* [The Gong], no.8, 1926, but was not included in any of the collections published by Ogata himself. *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 200.

kind of premonition is a good thing, but when I feel it coming I hold my breath and wait for it to happen". The poet seems to have no means of overcoming this fear --- instead of taking a positive action to get rid of such a sensation, he passively "waits for it to happen".

As a result of his lack of confidence in the link between himself and the outside world, the poetic subject becomes overly conscious of his own presence. He does not know where, and how, he stands in relation to others. In fact, even the works cited earlier, which presented Ogata's unique cityscape based on a vision influenced by Einstein's theory of relativity, can be read as further examples of Ogata's sense of uncertainty about his relationship with the outside world. In "A cigarette is my travelling friend", for example, the stillness, soundlessness and timelessness of the world surrounding the poet are a reflection of his sense of detachment. The elements constituting his surroundings take on a foreign appearance, and the subjective self is alienated from his own vision. We can note here that such a fundamental doubt in the reliability of the subject, and therefore in the reliablity of reality as perceived by the subject, reflects a consciousness attributable to the avant-garde poetry of the early twentieth century.

In Ogata's later works, the poetic subject is not only uncertain of his position, he becomes trapped in space and convinced that he is no longer able to move. The subject has lost all will to engage in what goes on around him. This attitude is clearly expressed in the title of one poem, "I am sitting and looking" ["Suwatte miteiru"] ( *The Morning Turning into Rain*). [39]

Were it merely the theme of immobility that characterised Ogata's poems, there would probably be little need to explore them further. What makes them interesting is the way the world outside is perceived from this immobile position. The most notable feature of Ogata's later works such as *The Morning Turning into Rain* and his last collection, *Shoji no aru ie* [The house with a paper door], which came out in 1930, is that the fragmentation of reality that results from this stance is faithfully

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[39] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 118.

represented in his poetic construction.

The following is the first part of the "Preface" to *The Morning Turning into Rain*, entitled "February"("Nigatsu").

What was thought to be a child crying, was the cry of a cock when I woke up.
The morning had already passed, and the still sun was up in the blue sky.
Leaves of the cypress tree were swaying in the soft breeze. A big cat walked across the eaves.
The second time the cat walked across, I was lying down.
An adult with an air-gun came near the fence and shot at a sparrow, but he missed it.
A child with holes in his socks came back inside holding a flag. And, because it was dark inside, he touched my face with a cold hand.[40]

The first line can be paraphrased as follows: "I first thought it was a child crying, but that was my mistake, for I found out when I woke up that it was actually the cry of a cock". The difference here is that in my paraphrased version "I" plays the role of the subject who perceives, reflects and judges, whereas in the poem the "I" who "thought" and "woke up" is not placed at the centre of perception. As Betsuyaku Minoru notes in his study of Ogata's later works, it is simply stated that phenomenon A (the sound that was thought to be that of a child crying) turned out to be phenomenon B (the cry of a cock).[41] In other words, it speaks only of the change in the nature of the phenomena, and the function of the subject is merely to register what change has occurred.

The line "The second time the cat walked across, I was lying down" is also worthy of attention. Between when the cat walked across the first time and when it walked across the second time (which couldn't have happened too soon after), the "I" had changed its position and is now lying down. However, since the act of changing position is not stated, the change in "I"'s perspective is simply presented as a description of a scene. In other words, the only message this line contains is that

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[40] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 115.

[41] Betsuyaku Minoru, "Sorekara sonotsugi e" ["And then after that"], *Gendaishi bunko Ogata Kamenosuke shishu* [The poetic works of Ogata Kamenosuke], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1975:136-139.

"phenomenon I" was in a supine position when "phenomenon cat" walked across on the eaves the second time.

The following section features "an adult" who "shot" but "missed", and "a child" who "came back inside". There is no link between the act of the man and the act of the child, as there is no subject to integrate the vision. Such general words as "adult" and "child" also suggest that they possess no more importance than any other moving object. Whether the "adult" is the poet's neighbour, or whether the "child" is his own child, is of no relevance. It is only when "I" feels the coldness of the child's hand that "I" comes in contact with the scene, and is slightly shocked by this sudden tactile sensation.

This deletion of the subjective ability to integrate vision is characteristic of many of Ogata's later works. His last collection, *The House with a Paper Door*, subtitled *Or, (if there is a stone for me to stumble over, I would like to fall)* [Aruiwa (tsumazuku ishi demo areba watashi wa soko de korobitai)],[42] consists of prose works only, many of which reflect this tendency. For example, the following line in "May" ["Gogatsu"] uses the same technique as that in the first line of "February":

What is crying is a cock and what is blowing is the wind.[43]

This is quite different from saying either "I heard the cock crying and felt the wind blowing" or "A cock is crying and the wind is blowing". The former places the subject as the recipient and unifier of senses, whereas the latter, even while leaving the relation of "I" in relation to the vision inexplicit, allows us to assume the subject's position as the unifying observer of the scene. In contrast, the

[42] The brackets are in the original. *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 145.

[43] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 146.

above line totally rejects any intervention by an observing subject, referring solely to the agents of "crying" and "blowing". The function of the poetic subject is merely to note the difference between the two sensations.

The following piece is entitled "A day in March" ["Sangatsu no hi"].

Getting out of bed around midday, the sun was at its normal spot. For no particular reason, I felt so relaxed I did without washing my face.
In a corner of the shady garden, the camellia has been blooming for the last few days.
In the desk drawer there remains one white copper coin.
When the sun shines obliquely through the paper door, the toilet is the brightest place in the house.[44]

Although we can assume here that "I" is the centre of perception, the way the focus of vision switches from one object to another -- from the camellia blossoms to the copper coin and then to the toilet -- leaves a somewhat disjointed impression. Similarly, in the following section from "A clown's face", the poetic subject describes his actions and the motions or non-motions of other objects on the same plane, creating a space whose entirety consists of disjointed motions and fragmented images.

It was raining. I bumped my head against a chime that I had grabbed once from somewhere when I was drunk and hung on the lintel. Of course, the chime made a sound. I have been absent-mindedly bumping my head against it about twice a day since I put it there. A brazier, a kettle, a sitting cushion, a burn on the floor mat. On the tea table is a rice bowl and a teacup.[45]

Once again, instead of saying "When I bumped my head against a chime..., it made a sound", thereby linking the two actions in a cause-and-effect relationship, the movements are presented as two separate phenomena, neither of which plays a more central role than the other. In Ogata's later works, no event or phenomenon is invested with more significance than any other. The following is

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[44] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 145-146.

[45] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 148.

another example from a piece entitled "A strange season" ["Hen'na kisetsu"].

The next day was rain. The day after that was snow. On the day after that there was a sty on my right eye.
In the afternoon a coin went missing. The weather turned to sleet and the month of February came to a close.
The butcher and liquor merchant to whom I had been intending to pay even a little, strangely, went back without saying much.[46]

As we have seen, Ogata's poetry is based on a perception of the world around him which de-links the perceiving subject and the perceived objects. "The subject" becomes a mere phenomenon on the scene. We are unable to reconstruct a total image of the space presented in his works because the vision is composed of disjointed elements whose relationships are never clarified.

As the prose works in *The House with a Paper Door* are mostly written in the style of a first-person monologue, references to the poetic subject are much more frequent than in the other two collections. Yet nowhere do we see the subject taking a positive action to interact with the outside world: even though in some pieces the poetic subject is physically moving, his perceptive stance remains determinedly still.[47] This subjective immobility lies at the core of Ogata's creative approach. In fact, he pursues it so thoroughly that the poetic subject not only abandons his will to encompass the world around him but also merely acknowledges the events that occur within his range of perception. Shifts in the immediate spheres of sound and sight --- or even the broader temporal changes that bring rain, snow and unpleasant sensations to the eye --- are what define the consciousness of the poetic subject. It may be possible to associate this pattern with the focus on the poetic subject's awkwardness about the presence of his body, which marked Ogata's earlier poetry.

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46 *Ogata Kamenosuk zenshu*: 153.

32 It is symbolic that *The House with a Paper Door* is subtitled *If There Is a Stone for Me to Stumble Over, I Would Like to Fall.* This can be read as an expression of the poet's determination not to take a positive action towards anything, but simply to wait for something to make him "fall".

The feeling that one's body is too big in proportion to other objects in space, after all, is also a reflection of the sense of difference between self and outer world. In Ogata's later works, which solely reflect the process of differentiation by the poetic consciousness, this sense of difference is internalised.

In sum, the fragmentation of reality in Ogata's later works results from the fragmentation of a consciousness which abhors placing itself in the secure position of the observing subject. Though Ogata completely abandoned his attempt to pursue innovative poetic styles, his works retained one particular aspect of the avant-garde: a consistent doubt in the reliability of the subject and the fragmentation of reality which resulted. Ogata's poetry and prose may not look avant-garde in appearance; but the growing scepticism about the rationality and totality of human experience that lies at the root of the avant-garde stayed with him long after he left the movement. Indeed, he pursued it in such a remarkably personal and convincing way that he finally called into question his own social existence. In the end, he had no other option but to sit and not move.

In fact, from around the time *The Morning Turning into Rain* was published, Ogata frequently mentioned to his friends his desire to terminate his life by starving himself to death. In 1930 Ogata and his second wife sold all their household items, and with another friend left their home together and headed toward the Suwa region, north of Tokyo, presumably to die.[48] That time they came back, but after another ten years of personal struggle -- a time during which he wrote little and worked as a temporary clerk in the city office of his hometown -- Ogata moved out of his house to live by himself in a one-room apartment. Without money or reason to live, he ate little and allowed his health to deteriorate. Ogata was found dead in his room in a state of semi-starvation at the age of forty-three.

As one might expect, Ogata's works reveal little about the poet's concern for the social or the

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[48] Ogata's biographical details are in Akimoto Kiyoshi, *Op Cit*. On this incident, see 348-352.

cultural conditions of his time. The word "Japanese" appears only once, in a poem in *The House with a Paper Door*, in the last part of "A clown's face", quoted earlier.

> The rain kept splashing onto the porch. It was wet all day, and in the rain the sound of the train was occasionally heard. When the evening approached, I sat there feeling sick of being a Japanese.[49]

In the year of his death, Ogata wrote a poem entitled "The big war" ["Ookina ikusa"], in which we find the following passage:

> I felt like going to the toilet again, but probably because I was too lazy to stand up, I remained sitting on the floor. The fly in the toilet (even a creature like a fly in the toilet knows that a big war has broken out) would not criticise me for it, but I felt bad for having been lying down all day, and I went to do my business out in the garden.[50]

Here we see some hint that Ogata sensed the encroaching uneasiness about the changing conditions of Japanese society. In trivialising the war by linking it to the knowledge of "a fly", Ogata suggests the gravity of the situation. If a fly knew about it, why wouldn't a poet know? And why would he worry about the possibility of being criticised by a fly? Ogata's strictly personal approach to poetry allowed little room for him to directly relate his works to the larger context of his time. At the same time, Ogata's approach to poetry could be said to be distinctively avant-garde in the sense that he refused to "merge" with any of those established trends which might have given him a secure position from which he could express his thoughts.

This quick look at Takahashi Shinkichi and Ogata Kamenosuke's works has shown that each poet struggled in different ways to find a solution to Japan's modernist dilemma and to define their positions as poets in the rapidly changing socio-cultural context of the time. Unlike Takahashi who

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[49] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 148.

[50] *Ogata Kamenosuke zenshu*: 254.

was able to quickly find a solution to the dilemma by linking his "avant-garde" inclination to a tradition that had a firm root in the indigenous culture, or like many other poets whose works reveal signs of swaying between the traditional and modern elements, Ogata left no trace of an attempt to rediscover the Japanese tradition in order to free himself from his paralytic state as a modern man. Even though Ogata's first contact with the literary world was through his involvement in the traditional *tanka* magazine, his link with the indigenous cultural tradition was cut off at the time of his involvement in the *MAVO* group, never to be sought for again. His modern self was so fragilely based that it could never find consolation in what was a lost tradition. It had only one path to pursue, which was to continually fragment itself. It desired to free itself from its paralytic state. Yet in the end it deprived itself of the power to be itself.

5. Hagiwara Kyojiro: A thrust into the centre and to a place of no return

Takahashi Shinkichi's quick re-orientation to traditional roots and Ogata Kamenosuke's mental imprisonment in a culture that deprived him of action can be seen as two particular cases in which the Japanese avant-garde movement was frustrated at its beginning. Recalling the manifesto written on the cover page of *Red and Black* --- which proclaimed the poets to be "criminals" carrying "a bomb" to break down the "doors and walls of prison" --- Takahashi's case can be metaphorically described as a bomb having been thrown into the air and exploding, scattering its fragments over other poets who consecutively made similar attempts; Takahashi, however, retreated from the battle in no time. In Ogata's case, the bomb misfired; he then stayed within the "doors and walls of prison" and sat still, holding the blind shell firmly in his arms. This last section will focus on Hagiwara Kyojiro (1899-1938), the poet of *Red and Black* and *MAVO*, whose bomb exploded, leaving a significant trace in the literary scene of Tokyo in the 1920s. His first poetic collection, *Shikei Senkoku* [Death

sentence], published in 1925, takes up representative features of the prewar Japanese literary avant-garde. At the same time, the radical twists and turns in his poetic theme and style throughout his career are indicative of the problematic of the Japanese avant-garde, and of Japanese modernism itself. Centring my discussion on the representation of the modern self in Hagiwara Kyojiro's poetry, I will focus particularly on the centre/periphery tension representing the urban/regional, dominating/subjugated relationship, which, I believe, forms the core of the poet's creative activity, and which probably is related to what some critics regard as his "conversion" at the very last phase of his life.[51]

Hagiwara Kyojiro was born in Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture, which was also Hagiwara Sakutaro's hometown.[52] Like many other poets of the time, Hagiwara Kyojiro wrote traditional *tanka* in high school before his interest shifted to writing poetry in the modern verse form. His earliest poems reflect the strong influence of Hagiwara Sakutaro and another major poet of the same region, Yamamura Bocho. A dramatic change occured in his poetry in 1920, after meeting Hirato Renkichi, the aforementioned promulgator of futurism in Japan. This was a year before Hirato handed out the "Japan Futurist Manifesto" in the streets of Tokyo.

What is notable about Hagiwara Kyojiro's biography is that during the thirty-nine years of his life, the time he spent living in Tokyo adds up to just over six years. Apart from short-term stays, the

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[51] On writing this section I have drawn substantially from William Ogden Gardner, "Avant-Garde Literature and the New City,: Tokyo 1923-1931", Ph.dissertation submitted to the Department of Asian Languages, Stanford University, 1999. This recent study on Hagiwara Kyojiro offers an insightful perspective on the relationship between Hagiwara's poetics and the problematics of Japanese modernity. In the following section I will be referring to Gardner's study where I have drawn directly from his argument.

[52] Hagiwara Kyojiro is not related to Hagiwara Sakutaro discussed in Chapter Two, even though their surnames are identical and they come from the same region. Both Hagiwara Sakutaro and Hagiwara Kyojiro went to Maebashi Junior High School and published their first *tanka* poems in the same high school magazine, *Bando Taro*.

only time that he lived mostly in Tokyo was between 1922 and 1928, and the publication of *Death Sentence* in 1925 symbolically marks the pinnacle of his "revolutionary" days in Tokyo. He was one of the four members of *Red and Black*, and was also involved in the publication of *MAVO* from its beginning as one of its editorial members.[53] Hagiwara continued to write poetry after moving back to his hometown, and engaged in anarchist activities in his region.[54] He voiced his support for the movement to plead the innocence of Nicola Sacco and Bartlomeo Vanzetti, and also began a mimeograph magazine of his own, which he named *Kuropotokin o chushin ni shita geijutsu no kenkyu* [A study on art centring on Kropotkin].[55] Hagiwara's second poetic collection, *Danpen* [Fragments] was published in 1931. The themes and the tone of Hagiwara's poetry fluctuate significantly througout his career. The most controversial piece, "There is a giant in Asia" ["Ajia ni kyojin ari"], was written shortly before he died, and appeard in a literary journal, *Serupan*, after his death.

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53 *Red and Black* and *MAVO* were started in January 1923 and July 1924 respectively. Also in November 1924, Hagiwara Kyojiro became one of the founding members of *Damudamu*, which was started with the intention to inherit the revolutionary consciousness of *Red and Black* that had ceased earlier that year. The "dadaist" Takahashi Shinkichi was also one of its members. The publication of this magazine was halted soon after its first issue came out, however, due to financial problems caused by the sudden disappearance of its "treasurer".

54 It is generally stated that Hagiwara returned to his hometown because it became impossible for him to continue living in Tokyo due to financial reasons. However, as Takahashi Shuichiro argues, it is possible to assume a more fundamental reason for his move back to the country. See Takahashi Shuichiro, *Hakai to genso: Hagiwara Kyojiro shiron* [Destruction and illusion: a personal study of Hagiwara Kyojiro], Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1978: 108-110. This question will be discussed later in this section.

55 An interest in the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti was commonly shared by Japanese anarchists. One of the central anarchist journals, *Dando* [Trajectory] featured the Sacco and Vanzetti Incident in its fourth issue, which came out in 1930. The relationship between dadaism and anarchism and the major features of literary anarchism during this period will be discussed later.

The relative shortness of Hagiwara's time in Tokyo is not unrelated to the scope of his poetic themes. On the one hand, Hagiwara is known as the poet of "Hibiya", commonly recognised as one of the most representative works of Japanese avant-garde poetry. On the other, Hagiwara is also the poet of "Winter hood"["Morokuzukin"], which describes with a realist touch the harsh reality of rural farmers.[56] The poem depicts a man wrapped in "winter hood" leaving his family in the mountain village in the severe cold of winter to work in a faraway town. The few words exchanged between the family members are written in the dialect of Hagiwara's region. The poem is presented in prosaic style comparable to a clip from a film, highlighting a symbolic moment of the impoverished life of rural communities. This poem was written in 1932 and appeared in the first issue of Hagiwara's handmade magazine, *A Study on Art Centring on Kropotkin*. This was not the first time that Hagiwara wrote a poem on the theme of rural poverty. Contrasting the provocative manifesto he and his co-founders printed on the cover page, Hagiwara wrote a poem entitled "The farm and its people" ["Hatake to ningen"] in the first issue of *Red and Black*, and another piece entitled "The farms extending in deserted villages" ["Kanson o meguru hatake"] in the second issue. The central theme of these pieces is the desolate and poverty-stricken lives of rural farmers, haunted by the fear of "starvation and death from cold" ["The farm and its people"].

The fact that Hagiwara wrote these poems at times of critical change in his poetic career cannot be overlooked. Despite his sensational appearance on the literary scene as one of the instigators of the avant-garde movement, Hagiwara's self identification was never completely cut off from his rural roots. His early retreat from the turmoil of Tokyo life cannot be simply explained as a result of his financial difficulties, or as related to an ideological reason, i.e. to promote anarchism in the rural

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56 "Morokuzukin" is a thick, cotton hood worn in winter by peasants in Hagiwara's region. The first part of the word, "moroku" means "doting" or "senile". The image is that of an aged farmer living in destitute, working in the cold to sustain his living. Hagiwara first wrote the poem "Morokuzukin" in 1932 and published its rewritten version in 1934. There is no major change in the central theme between the two versions.

regions. As we shall see later, even the poems which are thoroughly urban in theme reveal that Hagiwara's self-positioning in the urban landscape remained ambivalent, and we can discern in them a salient sense of estrangement from the monstrous city. Despite the absence of any trace of his regional roots in these poems, we can assume that the reinforced recognition of the unchallenged centrality of Tokyo was coupled with a renewed vision of those regions that were left behind in the process of modernization. The recurrence of the theme of regional desolation in Hagiwara's poetry suggests that the poet's return to his hometown was not incidental. This perspective also helps to explain why Hagiwara could take such a bold leap from traditionalism in theme and style in his radically urban poems. The greater the tension, the greater the drive to denounce, or celebrate, the monstrous construction that brought about that tension.

It is thus symbolic that "Hibiya" was chosen as the title for one of the central poems in *Death Sentence*. As has been indicated by a number of critics, the district of Hibiya signified the social, political and ideological centre of modernizing Japan with its government buildings, office buildings, banks, the police headquarters, and bordering them, the Imperial Palace.[57] It was also in the streets of Hibiya that Hirato Renkichi distributed the futurist maifesto leaflets. The following is the entire poem.

## Hibiya

Intense rectangles
    Chains and gunfire and intrigue
    Troops and gold and honors and fame
**Higher higher higher higher higher soaring higher**

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[57] For the rich connotations of Hibiya, see William Ogden Gardner, *Op.Cit.*,"Avant-Garde Literature and the New City,: Tokyo 1923-1931": 43-46; Wada Hirofumi, "Zen'ei geijutsu no nettowaku" ["The network of avant-garde art"] in Kurihara Yukio(ed), *Haikyo no kanosei: gendai bungaku no tanjo* [The possibility of the ruins: the birth of contemporary literature], Tokyo: Inpakuto Shuppankai, 1997: 78-79.

## The very central point of the capital----Hibiya

A refracted space
Endless pitfalls and burials
The graveyard of the new labourers of intelligence
**Higher higher higher higher higher even higher even higher**
The dark spaces between high buildings
Slaughter and exploitation and mauling

**Higher higher higher higher higher higher higher**
**Moving moving moving moving moving moving moving**
**Hibiya**

**He goes ----**
**He goes ----**
**Pushing everything forward**
**He holds his own key in his hands**
**A nihilistic laugh**
**The stimulating dance of currency**
**He goes ----**
**A point**
**In silence ---- cemetery ---- towards the eternal burial**
**The final toast and dance**
**The summit and focus**
**Higher higher higher higher higher higher a tower soaring ever higher**

**He goes alone!**
**He goes alone!**
**Hibiya**[58]

As discussed in detail by William Gardner, critics have given various interpretations of the identity of

[58] This translation is based on William Gardner's translation of "Hibiya". To make the present version, I have made minor changes in vocabulary. The changes were made to give a clearer idea of the words used in the original text, although by doing so, certain poetic effects present in Gardner's translation have been lost. The original text is in *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu* [Complete works of Hagiwara Kyojiro], Tokyo: Seichisha, 1980, vol.1: 154-155. All the citations of Hagiwara's work are taken from this collection.

"He" who "goes" through the soaring constructions of the city.[59] Where he is heading is also unknown. And it is probably the very blankness of destination itself, the unidentifiable vortex, that denotes the identity of this city centre. This centre is bursting with energy to soar up "higher", the mechanical repetition of the word "higher" evoking an image of the centre in motion. At the same time, the conspicuous large size print in bold of "the very central point of the capital" and "Hibiya", placed at the beginning, the middle and the end of the poem suggests the power of the centre, i.e. The dynamic energy unshaken by any attempt to overturn it. Hence the contradictory logic is established that the vortex with its "pitfalls and burials" embodies in itself a density that refutes all efforts to define it.

Hagiwara's *Death Sentence* was published with the collaboration of the *MAVO* group. The artists of *MAVO*, Okada Tatsuo, Yanase Masamu, Murayama Tomoyoshi and others, provided lino-prints, photographic works and illustrations to be inserted between Hagiwara's poems. Though not as radical as the artistic composition of the magazine *MAVO*, the presentation of the book itself was intended to support the avant-garde quality of Hagiwara's works. Written over a time span of approximately five years, from around 1920 to 1925, the themes of the over eighty poems included in

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59 Some of the possibilities proposed by critics are that "He" is: 1) Hirato Renkichi, 2) the embodiment of the city centre itself, 3) a symbol of death, 4) a terrorist with a bomb to destroy the establishment, 5) Hagiwara Kyojiro himself. A terrorist's attempt to attack the Imperial Regent, known as the *Tora no mon* incident, took place in December 1923. The terrorist, Nanba Daisuke, the son of an Imperial Diet member, was given a death sentence and executed in November 1924. Although "Hibiya" was actually written before the *Tora no mon* incident, one can assume that from around this time this city centre became potentially charged with threats from inside and outside of the establishment. The title of Hagiwara's collection, *Death Sentence*, also carries a number of connotations. One of them is its association with the *Tora no mon* incident. On the identity of this unnamed man, Gardner states that it may be any of them, or a composite of some or all of these figures. See William Gardner, *Ibid.*, 44-45.

this collection vary widely.[60] From the viewpoint of delineating the nature of tension in Hagiwara's poetic activity, I will focus on the representation of the self in relation to the representation of the city, highlighting the way in which the poetic self in *Death Sentence* embraces multiple, often mutually contrasting, views of the city.

In reading the poem "Hibiya" I have noted the ambiguous nature of the city. With the identity of "He" left ambiguous, the relationship between this anonymous man and the city is also unclear. Is "He", who weaves his way through the city, an element of its mechanical construction, that is, a metaphoric embodiment of the dynamic and autonomous entity called "Hibiya"? Or is it a figure who has made his way into the centre of the city with the intention to destroy it? The poem is presented in such a way that it allows either of these readings. In fact, this equivocal relationship between the poetic self and the city comprises one of the chief motifs of the poems in this collection.

The first piece of *Death Sentence* is entitled "Armoured Coil" ["Soko danki"].[61] In its opening section "I" sees "a giant armoured coil" placing itself amidst "the leaping bustle of the modern city". The description of the "armoured coil"'s ever-powerful and monstrous character follows. After a detailed portrayal of the features of this ugly, angry and aggressive creature with "the reddest and the most barbarian heart", it is revealed in the last part of the poem that "I" has become identical with it, becoming the "armoured coil" himself: "Ah! I can see, I am now / the giant armoured coil! / amidst the leaping bustle of the beautiful modern city".

While in this poem "I" has taken on the mechanical features of the monstrous machine, the superimposing of the poetic subject and the city can also occur in the reverse order, that is, the city

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60 Hagiwara writes in an introductory note to the collection that the works are roughly in the chronological order of their production, the oldest piece "The Armoured Coil" ["Soko danki"] having been written five years before the publication. "Shishu reigen" [Introductory notes to the collection], *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 50.

61 *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 54-55.

becomes personified, acquiring a certain organic quality. In "Morning raises its hands from the iron pipes underground" ["Chitei no tekkan kara asa wa te o ageru"], the city is first described as "a wiry brain all tangled into a bunch", but when a person walking through it "peels the stones off the ground", underneath them he finds "a white nude" gazing at him. This "white nude" is apparently the tender body of the city, hidden underground, underneath the inhuman and "wiry" appearance of its surface. Toward the last part of the poem there appears an image of a horse "panting" and "advancing", and the last line of the poem reads: "A piece of stamped horse-meat hanging in the butcher's shop!".[62] It is not clear whether this image of horse-meat refers to the death of the "white nude" or of the man who saw it. It is an unequivocal image of death, symbolising the pervasive cruelty of urban life, suggesting that both the city itself and its inhabitants become the victims of its ruthless forces.

A similar image also appears in "Morning, afternoon, night, robot" ["Asa, hiru, yoru, robotto"]:

I am sewing in wire and thread throughout my body
Turning into a yellow bag of flour -- hanging.[63]

Here, it is "I"'s body that is full of wire, but once again, the ambiguity arises, as in the following line:

If I could shoot the flesh like a pistol's bullet!.

Again, it is left unclear whether the "I" is the bullet blowing up "the flesh" of the city, or whether it is the remorseless forces of the city that blows up the "I" that has turned into a helpless "yellow bag of

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62 *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 176-177.

63 *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 178.

flour".

These are some examples of Hagiwara's early works which suggest that the poetic subject and the city are inter-penetrable and interchangeable, one taking on the features of the other. As evident in "Armoured coil", we can observe in some works the poetic subject's desire to incorporate the aggressive character of the city within himself. However, it is eventually revealed that such a desire is hardly sustainable in the face of the city's self-destructive forces. In *Death Sentence* we also find a number of works which focus on the image of the human body torn to tatters or crushed and buried under the weight of the city. In some cases the poetic subject's despair is brought to the point where he feels he could bear it no longer. The following extract consists of the first and the last four lines of a poem entitled "Cemetery cemetery" ["Hakaba da hakaba da"].

My arms and legs have fallen apart ---
I don't know where my body lies ---
On top of a hanging lamp --- fatigue
gathers together, like noodles!

Ah! it doesn't matter who, or what it is,
Come out of the wall!
Bite off my head! bite off! my body!
Chew and chew! Chew me to death![64]

The opening lines express the state of a disorientated subject overwhelmed by a sense of exhaustion. And in the last lines, frustrated by his inactivated existence, he asks for someone to put an end to it all. In a piece called "The revolving life" ["Kaiten suru seimei"], death comes as a result of violent turning, as in the following lines: "The revolving life / Burning to death --- (a pistol and a corpse) / === Bones".[65] But probably the most prominent image of death is that of a man, or the collective

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[64] *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 130-131.

[65] *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*: 158-159.

human being, crushed and deprived of movement, and unwittingly being buried underground. In "A man without a neck" ["Kubi no nai otoko"] "I" is compared to "a toy", being squashed and buried under "the revolving landscape".[66] The hostile nature of the city bringing death to human existence is presented with an image of numerous faces pressing against one another under the earth in "The human fault" ["Ningen no danso"], subtitled "They are buried underground hugging each other". The following is the opening section of the poem.

Pitch darkness ~~~~~~~
Ennui is the skeleton buried underground!
Under the accumulation of stereotype and bricks and murder!
Gas ●●●
Gravity pressured by concrete buildings!
Under the lead pipes ---- numerous faces moving!
The lanterns sway!
The human fault![67]

Some images that are typically found in proletarian poetry such as "lead pipes" and "lanterns" are found here. It is also possible to see in this poem a reflection of the tragedy caused by the disastrous earthquake of 1923.[68] Furthermore, the reference to "murder" and "gas" made in this poem can be linked to the occurrence of something more direct and gruesome --- mass murder and mass burial,

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[66] *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 124-125.

[67] *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*: vol.1: 186.

[68] As noted earlier, the works in *Death Sentence* were written over a period of more than four years, some written before and some after the earthquake. The exact date when "The Human Fault" is not known, but if we take into consideration Hagiwara's words in the introductory notes that the poems are roughly in the order they were written, we can judge that this poem was written after the earthquake. There is also a piece entitled "On the day of the earthquake" ["Jishin no hi"], which centres around a vivid image of human heads rolling on the ground.

evoking in the reader's mind the brutal bloodshed that took place after the earthquake.[69]

Hagiwara's *Death Sentence* thus illustrates the multi-faceted nature of the relationship between the man and the city. An attempt to challenge or incorporate the power of the ever-growing city was coupled with a desperate cry of the man threatened in his own survival, and of those that have been extinguished in the process of construction of this modern artifice.

Notwithstanding the fact that the poetic subject and the poet are never identical in principle, it is safe to assume in Hagiwara's case that there is a close affinity between the central figure "I" in these poems and the poet himself. In the introductory note to *Death Sentence*, Hagiwara states that in order for the readers to "know" him, they should "construct" the poet from the entire collection rather than from any single poem.[70] These words suggest that Hagiwara expected the readers to find in his works reflections of the poet himself. At the same time, he rejected the idea that the "I" in his poems should be seen as an immediate representation of the poet. By insisting that the readers should "construct" the poet from the entire collection, he urges his audience to read in the eighty-three poems of *Death Sentence* the complex formation/destruction process of the poet's subjectivity.[71] The few examples above have shown how the multiple subjectivities in Hagiwara's works were created in response to the poet's fluctuating vision of the city. The urban reality that he confronted was

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69 As is well known, large-scale violence took place in the wake of the earthquake. Thousands of Koreans and Chinese were lynched, many political activists were arrested or killed, and the central figure of the anarchist movement, Osugi Sakae, was killed together with his partner Ito Noe and his nephew by the military police.

70 "Shishu reigen" [Introductory notes to the collection], *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 49-50.

71 On this point, Gardner contends that we should look at Hagiwara's poems "as moments in the author's construction of the self --- as elements in the construction of the author's self-consciousness", and analyses how the poet's subjectivity undergoes a drastic set of mutations, best characterised as futuristic machine, terrorist (or bomb) and advertising power. Gardner, *Op.Cit.*, 37-39.

inspiring, threatening and exhausting at the same time. We can read in these examples an expression of Hagiwara's struggle in defining his position against the dynamic constructions of modernity, through which the question regarding the autonomy of the self became particularly highlighted.

It should be noted that in the context of the Japanese avant-garde, the notion of the autonomous self was not negated in the way it was by the avant-garde artists of Europe. It had been the central object of interrogation in literature since the introduction of the Western concept of the self in the Meiji period, and the idea to dis-establish the entire foundation of the concept and thereby question the wholeness of the individual, which played a critical role in the development of avant-gardism in Europe, remained foreign to Japanese writers and poets. Rather, in the 1920s, the potential of the power of the self as an agent of social reform was passionately sought for, particularly by those influenced by the political and philosophical visions of the leading anarchist, Osugi Sakae. Osugi's contention that literature's urgent task was the full realization of the self and that a full-fledged self would inevitably rebel against society was the source of inspiration for many avant-garde artists and poets of the time, including Hagiwara.[72]

Returning to Hagiwara's representation of the self and the city in *Death Sentence*, we can read in his poems traces of his foiled effort to establish his position as a rebel against and destroyer of this modern construction. That Hagiwara's attempt to instigate a rebellion was coupled with the poet's acute recognition that it was doomed to fail, is well expressed in a poem entitled "Hundreds of

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[72] Of the extensive literature by Osugi, the most influential were the pieces that appeared in the journal *Kindai shiso* [Modern Thought], which was published by Osugi himself. "The creation of life" ["Sei no sozo"] and "The extended fulfillment of life" ["Sei no kakuju"] are two of the most well-known works. There is a wide range of literature on the problematic notion of the self in modern Japanese literature. Suzuki Tomi's *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996 is a comprehensive study on this concept, dealing with the entire paradigm of the so-called "I-novel" from the perspective of modern Japan's historical formation. For a general discussion on the emergence of anti-establishment thought in the 1920s and the significance of Osugi's vision and its influence on literature, see Kurihara Yukio, "Hajimari no mondai" ["The question of the beginning"], in Kurihara Yukio(ed), *Haikyo no kanosei: gendai bungaku no tanjo*, *Op.Cit.*, 4-19.

eyeballs have been crushed and deformed!" ["Nanbyaku no gankyu ga tsubure yugandanoda!"].[73] Even though Hagiwara writes: "When the heart has changed its colour and started revolving! Men! Stand up!", as if to start a rebellion, it is suggested in the poem that the "Men" that stand up are nothing but phantoms -- an image of buried corpses appears earlier in the poem. We can also recall that a revolving motion brings death to the subject ("The revolving life / Burning to death ---"), and the modern landscape was depicted as a place of "burial" -- a cemetery. A challenge to the symbolic centre of the newly established order was destined to be frustrated. The predominant image of the wreckage of the human body in *Death Sentence*, particularly prominent in the later works of this collection, attests to Hagiwara's sense of alienation from the monumental centre of modernity, the city. In the indeterminable and radically fluctuating relationship between the poetic subject and the city that we saw earlier, we can observe different moments of the poet's struggle to find a space for his self-realization.

It is thus not surprising that Hagiwara left Tokyo and re-located himself in the town of his origin. As one would expect, however, this did not mean that Hagiwara was able to comfortably re-discover his identity in the familiar environment of his hometown. It is suggestive that Hagiwara's second collection, published a few years after his retreat from Tokyo, was entitled *Danpen* [Fragments]. This collection consists of a prefatory poem and fifty-nine pieces, from "Fragment 1" to "Fragment 59", written between 1922 and 1930, according to the poet.[74] The tone of the pieces in this collection is largely subdued, the formative attempts to radicalise the presentation of poetry by experimental use of printing techonology are totally absent, and many of the poems reflect the poet's anarchistic tendencies. In "A memo on fragments" attached at the end of the collection, Hagiwara

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[73] *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 182-183.

[74] "Danpen ni taisuru memo" ["A memo on fragments" ], *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 290.

writes that "'Fragments' are nails that I have pounded into my body in order to construct myself from today to tomorrow".[75] It was a year after the publication of *Fragments* that he wrote "Winter hood" mentioned earlier. I will not go into a detailed analysis of the works of this period. One point which is of relevance to the present discussion is that in "Winter hood" and other poems which deal with the harsh reality of rural livelihood Hagiwara takes the viewpoint of an observer rather than of someone whose life is entrapped in that reality.[76] Whereas his "city" poems demonstrated his aspiration for self-definition against the surrounding environment, in these works the poet's eye is distanced from the depicted scenes. The poet's engagement in the environment as represented by the dynamic imaginary constructions of body/city relationship is totally absent here.

It is natural to assume that on withdrawing from the "centre" of modernity, Hagiwara envisioned his hometown with a renewed consciousness, as a region characteristically non-central, non-modern, and subordinate to the modern order in which the cultural, social and political benefits of the people's efforts were usurped by central cities. "Winter hood" and other works would not have been written without such a consciousness. The narrative style of "Winter hood" suggests, however, that his was a vision of a modern man who had already been deprived of the possiblity to re-root himself outside the modern paradigm.

In the years that followed his return, Hagiwara maintained his connections with the anarchist movement, contributed some poems to its journals and also wrote essays and some prose poems. In compiling his mimeograph magazine, *Study of Art Centring on Kropotkin*, he encouraged locally

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[75] *Ibid.*

[76] Though relatively small in number, the poems centring on rural themes were written between 1932 and 1935. Following "Winter hood", which appeared in the first issue of *A Study on art centring on Kropotkin*, he wrote "Notes on my return to hometown" ["Kikyo nikki"] in its second issue. The titles of other poems are: "Over the mountains and down the valleys" ["Yama o koete tani o nutte"], "When winter comes" ["Fuyu kitarinaba"], "A woman's work"["Aru onna no shigoto"].

based poets to contribute. A sign of change in his poetic stance occured around 1934, and as mentioned earlier, he concluded his poetic career with "There is a giant in Asia" written in the year of his death in 1936.[77]

The leftists' "conversion" (*tenko*) was by no means a rare occurrence in the pre-war Japanese literary scene.[78] What has puzzled a number of critics, however, was that in the case of Hagiwara, there was no immediate pressure compelling him to "convert", and that this drastic shift in his poetic and ideological orientation occurred so suddenly, with no explanation provided by the poet. "There is a giant in Asia" is quite explicitly a poem supporting the Japanese militarists' advance into the Asian continent. Beginning with an image of a giant holding a halberd, it praises its advance through the continent, acclaims the birth of the "New Orient" as the giant "plows through" and adds his deeds onto "a new page" in "the new world". Coupled with this is a reference to the Japanese archipelago decorated with the traditional image of "red autumn leaves and chrysanthemums in full bloom". The poem ends with the image of the giant gazing at the peoples of the continent "with the heart of the great divinity", which is a clear reference to the emperor. Critics have offered various reasons for this dramatic transformation of Hagiwara's poetry. The most representative view is to regard this as a result of his increased disillusionment with anarchist activities, which in turn was linked to his

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[77] Takahashi Shuichiro notes that the "change" in Hagiwara's poetic stance becomes apparent in the year that the Imperial Army's special maneuvers took place in Gunma Prefecture. The Showa emperor visited Maebashi on the occasion, and Hagiwara came close to being expelled from the prefecture. To allow him to stay, his relatives found work for him at a publisher in Maebashi, and Hagiwara stayed with this work until his death. Takahashi Shuichiro, *Hakai to genso: Hagiwara Kyojiro shiron* [Destruction and illusion: a personal study of Hagiwara Kyojiro], Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1978.

[78] As is well known, such a "conversion" of the leftist activists to relinquish their former ideology and embrace Japanese imperialism had become a widely recognised phenomenon from around 1933, following the defection of the two top leaders of the Japan Communist Party, Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika.

despair at the thoroughly exhausted state of rural communities and his loss of hope in the possibility of "awakening" the locals, which eventually led to his newly-found interest in agrarian nationalism.[79]

For the present discussion there is little point in trying to pin down a particular reason for Hagiwara's change. Rather, I will look at this in the general context of Hagiwara's struggle for self-definition that had characterised the twenty years of his poetic trajectory. The highly visible difference in theme and style between Hagiwara's "city" poems and "rural" poems suggested that Hagiwara was strongly conscious of the fundamental social, cultural and political gap that lay between the centre of modernization and its periphery. The way he presented the rural poems in such a distinctly different manner to his city poems also suggests that the poet had little intention of integrating the two visions. The disparity in Hagiwara's poetic visions can be seen as evidence of his ambivalent view of his own position with regard to the cultural complexity of Japanese modernity. On the one hand, we see a poet whose eyes are fixed on the harsh reality of those suffering from the backlash of Japan's modernization process. He does not speak on the part of those that are caught in that reality but rather takes the position of an observer, depicting the scenes in a detached and non-committal manner. On the other hand, we see a poet who has thrown himself into the maelstrom of the modern city, whose all-out thrust to confront the centre of modernity was represented through the images of plural, mutually conflicting subjectivities. The attempt to overturn the traditional notion of poetry and to confer a social position to the poet as rebel against the established order by incorporating the very power of modernity was accompanied by representations of a despondent

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79. See Akiyama Kiyoshi, "Kare wa itsu shinda" ["When did he die?"], Ito Shinkichi, "Noteki mebiusu no wa" ["The agrarian ring of Mebius"], in Ito Shinkichi and Kawaura Sanshiro (eds), *Hagiwara Kyojiro no sekai* [The world of Hagiwara Kyojiro], Maebashi: Kankodo, 1987; Takahashi Shuichiro, *Hakai to genso: Hagiwara Kyojiro shiron*: *Op.Cit.*, 147-177. Takahashi notes that agrarian nationalism, particularly the version advocated by Gondo Seikyo, whose works Hagiwara is known to have read, shared many points in common with a stream of anarchism represented by Ishikawa Sanshiro, that stressed a return to native life.

poet, whose recalcitrant vision of the modern landscape suggested his sense of loss and dismay in the face of the undefinable embodiment of power called the city. The recurrent image of death in these poems carries the implication that the revolving energy of the rebellious poet was soon to be exhausted. Contrary to the aforementioned vision of Osugi that the full realization of the modern subject will be achieved through a bold and tenacious attempt to destroy the existing order, Hagiwara's exposure to the centre of modernity had led him to come to a reinforced realization of the fragility and instability of the modern subject.

Altogether, we can see in the body of Hagiwara's poetic works an earnest search for a place where he can belong, and where he can proclaim the realization of an autonomous self. Moving back from the city, the poet viewed the region of his origin with a strengthened awareness of its deprived state of existence, only to apprehend the decisive gap that lay between the consciousness of its people and his own. Although he stayed in his hometown until his death, it can be assumed that his poetic endeavours toward the construction of a new and liberated self during his last years were scarcely rewarded.

The reason why Hagiwara wrote a poem like "There is a giant in Asia" will never be fully known, but it is at least possible to say that the rise of an exclusive nationalism centring around the emperor system around this time allowed Hagiwara to find a symbolic place to belong. Furthermore, it provided a context in which his self could be comfortably defined. It was not the emancipated self born through the consistent act of rebellion against the established order. On the contrary, it meant the identification of the self with the entirety of the national polity -- "the giant". The significant aspect of this new vision of the self was that in its renewed definition against "Asia" it rendered domestic political tensions irrelevant. Considering that at the root of Hagiwara's poetic activities lay a strong awareness of the urban/rural, dominating/subjugated political structure of modern Japan, it is not unreasonable to surmise that a vision that suggested the dissolution of the tension caused by such a structure of uneven development would have had a certain appeal for Hagiwara. After his poetic

endeavours to achieve a self-definition had been hindered both in the urban and rural environments, Hagiwara found in the newly emerging idea of the national polity a context in which the place for the self could be secured.

Before concluding this section, a brief note should be given on one of the central poems in *Death Sentence*, not touched on earlier. A piece entitled "Advertising tower" ["Kokokuto"], which is one of the later works included in the collection, represents a symbolic moment in Hagiwara's response to modernity in a number of ways.[80] As Gardner discusses in his detailed analysis of the poem, this piece represents a fundamental challenge to the conventional ideas of subjectivity in the age of mass media.[81] Drawing on the idea of the advertising/propaganda kiosk favoured by the Russian constructivists, Hagiwara verbally presents an image of an advertising tower which mechanically reproduces and discharges multiple voices of multiple subjectivities.[82] Although it is difficult to discuss the significance of this piece without referring to the actual presentation of the poem, which consists largely of short sentences arranged to represent a complex and colossal assemblage of plural voices, one point should be made for our better understanding of Hagiwara's poetic trajectory. Written after most of the other poems in *Death Sentence*, this piece marks a critical point in Hagiwara's career. In place of the overwhelming image of death coupled with the image of

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[80] *Hagiwara Kyojiro zenshu*, vol.1: 194-198.

[81] For an inclusive analysis of this poem, see Gardner, *Op.Cit.*, 54-59; and Gardner, "Shi to shin-media: Hagiwara Kyojiro no 'Kokokuto' o chushin nishita 1920 nendai no avangyarudo ronko" ["Poetry and the new media: A study on the avant-garde of the 1920s centring on Hagiwara Kyojiro's "Kokokuto"], *Hikaku bungaku hikaku bunka ronshu* [Studies in comparative literature and culture], No.16, 1999, Tokyodaigaku Hikaku Bungaku Bunka Kenkyukai: 28-41.

[82] The rich implications of the idea of the advertising tower itself -- Tatlin's plan for the Monument to the Third International included -- are also discussed at length in Gardner,1999, *Op.Cit.*, 53-54. A photograph of an advertising tower designed by Oura Shuzo appeared in the second issue of *MAVO*. Hagiwara also drew a cartoon-like sketch of an advertising tower himself, which first appeared in *MAVO* and was reprinted in *Death Sentence*.

the poetic subject threatened in its survival that we saw earlier, we see here an outburst of mechanically reproduced voices, which all together deny the existence of any kind of a unified subject. Even the tension between "man" and the "city" is absent here. This robot-like poet/tower stands centrally on its own, taking in the exterior environment, breaking down its hierarchical structure, reprocessing it into a conglomeration of incoherent messages and spinning them out in mechanically rearranged forms. As noted by Gardner, the line, "I live like an emperor!" is aligned with "I live like a pig! / I live like a spy! / I live like an informer! / I live like a butcher!". Gardner also underlines the significance of the use of black dots (●) in the poem, which present the image of buttons to turn on this robotic machine, and at the same time suggest ciphers (*fuseji*), frequently used by poets and writers of this period to eschew collision with the authorities. In other words, the robotic subject/non-subject has even appropriated the tools of censorship and reduced them to mere technical components emptied of any inherent meaning.[83]

"Advertising Tower" is a spectacular representation ironically proclaiming the disintegration of subjectivity, which asserts its place at the end of *Death Sentence*, in which we saw different moments of the subjective struggle to establish a place for the self within the centre of modern construction. It signifies the zenith and the point of no return in Hagiwara's confrontation with modernity. In this regard, it is natural to assume that from this point onwards, Hagiwara's poetic endeavours were destined to take a radical turn. After "Fragments" and "Winter hood", Hagiwara's final point was marked by "There is a giant in Asia", which implicitly denied any attempt to uphold the value of independent subjectivity. This last poem provided a context that dissolved the urban/rural disparity brought about through the modernization process and gave Hagiwara a frame of reference for self-definition. It is still not implausible to argue, however, that as far as the problem of

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83 Gardner, *Ibid.*, 57.

subjectivity was concerned, the poem signified the end of Hagiwara's grappling with modernity.

6) The Japanese avant-garde in history

The foregoing examination of some of the representative works of three Japansese "avant-garde" poets offers some interesting questions with regard to the conditions of the avant-garde movement in the countries where the modernization process was greatly accelerated. One notable feature common to all three poets discussed above was that they were all from the rural region and that their initial involvement in the avant-garde movement was closely linked to their fascination with the city. The gap between the centre of modernization and its periphery was evident not only in the everyday living conditions of the inhabitants, and in the physical infrastructure of regional villages and towns and that of urban centres, but also in the dominating mentality and socio-cultural values of the respective inhabitants. The fact that all three poets left their place of origin to embark on their avant-garde project and that all three of them retreated from the turmoil of urban life either mentally or physically at a certain stage in their career cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence. As I noted in the discussion on Hagiwara's poetry, the recognition of the gap was the potential driving force for the creation of radically new poetry. In their encounter with the central point of modernization, these poets came to possess an acute sense of the unevenness in Japan's modernization process. This sense was also linked to an awareness of Japan's historical discontinuity and of the instability of modern Japan's cultural foundation. Although such a recognition worked in one way for them to make a bold leap toward the creation of something entirely new, since they aspired to assimilate with the centre of modernity through rebellion against older values, the fascination for the city spectacle eventually faded. In their poetic endeavours, they all came to a recognition in one way or another of the problematic situation of Japanese modernity and of the ambivalence of their position in relation to it. This involved a shift in the nature of their creative activity. Takahashi moved to claim the continuity

of tradition and saw the emergence of modernity as an extension of tradition. Ogata confronted the dilemma face to face and withdrew from any attempt to engage in a new historical construction. Hagiwara strove throughout his life to come to terms with the complexities of Japanese modernization, and in his aspiration to engage in its historical process also earnestly strove to find his place in it.

As I stressed in the discussion on Takahashi's retreat from avant-gardism, the fundamental motif behind the avant-garde movement to destroy the existing order proved difficult to retain in a context where there existed no common understanding as to what should become the target of destruction. This was the case not only with Takahashi, but with Ogata as well, as his quick retreat from avant-gardism was rooted in a deep suspicion of the meaning of action in a society where the very constitution of its cultural foundation was so uncertain. Similarly with Hagiwara, we saw that the tremendous "revolving" energy directed toward the centre of modernity was eventually burnt out in the nameless vortex of the city that resisted definition.

In a limited way, Tokyo was acquiring the features of a rapidly growing megalopolis, and with the remarkable development of the mass-media together with the pervasive notion of the "mass", the ground was being laid for an art of a fundamentally different nature to be born.[84] At the same time, it should be noted that it was only in 1918 that the idea of democracy was first advocated by Yoshino Sakuzo, Fukuda Tokuzo and others. And it was only two years after that, in 1920, that the Socialists' Union [*Shakaishugi domei*] was founded. The first Japanese translation of *Das Kapital* was produced in this year, and despite being illegal, the Communist Party was founded in 1922.

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[84] On the relation between the development of the mass-media and the emergence of the idea of the mass in modern Japan, see Kurihara Yukio, "Hajimari no mondai", *Op.Cit.*.4-19; William Gardner, 1999, *Op.Cit.*,28-33; Suzuki Sadami,*Nihon no bungaku wo kangaeru* [Thinking about Japanese literature], Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1994, Chapter 9, "Taishu bungaku to taishu bunka" ["Mass literature and mass culture"]: 194-203.

Universal male suffrage was granted in 1925, and in the same year the Peace Preservation Act, which legislated that all actions against the national polity would be prohibited and penalised, came into force. The fact that the movements for democracy and socialism were launched almost simultaneously, and that a law which marked a step toward democracy was passed at the same time as the law that prohibited freedom of speech and action illustrates the essential ambivalence that constituted the basis of Japanese modernity. As Kurihara Yukio states, while the ideas of democracy and liberalism can be regarded as the core principles of a modern society, socialism -- and Marxism, which came soon after -- represent a vision that takes a critical stance toward modernity. The fact that the former were confronted almost as soon as they appeared by the latter suggests that for Japanese intellectuals, the awakening to the modern consciousness progressed hand in hand with the acquisition of a vision that attempted to transcend it.[85] Furthermore, just as these ideas were starting to exert an influence on the cultural scene, the authorities were laying down measures to restrict their future possibilities, and eventually to crush them. It is not surprising, then, that the avant-garde movements in Japan struggled to pursue their goal once they confronted the complex realities of Japanese society. The rapidly transforming society was causing a number of short-circuits -- and these in turn were causing various types of short-circuits within different avant-garde enterprises.

Lastly, on the question of the self, we can assume from the above that the idea of the self itself was undergoing a dramatic transformation as different currents of Western thought permeated through the Japanese intellectual scene. The works of the poets dealt with in this chapter showed that the kind of struggle to come to terms with the basic idea of the modern self as illustrated in the poetic evolution of Hagiwara Sakutaro (Chapter Two) was no longer present. Yet, with the introduction of the contemporary attitudes of the European avant-garde that wholly negated the traditional concept of the self, a process of re-examination was set in train on the relation between the self, society, culture

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85 Kurihara Yukio, *Op.Cit.*, 12-17.

and the mass. It was mentioned earlier that the anarchist thinker, Osugi Sakae's vision of the self and society had a significant impact on the Japanese avant-garde scene.[86] It is noteworthy, however, that the idea of "the full-fledged self" as a crucial factor for social rebellion fundamentally asserts the notion of the self, and is thus based on quite a different assumption to that shared by most European avant-garde poets, particularly the dadaists. It was thus natural in a certain way that many Japanese poets with dadaist tendencies, especially those involved in *Red and Black*, turned toward anarchism later in their poetic career. Hagiwara Kyojiro was one of them. The anarchist movement suffered from a number of setbacks after the assassination of Osugi in 1923, and eventually gave up its organizational position to the dominance of Marxism. In the context of the present discussion, it should be sufficient to note that the idea of the self, which occupied a central position in the anarchist debate, harboured an inherent dilemma once its application was extended to the social dimension. The obscurity of the object of rebellion linked to the specific socio-cultural founding process of Japanese modernity made any attempt to arrive at a positive definition of the self an indefinably difficult task. In this regard, the fact that all three poets withdrew from the central scene of the avant-garde can be seen as a positive evidence of their perceptiveness toward the problematic situation of Japanese modernity.

7) Between authenticity and originality: unscrambling Japanese surrealism

Before moving on to examine the "l'esprit nouveau" movement of *Poetry and Poetics* in the next chapter, I will attach a brief discussion on the Japanese surrealist movement at the end of the present

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86 Osugi's vision of the self and society came into confrontation with the Marxists' vision of society and their understanding of the mass, leading to the well-documented controversy between anarchism and Marxism, which caused a serious dissension in the proletarian movement in prewar Japan.

chapter on avant-garde poetry. In Japanese literary history it has been most common to discuss Japanese surrealism in relation to the "l'esprit nouveau" movement of the late 1920s. This was chiefly because many of the Japanese "surrealists" were members of *Poetry and Poetics* at one time, and also because there were poets like Kitasono Katsue, who claimed to be a "l'esprit nouveau" poet and a "surrealist" at the same time. A representative "l'esprit nouveau" poet, Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, whom I will discuss in the next chapter, was the first translator of Andre Breton's "MANIFESTE DU SURREALISME - POISOON SOLUBLE" of 1924, a part of which appeared in the fourth and fifth issues of *Poetry and Poetics* in 1929. However, as I will illustrate in Chapter Four, it is only in limited aspects that *Poetry and Poetics* should be regarded as a journal representing the Japanese poetic avant-garde. Much of the energies of its editors were devoted to the introduction of various contemporary western literary movements, and the works produced by its members were far too varied to be classified in the name of avant-garde poetry. Rather than discussing surrealism in relation to this journal, I will independently present in this section a short discussion on surrealism in Japanese poetry as another case of the Japanese poetic avant-garde. For the reasons I will state in the following, the poetic works will not be discussed in detail. Instead, I will simply delineate the major features of the Japanese surrealist movement and examine its significance in the context of our broader discussion concerning the fundamental dilemma of Japanese modernism.

A discussion on surrealism in Japanese poetry inevitably concerns the question regarding its definition. In a number of ways Japanese surrealism brings to the fore the question of the problematic relationship between the source of an aesthetic theory and its reception in a different culture. Despite the fact that a large number of works were published in the name of surrealism, surrealism in Japan defies any attempt to produce a coherent theoretical explanation that encompasses the essential aspects of its various achievements. The crux of the problem lies in the varying interpretations of the source theory as well as the diversity of the source itself, as the surrealist

movement in Europe went through radically different stages involving different members, putting forth different theories and methodologies, and producing works of a significantly different kind. The reception of surrealism in Japan demonstrates a high degree of idiosyncracy to the extent that it becomes difficult to draw a line between which works are surrealist and which are not. This does not mean, however, that the works produced are of a secondary quality. The poetic achievements of Nishiwaki Junzaburo and Takiguchi Shuzo, for example, have contributed significantly to the exploration of the potential of aesthetic expression in Japanese. They continued to write actively after 1945 and left a significant trace also in the development of postwar Japanese poetry. An examination of their individual works, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis. This is chiefly because their respective achievements require a much broader point of view for examination than simply the point of view related to the question of the modernist dilemma in Japanese poetry, which is the major concern of the present study. At the same time, since their contribution cannot be totally neglected in a discussion on Japanese poetic modernism, I will include a brief introduction of the overall features of their works in the following section in which I will summarise the general features of the reception of surrealism in Japan and its outcome. The reference to these two poets highlights the diversity among Japanese poets in their approach to this aesthetic theory and also illustrates the difficulty of including the activities of many writers and poets within a particular "ism".

The earliest response to Breton's "MANIFESTE DU SURREALISME" of 1924 is found in a 1925 issue of *Bungei Tanbi* [Literary Aesthetic], which published several translations of the works of Louis Aragon, Andre Breton and Paul Eluard together with some works by Hashimoto Kenkichi (later Kitasono Katsue). In the same year, Nishiwaki Junzaburo came back from Europe and organised a surrealist group with his students at Keio University. In 1927 *Bara, majutusu, gakusetsu* [Rose, magic, theory] was inaugurated as the first surrealist journal in Japan and published four issues. The Japanese "Surrealiste Manifesto" appeared in its third issue, copies of

which were presumably sent to Aragon, Eluard, Breton and Antonin Artaud. Also in 1927 the first surrealist anthology, ***Fukuikutaru kafuyo*** [The fragrant stoker] was published, and in the following year another journal called ***Isho no taiyo*** [The sun in costume] was launched, gathering most of the representative figures associated with surrealism in Japan, and publishing six issues. In response to Breton's journal, which was called ***Revolution Surrealiste***, this journal had the words "L'EVOLUTION SURREALISTE" printed on its cover page. In 1930, the members of ***The Sun in Costume*** organised "le SURREALISME INTERNATIONAL". ***Poetry and Poetics*** also published articles on surrealism from its first issue, and as mentioned earlier, Kitagawa's partial translation of Breton's manifesto appeared in its fourth and fifth issues. Later in 1936, ***L'Echange Surrealiste*** (the title in French) was published, the intention of which was to promote exchange between the surrealists of different countries. Breton, Eluard and Tristan Tzara contributed to it. Nishiwaki's "Chogenjitsushugi shiron" ["Surrealist poetics"] was published in 1929, his "Shururearisumu bungakuron" ["On Surrealist literature"] came out in the following year; Takiguchi's "Shururearisumu no shiron ni tsuite" ["On the poetics of Surrealism"] was published in 1928 and his "Shururearisumu no doko" ["The direction of Surrealism"] in 1933.[87]

As we can see in the above sketch, the Japanese surrealists were highly conscious of their position on the international stage and actively attempted to promote exchange with the surrealists in Europe. Notwithstanding the fact that the trace left by the Japanese surrealists in the European surrealist scene was minimal, they at least managed to maintain correspondence with their European

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87 For a discussion on the overall activities of Japanese Surrealists, see Chiba Sen'ichi, ***Modanizumu no hikaku bungakuteki kenkyu*** [A study on modernism: from a comparative literature perspective], Tokyo: Ofusha, 1998: 21-26; ***Nihon Kindai Bungaku Daijiten*** [Encyclopaedia of modern Japanese literature], Nihon Kindai Bungakukan (ed), Tokyo: Kodansha, 1977, vol.4, Chiba Sen'ichi, "Shururealrisumu": 206-207; Sawa Masahiro and Wada Hirofumi (eds), ***Nihon no shuururearizumu*** [Surrealism in Japan], Tokyo: Sekai Shisosha, 1995: 4-20.

contemporaries.[88]

What, then, were the products of this cultural exchange? The most common accusation of Japanese surrealism in general by post-1945 Japanese critics has been that it was not authentic surrealism. Tsuruoka Yoshihisa points to the "warp" in the Japanese poets' interpretation of European surrealism.[89] Ooka Makoto emphasises the superficiality of importation, that is, that the formalist aspects of French surrealism were transplanted into the Japanese poetic ground without consideration of the socio-historical background that brought about the movement in Europe.[90] Kagiya Yukinobu also contends that the major failure of the surrealist movement in Japan is closely related to the fact that surrealism was brought in simply as a new aesthetic trend in an entirely different context from the importation of dadaism, and therefore lacked a fundamental problem

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88 The names of Takiguchi Shuzo and another Surrealist, Yamanaka Chiruu, appeared in *Dictionaire Abrege du Surrealisme*, published by Breton and Eluard in 1938. *Nihon Kindai Bungaku Daijiten*, vol.4: 207. According to Miryam Sas, Yamanaka Chiruu sent an anthology of Japanese surrealist poetry *Hiasobi* [Playing with fire] to Breton, to whom it was dedicated, and although Breton could not understand the words, the pink cover and dark rice paper, folded in French style, provoked a strong reaction --- "I am brought to the edge of illness with desire for the beauty of this paper". Eluard and Tzara also perceived *Hisaobi* as an "object of rice paper". Takiguchi and another surrealist, Ebara Jun, translated some Japanese surrealist poetry into French and wrote introductions to Japanese surrealism for publication in France. See Myriam Belle Sas, "Cultural Memory and Literary Movements: Dada and Surrealism in Japan", Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University, Nov.1995, Ann Arbor, Michigan: U.M. I Dissertation Services facsimile.

89 See Sas, *Ibid.*, 55-68.

90 Ooka Makoto, *Chogenjitsu to jojo: showa 10 nendai no shiseishin* [Surrealism and lyricism: the poetic spirit in the second decade of Showa], Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1965: 29-33.

consciousness shared by European surrealists.[91] In a slightly different vain, Sawa Masahiro points to the fundamental aspect of misunderstanding in the Japanese reception of surrealism, that is, that the Japanese poets tried to understand surrealism "intellectually", and were surprisingly oblivious to the fact that the idea of the unconscious played a crucial role in the development of surrealism in Europe.[92]

Having quoted these general comments, an interesting point to note is that all of these critics refer in one way or other to Nishiwaki and Takiguchi as exceptional cases. Strangely enough, the two most widely discussed surrealists are regarded as exceptional, and this fact by itself suggests the complexity involved in the discussion of surrealism in Japan. To summarise the points briefly, Nishiwaki is commonly known to have developed his own "surrealist theory", which, when examined closely, reveals little affiliation to the surrealist theories advocated in Europe. Despite the fact that he wrote a number of essays in the name of surrealism and that by and large he was regarded as Japan's representative surrealist by his contemporaries, he was clearly aware of the distance between his own poetics and the poetics of European surrealists and in fact never referred to himself as a surrealist. He sometimes used the term "sur-naturalist" to describe his works. Simply put, Nishiwaki's poetics revolved around the notion of "reality" as opposed to "art", and he rigorously pursued the relationship between the two with an attempt to achieve a complete liberation of poetry from reality. His intention to bring together two most distant things to create a world founded on a new relationship of things might have struck his contemporaries as representing a surrealist inclination, but the divergence of Nishiwaki's poetics from its European source becomes clear when we find that Nishiwaki's bold theory of "surrealism" includes as representative surrealists not only

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91 Kagiya Yukinobu, *Shijin Nisiwaki Junzaburo* [A poet Nishiwaki Junzaburo], Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1983: 261.

92 Sawa Masahiro and Wada Hirofumi(eds), *Nihon no shuururearizumu* [Surrealism in Japan], Tokyo: Sekai Shisosha, 1995: 5-6.

Baudelaire and Mallarme but also Shakespeare, Basho -- a traditional Japanese *haiku* poet -- and Hagiwara Sakutaro. Naturally, Nishiwaki was uninterested in the political engagement woven into the surrealist movement in Europe.[93]

In contrast to Nishiwaki, critics all argue for the authenticity of Takiguchi's surrealism, often referring to him as the only "real Surrealist" in Japan. Whereas Nishiwaki was extremely prolific, Takiguchi's poetic career is characterised by long periods of silence. Furthermore, he refused to call himself a poet and referred to his works as "poetic experiments".[94] According to these critics, Takiguchi not only faithfully adopted the original theory of surrealism but thoroughly internalised it, and even though he was initially involved in the activities of *Poetry and Poetics*, *The Fragrant Stoker*, *The Sun in Costume*, etc. to disseminate surrealism in Japan, he was in spirit quite aloof from other poets, as self-complacency gained through creating an ad hoc assembly of European imports and their Japanese applications was far removed from Takiguchi's attitude to poetry. Also, of the Japanese surrealists, Takiguchi's affiliation with surrealism was most strongly political, which resulted in him being arrested by the thought police in 1941 and put in detention for nine months

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93 "Chogenjitsushugi shiron", *Nishiwaki Junzaburo Zenshu*, vol.4, Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1971: see particularly 57-84. On Nishiwaki's relationship with surrealism, see Ooka Makoto, *Ibid.*,:37-38; Kagiya Yukinobu, *Ibid.*,: 241-267. For an extensive study of Nishiwaki's poetics, see Hosea Hirata, *The Poetry and Poetics of Nishiwaki Junzaburo: Modernism in Translation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. Chapter Two, "Pure poetry and reality", examines in detail Nishiwaki's notion of "reality": 149-166.

94 The longest period of silence was between 1937 and 1967. During this period he only created fragmented verbal constructions which manifested his determination to reject the very idea of poetry. The 1967 publication, appearing after thirty years of silence, was given the title *Takiguchi Shuzo's poetic experiments* [Takiguchi Shuzo no shiteki jikken].

under the suspicion that surrealism was linked to the international communist movement.[95] By nature of his poetics Takiguchi's poems resist a logical interpretation by the reader. To quote from Sas, "Takiguchi's images tempt the reader with the ends of threads of narrative and metaphors to follow, but these threads do not necessarily lead toward any determinate or determinable place, or even any exit: the threads proliferate."[96] Takiguchi's rigorous pursuit of pure poetry -- or a pure verbal constructon -- has resulted in the creation of a poetic space that refuses the intrusion of "reality" through words tainted with meaning by their everyday usage. According to Kagiya, his poetic space can be described as something like "a space of absolute vacuum", in which words are completely freed from "reality", suggesting the potential of the language to create an entirely new dimension of meaning.[97]

In place of a conclusion to this quick review of Japanese surrealism, I will refer to Ooka once again and his discussion regarding the active revision of surrealism, which took place in Japan between 1956 and 1958. During this time a number of poets gathered to discuss and re-examine surrealism in the context of postwar Japan. It did not take the form of a movement, as the poets who gathered shared an understanding in the very loss of the belief in the meaning of an aesthetic movement. Ooka argues, however, that through a series of discussions and publications that took place at the time, the poets came closest to surrealism in the strict sense of the term. The Japanese

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95 Takiguchi's poetics are also discussed in Ooka, *Op.Cit.*, 32-36; Kagiya, *Op.Cit.*, 187-195. An extensive analysis of Takiguchi's poetic works is found in Sas, *Op.Cit.* For Takiguchi's biographical details, see, Takiguchi Shuzo, "Auto-chronology" ["Jihitsu nenpu"], included in *Gendaishi Tokuhon, Takiguchi Shuzo*, Tokyo: Shichosha, 1985: 236-254.

96 Sas, *Ibid.*, 152.

97 Kagiya, *Ibid.*, 190-191.

experience of World War Two brought forth a reality comparable to the socio-cultural situation of the period succeeding World War One in Europe, and for the first time the circumstances urged the Japanese poets to share a similar sensibility to that shared by European surrealists. Consequently, the significance and the underlying social and cultural consciousness of surrealism were deeply felt by a substantial number of Japanese poets, and exerted an essential influence on poetry in the following years.[98]

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[98] Ooka, *Ibid.*, 41.

## Chapter Four:

## Mapping Japan's place in the world

### Part I Centre and periphery: The view from outside and from below

1) Against the native tradition

The Japanese avant-garde poetic movement in the early 1920s was as spasmodic in its manifestation as it was sensational in its poetic representation. Due to the specific conditions of Japanese modernity, its inherent weakness provided no lasting impetus or viable models of poetic innovation. While not unrelated to the avant-garde movements discussed in the previous chapter but rooted in a significantly different poetic consciousness, there were groups of poets in the late 1920s who were actively engaged in the production of yet another "new" poetry. They did not venture so much into experimenting with the printing technique and the visible presentation of poetry and art as the *MAVO* poets and artists did, but shared a clear self-consciousness of being at the forefront of a poetic revolution. The most characteristic of their visions was that they positioned themselves in the international context of their time. They devoted much of their energies to introducing contemporary European poetry and produced works that were just as "up-to-date" as those produced by their European counterparts. When compared with the avant-garde poets discussed in the previous chapter, this kind of international consciousness stands out as a prominent feature of these poets. Despite the fact that the inspiration for futurism and dadaism came from abroad, the Japanese futurist or dadaist poets showed little concern for linking their movement directly to that of other countries. On the individual level, there were artists like Murayama Tomoyoshi who devoted much energy to introducing contemporary works from overseas through essays and translations. There were also

incidents like the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti that attracted the interest of many poets.[1] But when we examine their actual works, whether it be Takahashi Shinkichi, Ogata Kamenosuke or Hagiwara Kyojiro, it becomes quite evident that their thematic frame of reference was more or less domestic. As was most clearly seen in Hagiwara Kyojiro's poetry, the poet's creative drive came largely from his double-edged vision of Tokyo --- the symbolic centre of modernity --- which was viewed in contrast to the reality of his rural hometown.

In the first part of this chapter I will focus on two of the major actors of a group of poets that advocated "l'esprit nouveau" in Japanese poetry. As was mentioned in Chapter One, many of the postwar critical works on Japanese poetry of this period refer to them as "the modernists" in Japanese poetry, primarily due to the fact that they were committed not only to importing contemporary ideas on poetry from the West but also to creating a Japanese version of modernist poetry comparable to the modernist works of European and American poets.[2] The activities of these poets are represented in a

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[1] See Chapter Three:

[2] Some of the poets in this stream had direct correspondences with contemporary European poets. To give a few examples, Kitasono Katsue began correspondence with Ezra Pound in 1936, and Pound agreed to contribute his works to Kitagawa's journal, *VOU*. Through Pound, Kitasono also came in contact with James Laughlin in New York. Yamanaka Chiruu actively corresponded with European poets and artists, beginning with Paul Eluard and Andre Breton, and later expanding his contacts to Salvador Dali, Man Ray and others. Both of them were related to *Poetry and Poetics*, which I will discuss later, and also to the Japanese surrealist movement. Nishiwaki Junzaburo and Takiguchi Shuzo, whom I discussed in relation to the surrealist movement in Chapter Three, also had direct contacts with European poets and artists. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, *Poetry and Poetics* played an important role in introducing surrealism into Japan. Both Nishiwaki and Takiguchi contributed their works to *Poetry and Poetics*. Nishiwaki spent three years in England and wrote works in Latin, English and French as well. Takiguchi had direct contact with Breton over the years, and he also wrote in French and English. For details on Kitasono, see Fujitomi Yasuo, ***Kitasono Katsue***, Tokyo: Yuseido, 1983: 74-89. On Yamanaka, see Nakano Kaichi, ***Modanizumu shi no jidai*** [The age of modernist poetry], Tokyo: Hobunkan Shuppan, 1986: 143-161; Sawa Masahiro and Wada Hirofumi (eds), ***Nihon no shuururearizumu*** [Surrealism in Japan], Tokyo: Sekai Shisosha, 1995: 155-167.

number of journals they published. In the following discussion I will refer mostly to *A* (pronounced [a] as in "hut") and *Shi to Shiron* [Poetry and poetics]. *A* can be regarded as the precursor to *Poetry and Poetics*, which occupied the most central place in the activities of these poets. Most of them were linked in one way or other to this journal. Its years of publication, between 1928 and 1933, also marked the most prosperous period of these poets.[3] The two poets whose works I will chiefly examine, Anzai Fuyue and Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, were involved as chief members in both *A* and *Poetry and Poetics*.

An examination of some of their representative works will be followed by a discussion on the political context of their activities, particularly on the question of the relationship between their poetic stance and their response to Japan's militaristic advances. By asking why their poetry could not take an effective stand against Japanese imperialism, I hope to highlight a major aspect of their international consciousness, that is, the ambivalence of their view toward Asia.

The second part of this chapter deals with the proletarian poetic movement, which formed an essential opposition to the movement led by *Poetry and Poetics*. Rather than going into the complex details of the development of proletarian thought in Japan, I will focus on the overall significance of the proletarian movement in relation to our general discussion of Japanese modernism. Particular attention will be paid toits poets' international consciousness which corresponded in a certain way to the international consciousness shared by the poets of *Poetry and Poetics*. In the last section of this chapter, I will introduce one proletarian poet, Oguma Hideo, whose works not only occupy a unique position in Japan's proletarian tradition but also embody a distinct kind of cosmopolitanism unparalleled in Japanese poetry of the period.

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[3] In 1932 *Shi to Shiron* [Poetry and poetics] was renamed *Bungaku* [Literature] and published six more issues for another year. The circumstances that led to the renaming of the journal will be touched on later.

Let me start with a discussion on the symbolic place of the literary journal *A* in the social and cultural context of Japan in the 1920s. This journal is noteworthy not only as the precursor to *Poetry and Poetics* but also because a brief examination of the international consciousness behind the publication of this journal provides us with some clues for understanding the historical status of *Poetry and Poetics*.

The thirty-five issues of *A* were published between 1924 and 1927 in Dalian, a central port city in colonial Manchuria. Of the four founding members, Anzai Fuyue was a resident of Dalian and the other three, including Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, were regularly coming back to Dalian to see their families during university breaks. The origin of the title of the journal is well known. According to Anzai, who first suggested it, this single letter, single syllable name evoked an exotic atmosphere distinct from that of island Japan. The shape of the Chinese character "亜" also looked distinctly foreign and pictorially effective. The sound is simple and resembles "Ah!", as readers might exclaim when they read the journal. Furthermore, "亜" is the first character of "亜細亜"(Asia) and is appropriate for a journal inaugurated on the Asian continent. The others agreed to its naming, and Kitagawa wrote the character "亜" in calligraphy, which was later printed on the cover page of the journal.[4] Anzai's reference to the Asian continent is particularly suggestive when we consider the geo-political relationship between Japan and "Asia" in 1924. Since the end of the Sino-Japanese War, "Asia" had acquired a new meaning for the Japanese nation as a ground for the expansion of Japanese colonial interests. Following its victory in the Russo-Japanese War, in 1905 Japan obtained administrative control over the Liaotung Peninsula and approximately seven hundred kilometres of the Chinese

[4] Sakurai Katsumi, *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko no Sekai* [The world of Kitagawa Fuyuhiko], Tokyo: Hobunkan Shuppan, 1984: 114-115.

Eastern Railway, which was to be renamed the South Manchurian Railway in the following year.[5] The annexation of Korea took place in 1910. In 1925 Japan gained a colony in Taiwan. Anzai moved to Manchuria in 1920 and worked briefly for the South Manchurian Railway until he had his right leg amputated in the following year as a result of a serious case of arthritis. Kitagawa's father also worked for the South Manchurian Railway. With the Japanese government's active promotion of this new "frontier" and also with the progression of a systematic development of modern infrastructures and urban planning initiated by the South Manchurian Railway Company, a large Japanese population had gravitated to Manchuria by 1920, directly or indirectly contributing to enhancing the base of Japan's colonial expansion.[6]

It must not be forgotten that the notion of "Asia" was something relatively new to the Japanese at the time. It was a Western geographic concept which referred to the entire region to the west of Turkey, the Japanese islands marking the furthest eastern end of it. The Chinese characters "亜細亜" were a transliteration of this Western name, created by a combination of characters, which produced a similar sound to this Western name.[7] As is argued by William Gardner, the name of this journal is

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[5] The railway was originally developed by China but was ceded to Russia in 1895. After the Japanese seized its administration rights through the Treaty of Portsmouth, the newly founded South Manchurian Railway Company became the central vehicle for expanding Japanese interests in the continent. The planning of Dalian as a major port city to represent Japanese interests in the region was also pursued by the South Manchurian Railway Company. See Higuchi Satoru, *Showashi no hassei: Sanshu no shiki wo mitasu mono* [The emergence of Showa poetry: the substance of three poetic vessels], Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1990: 121-125.

[6] On the conception of the new "frontier" by the Japanese and the impact of Japan's colonial expansion on the native Chinese people, see Kawamura Minato, *Ikyo no Showa bungaku* [Showa literature in foreign land], Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990.

[7] The first appearance of the Chinese transliteration of "Asia" dates back to 1602 in a map written by Matteo Ricci, but it was only after the Meiji period that the idea of "Asia" was recognised by the Japanese. The term was used by Fukuzawa Yukichi in advocating his "leave Asia and enter Europe" theory. It was another fifty years before the term became prevalent again, this time in a

indicative of the ambivalent self-positioning of the poets of this journal. Gardner contends that the Japanese view of "Asia" has been markedly indecisive even to the present day, its conceptual cartography varying from that of "Asia" including and centred on Imperial Japan (the Great East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere), to a map in which the Japanese place themselves outside of "Asia", or rather, place "Asia" outside of Japan, which is probably the more dominant perspective in popular journalism today.[8] It is evident from the above episode on the naming of the journal that the poets were conscious of their physical and mental detachment from "inland"(*naichi*) Japan. At this stage Japanese militaristic aggression on the continent had not yet visibly manifested itself. It is safe to assume that for the poets of *A*, stronger than a concern for the Japanese political relationship with "Asia" was a sense of liberation from the "main" culture of "inland" Japan, a feeling of being out in the open, unrestricted by preceding traditions. At the same time, the journal's title also suggests that there was a certain willingness among the poets to see their identity as positively belonging to "Asia" rather than to Japan. Whether this "Asian" identity implied in any way a picture of an extended Japan, gaining a dominator's position in the newly developing territories, or whether it simply signified a new region from which one could secure a critical distance to the "inland" traditions is not so clear. As we shall see later, we find in both Anzai's and Kitagawa's works a double-edged view of Japanese imperialism.

The specific geographical consciousness related to the publication of *A* bears a symbolic weight in considering the nature of internationalism that characterised the works of these poets. In looking at their "international" consciousness, it must be born in mind that the West was not the only point of

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distinctly "Asianist" manner, leading to the idea of "the Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere". See Higuchi Satoru, 1990, *Op.Cit.*, 153-154.

[8] William Ogden Gardner, unpublished Master's thesis submitted to the Department of East Asian Languages, Stanford University, 1995: 3-7.

reference but that, implicitly or explicitly, the idea of "Asia" played a significant part in determining the position of their poetry. Whereas the relationship with the West was more or less clear-cut in that the West served as the model and a source of inspiration for much of their poetic activities, the relationship with "Asia" was naturally more complex. In the works of these poets, we can discern certain elements that reveal the poets' vacillating vision toward "Asia", which was inevitably linked to their perception of Japanese colonialism. This "Asian" consciousness was most pronounced in the works of the poets of *A*, but was shared to a greater or lesser extent by many other poets of the time as well. How the presence of "Asia" was related to the "international" consciousness of these poets will be discussed further later in this chapter.

*Poetry and Poetics* was inaugurated in Tokyo in 1928, the year after the conclusion of *A*. The members of *A*, including Anzai and Kitagawa, joined *Poetry and Poetics* as founding members. This journal occupies a central place in the history of prewar Japanese poetry in a number of ways. Firstly, from its inauguration, it functioned as the central vehicle for introducing contemporary European and American poetry and poetics through translations of works and articles, essays and critical studies on the newly emerging movements, etc.[9] Consequently, various poetic theories were developed through the journal, turning it into an experimental ground for the application of new poetic theories and techniques: poetic formalism, cine-poem, prose poetry movement, surrealism, and so on. Secondly, compared to most other "little magazines" which were run by a small number of

[9] The following is the list of titles in the "Essays" section of Volume One, which illustrates the breadth and variety of the content of this journal: "On the free language of the Futurists(1)"(Kanbara Tai), "A note on Jules Romains(1)"(Iijima Tadashi), "On Paul Verlaine(1)"(Miyoshi Tatsuji), "Max Jacob's theory on prose poetry"(Kitagawa Fuyuhiko), "Texte Surrealiste"(Louis Aragon, translated by Ueda Toshio, "Theory on pure poetry"(Henry Bremond, translated by Nakamura Kikuo), "The sur-naturalist group"(J.N.), "The demise of modern Japanese symbolist poetry"(Haruyama Yukio), "The fundamental problems in poetics"(Toyama Usaburo). "J.N." are the initials for Nishiwaki Junzaburo. Also in the "Notes" section of the same volume, more general views on foreign and domestic poetic movements were included: "Contemporary poetic movements overseas"(Toyama Usaburo), "Japanese poetic circles today"(Sato Kazuhide), "The situation of poetry in France today"(Bernard Fay, translated by Kitagawa Fuyuhiko).

poets, *Poetry and Poetics* drew a relatively large number of poets and theorists to participate in its activity of disseminating "l'esprit nouveau" in Japanese poetry. The initial founding members consisted of eleven poets.[10] The journal also welcomed contributions from non-members, and from volume five relinquished the membership system altogether to allow free contributions from a wider group of poets. Each volume of *Poetry and Poetics* consisted of at least two hundred pages, elaborately bound and systematically divided into "Essays","Poesies","Notes","Esquisse", and "Varietes" sections. Published in Tokyo, attracting many poets and energetically incorporating contemporary Western trends, the journal quickly came to occupy one of the central positions in the Japanese poetic scene.[11] Thirdly, *Poetry and Poetics* took a firmly oppositional stance toward the preceding tradition of modern Japanese poetry. Colloquial free-verse poetry represented by the so-called "people's poetry"*(minshushiha)* as well as various streams of symbolist poetry became its target.[12] In a frequently quoted essay entitled "The demise of modern Japanese symbolist poetry" ("*Nihon kindai shochoshugishi no shuen*"), Haruyama Yukio, who played the chief editing role in the journal's publication, presents a diagram of the history of modern Japanese poetry, classifying all

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10 Apart from *A*, there were journals such as *Men* [Mask], *Aokishi* [The blue knight] and *Rashin* [Compass], which also acted as a precursors to *Poetry and Poetics*. *Men* was started in 1925 by Kitagawa, Kidokoro Eiichi, another member of *A*, and a few others in Tokyo. *Aokishi* was published in Nagoya in 1922 by Haruyama Yukio and Kondo Azuma. Haruyama later became the chief editor of *Poetry and Poetics*. *Rashin* was published in Kobe by Takeyama Iku in 1923. *Poetry and Poetics* had a magnetic effect in gathering all of these poets together.

11 For a further discussion on the general nature of *Poetry and Poetics*, see Chiba Sen'ichi, *Nihon kendai bungaku no hikaku bungakuteki kenkyu* [A study of modern Japanese literature from the perspective of conparative literature], Tokyo: Shimizu Kobundo, 1971.

12 "Minshushiha" was named after a journal *Minshu* [The people], which was compiled by a group of poets who advocated the expression of a democratic spirit in poetry. These poets actively employed colloquial language in their works. However, because of its heavy emphasis on content and a relatively small concern for the poetic form, the group was harshly criticised as being too idealistic and emotional. by those poets with a stronger formalistic concern.

the preceding poetic movements into either the "humanist"("*minshushi*") group or the "artistic" ("symbolist") group, dismissing all of them as being thoroughly outdated. Hagiwara Sakutaro was identified by Haruyama as one of the two representative figures of the symbolist group and was most harshly criticised for "not having been capable of understanding the meaning of pure poetry and having been willingly caught in the self-destructive trap prepared by the symbolists of the former age". According to Haruyama, modern Japanese poetry was undergoing a major shift from the age of "ego" to the age of "cubi".[13] Putting aside the arbitrary way in which the term "symbolist" was used -- not to mention "ego" and "cubi" (a term invented by Haruyama and presumably drawn from cubism) -- we can discern in Haruyama's article a daring, and almost desperate, attempt to become "new". For Haruyama, this newness was to be achieved by strictly abiding by "formalist" and "intellectual" concerns in poetic production.

*Poetry and Poetics* published fourteen issues between 1928 and 1931. In 1931 it was renamed *Literature* [Bungaku] and published six more issues up to 1933. After *Literature* was discontinued, other journals such as *Poetic Methodology* [Shiho, 1934-35] and *New Territory* [Shinryodo, 1937-42] carried on its interest in poetics. As early as 1930, after the publication of its seventh issue, Kitagawa and a few other poets left *Poetry and Poetics* to start a new journal, *Poetry · Reality* [Shi · Genjitsu], criticising the formalistic vision of Haruyama's poetics, denouncing it as representing petit-bourgeois interests. How the "newness" of *Poetry and Poetics* as well as the "realist" concerns of *Poetry · Reality* reflected the journals' understanding of their poetic status in the changing context of Japanese society/politics from the early 1930s onwards will be examined after

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[13] *Shi to Shiron*, vol.1, Tokyo: Tojishobo-shinsha, 1985 (a reprinted version of the original journal published from Koseikaku): 66-84. For a detailed analysis of Haruyama's theory and the general features of the "l'esprit nouveau" poetics, see Ooka Makoto, *Chogenjitsu to jojo: showa 10 nendai no shiseishin* [Surrealism and lyricism: the poetic spirit in the second decade of Showa], Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1965, Chapter One.

discussing the works of two poets, Anzai and Kitagawa.

2) Anzai Fuyue: the topography of Dalian and the cartography of fantastic Asia

As noted earlier, Anzai Fuyue (1898-1965) played the chief role in the publication of *A* in Dalian. He was also an active contributor to *Poetry and Poetics*. Born in Nara and receiving primary and secondary education in Tokyo and Sakai (near Osaka), Anzai moved to Dalian, Manchuria with his father in 1920. He had nurtured his literary interests since high school through a wide reading of Chinese literature and the writing of occasional *haiku* himself. Anzai's wholehearted involvement in the modern poetic movements began after he left the South Manchurian Railway following the amputation of his right leg. He stayed in Manchuria until 1934 and spent the last twenty years of his life in Sakai.

By way of introduction, I will begin by examining Anzai's most well-known poem, which has generally been acclaimed by critics as having marked the beginning of a new poetic age. It is a single-line poem entitled "Spring".

One butterfly flew across the Tartar Strait.[14]

It is extremely difficult to render into a foreign language the rich implications of this short poem. The piece first appeared in the nineteenth issue of *A* and was reprinted in Anzai's first poetic coll

[14] The original text is in *Anzai Fuyue zenshu* [Complete works of Anzai fuyue], Tokyo: Hobunkan Shuppan, 1977, vol.1. All the citations of Anzai's texts are taken from this collection.

ection,*Gunkan Mari* [Warship Mari], published in 1929. "Tartar Strait", originally written "Mamiya Strait" in the *A* version, points to the stretch of water separating the northern extension of the Japanese archipelago from the Asian continent. The Japanese name "Mamiya" was replaced by the foreign name for the same strait, "Tartar", to invoke the image of the Mongolian people and their history in the region on the western side of the strait. In the Japanese version, the word for "Tartar" is written in Chinese characters (韃靼), its complex inscription contrasting the simple inscription for "butterfly" written in the Japanese phonetic alphabet in the classical style (てふてふ). The flimsy movement of the butterfly is thus placed in opposition to the vast expanse of rough waters, an image which is also associated with a foreign landscape. The butterfly was an image favoured by traditional *haiku* poets to denote the transient liveliness of spring, its connotation being an existence that is beautiful but fragile and ephemeral. The poem is structured around these contrasting images and that structure is also supported by the sound composition which is arranged so that it evokes the awkward flapping of the butterfly's wings. Prior to writing this poem, Anzai also wrote a *haiku* centring on the same image. Written in classical Japanese, its rough translation is something like, "Ah! A butterfly flying across the Tartar sea".[15] The modernity of Anzai's "Spring" becomes clear

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[15] The following is the original poem and its *haiku* version in Japanese.

「春」
てふてふが一匹韃靼海峡を渡って行った。

韃靼のわだつみ渡る蝶々かな

For a detailed analysis of the poem, see Kamei Shunsuke, "Anzai Fuyue 'Haru': esupuri nubo to nihonteki dento" ["Anzai Fuyue's 'Spring': l'esprit nouveau and the Japanese tradition], in *Bunsho no Kaishaku* [Interpreting texts], Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1977: 352-361. A discussion on the cultural context of the poem is also in Toshiko Ellis, "Nihon modanizumu no saiteigi: 1930 nendai sekai nobunmyaku no nakade["Redefining Japanese modernism: in the world context of the 1930s], in *Modanizumu kenkyu* [Studies on modernism], Hamada Akira (ed), Tokyo: Shichosha, 1994: 544-572.

when compared against this *haiku*. In the *haiku* version the image of the butterfly is comfortably incorporated into the landscape of the Tartar sea. The use of the traditional five-seven-five syllabic structure not only renders it a familiar rhythm but the smoothness of the rhythm also has the effect of blurring the tension between the two images, reducing the foreign image of the "Tartar sea" into something more familiar. Looking back at "Spring", we notice that this single line poem resists the *haiku*-like familiarity in a number of ways. The poem is "framed" by the title "Spring". The sentence consisting of a subject, an object and a predicate verb, and finishing with a full stop, asserts a non-poetic logic. Written in the past tense and devoid of any expression to reflect the observer's emotions, the poem looks like nothing more than a statement reporting the flight of a butterfly.[16]

Critics have commented that a significant factor in the making of "Spring" was that Anzai was physically detached from the "main" tradition of "inland" Japan, which allowed him to gain a perspective outside the prvious tradition of Japanese poetry.[17] The vast expanse of the Manchurian plains, the ruthless waters that provoked a sense of a decisive separation from the culture of his origin, a climate that showed distinctly different seasonal features from those of the island country, all contributed to the creation of a dynamic and surrealistic image of "Spring". Added to this was the

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[16] Dennis Keene argues that despite the poem's closeness to *haiku*, it is definitely not *haiku*, as it makes use of the tradition only in order to show how it refuses to belong to it. The following is the translation of the poem given by Keene.

One butterfly passed over the Tartar Straits.

See Dennis Keene, *Modern Japanese Prose Poems: An Anthology of Six Poets*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980: 46-47.

[17] See Kawamura Minato, "Tokyo de shinda otoko" ["A man that died in Tokyo"], in *Gendaishi techo*, Tokyo: Shichosha, vol.29, no.10, October 1986, Nihon modanizumu no saikento [Re-examination of Japanese modernism]: 122-130.

fact that this foreign land was "Japanese" owned.[18] The grievances of the Chinese people in Manuchuria were suppressed, but the dissonance caused by the forceful intrusion of Japanese culture into this foreign land could not be wiped out totally. The makeshift modernity of Dalian embraced a distinctly artificial atmosphere. Kawamura points out that the traditional Japanese place names used for district names in Dalian, for example, functioned only as stilted signs when deprived of any historical association to the locality.[19]

In this sense, the fact that the major starting point of "l'esprit nouveau" modernism was located in colonial Japan deserves close attention. As we shall see later, the artificial use of language, negation of history, and a sense of rootlessness linked to a lack of interest in nativity, comprise the chief features of the modernism of *Poetry and Poetics*. Anzai's "Spring" can be seen as a persuasive example illustrating an event in which Japan's colonial topography was amalgamated with the modernist interest in contemporary Western poetic consciousness. Anzai's "Spring" has often been presented as an example of Japanese imagist poetry. Notwithstanding the fact that reference to Japanese *haiku* played a vital role in the English imagist movement, the Japanese imagists shared a consciousness of being detached from their own cultural history. It should not be overlooked, however, that their specific sense of detachment from their native history was in fact related to a distinctive historical situation.

In order to gain a clearer understanding of Anzai's perception of colonial Japan and the way he

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[18] Dalian was situated at the southern tip of Liaotung Peninsula. Originally a small Chinese fishing village called Chingniwa, its place in Russian and then Japanese history began when the entire Kwantung region of the peninsula was leased to Russia, which in turn embarked on developing the port city of Dalian. The administrative rights to the city were handed over to the Japanese after the Russo-Japanese War. The headquarters of the South Manchurian Railway was located in this city, and Dailan became the centre of Japanese colonial enterprise in the continent until Japan's defeat. See Higuchi Satoru, *Op.Cit.*, 13.

[19] Kawamura, *Op.Cit.*, 124.

defined his place in it, I will draw some examples from his poetic works that make a direct reference to his vision of Dalian. The following piece is entitled "Dalian" ["Dairen"].

There is no museum in this city.

It is like a man without lungs.[20]

This piece appeared in *A*'s sixteenth issue in 1926. The central message is quite clear. Museums are institutions that stand as a witness to history. A city without a museum is a city deprived of history, i.e. a city whose past is not documented. From this poem it is not clear whether the poet intends to shed light on the fact that this city did have a history, which has been forcefully obliterated, or whether he is simply lamenting the feeble foundation of the city's superficial modernity. Another piece entitled "The congested city-scape and civilization" ["Shippi suru gaikei to bunmei"], included in *Warship Mari*, highlights the speed of transformation this city was undergoing.

The photo studio that hastily brought in civilization is looking decrepit in the landscape.

(The "street improvement" has already been launched in this toffee coloured city.)[21]

The implications of Anzai's use of the word "civilization" deserve consideration. Once again, the poem renders itself ambiguous in denoting its stance toward this term. Is the term meant to bear a

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[20] *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.3: 44.

[21] The line in brackets is in brackets and is printed in smaller size in the original poem. *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 97.

positive meaning as something that brought "good" to the city? Or does it embrace a critical view indicating the city's fundamentally "fake" character? The additional note to the poem presented in brackets retains this ambiguity. The word "already" suggests both praise for the speed of the city's development and a sense of uneasiness at the forceful intrusion of modernity into a city that has been deprived of its original life and is now "toffee coloured". The subject of "civilization" is also unclear. It is possible to equate it to "Japan", or to modernity in a general sense with no particular concern about the identity of its bearer.

This kind of ambiguity characterises Anzai's early works written during the Dalian period. Ironically, the "modernist" approach to poetry -- largely imagist and formalist in Anzai's case -- allowed the poet to avoid making any direct allusion to history. Anzai approached his thematic objects with a neutrality apparently unhampered by the geo-political reality behind the scenes. Let us look at a few more examples of Anzai's depiction of Dalian and examine what aspects of the city were highlighted by the poet.

There is, for example, an auction shop where all sorts of odds and ends are recycled: "when the evening comes, a checkered flag is hung over the old pavement / a chair, a table, woollen cloth, a kind of Russian cotton, a sewing machine, a worn out printer, a broken buffet / are carried away"("A landscape with an auction shop" ["Kyobaijo no aru fukei"], *A*, no.1, 1924)[22]. Or sometimes we see a well-dressed Russian refugee woman standing against the city's smoky landscape: "An elderly woman carrying a steamy looking parasol -- a distorted city spread out from her eccentric skirt / a rickshaw / smoke has never ceased in that area"("A landscape with an overpass" [ "Rikkyo fukei"], *Warship Mari*).[23] The city as a cultural mixture is well presented in the following lines.

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[22] *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.3: 22.

[23] *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 98. Together with the native Chinese people and the newly emigrated Japanese, a substantial number of Russian refugees were living in Dalian. Naturally, the presence of Russians added to the "international" atmosphere of the city. Anzai frequently used their

A girl dressed in Western clothes hanging over a raincoat, looking pale and leaning against a mantlepiece that is no longer burning
Shabby advertising magazines falling to bits, scattered on the table
A university student wearing a cap, coming down from the restaurant upstairs
Cars, and more cars, speeding down the muddy road
Porters, station workers, and shoe polishers
The heavy lead-colour of the station's interior

It is a grimy afternoon of the city"
("A station looking grimy in the rain" ["Ame ni yogoreta teishaba"], *A*, no.4, 1925)[24]

As we can see in these examples, the tone in Anzai's poetic representation of this richly "international" city is largely negative. Even though Anzai does not draw attention to the inherent tension supporting the superficial prosperity of the city, what look like casual sketches of this city are characterised by references to its dingy atmosphere and a grave lack of harmony in its cultural texture.

Though sparse, there are certain passages that indicate that Anzai was not unaware of the obscurity behind the construction of this city. A piece entitled "A cat" ["Neko"], included in *Warship Mari*, reads as follows.

The city is folded up

Banks go bankrupt, the canal is turning pale[25]

This not only suggests the shaky nature of the colonial economy, but the expression "folded up"

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images in his [illegible]

[24] *An* [illegible] *zenshu*, vol.3: 25.

[25] *Anzai Fu,ue zenshu*, vol.1: 110.

suggests the inherent obscurity of the city's foundation, where a number of things are tucked away, crushed and compressed under the weight of the forceful "modernity" imposed on it. The second line, written in small-size print, suggests that in the inner part of the city, which is "folded up", the city is suffering. Next to "A cat" in *Warship Mari* is another short poem, "Late spring" ["Banshun "].

The city is ailing from fever
*pagoda*

How far do I have to go to arrive at its bottom?[26]

The implication of "*pagoda*", written originally in English is not clear, but its juxtaposition with the image of an ailing city suggests that there is something ominous about its existence. A typically Chinese construction with a symbolic historical connotation has been "foreignised" -- and is sick. The poem's structure leads us to read the second line in apposition to the first line: *pagoda* is a symbol of the city itself. The last line suggests, however, that it is tantalisingly remote, and harbours at its bottom an opacity impenetrable by an outsider.

According to Nakagawa Shigemi, Anzai's house was located in the heights of Dalian's western district, a quiet residential area near the city's central park. On the other side of the park was the commercial district, and in between, surrounding the park was an area where the houses of the Chinese labourers stood. These houses were eventually cleared by the Japanese authorities for the

[26] *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 111.

development of a "modern" shopping centre.[27] Nakagawa points out that Anzai's poetic representation of Dalian constitutes a distinct absence. The poet's vision concentrated on the view of the sea and the city from the city's hilltop park, and the street scenes down in the central commercial district, but never fixed its focus on the areas where the contradictions of colonial modernity were taking a visible form.[28] This part of the Dalian culture was "folded up" in Anzai's vision, only to be expressed in a vague and indirect manner, as the intrinsic murkiness of the city and the discordant atmosphere that enveloped it.

Anzai's reflection of the reality of colonial rule does not go further than this. Instead, the works that followed reveal that Anzai's energies were devoted more and more to the exploration of the "unreal", i.e. fictional world of "Asia" with a strongly romantic flavour developed through an unfettered imagination of its geography. In this case, geography means literally the map of Asia with its names of countries and regions, the shape of the continent as well as its rivers, lakes and other geographical features. Place names also invoked in the poet's mind numerous myths, legends, and ancient historical incidents. Anzai's interest in maps was already manifest in *Warship Mari*, and we find that as references to the colonial reality of Dalian recede, Anzai's poetry proceeds further and further into the esoteric world of fictional "Asia".[29]

A piece entitled "Dice" ["Toshi"] in *Warship Mari* begins with the phrase: "The spring moon is

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[27] Nakagawa Shigemi, "Anzai Fuyue ron" ["On Anzai Fuyue"], in *Toshi modanizumu no honryu: shi to shiron no esupuri nubo* [The currents of urban modernism: the l'esprit nouveau of *Poetry and Poetics*], Sawa Masahiro, Wada Hirofumi (eds), Tokyo: Kanrin Shobo, 1996 :68-78. For the details of the environment of Anzai's life in Dalian, see Myochin Noboru, *Hyoden: Anzai Fuyue* [Anzai Fuyue: a critical biography], Tokyo: Ofusha, 1974 :111-122.

[28] Nakagawa, *Ibid.*

[29] Anzai's interest in geography and its development into his poetic themes are examined in detail in Tokami Yoshihide, *Anzai Fuyue: Modanizumu shi ni kakusareta romantishizumu* [Anzai Fuyue: romanticism concealed in modernism], Tokyo: Miraisha, 1989: 58-66.

shining on the Occident of the model globe".[30] In the lines that follow, the poet's imagination moves from Lisbon to Monte Carlo, then to Peking and back to Tokyo. There are also poems in this collection that make a direct reference to maps hung on the wall ("Room" ["Heya"], "Spring: a map on the wall" ["Haru: kabe ni kaketa chizu"]).[31] A piece entitled "The work of the Yellow River" ["Koga no shigoto"] is indicative of the direction that Anzai's poetry was to take in the following years. The poem is centred around the image of the Yellow River and its various associations: the ancient Muslim culture, the Lo-lo people, the Tunhuang Ruins, Yangtsekiang Bagdad Express, etc. It ends with the following lines.

The Yellow River is carving the earth.
Give it a *Catalyser*.
So that its riverbed will join the Mississippi.[32]

In Anzai's third collection, *Ajia no kanko* [Asia's Salty Lakes], published in 1933, the poet's imagination revolves specifically around the image of "Asia", delving into its age -- "On your inquiry about the age of Asia, I must say with regret that I cannot provide you with a reliable answer" ("Three things" ["Mittsu no mono"]),[33] and further into the mysterious images of its rivers -- "In our Asia, people spend their first night between two rivers" ("Between two rivers" ["Futatsu no kawa no

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30 *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 79.

31 *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 66.

32 *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 74-75.

33 *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 148.

aida"]).[34]

It can be naturally assumed that the further Anzai's poetic interest was pushed toward the presentation of a mystical "Asia", the less significant did it become for the poet to cast his eyes on its contemporary reality. A piece entitled "Business rival" ["Shobai gataki"] in *Asia's Salty Lakes* is a suggestive example of Anzai's stance toward "Asia" in the early 1930s. The following is the entire poem.

A friend from primary school has come. But I will not see him. I am recalling the long excursions we went on when we were children. He was a joker. And is now an antique collector. Has come to look for China's *Curio*.

His business is the same as mine.[35]

The "I" in this poem has defined himself as a curioso. From what we have seen so far, it should not be unfair to regard this as at least a partial self-image of the poet. A curioso looks for objects to change into money or to collect. There is no intrinsic relationship between a curioso and his object of search. Is this a self-parody of the poet who has cut off emotional ties with the native people of the land he inhabits, whose interest has become dominated by digging up ancient stories of the people and composing a fantastic world out of them? With regard to the technical features of Anzai's poems during this period, the abundant use of the Chinese characters stands out as a predominating characteristic. The use of words with Japanese origin is actively avoided, and even when they are used, the Chinese characters are applied for the written form, with the Japanese reading of the word

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34 *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 150. Anzai's second collection, *Kawakeru kami* [The Thirsty God] came out in the same year as *Asia's Salty Lakes*. It consists chiefly of long prose poems, many of which are dreamlike stories of ancient Asia.

35 "Curio" is written in English with a capital "C". *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol. 153.

inscribed next to it in smaller print in the Japanese phonetic alphabet. This was not an uncommon technique used by Japanese writers and poets in this period, but the extent to which Anzai applied this technique, combined with his profuse use of words of Chinese origin including place names and the names of historical characters, was not comparable to that of other poets. Consequently, the visible effect of the poems produced by a succession of lines full of uncommon Chinese characters came to constitute a major feature of Anzai's poetry. This can be regarded as an example of a typically modernist technique in the sense that it causes a tension between the written word and its meaning, also highlighting the autonomy of the poetic realm constituted by a new language untainted by everyday usage of the words.[36] At the same time, this technique contributed significantly to the making of Anzai's exotic and enigmatic "Asia". Through this technique the poet's detachment from his thematic object became complete.

It is not surprising then that Anzai's poetry did not voice a significant resistance when Japanese aggression into Asia began to take more belligerent and oppressive forms from the late 1930s onwards. The contemporary history of Asia was gradually superimposed on Anzai's imaginary map of "Asia". Following his father's death, Anzai moved back to Japan in 1934 and worked for the Sakai municipal government. Having had to earn a living for himself and his family for the first time, his poetic activities temporarily slowed down. His fourth collection, *Daigaku no rusu* [A Break from the university] came out in 1943. A piece entitled "North" ["Kita"], included in this collection, demonstrates how his fantastic journey into the depth of historical Asia acquired a realistic dimension. The poem is over one hundred lines and is composed around the central image of the Manchurian Railway stretching northward into the continent. The poetic "I", who had a surpassing ability in geography in school, is given a post in the Manchurian Railway Company. "Small as a grain of sand

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[36] The use of the Chinese characters in Anzai's poetry is discussed in Myochin Noboru, *Hyoden:Anzai Fuyue* [Anzai Fuyue: A critical biography], Tokyo: Ofusha, 1981: 97-105.

in the vast desert", he proceeds through the land as "a heavy-armoured soldier", suffering from illness and cold, and digging up the old forts of Ghengis Khan. The Manchurian Railway is described as "a caterpillar machine of the age", vigourously heading north through the "swamps" and "granary regions" and further into the "tundras where the polar lights are swirling". It is suggestive here that this figure "I" is playing the double role of a "curioso" (with an interest in Ghengis Khan) and a "soldier".[37]

Apart from this poem, the image of the Manchurian Railway appears several times in Anzai's poems. I will just touch on another piece entitled "The incomplete railway" ["Miseitetsudo"], which appeared in a literary journal *Shiinoki* [Pasania Tree] in 1929, more than ten years before he wrote "North". The difference in the imaginary representations of the railway and the continent in the two poems illustrates the change in Anzai's view of the continent during the ten years. The poem has a surrealistic character, and "I" is equated to the continental earth. It begins with the following lines.

The incomplete railway has agreed with me.
I have been made strong by the figures of the hay and wheat harvest, pounded like rivets into myself.
Beyond that is the harlem, the religion, and the fig trees that consent with religion.
At night, I lie under the map, taking off the rib bones of my night costume, so that I can absorb its blueprint while I am asleep.[38]

This section can be read as an indirect appraisal of Japan's ambitious railway construction project -- a consent has been established between "I" and the railway. However, in the second half of the poem, the tone radically changes, as "I" becomes afflicted with "a cold". "A chill" runs through his nerves, and "malignant fever" creates "spots" all over his skin. The poem ends with "I" dreaming a bad dream of "a black river flowing like opium".

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[37] *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 326-339.

[38] *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.3: 73-74.

Anzai never took an openly critical stance against Japanese colonialism, but the above poem suggests that he sensed something ominous in its advancement. Even though in this poem, the illness of "I", the continental earth, is related to "the polluted population dragging a town" -- presumably referring to the small "towns" emerging around the railway construction sites where all kinds of shoddy businesses and prostitution became common practice -- the poem is unmistakably a projection of a negative view of Japan's colonial expansion. Comparing this with the other later poem on the Manchurian Railway, "North", it becomes clear that Anzai eventually abandoned his sense of hesitation and uneasiness toward the situation, allowing his imaginary vision of "Asia" to serve as a source of inspiration for a pro-establishment poetic stance.

After the introduction of the idea of the Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere in 1940, Anzai added the Japanese archipelago to his imaginary map of Asia, placing Japan as the unifier of the entire region. The following is the first part of a prose poem included together with "North" in *A Break from the University*. The piece is entitled "The rainy season" ["Tsuyu"].

Casting my eyes on the rising map, I will reflect upon the land of East Asia for a while.
At the edge of the great mass of land stretching from Europe, the land of the lands --- the Great Asia, lies the arch of our archipelago standing like a marine fort. The people will look upon the elegance of this graceful and most stalwart bend of the arch.
This is the truthful figure of Imperial Japan, demonstrating its unyielding will, bearing on its shoulders the rise and fall of the Great East Asia whose fortune is one.[39]

There is little trace of a "l"esprit nouveau" modernist imagination in this passage. The map of Asia, which served as a source of imagination for many of Anzai's poems, now provides nothing more to Anzai than what it offered to the Japanese militarists. Also in the same collection, we find a prose poem which starts with the following line.

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[39] *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 267-268.

Swallows have come flying across the sea from the Southern co-prosperity region.
("Swallows and asphalt" ["Tsubame to asufaruto"])[40]

The thematic and stylistic resemblance of this line with his most renowned "butterfly" poem discussed earlier is obvious. It is ironic that the idea for the piece that established Anzai's position as a leading Japanese modernist was recycled fourteen years later, suggesting the close of his career as one of the pioneers of new poetry.[41]

Despite the fact that Anzai's poetry went through different periods, each period demonstrating a stylistic and thematic tendency different from the rest, one cannot deny that there are some elements of continuity in his approach that bestow a certain persuasiveness to his poetic evolution. His "Asian" consciousness is one. Even though his works from the early 1940s demonstrated a conspicuously biased view of "Asia" as his vision merged with that of the Japanese wartime government, we can assume that for the poet the acquisition of this wartime vision occurred as a natural extension of his earlier poetic interests. We have seen how his ambivalent view toward Japanese colonialism gradually dissolved as his fantastic view of Asia came to occupy his creative interests. It was only another short step for this fantastic view of Asia to be replaced by the "real politics" view presented by the Japanese authorities, which ironically was nothing other than fantastic.

Throughout his poetic career up to 1945, Anzai's poetic vision was centred around the idea of

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[40] *Anzai Fuyue zenshu*, vol.1: 239-240.

[41] Apart from the works included in *A Break from the University*, Anzai wrote a number of pro-war poems and participated in propagandistic activities during the war. After 1945, he published two more collections in 1947 and 1949. During the last sixteen years of his life, Anzai actively participated in a variety of educational activities while regularly contributing poems and essays to different literary journals and newspapers.

"Asia". Considering that the idea of Asia itself was a distinctly modern product, the imaginary development of this idea in Anzai's poetry provides us with insights with regard to the particular nature of internationalism in Japanese modernist poetry. Although in hindsight Anzai's view of "Asia" can hardly be regarded as convincing, his adherence to a certain Asian consciousness contributed significantly to liberating his poetic imagination from the native traditions of Japanese literature.

A further aspect of Anzai's poetic work that gives it a significant place in the discussion on Japanese modernist poetry is that he demonstrated a consistent global awareness. The most tangible example of this was his attachment to maps.[42] This interest in the spatial dimension of poetic imagination can be regarded as a typically modernist feature of Japanese modernists. In their intention to break away from the traditions of their own culture, many Japanese modernists strove to extend their imagination globally. This was related to the modernists' concern for contemporaneity with Western cultural trends and their willingness to give themselves an international identity. Anzai's interest in geography thus should be noted as implying something more than a personal interest. It is indicative in that sense that the last of the journals representing the "l'esprit nouveau" poets in pre-1945 Japan was called *Shinryodo*, which means "new territory". That one of the characteristic features of this journal was, ironically, a total loss of a sense of place will be discussed later in this chapter

Complementing this geographical inclination in Anzai's poetry was the unprecedented rise in an interest in Japan's place in the world at the time. Never before was so much attention given to

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[42] Apart from the references to maps in Anzai's poetry mentioned earlier, there are many other works in which Anzai uses an image of a map as a component to constitute the central theme of the poem. One of the most well-known examples is a prose poem entitled "Tartan Strait and the butterfly" ["Dattan kaikyo to cho"] in *A Break from the University*, in which "the pale Tartan Strait" on the map hung on the wall of the room "flows down like a cape" over the shoulders of a girl leaning against the wall.

"maps" in Japan's political, ideological and popular discourse. There were two kinds of mentality at work. One was the increase in a general willingness by the Japanese to situate their culture in the context of the contemporary world, a factor directly related to the aforementioned "international" consciousness of the "l'esprit nouveau" modernists. The other, needless to say, was linked to the nation's imperialist ambitions. Maps began to bear a political significance. The burgeoning of Anzai's interest in geography can be partly explained from the former perspective. With the changing socio-political context of the time, however, we have seen how that perspective receded, and the poet's cartographic fantasy gradually moved into the realm of the latter.

With hindsight, the title of Anzai's first and the most well-known collection, *Warship Mari*, was pregnant with premonitions of the ensuing development of his poetry. The name was taken from the title of the first piece in the collection, a prose poem with a mysterious atmosphere centring on an image of a white warship with the name of a fragrant flower, "Mari", which is also a female name. The ship has been taken over by "yellow pirates", and "I", the captain, is captured inside, guarded by a "snow-coloured collie" and sitting on a "Moroccan *divan*" in a semi-comatose state as a result of an overdose of opium, tormented by the knowledge that his sister is being raped by the chief engineer of the ship. In moonlight the warship is about to lift its anchor to start sailing again, without a destination, into the still, dark sea of North China.

The elements of the fantastic, exotic, romantic and the geographic, which were to characterise Anzai's poetic themes in the succeeding works are all here. We also know that this mysterious warship without a destination will eventually transform itself into a real warship.

3) Kitagawa Fuyuhiko: constructing a new poetics of resistance

Kitagawa Fuyuhiko (1900-1990) worked with Anzai in the founding of both *A* and *Poetry and*

*Poetics*. However, as mentioned earlier, Kitagawa left *Poetry and Poetics* two years after its inauguration to start a different journal, *Poetry · Reality*. The aim of *Poetry · Reality* was to re-establish a link between poetic creation and historical reality, as Kitagawa saw *Poetry and Poetics* as demonstrating a tendency to indulge in formalistic innovations and turn its back on the reality of modern Japan. In this section I will examine Kitagawa's attempt to create a poetry of resistance through the application of the "l'esprit nouveau" poetics of ambiguity and how that attempt was aborted by historical circumstances and the theoretical limitations of his poetics.

Like Anzai Fuyue, the beginning of Kitagawa's poetic career was closely linked to his experience of living in Manchuria. Born in 1900 in Otsu City in Western Japan, Kitagawa moved with his family to Manchuria at the age of seven and spent his middle school years there. He moved back to "inland" Japan in 1919 and began translating modern French poetry during his university days in Tokyo. It was in 1923 during his visit back to Dalian that he began writing poetry himself and joined with Anzai and others to embark on the publication of *A*. During the following few years, Kitagawa acquainted himself with various contemporary poetic movements in Japan and nurtured his own conception of new poetry. Takahashi Shinkichi's *The Poetic Works of Dadaist Shinkichi* came out in 1923. The first issue of *MAVO* was published in 1924 and Hagiwara Kyojiro's *Death Sentence* appeared the following year. In advocating his own "short poem movement", which provided the basis for his poetic production in the earliest period, Kitagawa contrasted his approach to that of Hagiwara Kyojiro, criticising Hagiwara's experiments with print layout as nothing but "an abuse of printing technique".[43]

Kitagawa's first two poetic collections, *Sanhankikan Soshitsu* [Loss of the Semi-Circular

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[43] Sakurai Katsumi, *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko no sekai* [The World of Kitagawa Fuyuhiko], Tokyo: Hobunkan Shuppan, 1984: 133-134. The quotattion is from "Shi ni okeru insatsu giko ni tsuite" ["On the printing technology in poetry"], which appeared in *Men* [Mask], no.4, May 1925. For Kitagawa's biographical details around this time, see 91-187.

Canals] and *Ken'onki to Hana* [Thermometer and Flower], published in 1925 and 1926, include some of his representative "short poems".[44] Here is one of the most well-known pieces from this period, "View from the top" ["Kankakei"], which illustrates a typically "modernist" perspective.

Looking down from the top of a building
Trains, cars and humans are squirming

My eyeballs are almost sucked into the ground[45]

Considering that it was only eight years before this that Hagiwara Sakutaro's *Howling at the Moon* came out, the speed with which Japanese poetry acquired, digested and tried to go beyond the classical modern perspective based on subject/object duality is noteworthy it would have been quite unimaginable for Hagiwara Sakutaro to apply the modern perspective in such a playful way as this. The futurist interest in urban themes and the expression of speed in poetry is also present here.

Also in this early period. we can find a burgeoning of Kitagawa's interest in developing a critical poetic discourse by incorporating historical and social issues in his poetic images. "Plains" ["Heigen"] and "The pale park" ["Aozameta koen"] in *Thermometer and Flower* are such examples. The former is a single line poem centring on the image of an army troop "swarming like pests at the

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[44] Kitagawa's theory of the "short-poem movement" will not be discussed in detail, as it does not have direct relevance to the main discussion of this chapter. It is important to note, however, that the idea of "short-poem" had a significant impact on the development of new poetic forms by other poets of *A* as well, and later, of *Poetry and Poetics*. Anzai's "Spring" discussued earlier can be seen as an example of this, and we can see a circular link of haiku-imagism-"short-poem" being created here. Ogata Kamenosuke, discussed in the previous chapter, was also briefly a member of *A*, and we can discern some traces of the "short-poem" method in his early works as well. Kitagawa soon moved on to advocate the "new prose poem" as a result of his theoretical development.

[45] The original poem is in *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu* [A Poetic collection of Kitagawa Fuyuhiko], Tokyo: Hobunkan, 1951: 6. The citations of Kitagawa's work, except indicated otherwise, are taken from this collection.

furthest end of the plains". The latter focuses on the image of "the impoverished people", referring to the Chinese coolie workers in Manchuria, lying in a park where "a funnel-shaped darkness drooped down from the sky".

In order to understand Kitagawa's original position in the cultural context of Japanese modernism, however, we must look at his third collection entitled *Senso* [War] published in 1929. Included in this are his most well-known "Horse" ["Uma"] and other poems which demonstrate Kitagawa's attempt to attribute a critical function to poetic representation. Many of the works in this collection are written in prose style, as Kitagawa was by this time advocating the "new prose poem movement" as an alternative to the earlier "short-poem movement". "Horse", however, belongs to the short poems.

Intestinising a military port.[46]

This is the entire poem with the title "Horse". "Intestinising" is a verb form of "intestines", although in Japanese this verb form has the same sound as a common verb meaning "to build in" or "to incorporate". From the title, it can be figured out that the subject of "intestinising" is the "horse". Thus, the image of a military port is superimposed on the image of a horse's internal organs, evoking in the reader's mind an image of a gigantic horse harbouring in it a military port intricately shaped like the horse's entangled intestines. As a result of the technique of superposition, the reader gains an impression of "seeing through" the horse as if through a fluoroscope. The most common reading of the poem is to regard the horse as a metaphorical representation of the growing militarist power and to see this as an implicit warning against "a war" to come. Because the image is so condensed, it is also

[46] *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 63.

possible to see the "intestines" as an image of a complex plan of the military port to be built in the near future, concealed in the interior of a growing organization whose true colours are yet to be revealed.[47]

There are other poems in *War* in which Kitagawa's language of social criticism is much more explicit. The first piece of the collection entitled "War" opens with the lines: "What meaning is there to have a diamond inserted in an artificial eye? What meaning is there to have a medal hung around moss-covered rib bones?" This image of soldiers whose lives had been destroyed by war is succeeded by an image of a "gigantic head" which appears to have some relationship with the cause of their destruction: "The gigantic head dangling a sausage must be crushed to pieces. The gigantic head dangling a sausage must be crushed to pieces."[48] The line can be read as a criticism against capitalists, fattening their interests with the profits of war. The accusation against anything "gigantic" is repeated in another piece of the collection, "The whale" ["Kujira"], which ends with the following line written in large-size letters: "To be gigantic is evil. Nothing but evil!".[49] The poem "War" concludes with a line expressing a longing for a day when "its (the gigantic head's?) bone's ashes will be blown from the palm of a hand like dandelion seeds". *War* was written at a time when Kitagawa's interest in the proletarian movement was rapidly growing. Some pieces focus on the "evil" nature of his target, whereas some deal with a typically proletarian theme, advocating union and resilience in the fight against the existing order. For instance, in "Arms" ["Ude"], the focus is on

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[47] For a further interpretation of this poem, particularly on the poem's significance in relation to contemporary *haiku* centring on war themes, see Higuchi Satoru, *Op.Cit.*, 133-152.

[48] *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu:* 93-94. It has been pointed out by critics that the inspiration for this image came from the caricatures of the German artist George Grosz. Koume Eiji, Notes to *Nihon no shiika* [Japanese poetry], no.25, Chuokoronsha, 1975: 30.

[49] *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 98.

the unyielding will of the "thin" and "wire-like" arms that "grow out from the mud".[50]

At the same time, as we have seen in the above examples, Kitagawa retained a strong concern for the artistic presentation of his poems, and experimented with a variety of poetic methods to present his critical view of history and society most effectively. The application of the "short poem" method allowed the poem to generate plural layers of meanings. One of the core ideas of the "short-poem" movement, according to Kitagawa, was to make an effective use of "blanks" in poetic representation, and this was successfully achieved in "Horse", in which both conceptual and physical blanks were introduced to activate the reader's imagination.[51] Kitagawa's frequent use of metaphors and similes also contributed to highlighting the essential aspect of his message without being overtly political or ideological. In the year that *War* was published, Kitagawa wrote a manifesto for the "new prose poem movement" in *Poetry and Poetics*, no.3. He claimed that the "short-poem movement" functioned as a "test tube" for this new poetic approach, and stressed that poets should regard themselves as "engineers", dedicated to the making of a poetic "construction" through an intellectual process of selecting and assembling words. The main idea behind this approach was to eliminate emotional language from poetry: "Poets today are no longer documenters of the spirit, and their role does not lie in exposing their emotions."[52]

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50 *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 100.

51 There is both a conceptual and physical blank between the title "Horse" and the main line of the poem referring to a "military port". The semantic ambiguity between the verb "intestinise" and its object "military port" can also be regarded as a manifestation of a conceptual blank. Gardner discusses the significance of Kitagawa's idea of "blanks" in relation to the traditional notion of negative space in Japanese aesthetic tradition. See William O. Gardner, "Colonialism and the avant-garde: Kitagawa Fuyuhiko's Manchurian Railway", *Stanford Humanities Review*, vol.7, no.1, "Movements of the Avant-garde", 1999: 18.

52 "A road to new prose poetry" ["Shin sanbunshi eno michi"], *Shi to Shiron*, vol.3, Tokyo: Tojishobo-shinsha, 1985 (a reprinted version of the original journal published from Koseikaku): 258.

I will cite one more poem from *War*, which is a representative example of Kitagawa's "new prose poem", and which is also interesting for the poet's vision of Japanese colonialism. The piece is entitled "Railway of Annihilation" ["Kaimetsu no tetsudo"].

The military state's railway progressed through the frozen desert planting numberless teeth, numberless teeth with sprouted spikes.

Suddenly, a clod of a town emerges, in this gray, frozen desert, where not a single bush grows, not a single bird flies.

Around the caterpillar-like railway construction cars, the constituent elements of the town gather one by one. For instance, prostitutes whose legs are already frozen.

*Variations* constituting the inflexible hierarchy of a train of railway cars.

The railway will only be completed by inflicting pain on human beings. Human arms change shape underneath the railway sleepers. It happens more casually than a rotten leaf separating from a tree.

The completion of the railway is the extinction of the town. Instantly, the flock of human beings scatter away.

The desert returns to desert. Leaving a long scar which reaches the stars.

The military state will soon extend its arm, wearing away this scar.

Towards ruin.[53]

Needless to say, this is a critical vision of the South Manchurian Railway extending northward into the continent. The "town" refers to the moving centres of construction sites where business flourished temporarily between the local Chinese people and the construction workers. We can recall Anzai Fuyue's "The incomplete railway", which also had a reference to these emerging towns, in the line, "the polluted population dragging a town". Anzai also used the image of a crawling "caterpillar" to describe the railway extending into the continent. But compared to Anzai, Kitagawa's description of the railway has a much stronger political message. In his "new prose" style, Kitagawa constructs

[53] A complete English translation of *War* together with some other works of Kitagawa is attached to Gardner, *Op.Cit.*, unpublished MA thesis. I have referred to these translations in preparing my own translation of Kitagawa's poems, making changes where I chose to be more accurate to the original rather than make the translation poetically effective. The original text is in *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 96.

the poem by combining selected images in a non-emotional way, highlighting the forceful progression of the construction enterprise, the seedy atmosphere of the "towns" -- where prostitutes' legs are "already frozen --", and the human sacrifice accompanying the construction of the railway. The "human arms" which stood for the uncompromising will of the proletarian workers in "Arms", are here helplessly "chang[ing] shape" under the railway sleepers. These are the arms of the coolie workers who, as well known, were exploited by the Japanese, and suffered a high death date. "*Variations* constituting the inflexible hierarchy" must be referring to the hierarchical structure pervading through all levels of the enterprise. The word for "variations" written in French pronunciation probably suggests that this kind of hierarchy, and obviously cruel discriminatory treatments toward those at the bottom that accompanied it, were much more pronounced in this foreign land than in "inland" Japan, particularly because there were "variations" among "the constituent elements" of the population. The poem's concluding line, "Towards ruin" bears a prophetic significance, as the Manchurian Incident, which was started by the Japanese Kwantung Army officers setting up an explosion of a section of the South Manchurian Railway to obtain a pretext for advancing through southern Manchuria, occurred in 1931, two years after the poem was published. This incident eventually led to the Asia-Pacific War, and "towards ruin" of Japan and many regions in Asia and its people.

The question to be raised here regards Kitagawa's self-positioning in relation to the Japanese imperial expansion. Even though it is clear from the above reading of the poem that Kitagawa's perspective was unmistakably negative, this does not automatically mean that he was free from a colonialist view in defining his own historical position. One notable feature of the poem is that his description of the people abused and consumed in the process of colonial advancements is distinctly inhuman. They are "constituent elements" who gather and disperse, and those who are crushed and disfigured under the railway sleepers have no voice. The women standing in the streets are characterised by nothing more than "frozen legs". With the disappearance of the town, they also

disappear like "a flock". Gardner argues in his analysis of Kitagawa's relationship with Japanese colonialism that the poem is written from the point of view of those who are overrunning the continent: "the predominant 'ruin' and 'pain to human beings' associated with the railway's expansion is located within the colonizing force itself, and not with those in the subjugated territory, which is devoid of human life.[54] In support of this view, Gardner also notes that Kitagawa's poetic vision of the Manchurian "desert" is congruent with the Japanese myth of the continent, that is, the image promoted by the Japanese government of the land as a vast unpopulated region open for "pioneer" farmers to emigrate, when in reality, Manchuria was a fertile agricultural region with a substantial population of farmers, who were eventually forcefully displaced as the Japanese moved in.[55] It cannot be denied that Kitagawa's inclination to look at Manchuria as a "desert" reinforces the general Japanese view of the time, which contradicted reality. Thus, in this sense, Kitagawa was not entirely free from the influences of the prevalent "Japanese myth". At the same time, it is possible to argue that the stark images of the subjugated people and the machine-like view of the human suffering constitutes a striking indictment of Japanese imperialism. Kitagawa's non-sentimental description of the colonised people does contain ambiguity that allows the reading of the poem in both ways.

Does the apparent detachment from the object of description reflect the poet's implicit compliance with the colonising forces? Or, to the contrary, does his objective, alienating and grotesque language speak of the poet's will to commit himself to act against them? It is true, Kitagawa does not speak for the subjugated. The emphasis, however, is on their silence -- that they are deprived of the voice to speak. In this sense, Kitagawa has succeeded in presenting a powerful image of the cruelties of the

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54 Gardner, *Op.Cit.*, 1999: 19.

55 Gardner, *Ibid.* It is noteworthy that Anzai Fuyue also endorsed this myth in creating his poetic vision of Manchuria. In fact, in Anzai's case, the myth of the continental vastness was so thoroughly applied that his depiction of continental "Asia" was often deprived of a historical reality of any kind, and transplanted into the realm of fantasy.

imperialist expansion and of the pains afflicted on its victims. The objective language of the new prose poetry he advocated proved to be an effective method to convey this message. It is worth noting again that "Railway of annihilation" was written and published before Japan's attack on China. Here we see a rare case in which a poetic message literally served as a prophetic warning for the impending crisis to come.

Allied with Kitagawa's potent description of the victimised, we can also say that Kitagawa's description of the aggressor is often overtly grotesque, and even caricatural at times. In the above poem the predominant image of the aggressive forces is constituted by the mechanical and monstrous "teeth" and "caterpillar". In "The whale", in which the evil of being "gigantic" was stressed, the image of the whale was used to make an explicitly negative reference to the marine forces. We also saw in "War", the opening poem of the collection, the cartoon-like image of a "gigantic head". Another piece in the collection, "Reprimanding the great army" ["Taigun shitta"] is a typically grotesque piece, centring on an image of a corrupted army general misusing the military money on "women" -- "On his hairy ankles, Chinese women are dangling".[56]

Whereas Anzai demonstrated little interest in confronting Japan's colonial reality and allowed the ambiguity of his position to dissolve into the fantastic, Kitagawa strove to observe the reality of colonial expansion and unhesitatingly denounced it, attempting to supersede the prevailing discourse. Even though it is possible to argue that Kitagawa was affected by the colonialist vision in his manner of highlighting the "blankness" of the land, it was the violence of intrusion into the blankness that was stressed in his poems. It was not a blank into which the poet could weave his exotic imagination. Rather, the perceived emptiness of the land, or its apparent voicelessness and its people's lack of power to resist, was actively utilised by Kitagawa to bring to light the reality of colonization in progress.

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[56] *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 95.

While the openly political poems such as "War, "Whale" and "Railway of annihilation" constitute the most prominent feature of Kitagawa's *War*, we can also find in this collection some poems in which the poet's sense of crisis is presented more indirectly, as internalised anguish. A piece entitled "A song of despair" ["Zetsubo no uta"], illustrates in a ghastly manner the pressing atmosphere accompanying the nation's imperialist transformation. It is one of the few poems in the collection centring on the image of "I", posing an existentialist question, "who am I?". It begins in the following way.

I am nursing a man on the cold concrete floor of an empty customs warehouse. Who is this man? I don't know. On top of the man's one leg, my arm is creating a squeaking sound like the sound of a rusty cogwheel. The man's other leg has already fallen off. From morning to midnight, from midnight to morning, I am incessantly rubbing the man's one remaining leg.[57]

Toward the end of the poem, the "corpse-like man" groans: "despair, it is despair, you cannot live unless you despair ---", and the piece finishes with "I" muttering "I don't know, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know", as he questions why he is nursing this half-dead stranger. The intensity of the poem urges the reader to regard the man being nursed and the man nursing him to be the two halves of the "I". The fundamental meaning of the subjective existence of "I" is brought into question, and despite the lack of any political or ideological association in the poem, the piece generates a highly charged psychological space that is connotative of the growing anxiety spreading among both the coloniser and the colonised toward their immediate future. The darkness penetrating the entire poetic landscape has an anguished quality quite different from the stark images in the poems characterised by Kitagawa's openly political gestures.

Kitagawa published three more collections before 1945: *Koori* [Ice] in 1933, *Iyarashii kami*

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[57] *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 110-111.

[The Disgusting God] in 1936 and *Jikkenshitsu* [Experimental Room] in 1941.[58] Notwithstanding the fact that the diverse poetic efforts of individual poets cannot be arbitrarily drawn together from a historical vantage point in order to produce a coherent explanation of a general historical development, it should still be possible to acknowledge a common historical force in operation that urged a number of poets to follow a similar evolutionary pattern. In that sense, the developments we see in Kitagawa's poetic style through these collections leading to his eventual participation in Japan's war effort is suggestive of a certain developmental pattern followed by many poets of the time. While in *Ice*, we can observe distinct traces of the poet's struggle to create a language of resistance, it cannot be denied that the two collections that followed demonstrate signs of the poet's uncertainty in determining his creative stance. After a brief look at *Ice*, I will examine some aspects of change in Kitagawa's poetic language during this period.

Kitagawa joined the Japan Proletarian Writers' Association in 1931. However, the Japanese government was beginning to employ increasingly drastic measures to suppress the proletarian movement from around this time, as the Manchurian Incident markedly changed Japan's social and political climate. *Ice* responds to such a change of climate and is dominated by bleak, despondent images. This collection is also characteristic in that it demonstrates a point where Kitagawa's observing position came closest to the objects being observed. In contrast to the stance taken in "Railway of annihilation" to present in a detached manner the aspects of reality that was overrunning the continent, the poet's vision in this collection is much more focused on the personal gestures and expressions of individual persons who are forced to live through that reality. For instance, "The walking man" ["Aruku hito"] centres around the image of one man, totally exhausted from the heavy

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58 *Experimental Room* is a collection including Kitagawa's representative works from the earliest period up to 1940. In compiling this collection, Kitagawa grouped his poems according to the years they were produced. In the following discussion on this collection, I will be referring to Part One and Part Two of this collection, which include the works written between 1937 and 1940.

burden of his work, dragging his heavy legs and retaining just enough strength so as to stumble on. It is almost nightfall in the port town, the man looks at the glittering horizon in the distance, and "tears ran down his face". In this poem the central figure is an anonymous proletarian. The focus of Kitagawa's vision in this collection shifts from a labourer, to a soldier, to the wife of a farmer who has gone to war, and to the coolies. In place of the grand and inhuman image of the monstrous "teeth" of the extending railway, we see an emaciated soldier of "the sinking army" being forced to march through the foreign land, blown by ruthless, freezing winds, staggering in the mud and tripping over branches of a fallen tree, like "a chicken" ("Burial" ["Maiso"]).[59] In the piece which has the same title as the collection, "Ice" ["Koori"], the poet's eyes are cast on the coolies engaged in the railway building labour. This piece is written in cine-poetic style, and the numbered lines are constructed to produce an impression of a film's sequence. The images combined present a picture of the coolies working in the frozen desert, and the severity of their labour is highlighted by close-up shots of a coolie's hand, "blackened and chapped", and further, with an image of them "wrapped in mountain-dog fur", "bundled together" at night and touching each other's hands, the "cracks" of their fingers sticking out from the torn gloves overlapping one another.[60]

In *Ice* we no longer hear the assertive voice of a poet accusing the evil of the growing militarist power. Whereas *War* embraced a prophetic powerfulness as it comprised a warning against the dark age to come, *Ice* is dominated by a sense of desperation that such darkness has already become a large part of the poet's reality. Compared to the style of representation in *War*, the images in this collection have acquired a remarkably realistic quality, but there is little expression here of the will to

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59 *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 137.

60 *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 147-149. Another piece in the collection entitled "Sweat" ["Ase"] also focuses on the severe labour conditions of the coolies. It is written in the "new prose" style, depicting a scene of the coolies working at the Dalian dock, carrying heavy bags of pulses, staggering and stumbling and injuring themselves, probably fatally: 138.

negate or change the hapless reality that ruthlessly unfolds in front of the observer's eyes.

By the time *The Disgusting God* was published three years later, Kitagawa's poetic language had lost its active critical function to a significant extent. Anti-militarist images are still there, but they infer little more than a poetic gesture to allow the poet to profess his anti-militarist stance. The title poem, "The disgusting god" centres on the image of a monstrous looking military ship which "sits in water ... firm as a rock", and "harbouring a secret".[61] The image of a militaristic venture harbouring a secret reminds us of "Horse". But the rhetoric of ambiguity has been dramatically simplified. Without using the image of a military ship *per se*, Kitagawa introduces a metaphor of an ugly looking creature -- the disgusting god -- and lists its characteristics in plain language. The use of metaphors would have been effective at this time to avoid troubles related to censorship, but a simple combination of metaphoric images to say that the military is bad is saying nothing but that the military is bad.

As if to replace this, a new thematic inclination appears in Kitagawa's poetry, i.e. a focus on the everyday lives of the common people who are living through this dark age with wit and humour. Casual sketches of these people are found in poems such as "Sunshine" ["Hizashi"] and "Roji" ["Alley"]. In the next collection, *Experimental Room*, Kitagawa's poetry reveals yet another new tendency. As an extension of the theme of innocence of the common people uncorrupted by Japan's militaristic adventures, the theme of innocent nature begins to occupy a significant place in Kitagawa's poetic space. A piece entitled "On a warm island" ["Atatakai shima nite"] is an open appraisal of rich and beautiful nature overflowing with life forces. The poem begins: "The trees are full of fruit./ Yellow fruit, red fruit, blue fruit./ How rich it is./ The leaves are thick./ And does not

[61] *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 164.

accept the arrival of winter."[62] As I will discuss in Chapter Five, the theme of innocent nature became the most common theme among Japanese poets across the board in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The manner in which each poet approached this theme demonstrated variations, but the almost sudden emergence of "nature" themes among a large number of poets is clearly related to the emergence of ultranationalism and the diminishing power of the poets to form a critical discourse against the social and cultural trends of their age.

Before concluding our examination of Kitagawa's poetic development and moving on to a broader discussion on some of the essential features of "l'esprit nouveau" poetics, I will briefly touch on two more pieces by Kitagawa written around this time. The piece entitled "The continental snow never ceases" ["Tairiku no yuki wa hihitoshite"] is noteworthy for the very reason that its central theme is ambiguous. The poem revolves around the image of nurses and women volunteer workers helping injured soldiers board a ship to return to "inland" Japan. The piece ends with the image of the wounded soldiers lying inside the ship with their eyes filled with tears as they hear the voices of the women bidding farewell to them. It is possible to include this in an array of the so-called "war poems", heralding the brave deeds of Japanese soldiers who devoted themselves to the nation's war effort. It is also possible to read this as an expression of Kitagawa's anti-militarism, casting light upon the "human" aspect of war and presenting the soldiers as its victims.[63] This ambiguity is most characteristic of Kitagawa's poetic activities around this time. And this, I believe, is related to the interpretation of the central theme of another piece written a year or two before this, entitled "The skating song" ["Suketo no uta"]. It would be misleading to read this simply as a poem about the

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[62] *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*: 268-269.

[63] Strictly speaking, this is not a "war poem" if we abide by the general definition of this term which refers to a particular poetic category. I will discuss this term in Chapter Five.

physical pleasure of skating, which Kitagawa presumably loved, as some critics say.[64] Apart from the fact that the piece can be seen as a typical example of an interest in poetic expressions of body movements which was gaining currency around this time, this piece is worth noting in the present discussion because of the implicit message in the following lines.

The important thing
Is to leave your ego behind
To immerse in an ecstatic state.
Without knowing
To proceed with the music,
Finding your way among others
Go round and round, and keep going round.
(...)
It is the feeling that wells up in yourself after you've surrendered both your body and soul. There is even a sense of regret pervading through it.[65]

If we read these lines in relation to the question of the changing nature of Kitagawa's poetic subjectivity, the lines are almost self-explanatory. Would it be reading too much into the poem to regard this as an expression of the poet's admission of "surrender", and to "proceed with the music" of the time -- that is, to follow the dominating social current with his compatriots and to "keep going round"? Whether or not the poet was conscious of the possibility of such a reading of the above lines is not known. But even if he wasn't, the poem speaks for itself, appealing to the readers with cynicism, or with a sense of regret, that the only way to go is to give up your subjectivity and "immerse in an ecstatic state". The way the poem stresses the movement to repeatedly "go round"

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64 Sakurai Katsumi, *Kitagcwa Fuyuhiko no Sekai* [The world of Kitagawa Fuyuhiko], Tokyo: Hobunkan Shuppan, 1984; Kokai Eiji, Notes to *Nihon no shiika* [Japanese poetry], no.25, Chuokoronsha, 1975: 55.

65 Included in *Gendai nihon shijin zenshu* [Colletion of works of contemporary poets] , vol.8, Tokyo: Sogensha, 1954. This poem was not included in *Kitagawa Fuyuhiko shishu*, edited by the poet himself.

suggests that you cannot go against the current in the opposite direction. Furthermore, the movement of going round does not take you anywhere. The "ecstatic" act of skating on this circular rink has no destination. In 1942 Kitagawa was sent to the Malaya Peninsula as a member of the Japanese Army's press corps, and produced numerous works in collaboration with the nation's total war effort.

It must be asked, however, what would have been a possible means of resistence to the all-pervasive wartime pressures. As we shall see in Part Two with regard to the proletarian poets in general, the external forces either drove them to silence or to death. Kitagawa's trajectory reveals how the environment of the times gradually pressured him to yield to silence, in an indirect way, by scraping off the critical edges of his works and writing poems devoid of messages that reflect the poet's own vision. The works in *Experimental Room* embrace the cry of the poet who was quickly losing his power to speak. The words that were produced do convey a message, reflecting the limitation of what the poet could choose to say. In "On a warm island", the acceptance of the arrival of winter is rejected, indirectly protesting against the political current leading Japan further into war, which was perceived by many as a "natural flow", comparable with the seasonal cycle of nature. "The continental snow never ceases" stressed the human side of the war, which was quickly being suppressed as the ultranationalist discourse began to take over. Finally, in "The skating song" we can hear the desperate cry of the poet, on the verge of admitting the death of his poetry, and the death of himself as a poet, in order to live through the dark times. In these poems, the internal dilemma of Japanese modernism as we saw in the works of the poets of the 1920s is not so prominent. The external political conditions began to overdetermine the internal dilemma, which was progressively suffocated and cut off in the 1930s.

4) Internationalism or solipicism?: "l'esprit nouveau" and its "new territory" uprooted

The foregoing examination of the poetic works of Anzai Fuyue and Kitagawa Fuyuhiko illustrated only two cases within the diverse developments of the "l'esprit nouveau" poetic movement. The poetic evolution of these two poets in the years leading up to Japan's total warfare illustrated two quite different ways in which the "l'esprit nouveau" poetry responded to Japan's rapidly changing social and cultural environment. Although the two poets' vision of the Japanese imperial programme significantly diverged as the years progressed, we have also seen that they shared a number of points in common at the base of their poetic activities, particularly in their self-definition against traditional Japanese culture -- which was related to the "exterior" origin of their poetic career -- and also in their ambiguous self-positioning against "Asia".

Firstly, on the former point, neither of them wrote much about their relationship with the longstanding tradition of "inland" Japanese culture. Even though the "short poem" forms that characterised the style of their early works intimate a certain relationship with the traditional *haiku* poetry, the circumstances that brought about the founding of *A* allowed them to proclaim the birth of new poetry without making a reference to how it stood in relation to Japan's indigenous traditions. The eventual joining of *A* poets in the larger poetic movement of *Poetry and Poetics* strengthened this attitude, as the chief editor, Haruyama Yukio, fervently advocated that with the advent of the new poetic age of the "l'esprit nouveau", the existing traditions of Japanese poetry would be superseded. Haruyama's immediate target was the modern, post-Meiji literary tradition, but his claim of discontinuity with tradition implied a wholesale dismissal of the pre-modern tradition as well.

The question to be raised here is on what foundation these poets were to ground their new aesthetics. As I have repeatedly mentioned, a significant rise in international consciousness among Japanese poets was a crucial factor in pushing the poets toward the inauguration of *Poetry and Poetics*. However, in regard to the basic principles of their own poetic creation, there appeared to be

little coherent understanding shared by the poets involved in the journal. Haruyama's proclamation that Japanese poetry was moving from the age of "ego" to the age of "cubi" offered little in terms of a concrete poetic program. His emphasis on "formalistic" and "intellectual" concerns also required significant substantiation in order for it to be applied in poetic practice. Kitagawa's "short poem" theory and his later "new prose poem" theory can be regarded as a response, but his ideas were not in any way understood as a common aesthetic principle to support the general activity of the group. The only common understanding shared by the poets of *Poetry and Poetics* was that they had broken away from indigenous traditions and were working within an international framework of contemporary poetic movements. In order to sustain it, the poets worked hard to introduce varying contemporary trends from the West and to actively incorporate them in their own poetic practices.

This led the journal to function as an experimental ground for a variety of new aesthetic theories. Surrealism was one of them (Chapter Three). It was Kitagawa who first translated a part of Andre Breton's "Manifeste du Surrealisme" for publication in *Poetry and Poetics*.[66] Before going on to discuss the new aesthetic trends originating from *Poetry and Poetics* and their developments during the period immediately preceding the Asia-Pacific War, I will come back once more to the question related to the presence of "Asia" in Anzai and Kitagawa's poetry and examine this question in relation to this new international consciousness of *Poetry and Poetics*.

We have seen how the "Asian" themes held a central place in the development of both Anzai and Kitagawa's poetic works. Whereas a sense of uncertainty in Anzai's view of Asia and Japanese colonialism soon dissolved as his poetry progressed into the fantastic realm of Asian geography, the

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66 Kitagawa's translation appeared in the fourth (1929) and fifth (1930) issues of *Poetry and Poetics* and was discontinued without any explanation. As Ooka Makoto says, he probably came to see the translation of the manifesto as having little relevance to his poetic activity as his interest had shifted to advocating the "new prose poetry movement". Ooka Makoto, *Chogenjitsu to jojo* [Surrealism and lyricism], Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1965: 24-27.

"Asian" theme in Kitagawa's poetry played a vital role throughout his poetic activities up to 1945 in determining his position against the dominant social, cultural and poltical currents of the time. A point to be considered here is how the two poets' recognition of Asia, despite their differences, was linked to the general international consciousness of the *Poetry and Poetics* group. I mentioned earlier that the international consciousness of this group derived from a strengthened sense that they were working the same ground as their Western counterparts in their endeavours to open up a new realm of aesthetic expression. Strictly speaking, however, their sense of contemporaneity was inseparable from their aspiration to be up-to-date, the implication being that they were in a position of catching up rather than of initiating a movement themselves. Regardless of the speed and efficacy of the Japanese poets' response to contemporary Western movements, the fact remained that the West served as a point of reference for measuring the newness of their activities.

The significance of the "Asian" consciousness of these poets should be examined in regard to this Japan-West consciousness. I will draw once more on Gardner's argument on this question. In his analysis of Kitagawa's relationship to Japanese colonialism, Gardner argues that by locating his poetry in the imaginative space of the Asian continent, Kitagawa was able not only to undertake a critique of Japanese colonialism and militarism but also to "escape from the dualism of Japan and the West".[67] Our earlier examination of Kitagawa's works showed that he had little intention of embracing an "Asian" identity himself and maintained a critical distance from the objects of his poetic themes. It must also be emphasised that his geographical association with Manchuria worked effectively to problematise his "Japanese" identity in a specific way. Just as the idea of "Asia" suggested a vaguely new vision of an expanse of land -- the foreignness of which was felt in a significantly different way to the foreignness felt toward the West -- Manchuria within it was a territory which embodied an ambiguity of a further complex nature because of its colonial association

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[67] William Gardner, *Op.Cit.*, 1999: 19.

with Japan. Having spent his teenage years in Manchuria and beginning his poetic career with *A*, Kitagawa was in a position to assert a certain exteriority to Japanese culture. Yet, Manchuria being a formal part of Japan, he was able to enjoy this exteriority without his Japanese identity being totally threatened. Gardner contends that Kitagawa's willingness to associate his works with Manchuria allowed him to eschew the Japan/West dichotomy, and furthermore, worked succesfully toward giving the poet a "cosmopolitan" or "international" identity.[68]

A similar point can be made about Anzai as well. His pursuit of "Asian" themes allowed Anzai to create an imaginary space distinctly different from the established imaginary space in the Japanese literary tradition and gave his work a kind of newness that suggested a spatial liberation from the constrictions of indigenous practices. At the same time, the "Asian" themes worked well for the poet to evade criticisms of imitation. Considering that the international quality of the works of the poets of *A*, and later of *Poetry and Poetics*, was founded on a largely one-way importation from the West, we can assume that there was a desire on the part of the poets to open up a new territory for their thematic development that would allow them to proclaim originality and obscure the lopsided relationship with their source of inspiration. "Asia" lay before them as an imaginary land sufficiently unknown and vaguely defined, and furthermore, as a new frontier that belonged neither to Japan nor to the West. The fact that both Anzai and Kitagawa stressed the vastness and emptiness of the continental "desert" in their poetic representation of "Asia" is indicative of this tacitly shared mentality

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68 Gardner quotes passages from two critics who have emphasised the "international" or "cosmopolitan" vision of Kitagawa's works. One of them, Yoshida Seiichi, concludes that "among all modern poets, Kitagawa Fuyuhiko is the greatest cosmopolitan". Gardner, *Ibid.*. Another critic, Ando Tsuguo, states that one major feature of Japanese poetry in the early 1930s is the prevalence of the sense of cosmopolitanism, and accompanying it, a sense of being a "deracine". Ando Tsuguo, *Gendaishi no tenkai* [The development of contemporary poetry], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1965: 76-78.

to aspire for a space yet to be cultivated.[69]

A desire to situate oneself outside of the main tradition of Japanese culture is evident in other poets of the time as well. A critic of Japanese modernism, Higuchi Satoru, argues that from the late 1920s many Japanese poets shared an inclination to move out to "the continent" in order to become free from the social and cultural constrictions of "inland" Japan. Together with a discussion on Anzai and Kitagawa, Higuchi cites the examples of other young poets such as Kaneko Mitsuharu and Tominaga Taro, who left Japan to spend some time in Shanghai. The following is Kaneko's words quoted by Higuchi.

> In those days it was not only myself who felt an urge to get out of Japan, but such a sentiment was shared by young people in general. (...) Manchuria and Shanghai were the easiest places to go from Japan, because you didn't even need a passport.[70]

The last part of Kaneko's words is suggestive. Manchuria and Shanghai were chosen by many young Japanese as favourable destinations because of the very ambiguity of their positions. They were far enough for them to escape from the immediate oppression of tradition but not so far that their

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69 On an additional note, it is worth mentioning that Ogata Kamenosuke, whom I discussed in the previous chapter, became a member of *A* from its twenty-fourth issue, and actively contributed his works until the journal was concluded with its thirty-fifth issue. He also did the illustration for its cover page, which was used from its twenty-fifth issue. It is interesting that a poet whose works consistently expressed his will not to belong to a particular place was attracted to *A* at an early stage of his career.

70 Higuchi Satoru, *Op.Cit.*, 1990: 100-102. The citation of Kaneko's words are from Kaneko Mitsuharu, *Dokurohai*. Another poet, Kusano Shinpei should also be mentioned here. Kusano left Japan as early as 1921 to enter a university in Kuang-chou. He went back to Japan in 1925 with the rise of the anti-Japanese movement, but his relationship with China continued. He was in Nanking between 1940 and 1945 as advisor to the advertising section of the Nanking government. Under the political circumstances of the time his vision underwent intricate refractions, but even his wartime poems reveal a certain sense of intimacy toward China.

Japanese identity had to be brought into question. It is worth noting in this context that even the poets who wholly immersed themselves in Westernism expressed little willingness to give up their Japanese identity altogether. For example, Kitasono Katsue, one of the most "international" poets of *Poetry and Poetics*, adhered to his Japanese identity in promoting his internationalism. As John Solt argues, Kitasono never attempted to "transcend his awareness of nationality or hemisphere in favor of a one-world utopianism, despite his constant desire for more communication between poets of different countries."[71]

I will now turn to a more general discussion of the poetic efforts of the contributors to *Poetry and Poetics* with a view to assessing their activities in relation to the broader question of Japanese modernism and its dilemma. Although I have been focusing on the increasing significance of the idea of "Asia" in the creative activities of the poets of the late 1920s and onwards, needless to say, there were poets, too, who expressed little interest in bringing in such "Asian" consciousness in defining their positions in the current context of Japanese modernity. Kitasono Katsue mentioned above was one of them. The works of the chief editor of *Poetry and Poetics*, Haruyama Yukio, also reveal a typical "Westemiser"'s point of view, in that they are dominated by Western images and are full of words in the *katakana* syllabary, commonly used for words directly imported from the West. The "Asian" consciousness did not surface in these poets, although this fact by itself by no means suggests that they were immune to such consciousness. The only difference between them and poets such as Anzai and Kitagawa lay in whether or not the "Asian" theme was utilised in the poet's self-definition process to support a non-traditional, i.e. international identity. There was not a single poet at the time who was unaware of imperial Japan's colonialist aims. As Solt observes of Kitasono's

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71 Solt, John Peter, "Shredding the tapestry of meaning: The poetry and poetics of Kitasono Katue (1902-1978), Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Harvard University, 1989, Ann Arbor, Michigan (U.M.I.Dissertation Services facsimile): 222. In relation to his extensive analysis of Kitasono's correspondence with Ezra Pound, Solt brings to light how Kitasono was always conscious of "representing" his country or hemisphere, as playing a role of "poetry-ambassador" for Japan.

poetic stance, a poet's claim that his interest lay only in "pure poetry" and not in politics is in fact adopting a political position through tacit support of imperialism.[72] Especially when we consider that even these most "international" poets firmly held on to their Japanese identity in strengthening their contact with the West, their evasion of the central political issues supports the view that there was an assumed consent with the general progress of Japanese history.

It is clear, then, that the activities of these enthusiastic Westernisers confronted a major difficulty when the social and political climate of Japan turned against Westernization in favour of promoting a united "Asian" spirit. The establishment's control over freedom of expression began to tighten from the late 1930s, and by 1940 even those poets who claimed a genuinely apolitical stance in their creative activities became a target of the police crackdown, as any expression indicating Western influence was deemed counterproductive to imperialist Japan's goal of establishing a new "Asian" order.[73] I will not go into the details of the radical transformation in the quality and style of the works of some of these poets, as there is little point in doing so without having examined their earlier works that represented their spectacular, and sometimes quite original, emulation of Western models. The point I wish to make is that for many of the poets, whose names became known for their earnest efforts to identify their works with contemporary Western poetry, there was not much leeway left for their activities once the social and politcal climate turned against them. Compared to those poets who incorporated "Asia" into their literary space, the swing of the pendulum from being "international" to becoming "traditional" was evinced in a much more radical and visible manner with a poet like Kitasono, an exemplary Westerniser. In this sense, the poets who pursued "Asian" themes were able to find an escape route, at least to a limited extent. The idea of "Asia" not only worked to

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[72] Solt, *ibid.*, 107.

[73] The gradual tightening of ideological freedom by the Japanese authorities and the predicament of typical "Westernisers" such as Kitasono Katsue is discussed at length by Solt, *Ibid.*, pp.207-243.

problematise the poets' Japanese identity and contribute to giving their works an "international" quality, but also functioned as a cushion against a cultural trend that forcefully pushed "Western" poets to convert to traditionalism.

It must be mentioned in this context that there did exist a group of poets who strove to maintain their Western/international orientation to as late as the early 1940s. These were the poets who gathered around *Shiho* [*Poetic Methodology*] and *Shinryodo* [*New territory*] after the conclusion of *Poetry and Poetics* and its successor *Literature*. *New Territory* was published between 1937 and 1942 and asserted its position as the last vanguard of the "l'esprit nouveau" internationalism in the age of severe social oppression. With the exception of poets such as Haruyama Yukio and Kondo Azuma, who played an active role in the publication of *Poetry and Poetics*, many of the members in this group were comparatively minor poets and thus were relatively free from the surveillance of the so-called "thought police", who were actively in operation to round up social dissidents as well as those writers and poets who were unwilling to contribute to the promotion of the new "Asian" order. The journal lacked the power to influence the social or cultural trend of the time in any way, but the very existence of the journal at this particular period is worth noting. We can also discern in this journal some of the chief aspects -- mainly weaknesses -- of the "l'esprit nouveau" poetics in their extreme form.

In its first issue, a note is attached regarding the naming of the journal. It states: "the name 'new territory' does not mean taking a territory but means that we will open up a new territory, and as such, we do not support nationalism but uphold internationalism".[74] In looking through the journal, however, it becomes clear that this "internationalism" meant hardly anything more than a diligent

[74] *Shinryodo*, no.1, May 1937, "Koki" ["Editor's notes"]: 77.

introduction of contemporary Western poetic trends and their works.[75] The attempt to incorporate new styles, ideas and thoughts into their own poetry is not totally absent, but their works reveal little trace of the poets' effort to confront or challenge the social and cultural reality of contemporary Japan. The creative efforts of the poets were concentrated on formalistic application of the newly introduced trends, making the journal resemble something like a display showcase of new Western works and their applied Japanese versions. In short, there was little ground for the poets of *New Territory* to form anything approaching a direct resistance against the dominating social and cultural environment. In discussing the historical significance of *New Territory*, Ooka Makoto quotes the words of Haruyama in his essay, "The essence of lyrical poetry", which appeared in the journal's first issue. In this essay Haruyama states that the emergence of modernism is related to the poets' ability to "adapt to the environment".[76] As Ooka states, the poet's declaration to adapt to the environment is almost synonymous with saying that the poet has abandoned the will to confront the environment, let alone change it. Admittedly, Haruyama's intention lay in stressing the importance of being up-to-date with the rapidly changing culture and society of the modern world. Haruyama's understanding of the "modern", however, was strikingly vague. With little concern given to the particularity of the Japanese modern situation, and with the focus of interest consistently placed in the new Western trends, Haruyama and his group removed themselves further and further away from the historical

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[75] The names introduced were predominantly British, American and French writers and poets. The names of representative modernist writers and poets as well as active anti-fascist leftist writers frequently appear. They include: W.H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice, Stephen Harold Spender, Malcolm Cowley, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Edmund Wilson, John R. Dos Passos, Paul Nizan, Jean Cocteau, Andre Breton, Henri Michaux, Jean Guehenno, Julien Benda etc.

[76] Ooka Makoto, *Op.Cit.*, 1965: 48-51. Haruyama's original essay appeared in *Shinryodo*, no.1: 5-9. In this essay Haruyama harshly criticises "lyrical poetry" as an outdated genre and advocates an "intellectual" approach to poetry. This line of argument is consistent with the stance Haruyama took during his *Poetry and Poetics* period.

realities of Japan in the late 1930s. They were engaged in history in one strictly limited sense: by focusing on Western poets, the group indirectly refused to comply with prevailing nationalism. In retrospect, *New Territory* stands out as evidence of the last of the efforts of the "l'esprit nouveau" poets to create a tradition-free poetry -- which resulted in a creation of free-floating poetry, overtaken by events, precisely because of their painful intention to "adapt to the environment". We can understand Haruyama's use of the word "environment" to suggest not only the immediate context in which the poets were writing but also the general structure of Japanese modernism, in which the position of the West was firmly secured as the centre of influence.

It was mentioned earlier that an expansion in spatial imagination constituted one of the major features of the "l'esprit nouveau" modernists. This was related to their willingness to situate themselves in relation to the geography of the contemporary world. The naming of *New Territory* suggests that the poets of this journal, too, were inclined to pursue their creative activity in spatial terms as opposed to temporal, historical terms. However, their preoccupation with the idea of being free from historical constrictions and of joining the world stage, ironically, resulted in the production of works that revealed no sense of place but rather attested to the futility of the attempt to invest in formalistic innovations in a historical and political vacuum.

## Part II: Cosmopolitanism and the proletarian rebellion

### 1) The trajectory of the Japanese proletarian movement

It might appear odd to include a discussion on the proletarian literary movement in the present chapter. Generally speaking, the proletarian literary movement stands in opposition to the "l'esprit nouveau" poetic movement in terms of its stance toward politics. Whereas the former strove to create revolutionary poetry, the latter aspired to achieve a poetic revolution. One of the most prominent characteristics of the "l'esprit nouveau" poetics was its indifference to politics, which, as we saw, was coupled with its strong inclination to formal innovations in poetry. In contrast, the proletarian literary movement wanted poetry to function as a tool for promoting its political agenda, therefore, in general, it gave only secondary importance to the aesthetic quality of the poetic products themselves.

Despite these differences, however, these two groups shared one fundamental aspect in common. They both perceived their activities to have an international relevance and positioned their activities in a cross-cultural framework concerning either the dissemination of Marxist ideology to support the realization of a proletarian revolution or the achievement of an aesthetic revolution through innovation in language. It has been widely argued that the introduction of Marxism signified the most radical form of an introduction of otherness into Japan's indigenous culture. As Kurihara Yukio contends, it was through the encounter with the exteriority of Marxism that Japanese society awakened to its modernity. With this newly introduced philosophy which aimed to surpass the modern, a number of Japanese intellectuals strove to develop a theory of modernization as well as various other social theories based on an objective and critical analysis of society.[77]

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[77] Kurihara Yukio (ed), *Haikyo no kanosei: gendai bungaku no tanjo* [The possibility of the ruins: the birth of contemporary literature], Tokyo: Inpakuto Shuppankai, 1997, "Hajimari no mondai" ["The question of beginning"]: 16-19. To illustrate this point, Kurihara points out that many Japanese intellectuals of the time used the term Marxism almost synonymously with the term "social

As a broader discussion on the significance of the role played by Marxism in the making of Japan's modern history is far beyond the scope of this thesis, in the present discussion I will only make a limited reference to the literary proletarian movement. The purpose is to locate the group of poets whose literary tendencies counterbalanced those of the "l'esprit nouveau" poets, and who, at the same time, demonstrated a parallel but opposed stance in the way they envisioned the nature of their activity in the international context of the time. In the poets belonging to both of these groups we can observe a kind of a self-consciousness of being linked to movements outside of Japan, even though their movements per se were by and large domestic and did not transcend national borders apart from individual exchanges between poets.

As we saw in our earlier discussion on the self-positioning process of the "l'esprit nouveau" poets, one notable aspect of their movement was that it was trapped in the structural dilemma of Japanese modernity, which fixed the poets' activities in a derivative position, putting their works constantly under the threat of becoming secondary compared to the works produced in the source cultures. When originality was vehemently pursued and claimed, then the authenticity of the works was questioned, as a visible discrepancy arose between the imported name of a movement and its product in Japanese. Another fundamental factor that threatened the identity of the works of Japanese poets was that they were working in a social and cultural context that diverged significantly from that of the West, which often resulted in their works being criticised as products of formal emulation only. The poets who incorporated an "Asian" theme in their works were able to defend themselves from these weaknesses to a certain extent, as the way they positioned themselves outside indigenous Japanese culture allowed them to eschew some of the basic dilemmas of the Japan-West dichotomy and to assert an "international" working position. Not only were they able to dismiss more easily the particularities of Japan's indigenous culture, but also the derivative nature of their activities in relation

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science", and "objectivity" with "historical materialism".

to the West was supplemented by a newly invented means of symbolically bestowing a central position to Japan in relation to colonial "Asia".

In principle the proletarian poets earnestly strove to confront the reality that surrounded them, and in that sense stood in opposition to the "l'esprit nouveau" poets who willingly divorced themselves from reality. By reality, here I mean the immediate social and political environment of Japan in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. If we expand our understanding of reality in a broader sense, however, both of these groups expressed little interest in the cultural reality of Japan seen in the international context of modernization. As we shall see in the next chapter, there were poets who were profoundly disturbed by the fact that Japan had lost its cultural integrity through its encounter with modernity. For them, further internationalization, synonymous with Westernization, only meant precipitation of Japan's cultural degradation. When compared with this kind of cultural perception, the proximity of vision between the "l'esprit nouveau" poets and the proletarian poets becomes clear. They both regarded the West as a point of reference to measure the success of their movements. Also, in their pursuit of contemporaneity with the West they expressed little interest in problematising the relationship between the state of Japanese modernity and Japan's indigenous social and cultural traditions which had been largely disregarded in the process of modernization. This does not necessarily mean that they were unaffected by these traditions, but their stance toward them remained markedly undeveloped.

As noted earlier, the introduction of Marxism into Japan promoted theorization of society at an unprecedented level. Together with this, various theories directed to explicating the relationship between literature and society flourished, resulting in numerous debates concerning the significance of literary activities in relation to society, the question of how to assess a work's aesthetic value in light of its ideological effectiveness, etc. What is generally referred to as the proletarian literary movement in Japan can be roughly regarded as spanning the years 1921-1937. During this period, the movement underwent a number of different phases, marked by points of sectarian antagonism,

secession, merging, disbanding and dissolution. Although the term in its broadest sense includes the activities of both anarchists and Marxists, most of the major organisational activities were represented by Marxists, as the anarchists defined their oppositional stance against Marxism precisely through their consistent disapproval of sectarian literature. The leading figure in the anarchist movement was the activist of anarcho-syndicalism and philosopher Osugi Sakae, whom I touched on in the previous chapter. With the assassination of Osugi and a series of conversions of anarchists to Marxism which followed his death, anarchism as a movement rapidly declined, giving way to the dominance of Marxism.[78] The following is a brief outline of the evolution of the pre-1945 Marxist movement in Japan.

The organizational Marxist movement was started by the publication of the journal *Tanemaku hito*(The man sowing the seeds) of 1921, dedicated to a passionate support of the Russian Revolution. After a series of theoretical debates provoked by the disbanding and re-structuring of different groups, three major streams emerged, two of which pronounced their rigid adherence to communism --- one with a more theoretical and formulistic inclination than the other ---, and one which represented a social democratic tendency within Marxism. As the Japanese government began to adopt increasingly oppressive measures to suppress all possible sources of Marxist activities, the two pro-communist groups merged in 1928 to organise the "All Japan proletarian artists association", commonly known as *NAPF* [Nippona Artista Proleta Federacio]. The activities of this organization,

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[78] The term "proletarian literature" was being used by Marxists at the time. The original idea was to name their activity "proletarian revolutionary literature", but it was deemed impossible to include the word "revolutionary" in the name, as any kind of publication including this word was actively banned by the authorities unless it was used in a negative sense. See Odagiri Hideo, "Proletarian literature" ["puroretaria bungaku"], *Nihon Kindai Bungaku Daijiten*, vol.4: 451. Odagiri discusses the social and ideological background to the launching of the proletarian literature movement in *Nihon kindai bungaku no shiso to jokyo* [Thought and situation in modern Japanese literature], Odagiri Hideo chosakushu [Writings of Odagiri Hideo], vol.7, Tokyo: Hosei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1971: 288-335.

centring around its journal *Senki* [Battle flag], mark the high point in the brief history of Japan's prewar proletarian literature. The circulation of *Battle Flag* increased from seven thousand at its start in 1928 to twenty-six thousand at its highest in 1930, and despite the repeated banning of the issues by the authorities, managed to publish forty-one issues altogether until the end of 1931.[79] However, as a result of incessant theoretical clashes within the group and the loss of many of its central members --- as one after another the leaders of the movement were arrested by the police --- "NAPF" eventually adopted a policy of following the Bolshevist strategy and ordered all literary activities to centre their aim on instigating and enlightening the general public. Between 1930 and 1931 another journal *NAPF* was published so as to ensure that this policy was actively pursued. At the end of 1931 it was announced that the proletarian literature movement would be dissolved altogether, and replaced by a new organisation *KOPF* [Federacio de Proletaj Kultur Organizoj Japanaj] would be founded, the role of which was to systematically disseminate the Bolshevist ideology not only through literary activities but also through direct engagement in organising social movements in factories and villages. "KOPF" had to struggle from its beginning. All of the issues of its journal were banned, and with the unceasing arrests of its members, the organisation quickly dwindled. Although the ultimate dissolution of the movement did not take place until 1934, the proletarian literary/cultural movement was virtually annihilated after the outbreak of the Japan-China War in 1933.[80]

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[79] The journal was banned eighteen times in total. Every time the authorities ordered prohibition of sale of one of its issues, the members promptly made a revised version to replace it.

[80] Studies on the Japanese proletarian movement have been actively taken up by critics in the post-1945 period, and have produced a wide range of literature. The works by Odagiri Hideo, Yoshimoto Takaaki, Hirano Ken and Kurihara Yukio are widely recognised as representative studies in the field. Major works of proletarian literature are collected in *Nihon puroretaria bungaku taikei* [Japan proletarian literature collection], vols.8,9, Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1964. For this outline of the proletarian literary movement, I have referred mainly to: Odagiri Hideo, Op.Cit., 1971; Odagiri Hideo, *Gendai bungakushi* [Contemporary literary history], vol.2, Tokyo: Shueisha, 1975;

As a poetic movement in particular, an organisation named the "Society of Proletarian poets" ("*puroretaria shijinkai*") was founded in 1930, following the foundation of an association for writers in general called *NALP* in the previous year. It published twelve issues of its journal *Puroretaria shi* [Proletarian poetry] until the beginning of 1932. The activities of this group fell largely under the umbrella of *NAPF*, and its poetic products reflected the perception of literature shared by the central members of *NAPF* at the time. A brief note should also be made on an organisation called "Proletarian science research centre"("*puroretaria kagaku kenkyusho*"), which functioned as a centre for the study of Marxist ideology and culture. It was founded in 1929 and dissolved together with the dissolution of *KOPF* in 1934. This organization, too, was strongly influenced by the policies advocated by *NAPF*. One reason to note this organization is that the changes in the direction of this organization most eloquently describe the evolution in the nature of Japan's proletarian literature. The close relationship between ideological research and literary production had already been evident in the period immediately preceding this, when studies were undertaken by an organization called "Research centre for international culure"("*Kokusai bunka kenkyujo*"). This centre was founded in 1928, and as its name suggests, manifested a strong international inclination. Comparable to the manner in which the poets of *Poetry and Poetics* enthusiastically imported new trends and ideas from the West, the journal of this organization, called *Kokusai Bunka* [International culture], actively introduced different trends and new directions in Marxist studies in the Soviet Union and other nations. The restructuring of the organization and the change of its name to "Proletarian science research centre" occurred as a result of a strengthened consciousness that rather than simply introducing the ideas from abroad, Japan's social and cultural

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"Puroretaria bungaku no tenkai" in Kono Toshiro (et al), *Showa no bungaku* [Showa Literature], Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1990 (first ed.1972), and related headings in *Nihon Kindai Bungaku Daijiten*, vol.4, which includes: Odagiri Hideo, "Puroretaria bungaku" ["Proletarian literature"]:451-454; Kurihara Yukio, "Nappu" ["NAPF"]: 307-308; Kurihara Yukio,"Koppu" ["KOPF"]: 156.

situation should be considered and systematically analysed in order for Marxism to take root in Japan. In this way, attempts were made to incorporate Japan's socio-cultural reality in designing their movement, and the Marxist movement in Japan began to take on certain features of a domestic movement. Issues particularly concerning Japan, for example, "the Chinese problem", were dealt with as well, but this renewed awareness of the particularities of Japan's social and cultural situation did not necessarily lead to an extended examination of the structural tension between Japan and the West, that is, the issues concerning the exteriority of Marxism itself in relation to Japan's indigenous culture. Marxism was pursued as an essentially universal ideology and the problematic of Japan's social and cultural particularities wass examined against exterior models. The international consciousness dominating the proletarian movement was heightened as *NALP* officially joined the "International Alliance of Revolutionary Writers" centred in Moscow in 1929. Some of the products of Japan's proletarian literature such as *Kanikosen* [Crab ship] by Kobayashi Takiji and *Taiyo no nai machi* [City without sun] by Tokunaga Sunao were translated and published in its Moscow review, *International Literature*.

An examination of the actual literary works produced by Japan's proletarian movement and their significance in Japan's literary history would require an extensive study of the individual works. For my purposes, the relevance of the proletarian movement to the overall discussion of Japanese modernism lies in the fact that they constituted a major literary tendency in opposition to the *Poetry and Poetics* group. I have noted earlier how the two groups most clearly diverged from one another in their treatment of "reality" and also how they shared a similar stance in envisioning the significance of their movement in the contemporary international context. We should also draw attention to the chronological correspondence between the two groups. Both *Poetry and Poetics* and *Battle Flag* began their publication in 1928. It was in 1930, when the influence of *Battle Flag* was at its peak, that the split occurred within the *Poetry and Poetics* group, resulting in Kitagawa and four others

moving out of the group to start *Poetry · Reality*. The major reason for the secession lay in Kitagawa's discontent with the strongly formalistic approach taken by the representative members of *Poetry and Poetics*, which he saw as related to their lack of awareness of social reality. Kitagawa joined the proletarian writers' association, *NALP* in 1931. Following this, the *Poetry and Poetics* movement came to an end, and was started again in 1932, when the journal was renamed *Literature*. This movement led on to the publication of *The New Territory* in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. *Battle Flag* ceased its publication in the end of 1931, and also with the conclusion of *Proletarian Poetry* at the beginning of 1932, the proletarian literary movement came to an end, as the policy of bolshevization declared by *NAPF* encouraged writers and poets to give precedence to political aims in all forms of cultural production. The inauguration of *KOPF* was the outcome of this policy.

Although there was an individual case like Kitagawa's where criticism of *Poetry and Poetics* resulted in the poet joining the proletarian movement, generally speaking, there was surprisingly little interaction between the *Poetry and Poetics* group and the proletarian poets' group, let alone theoretical debates. As Hosea Hirata states, perhaps the chasm between them was too wide.[81] The two groups pursued their activities without major mutual interference. One tackled the potential of language to conjure up a new mode of expression that adequately reflected the sensibilities of a modern age and beyond. The other devoted its energies to the pursuit of a universal revolutionary principle, which was to create a new social order in the coming age. Both groups dismissed Japan's existing traditions as being either outdated or belonging to the old order, and in their belief that their activities were unrestricted by Japan's cultural particularities, transferred their interests to the creation of a poetry that bore an international significance, thus transcending the national borders in spirit.

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[81] Hosea Hirata, *The Poetry and Poetics of Nishiwaki Junzaburo: Modernism in Translation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993: 143.s

6) Oguma Hideo: The unyielding voice of the dispossessed

In conclusion, I will present a short discussion on one proletarian poet, Oguma Hideo (1901-1940)s, whose works reveal one of the very last phases of an attempt to resist the imposition of a death-threatening culture brought about by the rise of Japanese militarism. Compared to a widely discussed proletarian poet like Nakano Shigeharu, the attention given to Oguma's works by literary historians has been relatively small. The fact that Oguma produced only a limited number of works is one reason. Also, unlike Nakano, Oguma's works involve little theoretical embrace of the Marxist ideology.[82] His confrontation with the authorities was also not as direct and dramatic as Nakano's case, because as far as his involvement in the proletarian movement was concerned, his position was anything but central. He joined the "Society of Proletarian Poets" in 1931, at a time when the proletarian movement was on the verge of dissipating.[83] Many of his poems were written when Japanese militarism was in full force, but his fringe position allowed him to continue writing. Apart from contributing his poems to whatever place for publication he could, he founded a journal himself called *Shiseishin* [Poetic spirit, 1934-1935] and its renamed version, *Shijin* [The poet, 1936]. As late as 1938 and 1939, he co-founded two more journals, *Enju* [Pagoda tree] and *Gendai bungaku* [Contemporary literature].

It is not only because of his persistence in writing that makes Oguma's name noteworthy in our

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82 An in-depth study on the life and the poetic/ideological evolution of the most central Marxist poet, Nakano Shigeharu, has been undertaken by Miriam Silverberg. See *Changing song: The Marxist Manifestos of Nakano Shigeharu*, Priceton: Princeton University Press, 1987. Its Japanese translation was published as *Nakano Shigeharu to modan marukusushugi*, translated by Rin Shukumi, Rin Shukuki, Samata Hideki, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1998.

83 As noted earlier, the proletarian movement was virtually concluded by the end of 1932. This was the year that more than four hundred intellectuals and poets were arrested and imprisoned. Among them was Nakano Shigeharu.

discussion on Japanese modernist poetry and its relation to history. The thirty-nine years of his life can certainly be described as a succession of unfailing attempts to fight against the adversities of his own upbringing and of Japan's historical development. He was resolute, and never contemplated giving in to the authorities. His determination to voice resistance with whatever sacrifices threw him into utter poverty, which eventually took his life. There is another reason why his poetry attracts our attention, however, and that is Oguma's unique perspective toward the marginalised people of Japan as well as the victims of Japanese imperialism. Also, as a proletarian poet, his was one of the rarer cases in which the literary quality of poetry remained relatively unaffected by the political aim it was to achieve. Japanese proletarian poets in general faced the predicament of having to give up much of their literary interests in their pursuit of creating poetry that had direct political effectiveness. It can be said that this was in fact the first time in Japanese literary history that conscious efforts were made to incorporate political interests in literary works, and writers and poets alike struggled in search of a new methodology for the creation of this new type of literature. As a part of their strategy to produce "the literature of the mass", one of the ideological leaders of *NAPF*, Kurahara Korehito, advocated the application of "proletarian realism".[84] However, with the adoption of *NAPF*'s policy to work according to the Bolshevist line in order to engage the masses more directly, it was declared that a literary work's aesthetic values would only play a subordinate role compared to its principal role of disseminating the Marxist ideology. The result of this policy was a standardization in the creative process of literature, the outcome of which was a production of a large number of works abounding in Marxist tropes and presenting little originality as far as the value of individual works was concerned. Oguma's involvement in the proletarian movement coincided with this period of literary standardization, but Oguma's poetry asserts a uniqueness in that the poet adhered to his "personal"

[84] The fruit of this methodology can be found in the most well-known proletarian novels, including Kobayashi Takiji's *Crab ship* and Tokunaga Sunao's *City without sun* mentioned earlier as well as some of the prose works of Nakano Shigeharu.

stance, refusing to subjugate literature to politics. Although his poems are not entirely free from political tropes, we can hear in them the voice of an individual who was determined to prove himself impervious to the political pressures of the time by compromise or by falling silent. Below, I will present a brief sketch of Oguma's poetic enterprise and highlight the originality of his position in the light of his response to the socio-cultural context of his time.

One major point to be noted about Oguma's background is that he was born in Hokkaido and spent his youth in Hokkaido and Sakhalin. Hokkaido is not only the northernmost main island of Japan but it is a region which was deveoped only after the Meiji Restoration and was treated more or less like one of Japan's colonies even as late as the 1930s and the 1940s. Sakhalin was formerly a Russian territory, and its southern part was annexed to Japan in 1905 following the Russo-Japanese War. Oguma was born in Hokkaido in 1901 and moved to Sakhalin at the age of ten. He lived there for ten years until he moved back to Hokkaido. In Sakhalin Oguma began working at the age of fifteen, taking up a variety of jobs such as squid fisherman, seaweed collector, charcoal burner, farmhand, a labourer in a pulp mill, etc. After moving back to Hokkaido, he found work as a newspaper journalist, which eventually led on to his career as a poet. With his interest in writing and also because of his desire to break from his past life tainted with memories of the antagonistic relationship with his father, he moved to Tokyo in 1928.[85] It was in 1931 that Oguma joined the "Society of proletarian poets". During his lifetime, Oguma published two major collections, *Oguma Hideo shishu* [The poetic works of Oguma Hideo] and *Tobu sori* [The Flying Sled], both in 1935.[86]

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[85] Oguma was born through an illegal marriage, and after the death of his mother at the age of three, he was brought up by his father and stepmother, and for some time by his aunt. Due to a number of factors, including the fact that his name was never registered as his father's son, his relationship with his father's family deteriorated with the years.

[86] For Oguma's biographical details, see Okada Masakatsu, *Oguma Hideo*, Tokyo: Shimizu Shoin, 1991. Also, a brief biographical introduction by David Goodman together with a discussion of the major features of Oguma's works is included in *Long, Long Autumn Nights: Selected Poems*

Oguma's poems amply reflect his affiliation with the regional climate of Hokkaido as well as with the even further marginalised culture of Sakhalin. In a way similar to the poets of *A* in Manchuria, Oguma held a distinct sense of being cut off from the dominant cultural traditions of "inland" Japan. Furthermore, quite exceptionally as a proletarian poet, Oguma presented his vision of Japan's modernity as a state of being caught between its own traditions and the imported civilization of the West. This vision of the Japanese dilemma was born from Oguma's original perspective from Hokkaido. Before introducing Oguma's proletarian poems, I will cite part of one of his earlier works, "Sound of the Sea" ["Shiosai"].

Japan's burden
Is the two waves,
The Pacific Ocean and the Japanese Sea,
Both ebb and flow violently.
(.....)
Sometimes I think
Japan might be magnetic.
European friends,
The migrating birds from your land
Descended in Japan, their only place of rest.
And left me a beautiful feather as a memento.
(.....)
Friends, European friends,
Stop the undeserved praise of Japan.
Please understand that the true substance of Japan's rhythms
Is solemn and sad,

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*of Oguma Hideo, 1901-1940*, translated by David G. Goodman, Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies, no.3, Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1989: 1-21. A collection of essays on Oguma Hideo by his contemporaries and postwar critics is included in Odagiri Hideo and Kijima Hajime (eds), *Oguma Hideo kenkyu* [Studies on Oguma Hideo], Tokyo: Sojusha, 1980.

Like the sound of the sea.[87]

It was in fact quite rare for a Japanese poet to present a critique of Japanese culture as openly and succinctly as this. Here, the poet reveals his emotional affinity with European culture and expresses at the same time the "solemn and sad" state of modern Japan which is squeezed between the "two waves". Although the poet's fondness for his country is suggested, we can also note in this poem a sense of detachment, characterised by the breadth of the vision which locates Japan's position in the larger geographical and cultural perspective of its surrounding "seas". Such a perspective is largely attributable to Oguma's self-positioning on the fringe of Japanese culture and society. The reference to "European friends" is also suggestive of the poet's "international" consciousness, though Oguma's is quite different from the "international" consciousness of the poets of *Poetry and Poetics*. For Oguma the emulation of Western models was not an object of concern. Unburdened by the dominant traditions of Japan and probably by the very notion of Japaneseness, Oguma freely allied himself to his "friends" across national borders. A clear difference in the manner of self-positioning between Oguma and, for example, the poets of *A* working in Manchuria, was that Oguma was indifferent to associating himself with the idea of centrality in any sense of the word, and this is reflected in his vision of the indigenous people not only of the peripheral Japanese land of Hokkaido but also of the people of the lands colonised by Japan.

*The Flying Sled*, subtitled "For the Ainu people", is an epic poem, exceptionally long by the Japanese literary standards, which describes with unsentimental sympathy the plight of the Ainu

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[87] In producing this translation I have referred to David Goodman, *Ibid.* As with previous cases, I have made changes so that the original nuance of the words would be more directly conveyed, which has sometimes negatively affected the aesthetic quality of the translation. Unless noted otherwise, I will be referring to Goodman's translations for other works of Oguma to be cited in the following discussion. The original text is included in *Oguma Hideo zenshu* [Complete works of Oguma Hideo] , Tokyo: Sojusha, 1978, vol.1: 75-76. All the citations of Oguma's work are taken from this collection.

people. The Ainu are the indigenous people of Hokkaido and Sakhalin, who were on the verge of extinction as the Japanese advanced northward, forcefully bringing into the land the language and the cultural values of "inland" Japan. In a similar way, Oguma spoke for the victims of Japanese colonisation. A poem entitled "Changjang ch'uya", which means "long long autumn nights" in Korean, is, as David Goodman states, "the ultimate expression of Oguma's multicultural worldview". As Goodman observes, to title one's poem in Korean and to include Korean vocabulary such as *nop'a*(old woman) and *chonyo*(maiden) in the text was by itself an act of outstanding courage when we consider the social and political climate of Japan in 1935.[88] This is also a long poem over two hundred and fifty lines, centring on the image of an old Korean woman crying out to express her despair as she washes Korea's traditional white costume, which the Koreans were no longer allowed to wear. The devastation of the Koreans living under Japanese rule and being stripped of their cultural identity was never so directly and eloquently expressed by a Japanese poet. I will just quote a few lines from the poem's middle section and the very last lines.

But just as the water flows from deep sources
The sadness of the old women
Springs from deep within.
The old women
In a procession of anguish and rage
Wend their listless way home
The curtain of night, like a heavy sack
Leans over the hearts of the aged.
(.....)
Tok tara, tok tara, tok tara,
They begin to beat the laundry.
Looking at each other
Striving to affirm all that has happened
Their expressions change to painful smiles.
They raise their frail hands
And hit the rocks hard.

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[88] David Goodman, *Ibid.*, "Introduction": 17.

And begin to sing the songs of Korea.
With the mallets they beat the white robes tainted with the colour black.
The beating mallets weep.
The beaten robes weep.
The old women beating are also weeping.
The stones being struck are weeping.
All of Korea is weeping.[89]

Compared to an expression like this, we can see how the anti-colonialist stance of Kitagawa's poetry that we saw at the beginning of this chapter was still encumbered with Japan's colonialist discourse. Although at times Oguma's poetic voice amplifies to the extent that it is taken to the edge of slipping into literary tropes, we can discern in his verses the poet's desire to empathise with the Korean people. He maintains a personal stance in striving to illuminate the inner emotions of those that suffer.

Finally, I shall look at Oguma's works representing his position as a proletarian poet. In these poems we can hear the outcry of a poet who despaired at the darkness of Japan's imperialist and socially oppressive present but who nevertheless desired to believe that the history would eventually revolve, bringing light to the peoples of all nations.[90] The following is the last part of one of the most well-known of Oguma's works, entitled "The whetstone of reality" ["Genjitsu no toishi"].

Reality is a whetstone,

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[89] This poem first appeared in *Shiseishin*, October 1935. *Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.1: 182-196 (cited sections: 192-192, 195-196).

[90] The works reflecting Oguma's proletarian ideals can be found throughout his career, but are most prominently seen in the poems written before the compilation of *The Collected poems of Oguma Hideo*, published in 1935. After the publication of this book and the aforementioned *The Flying Sled*, Oguma wrote a number of love poems and also poems satirising famous names in Japan's dominant literary circles. Toward the end of his career, he wrote a number of poems denouncing the advancement of Japanese militarism and the atrocities of the Japan-China War, using abundant metaphors to avoid the attention of the "thought police".

It only hones the rebel spirit.
In my society
In my situation
In my social class
People wish to live a long life.
But what causes the trouble, you see,
Is free will.
If they cut off my hands, I will write with my feet,
If they cut off my feet, I will write with my mouth,
If they gag my mouth,
Let me sing with the hole in my ass.[91]

The message is direct and requires little explanation. In another piece entitled "Talk up a storm" ["Shaberimakure"], the poet declares himself "happy" for having his tongue.

I don't intend to argue with you,
--- As to whether or not my poems are just so much talk.
I am happy now,
That my tongue moves freely in my mouth!
I know well enough
That silence is a form of cowardice.[92]

This last line is directed to Oguma's fellow proletarian poets who had stopped writing poetry under social pressure. Later in the poem he asserts that he would keep talking "for the sake of the right to talk", and encourages other proletarian poets to do the same. Also in another poem entitled "Let us sing in the rhythm of a march" ["Warera wa maachifuni utae"], the poet accuses others who are reluctant to sing --- who say that the Japanese language is not suited for singing --- and ridicules them as those who would only be pleased if "a hen carrying spring onions on her back / came jumping into

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91 *Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.3: 241-242.

92 *Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.2: 70.

the pot [to be eaten]".[93]

In the age when his comrades were becoming more and more reticent, Oguma made the most of his fringe position and of his poverty and devoted his energies to "talking" from the bottom of the social scale.[94] As the above examples suggest, his poems do not deal much with the theoretical aspects of the proletarian movement. In fact, when references are made to the proletariat and to the proletarian revolution, Oguma tends to use the most common metaphors and expressions in currency by other proletarian poets. For example, the realisation of the proletarian revolution is compared to an eternal sunrise. The poet calls out to the sun, asking it to promise that it will bring about "the event we wait for", and continuing, "Sun / show us our way out, direct us to our way out. / I don't believe that there is a world / where there is only entrance, and no exit" ("To the sun" ["Taiyo e"]).[95] Similarly, the description of a proletariat is found in the image of a labourer "standing next to a blast furnace" and is opposed to the image of "the bourgeoisie in a turkish bath" ("Make your heart catch a cold" ["Kimi no shinzo ni kaze wo hikasero"]).[96] Also, in a piece written for his sister, called "To my sister" ["Ane e"], the poet refers to himself as a proletarian, and says, "I clenched my fist, a labourer's hand / and carefully opening it / I find nothing inside / my hand is only sweating with

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93 *Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.2: 146.

94 There are many episodes relating to Oguma's desperate state of poverty. His earnings from writing poems and essays and drawing satirical illustrations in newspapers were far from sufficient for making a living. His friends recall how he used to ask for a piece of bread, or for local train fare. His wife wrote in her memoir how they moved every few months as they were never able to pay the rent. It always happened that the landowner would plead with them to move out, offering them just enough money for moving. As they could not buy charcoal for cooking rice, his wife used to go out to collect wood. See Oguma Tsuneko, "Oguma Hideo to no saigetsu" ["Years with Oguma Hideo], in Odagiri Hideo and Kijima Hajime (eds), *Oguma Hideo kenkyu.*, *Op.Cit.*, 448-456.

95 *Oguma Hideo Zenshu*, vol.2: 48-50.

96 *Oguma Hideo Zenshu*, vol.2: 128.

hatred".[97]

Ironically, it is when Oguma's verses "run idle", so to speak, without a clear object of reference, that his poems spark with originality. The expression of the will to talk, and to keep talking even when the subject is more than aware that his talking will be in vain would have had the most provocative effect on his readers at the time, and also was, probably, the only sincere way to remain a proletarian. Oguma described his work as "a song of pain": "My song / is a song of pain. / and like the smoke that rises / the moment I place the burning shoe / against your living hoof / my song, too, billows gray" ("The blacksmith's song" ["Teitetsuya no uta"]).[98] He challenged the authorities with his unbending will --- which was the only thing he knew he would never lose.

Silently, my will stands up.
Try to capture it.
My will is there!
Not there, it's here!
No, not here, over there!"
("Singing on horseback" ["Bajo no uta"])[99]

Oguma did evade being killed by the authorities. He continued to write until his death from illness at the age of thirty-nine in 1940.

With regard to Oguma's proletarian poems it should also be noted that his "international" consciousness that I touched on earlier is expressed in the most explicit way. There are frequent references to Lenin. He also wrote a poem in homage to Vladimir Majakovskij called "Singing for Majakovskij's tongue" ["Mayakofusuki no shita ni kawatte"]. He believed that the world is one, that

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[97] *Oguma Hideo Zenshu*, vol.2: 77.

[98] *Oguma Hideo Zenshu*, vol.2: 15.

[99] *Oguma Hideo Zenshu*, vol.2: 16-17.

it is "connected by land / or by the sea", and dreamt of the spiritual union of comrades across national borders.[100] As Oguma says in his own poem, "As a cross-breed of the human kind" ["Jinsei no zasshu toshite"],[101] he was "a cosmopolitan / who drinks Japanese wine and Western wine at the same time." --- and as to which wine made him drunk, "even the doctors don't know". To become a "cosmopolitan" was a popular trend, both among the "l'esprit nouveau" poets and the proletarian poets, and there were many, including Kitagawa, who proclaimed their position to be cosmopolitan. Within the limited ways that were available for Japanese poets at the time, it would not be unfair to say that Oguma was one of the most "cosmopolitan" poets in pre-war Japan. It was this "cosmopolitan" spirit that pushed him to write on his death bed a poem denouncing the terrible reality of the Japan-China War.

As death approached, Oguma was scribbling poems on pieces of paper with his trembling hands. One of them, simply entitled "Sketchbook" ["Gacho"], is a direct accusation of the cruelties of the war. In order to avoid the eyes of the police, the entire poem is filled with metaphoric expressions, but the decoding is quite easily done. The poem starts with the following lines.

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[100] *Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.3: 235-238. Another poem, "A farewell to the representatives" ["Daihyo sobetsu no shi"] is about communist representatives going over to the Soviet Union to meet their comrades. It starts with the following lines.

The world is connected by land,
Or by the sea.
When the wind blows,
I can smell the wheat.
Comrades, you shall go to the Soviet Union! (*Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.3: 227)

There is also a poem [illegible] e Volga River, "For Volga River"["Borugagawa no tameni"], in which he refers to th[illegible] of justice" where "our history flows". *Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.2: 113-116.

[101] *Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.2: 168.

In the plains
A pumpkin fell on a bean curd,
On top of a mud sardine
An egg burst,
The chef made a dish,
But pumpkin jelly
And mud sardine cooked with egg
Is too fishy,
It's not an edible thing.[102]

This is obviously a scene from the battlefields. The lines depict the gruesome image of the human brain being squashed by a hand grenade, and another bomb bursting on top of a "mud sardine", probably an image of a soldier dragging his body in the mud. This scene is followed by "innocent travellers" lying beside the trees on "acid sprinkled sheets" in moonlight, when suddenly, "round caps" come and attack them. Unmistakably, these "round caps" are helmets. And with the attack, "jackets scream", "pairs of pants run about", and "shoes fly high up in the air". The poem concludes with the poet talking to "those who make history / for the sake of a bold goal", saying that they will become "the main figures in a sketchbook" --- "a sketchbook so fearful that the clever children of the future will not dare touch it".

It is probably right to assume that the "round caps" are the Japanese soldiers and the "innocent travellers" are Chinese, but that distinction is not so essential in Oguma's poetry. As Goodman states in his commentary on Oguma's earlier epic poem called "The tumbleweed company" ["Puramubago chutai"], it is the dehumanising experience of war, the devastation, brutality and senselessness of the whole thing that Oguma wished to present. In "The tumbleweed company", both Chinese and Japanese soldiers are nothing more than "dehumanized automatons", as Goodman describes, citing the following lines.

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102 My translation. This piece is not included in Goodman's book. *Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.4: 299-300.

Just then,
A company of Japanese soldiers appeared,
Running from the opposite direction,
At the same rate of speed,
In the same psychological state.
The enemies collided on the crest of a hill.[103]

Desperation in the battlefields has put the soldiers on both sides in "the same psychological state". This epic poem was written around 1935, about four years before Oguma's death. His anti-war stance was never shaken. Compared to the free-flowing rhythm and the vivid, real-life expressions of "The tumbleweed company", the literary quality of "The sketchbook" is threatened by the use of metaphorical expressions which are all too direct. But we can see in this posthumous publication the very final attempt by an indefatigable Japanese poet who devoted his life to resisting the authoritarian powers of his time.

As noted earlier, most of the major proletarian poets and writers who had not ceased their activities were arrested by 1933. One of the most influential of them, Kobayashi Takiji, was tortured to death in prison in February of that year. In June of the same year, a joint statement signed by two of the central members of the Communist Party, Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika, was released by the Japanese government. In this well-publicised statement, Sano and Nabeyama recanted their belief in Marxism and swore allegiance to the emperor. As has been widely discussed, this incident had an enormous effect in putting an end to the proletarian movement of prewar Japan. To quote from Hosea Hirata: "the collapse and the consequent reversal of the resistant spirit among the poets were almost eerie in their completeness. As if there had been no subjectivity, no identity, no belief, no spirit that would define one's existence as a continuous being, every poet began singing

[103] Goodman, *Op.Cit.*, p.14. *Oguma Hideo zenshu*, vol.3: 59.

horrendous war-hymns praising Japan's 'sacred' mission".[104] Following these words, Hirata mentions the name of the "surrealist", Nishiwaki Junzaburo, as one of the few poets that did not fall -- because he fell silent. For an established poet like Nishiwaki, this was most probably the only possible means of resistance, and even this would have required great courage. It was the unexpected fortune of a "minor" poet like Oguma that he could still express his deep-seated dissent against Japan's socio-political reality and openly accuse the authorities throughout the 1930s.

At the end of this chapter, we can observe an interesting reconfiguration of the Japanese poetic scene accompanying the nation's imperialist expansion in the late 1930s. The centre of the poetic scene, represented by the "l'esprit nouveau" movement of *Poetry and Poetics*, became more and more marginalised, overtaken by events and forced into passive resistance and withdrawal. As the successor of *Poetry and Poetics*, *New Territory* struggled to pursue its internationalism, but against the dominant socio-political climate, that internationalism proved to be of little effect, and was criticised, or neglected, as only clinging to form without substance. In contrast, the periphery, with its new vision of "Asia", or with its proletarian vision from below, found a new ground for writing. The poets who moved away from the *Poetry and Poetics* stream were able to widen their horizon and were able to engage themselves more successfully with history.

The discovery of "Asia" in addition to the West led to an acquision of a more complex and original perspective on Japan's place in the world, and gave the poets a sharper sense of the social and political contradictions of Japanese modernism. If the central Westernizers were two-dimensiona l in their internationalist approach, the vision of these peripheral Asianists -- those who situated themselves in relation to "Asia" -- was three-dimensional. It was also such a peripheral vision that opened the possibility for new poetry in adverse circumstances, which was choking and cutting off the modernist movements in the centre, "inland" Japan. By finding a new "Asian" content, they were

[104] Hosea Hirata, *Op.Cit.*, 144-145.

able to carry on modernism through the view from the periphery and were successful in providing a concrete substance for poetic form. At the same time, there were clear limits to their activities. Anzai's case illustrates an internal limit, as he allowed his vision to escape into a fantastic Asia, eventually letting it mingle with a support for imperialism. Kitagawa's trajectory illustrates a case of an external limit, as he faced an objective limit to his activities and could write only of despair and regret. Against this, we see an exceptional case of Oguma in his class consciousness, solidarity with the oppressed, and his radical rejection of nationalism. Kitagawa's case, however, can be seen as a representative case for modernism, for the situation of the poet in dark times.

**Chapter Five:**

**Envisioning and re-visioning history: The modernist "return to Japan" of Ito Shizuo and Miyoshi Tatsuji**

1) The "cultural renaissance" of the 1930s

In the 1930s when the drive for "revolution" either poetic or political was beginning to weaken, we see the emergence of a new group of poets, who no longer sought to produce new, revolutionary poetry, whose chief concern lay rather in reflecting upon the state of Japan's cultural situation and in re-assessing Japan's cultural tradition that had largely been left unexamined in the process of the nation's rapid and all-embracing modernization since the Meiji period. This general tendency to look back critically on the modernization/westernization process with a view to restoring Japan's cultural identity came to be known as the "cultural renaissance" of the 1930s.

A number of those who expressed an active interest in supporting this new cultural trend were former Marxist writers. Hayashi Fusao, who coined the term to be applied to Japan's contemporary situation, was originally an advocate of Marxism and had spent twenty-one months in prison in 1930-31. His ideological "conversion" is said to have occurred around 1932, though it was not until 1936 that his break from Marxism was openly declared.[1] Hayashi's introduction of the term "cultural

[1] The signs of Hayashi's willingness to move away from Marxism and his growing inclination toward romantic writing are found in a piece entitled *Seinen* [*Youth*] produced during his period of imprisonment. The novel depicts the ideals of a young intellectual living through the turbulent years immediately preceding the Meiji Restoration, and is amply suggestive of Hayashi's inclination to "return to Japan". It was not until 1936, in a piece entitled "Giving up proletarianism" [puroretaria sakka haigyo], however, that Hayashi publicly renounced Marxism. For an in-depth analysis and discussion of the evolution of Hayashi's thought and his position in the discursive context of the time, see Kevin M.Doak, *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and the Crisis of Modernity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, Chapter Five, The Production of a Culture of the Same: 107-130.

renaissance" was not initially meant to mark the beginning of a new and all encompassing cultural movement. The term was created as he struggled to present his vision concerning the relationship between art and politics, which conflicted with the vision upheld by *NAPF*. Hayashi was strongly opposed to the stance ultimately chosen by the organization that art should not claim independent value but should be completely subordinated to politics. Arguing against this, Hayashi presented a broader view of literature, claiming that the value of literary practice should be based on its innate quality and not judged by its political and ideological significance. Hayashi's critical view of *NAPF* also led him to question the Japanese proletarian movement's fundamental lack of interest in Japan's indigenous culture, and its willingness to internationalize along Comintern lines to the extent that the issue of culture was given only secondary, if any, importance.

In 1933, Hayashi and six others started a literary journal, *Bungakukai* [Literary world ]. In the editorial note of its first issue, the novelist Kawabata Yasunari wrote, "our age is witnessing the birth of a cultural renaissance".[2] *Literary World* provided the space for former Marxists like Hayashi, together with other writers and intellectuals with a growing sense of crisis in relation to Japan's cultural situation, to work towards re-evaluating and reconstructing Japan's cultual tradition. The term "cultural renaisaance" began to carry a specific weight in the consciousness of these writers and soon spread beyond the boundaries of a particular journal to represent a shared critical sensibility vis-a-vis the cultural situation of contemporary Japan.[3]

In the field of poetry, this new trend in thought was to be reflected in the publication of three major poetic journals: *Kogito* [Cogito], *Shiki* [The four seasons ], and *Nihon Romanha* [The Japan

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[2] *Bungakukai*, vol.1, October, 1933.

[3] The journal successfully attracted a number of major literary figures of the time, having twenty-six members in 1938, and gradually confirmed not only its liberal and anti-Marxist stance but alsoits inclination towards "Japanism". It is well known that *Bungakukai* played the organizing role in the controversial "overcoming of modernity" conference that took place in 1942.

romantic school]. *Cogito* and *Shiki* published their first issues in 1932 and 1933 respectively. Both of them continued to publish regularly until 1944: *Cogito* published 146 issues and *Four Seasons* published 83 issues in all.[4] *The Japan Romantic School*, published 29 issues between 1935 and 1938. Ito Shizuo and Miyoshi Tatsuji, the two poets I will discuss in this chapter, were closely related to these journals. Ito was a member of all three journals and Miyoshi was a founding member of *The Four Seasons* and an official member of *The Japan Romantic School*. Miyoshi also became a member of the above mentioned *Literary World* in 1938.

*Cogito*, named after Descartes' "cogito ergo sum", is known as the first of the poetic journals to have demonstrated a willingness to problematize Japan's cultural situation, openly declaring a willingness to look back on and question the past history and the meaning of Japanese modernity. As will be discussed later, this did not mean that its members seriously longed to make a literal return to the nation's cultural past. Rather, the intention lay in the strengthening of historical awareness, particularly in light of the fact that Japan of the 1930s was experiencing an unprecedented crisis in terms of identifying the foundation of its cultural activities. The members strongly shared the sense of an urgent need to redefine the relationship between Japan's premodern past and its modern present.

In the editorial note of *Cogito*'s first issue, the chief editor Yasuda Yojuro wrote: "We love the classics most profoundly. We love the classics of our country which is not looked back upon. We love the classics as an empty shell. And we love the will to break the empty shell".[5] We can observe at least two points in this rather enigmatic manifesto by Yasuda: a willingness to reappraise the classical tradition which had not been adequately reflected in Japan; and the awareness that these

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[4] *The Four Seasons* was restarted in 1946 and published five more issues. Twenty years after that, it was started again by a few of the central members of the prewar period.

[5] The editor's postscript of *Cogito*, no.1, March, 1932.

classics have become nothing more than an empty shell, that is, mere forms deprived of content. As Kevin Doak has pointed out, it is stated nowhere in this particular note that "the classics" should be understood to refer to the Japanese classical tradition in particular. As the name of the journal itself suggests, the members of *Cogito*, particularly Yasuda, were equipped with a broad knowledge of Western history and culture, and were not only willing to display that knowledge but were also quite ready to utilize it in their attempt to come to an understanding of Japan's cultural problem.[6]

Although relatively few pages were given over to translations, *Cogito* actively introduced, together with the poetic works and essays by its members, works by Western writers. Its inclination toward German romanticism was particularly strong, introducing works by August Wilhelm von Schlegel, Friedrich Leopold Novalis and Friedrich Schelling.[7]

Like *Cogito, The Four Seasons*, too, cannot be discussed separately from the general cultural trend of the early 1930s toward Japan's "cultural renaissance", though it did not express a strongly ideological concern as did *Cogito*. The main editors, Miyoshi Tatsuji, Maruyama Kaoru and Hori

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[6] Kevin Michael Doak, *Op.Cit.*, 1994: xxxii-xxxvii. According to Doak, Yasuda's use of the word "classics" included the Greek and Roman classics, and the belief that the cultural distance separating Japan from the West provided the critical distance necessary for understanding the historical use of Greek and Roman classics in the construction of a modern age. Doak further argues that in order to repossess their own cultural identity, the members of *Cogito* found it necessary to begin with a critique of the classics of Western culture in order to free themselves from the chains of modernity and and its imitations. With regard to the journal's name, Doak argues that the naming of the journal was based on the *Cogito* group's understanding that Descartes' formula of the knowing subject was the epistemological and existential origin of all forms of modern identity, and that the intention of the journal lay in criticizing it for excluding a Japanese identity grounded in native sensibilities.

[7] Also included were essays, prose and poems by writers such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Heinrich Heine, Hans Carossa, Arnold Zweig, Stefan Zweig, Rainer Maria Rilke, Erich Kastner and Georg Simmel. A part of the translation of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* also appeared in *Cogito*. Though the translations from German exceeded those from other languages by far, we can also find such names as Marcel Arland, Gustave Flaubert and Arthur Symons.

Tatsuo were all once members of *Poetry and Poetics* but had moved away from the journal and its group, dissatified with the excessively formalistic tendencies of the "l'esprit nouveau" poetry. With their extensive knowledge of modern Western poetry, they shared a desire to revive the tradition of Japan's lyrical poetry in modern forms.[8] The emphasis was placed on the creation of pure lyrical poetry unaffected by the unsettling changes in the nation's social and political environment. Also, unlike *Cogito* and the earlier mentioned *Literary World*, the fact that most of the chief members of *The Four Seasons* had little contact with the proletarian movement prior to their involvement in the journal contributed to providing an atmosphere of non-political detachment to this journal.[9]

It was around 1940 that the distinctive characteristics of *Cogito* and *The Four Seasons* began to disappear, bringing the two journals extremely close, both in content and in membership. With the rise in the renewed interest in nature as a poetic topic, which I will discuss later, the works published in the two journals began to demonstrate a striking resemblance, and a number of the members of *Cogito*, including Ito Shizuo, joined *The Four Seasons*.

The third of the journals representing the poetic scene during the "cultural renaissance" of the 1930s is *The Japan Romantic School*. Yasuda Yojuro, the acknowledged leader of *Cogito*, together with Kamei Katsuichiro and Nakatani Takao, took the initiative in its publication. Yasuda and Kamei

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8 It is wrong to assume that the intention behind the publication of *The Four Seasons* was a mere return to tradition. The fact that *The Four Seasons* vigorously introduced the works of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century French poets suggests that its editors believed that the revival of the lyrical tradition of their culture could only be possible via a knowledge of modern Western poetry. Among the poets introduced were Charles Baudelaire, Jules Laforgue, and with a particular enthusiasm, Paul Valery.

9 For a discussion on the characteristic nature of *The Four Seasons* in the social and cultural context of the time, see Ooka Makoto, "Showa 10 nendai no jojoshi" ["Lyrical poetry in the Showa second decade of Showa"], in *Chogenjitsu to jojo: showa 10 nendai no shiseishin* [Surrealism and lyricism: the poetic spirit in the second decade of Showa], Tokyo: Shobunsha, 1965: 166-185; Kawano Hitoaki, "Shikiha no jojo" and "Nihon romanha to shiki", in *Shikiha no kiseki* [The trajectory of the Four Seasons group], Kyoto: Shirakawa Shoin, 1978: 1-70.

were former Marxists, and Nakatani had once been writing under the influence of anarchism.[10] Calling in three more members, the journal was founded in 1935, announcing the embarkation on a new romantic project. The famous advertisement for the journal, which appeared in *Cogito* four months before its first publication, claimed that the journal marked "the inauguration of a literary movement for the purpose of negating all the [existing] literary movements", and declared that the journal will uphold "loftiness" as opposed to "vulgarity", "eternity" as opposed to "impermanence", and "the way of truth" as opposed to "submission". It then states that in pursuing this goal, the idea of "irony" as "a servant of truth and sincerity" will be brought in to play an essential role in the realization of this literary project.[11] The chief target of criticism implied here was the naturalist writings of the time, chiefly realist novels, but the intention of the founding members extended to condemning all existing forms of literature and presenting a stage for a new kind of literary practice which would contribute to the creation of a new age of cultural production.

Needless to say, the main issue of culture that led to the inauguration of this movement was Japan's relationship to modernity. The ultimate aim of the romantic project was to confront and overcome modernity in the name of culture. *The Japan Romantic School* eventually took the course to "return to Japan" and quickly lost its critical power with the consolidation of the wartime regime. The ideological questions that have been discussed widely in the post-1945 era regarding the responsibilities of *The Japan Romantic School* in contributing to the creation of Japan's wartime discourse will not be dealt with in depth in this thesis. References to this question will be made

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[10] On the questions of ideological evolutions in Yasuda and Kamei, see Doak, *Op,Cit.*, "Toward an Ironic Praxis: Yasuda Yojuro and the Aesthetics of Totality" and "The ethic of identity: Kamei Katsuichiro and the search for a new project".

[11] Yasuda Yojuro, "Nihon romanha kokoku" ["Advertisement for *The Japan Romantic School*"], *Cogito*, November 1934. The meaning and the significance of "irony" will be discussed later in this chapter.

where relevant in the following discussions on Ito Shizuo and Miyoshi Tatsuji and their relationship to Japan's cultural dilemma and the problem of modernity.

3) Ito Shizuo: A vision of a paralised modernist

A quick look at Ito Shizuo's early poems may make one wonder why this poet was regarded as one of the most representative poets of *Cogito*. There is little indication of his interest in the question of Japan's cultural tradition, let alone a willingness to reappraise the value of classics whether Japanese or Western. His early works are characteristically non-classical and culturally neutral. Even in the works which make references to specific place names in Japan, these names bear little significance in the presentation of the main themes and serve only to suggest the link between the poetic setting and the poet's personal experience. What then is in Ito's early works that caught the attention of *Cogito*'s editors and resulted in Ito's prominence in the poetic scene of the 1930s? And what kind of a transformation did his works undergo as he continued to write and publish through the period of militarism and the war?

Ito Shizuo (1906-1953) was born in a small country town in Kyushu, went to the University of Kyoto and spent the rest of his life as a high school teacher in Osaka. The fact that he did not hold a major administrative or political position either in literary circles or elsewhere and adhered to his place as an "ordinary citizen" has a certain significance in our understanding of the nature of the poet's later works. We shall find that Ito's attachment to the everyday nature of his creative activity acquired a political dimension as the social and cultural environment in which he wrote underwent significant transformations.

Ito published four poetic collections during the forty-six years of his life. The time span between his first and his fourth collections is only twelve years. His first collection was published in 1935,

and the following collections were published in 1940, 1943 and 1947 respectively. Most of the poems in these collections appeared first in one of the earlier discussed journals. The distinctly different nature of the four collections published within his relatively short poetic career has given rise to a number of debates among critics regarding the overall evaluation of his work and his position in the context of modern/modernist Japanese poetry. Whereas his first collection, ***Wagahito ni atauru aika*** [An Elegy to My Beloved], is a collection of elaborately constructed poems with a high-strung tone suggesting the poet's endeavour to create an autonomous universe of poetic language, the themes dealt with in his later works move more and more toward the minute details of everyday life. The lack of a poetic theme often becomes the theme of the poem itself, and the 'emaciated' mental state of the poetic subject is characteristically expressed through the application of the traditional Japanese poetic convention of associating the psychological state of the subject with the images of the surrounding landscape. The evanescent nature of human existence, also widely present in traditional Japanese poetry, becomes a dominant theme in his later works.

The evolution of Ito Shizuo's poetic works cannot be discussed separately from the changes in the social and cultural environment of the time. Like many other poets, Ito, too, started writing under the strong influence of modern Western thought and poetry. Although he is not known to have had any direct contact with the advocates of revolutionary poetry or the poetic revolution, he had come in touch with Marxism at the earliest stage of his poetic career and subscribed to the Marxist journal *Senki* [Battle flag] at one stage. After going through a period of a particular interest in Russian literature, he moved on to read modern French novels in translation, then German prose and poetry. Around 1930 he was reading Thomas Mann, and in 1932 he read for the first time the poetic works of Rainer Maria Rilke and even attempted to translate some poems himself. His attraction to German literature stayed with him for a long time. Particularly important, apart from Rilke, were Erich

Kastner, Friedrich Holderlin and Hermann Hesse.[12] We can observe certain correspondences with German romantic thought in the poems included in *An Elegy to My Beloved*. The traces of his adpotion of *Neue Sachlichkeit* are also evident in some of the pieces in this collection. However, as his career progressed, such direct influences of foreign thought and poetic practices became less evident, and we find, in the themes and the style of his later works, a typical case of a "return to Japan", a shift in orientation toward Japan's native tradition observable among a number of poets and writers in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. It would be too hasty to conclude, however, that this was a mere response to the general cultural trend toward Japan's indigenous culture promoted by the wartime propaganda that rejected the intrusion of Western ideology onto Japanese soil and upheld Japan's renewed "Asian" identity. Despite the fact that the so-called war poems appeared in his third collection, Ito's relationship to the prevailing national ideology, not to mention his vision of the Japanese state, was far more subtle and complex, more a result of the poet's struggle with the representation of the subject than an opportunistic participation in the dominating trend.

It is well-known that when Ito's *An Elegy to My Beloved* came out, Hagiwara Sakutaro, who had just published *The Iceland*, his last poetic collection, in 1934, expressed enthusiastic admiration for this new poet, saying that his "heart skipped with joy and hope" at finding that "there was still a poet in Japan". Hagiwara goes on to say that in Ito's poems "the rhythm is broken and dispersed with every line, the thought is dark and filled with melancholy", that "there is no hope and no goal", that it only yearns for "a ghostly nostalgia", and concludes that his poetry represents the "wounded Romantic School", embodying a "contorted" type of lyricsim.[13] What catches our immediate

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12 On the biographical details of Ito, see Odakane Jiro, *Shijin Ito Shizuo* [The poet Ito Shizuo], Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1971.

13 *Hagiwara Sakutaro zenshu*, vol.10: 75-78. The original essay appeared in *Cogito*, no.44, January 1936.

attention are the expressions "wounded" and "contorted". What elements in Ito's poetry urged Hagiwara to use these expressions, and in exactly what way was it "wounded" or "contorted"? Let us begin by looking at one of the most widely acclaimed poems by the poet, "An elegy to my beloved" ["Wagahito ni atauru aika"], from which the title of the first collection was taken.

The sun is shining beautifully
Or, wishing that the sun will shine beautifully
Holding our hands tightly together
Quietly we walked on
Whatever it is that entices us
Within ourselves
I believe in the purity of being enticed
Even though you are indifferent
The birds sing ceaselessly and everlastingly
The whispering of the grass and trees continues regardless of the passing time
Now we hear
With our determined will
The limitless, vast songs of praise
My beloved
The invention of eyes that cleverly distinguish
The soundless void
That has crept into this shining light
What good will they do?
What else can be done but to climb the deserted mountain
And let the sun, so earnestly longed for
Disperse light over the lake that is nearly dead?[14]

The sun, birds and trees all provide a common setting for a love poem. The second line suggests, however, that the sun is not in fact shining. The following lines present an image of the two lovers walking together in nature where the grass and trees are swaying in the breeze, where the birds are singing endless songs. However, once again , it is revealed that neither the whispering of the plants nor the voice of the birds is actually heard. Even though "I" yearns to hear it with "our determined

[14] The original poems are in *Ito Shizuo zenshu* [Complete works of Ito Shizuo], Kyoto: Jinbun Shoin, 1956: 33-34. All the citations of Ito's work are taken from this collection.

will", this is only a wish, as the function of hearing requires the power of the "will" to listen, and the "beloved" remains silent. Instead of attempting to listen to the "songs of praise", the "beloved" invents "eyes", as opposed to ears, that perceive the "soundless void". Instantly, silence fills the space, usurping all sources of life from the surrounding nature. The void dominates, as if it had been dominating the space from the eternal past. The poem concludes with the image of "I" on a "deserted mountain", looking down at a lake which is faintly reflecting dispersed light on its still surface. It is, precisely, the light of the sun that has never shone.[15]

For a long time critics had read the poem as an expression of Ito's lament over his lost love, on which biographers have collected abundant information. It was Sugimoto Hidetaro who attempted to read the thematic link between the twenty-eight poems constituting this first collection and found that the poems were carefully arranged so as to present a drama of tension between the two "selves" of the poet: one that persists in staying within the realm of everyday life, and the other who is destined to wander in search of his real home. Sugimoto identified the fictitious author of each poem and demonstrated how the crossing of the two perspectives constructs the imaginary space of the twenty-eight poems. According to his analysis, the subject of the above poem is the wandering "I" finding himself paralysed in the stillness of a deserted mountain, as the realist "I" will not join him in his "songs of praise". The sun that has the potential of shining beautifully recedes, and the still lake becomes the only perceivable object of nature: desolate, calm, trapped, and deprived of the potential

[15] For writing this section and the following analysis, I have referred to earlier papers of my own: "A Vision of a Paralysed Modernist: Some Aspects of the Works of Ito Shizuo", *Poetica*, No.35: 86-97; "Ito Shizuo no Shizen: 'Wagahito ni atauru aika' kara 'Haru no yuki'made", in Kawamoto Koji (ed) *Uta to shi no keifu* [The historical development of songs and poetry], Sosho hikaku bungaku [Studies on comparative literature], vol.5, Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1994: 349-380.

ever to be revitalized.[16]

Another poem featuring the wandering "I"'s desperate attempt to continue his journey and its eventual failure to do so is "The freezing valley" ["Kooreru tanima"]. In this poem, the wandering "I" is deep in the mountains, trying to advance forward, but the surrounding nature freezes and rejects his entry as soon as he attempts to go forward.

You, writhing and raising your hands up high
Those distant waves, threatening!
The birds on the trees are shot down
Becoming mysterious
Still weaving endless songs
Melancholically and proudly, quickly freezing
The valley freezes instantly
The fragile summer has echoed away.....
Those crimson flowers
Letting their scent wander about
(So capriciously!)
On those striped patterns on the dark and ghostly floor
Having the feet of a child
This walking is pleasant
The fish that failed to escape, and stuck upside down
Frozen, and the pale
Spines that prick
Are painful! Rather beautiful![17]

The soaring waves in the first two lines are counterposed to the image of snowcapped mountains in the poem immediately preceding this one, "The song of the prairie" ["Koya no uta"], in which the wandering "I" journeys through the mountain region making his "eternal return". We know, therefore, that we are in the depth of the mountains. The entry of the wandering "I" into the valley has instantly killed the birds but their songs are still lingering in the air. The summer flowers have

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16 Sugimoto Hidetaro, *Ito Shizuo*, Kindai Nihon Shijin-sen 18 [Modern Japanese poets series 1], Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1985.

17 *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 24-25.

withered but their scent has not yet completely disappeared. Silence dominates in this poem as well, as the sounds of summer have "echoed away". The valley has frozen so quickly that the fish swimming in the stream are caught, upside down, sticking their tails up in the air. The wandering "I", probably walking bare-footed on this icy floor of the valley, feels the prickly sensation of the spines. It is a "painful" walk, and yet, it is "beautiful", he exclaims.

Common to these two poems is the image of an isolated individual surrounded by unfriendly nature unwilling to accept his entry into it. In "An elegy to my beloved", the untainted, primordial nature exists in the wandering "I"'s imagination, but it is negated by the realist "I"'s disenchanted vision -- the eyes that cleverly distinguish / the soundless void -- just when it seems that the harmonious unification with nature is about to take place. In "The freezing valley", defensive nature fiercely rejects "I"'s entry and freezes as soon as he walks into it. "I" is captured in the deep valley, in this foreign land, surrounded by soaring mountains and threatening waves.

Many of the poems in *An Elegy to My Beloved* deal with the theme of nature. The wandering "I"'s persistent quest appears to be driven by the desire to be one with nature, and this is constantly interrupted by the realist "I"'s refusal to join in the quest. Rather than sharing the romantic aspiration toward nature with his other self, the realist "I" expresses his disillusioned view of nature. For example, in a poem entitled "On a country road" ["Inakamichi nite"], the realist "I" complains that "the sunlight is excessively clear". The bright sun is not an object of innocent admiration but is seen rather as something annoying to this detached observer. In the same piece, he questions himself, "the nature that surrounds me, why is it that I don't recognize it at all?" This alienated self refers to his own heart as "a brass basket" that makes "the simple sound of a toy".[18] This alienated self can no longer sing, together with the other "I", "the vast songs of praise".

As we can see from the above, the aspiration for "nature" in this collection suggests a return to a

[18] *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 28.

state of innocence, where emotions are freed, sensibilities released, where one is no longer disturbed by the rationalizing power of the "eyes". The description of nature in these poems is extremely simple, composed of the most basic elements such as the sun, the fields, the singing birds and the mountains. As many critics have noted, it is an image of nature in its purest form existing only in one's imagination, suggesting no link with immediate experience.[19] This approach to nature is strikingly different to the way nature is presented in Ito's later poems, where an intimate relationship is created between the poetic subject and his surroundings. When an image of the sun is presented, for example, it is presented not as an element of the vast universe but as the sun that bears a specific meaning for the poetic subject, bringing light and warmth into his personal space and constituting a part of the poetic subject's everyday life.[20]

In other words, the image of nature dominating Ito's first collection is of nature as an abstract concept, something that is in principle infinitely distanced from the poetic subject. As Aeba Takao has argued, nature in *An Elegy to My Beloved* is beautiful, pure and inhuman precisely because it is forever unattainable.[21] This explains why the central theme comprising this first collection is the

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[19] See, for example, Kanno Akimasa, "Koya no uta: Shinso no rearizumu" ["'The song of the prairie' and its subconscious realism"], in *Gendaishi Tokuhon: 10: Ito Shizuo* [*Contemporary Poetry Reader 10: Ito Shizuo*], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1983: 125-137; Aeba Takao, "Ito Shizuo no hana to yuki: Hikari to kage no awai" [The flowers and the snow in Ito Shizuo's poetry: Between the light and the shade], in *Gendaishi Tokuhon 10: Ito Shizuo* [*Contemporary Poetry Reader 10: Ito Shizuo*], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1983: 226-235.

[20] For example, "Hyakusen no" ["Hundreds and thousands"](in *Haru no Isogi* [*The haste of spring*], 1943), which I will discuss later, concludes with the line: "I express my thanks to the autumn sun". Similarly, "Yubae" [The evening sunlight](in *Hankyo* [*Echoes*], 1947) begins with the line, "The evening sunlight that reaches my window", *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 106, 116-117.

[21] Aeba Takao, "Ito Shizuo no hana to yuki: Hikari to kage no awai" [The flowers and the snow in Ito Shizuo's poetry: Between the light and the shade], in *Gendaishi Tokuhon 10: Ito Shizuo* [*Contemporary Poetry Reader 10: Ito Shizuo*], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1983: 228.

tension between the two split "selves" of "I": a yearning to attain an ideal state is founded upon the belief that it will never be attained.[22]

This theme of an unattainable dream is symbolically expressed in "The song of the prairie" ["Koya no uta"] placed immediately before "The freezing valley". As I noted earlier, this poem is set in the mountain region where the snowcapped peaks soar high against the sky. Nature does not reject the wandering "I"'s passing through it -- precisely because "I" is dead. The poem begins with the following lines.

On the beautiful day when I die
The peaks of my dreams! Do not
let your pure white snow melt away.[23]

The poem as a whole presents a picture of "I"'s "eternal return home", focusing on the image of a coffin being pulled by a carriage horse through a deep mountain valley. Nature for the first time is amicable to this traveller. It sheds "noble white light" from its snowcapped peaks to bid farewell. "The fruit on the trees" is "shining", and "the spring" is "laughing". Responding to this, "I" exclaims in the last two lines: "My painful dream, you will at last / find a place of rest!"[24] It is a "painful dream" because it has always been known that the act of dreaming was in vain and that the wandering "I"'s search for a real home would prove to be futile.

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22 The word "half" ("*hanshin*" in Japanese) actually appears in the very first poem of the collection, "On a clear day" ["Hareta hi ni"].

23 *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 23.

24 For a detailed analysis of this poem, see my earlier article, Toshiko Kishida, "Ito Shizuo no 'Koya no uta' to Segantini' ["Ito Shizuo's 'Song of the prairie' and Segantini", Hikaku Bungaku Kenkyu [Studies in Comparative Literature], vol.50, October 1986, in which I also show how a painting by Giovanni Segantini entitled "Ritorno al Paese Natio" and Eduard Morike's *Mozart on the Journey to Prague* played a critical role in the making of this poem.

We can see from the above that the quest for nature, equivalent in Ito's work to yearning for an eternal return home, and the realization of its fundamental impossibility constitutes the main theme of *An Elegy to My Beloved*. What then does the eternal return signify, and why is it impossible? In Ito's early works little direct reference is made to the social or cultural conditions of the time. Nature as an object of longing also presents hardly any characteristics of the traditional Japanese landscape. The earnest longing to "return" does not literally signify a return to Japan's traditional past. And yet, it is this very persistence of the theme of an impossible return that made Ito a representative poet of *Cogito*. We should recall that Hagiwara Sakutaro was concluding his poetic career around this time with the publication of *The Iceland*, which also dealt with the loss of a place of return. It is thus no wonder that Ito's evocations of a search for the unattainable had such an appeal to this old poet in despair.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Hagiwara, after seeking throughout his career through the use of colloquial Japanese to establish a modern poetic language, resorted to the stilted use of Chinese words and characters in his last poetic collection to express his grave sense of alienation. For Ito, the choice was not between the use of the modern colloquial language or the traditional Chinese words and characters. He used the modern style, but in an extremely awkward and unnatural way, to the extent that many critics dismissed his work as being simply unintelligible or grammatically distorted. Though it is hard to render in translation the essential features of Ito's poetic style, it should be clear even from the two examples cited above, how the subject and the verb are often separated by a number of inserted phrases, making it difficult for the reader to identify the subject of each verb and to work out the logical and syntactical links.

This artificially distorted language characterizes Ito's early works and is amply suggestive of Ito's predicament in creating modern poetic verses to express his sceptical vision of modernity. Relating Ito to Hagiwara once again, it is also symbolic how Ito in "An Elegy to My Beloved" describes his

sense of being forever cut off from the innocent past, i.e. nature in its intact state, by accusing the invention of "the eyes". It was Hagiwara who in one of his earliest works, "The Reason Why the Person Inside Looks Deformed", linked the intrusion of modernity into Japan's poetic tradition to the invention of "the eyes" that objectified the exterior and alienated the "seeing" subject.[25] The functioning of the "eyes" distanced the subject from the object being "seen", thus creating an estranged landscape.

One last point to be made about Ito's early works concerns the overlapping of this alienation with the poet's sense of alienation from his own hometown and his disbelief in the possibility of a truly harmonious human community even in the remote past. Dominant in the works focusing on the vision of the realist "I" in *An Elegy to My Beloved* is the theme of contempt for the idea of an ideal human community, even before the advent of modernization. In "Homecoming" ["Kikyosha"], "I" claims that there has never been a time when "people lived beautifully" and that the whole notion of "a beautiful hometown" is itself nothing but "vain homework"[26]. Similarly, in the poem "Rather, they sing the songs of my present day" ["Mushiro karera ga watashi no kyo no hi wo utau"], "I" insists that he will never sing the songs of "the brief bright days" of the past, as such an idea is nothing but an illusion of the present.[27]

Hence, we can observe a kind of a double-folded irony in Ito's early works. On the one hand is the theme of a quest for a place of an eternal return which is destined to fail. On the other hand, persistent references are made to the fact that this yearning for a "return" is itself only an illusion which should be quickly abandoned. In fact, in the very first poem, "On a Sunny Day" ["Hareta hi

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[25] See Chapter Two.

[26] *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 30-31.

[27] *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 49-50.

ni"], the thematic structure of the whole collection is already prefigured. This poem, dominated by the voice of the realist "I", unveils the implicit conspiracy between the two "selves" of the poetic subject. Calling the attention of the wandering "I", the realist "I" speaks: "My wandering half-self, my beloved / I must tell you / not everyone is allowed to live / in a place where he desires to live". Then further on in the poem, the realist "I" speaks again, in response to a letter about "the homeland" the wandering "I" claims to have seen: "in order to be loved, you have been ordered".[28] In retrospect the reader can see that the wandering half-self has been "ordered" by his other half to continuously wander in search of a home, knowing from the very beginning that it is a futile attempt. The ordering "I" confesses that he, too, is aware that his other "half" is unwilling to go: "I can guess precisely / what it is / you, the ordered one, my wandering half / that you so earnestly refuse to believe in". This very complex piece, having long been criticized by many critics as an exemplary case of Ito having gone too far to test the limits of syntactic communicability, ultimately resulting in a mere breakdown of meaning, blends in between the main messages by the realist "I" a number of negative images of "home": as a place where even the "I"'s mother was "compelled to return"; a place where it is "hard to walk barefooted"; and where one can only plant "mutant apple trees" that can only "bear pale fruit". For example, Ooka Makoto has said that in this poem the poetic intention to produce meaning through implication or abbreviation has gone so far that it does not only urge the reader to work out the deeper structure of meaning but also causes a grave sense of irritation and frustration on the part of the reader as the syntactic interruptions are often left unretrieved. Although Ooka does not totally deny the significance of Ito's attempt, he sees in Ito's early works a conscious will to thwart the production of meaning.[29]

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28 *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 21-22.

29 Ooka Makoto, "Jojo no yukue: Ito Shizuo to Miyoshi Tatsuji" ["In search of lyrical poetry: Ito Shizuo and Miyoshi Tatsuji" in *Gendaishi Tokuhon 10: Ito Shizuo* [*Contemporary Poetry Reader: 10 Ito Shizuo*], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1983: 148-159. As opposed to such a view, Sugimoto

Once we familiarize ourselves with the central thematic structure of *An Elegy to My Beloved*, it becomes relatively easy to read the individual poems. For example, we can immediately see the poetic intention of "I am compelled" ["Watashi wa shiirareru"], which starts with the following lines:

I am compelled, to make wander
My ex-beloved
The fields, the clouds and the forests
That my eyes behold[30]

This is clearly another variation expressing the relationship between the two "selves" of the "I". We should note the persistent use of the passive voice and causative verbs, also seen in the poems cited earlier and typically shown in the unusual title of this piece. It reveals that the realist "I" has no choice but to "order", and that the wandering "I" is "made" to "wander" regardless of his will. Another typical use of a causative verb is seen in the first few lines of the piece entitled "At a cold place" ["Tsumetai basho de"].

Whom I love
And who gives me a hard time because of it
Do make him believe
In the place beyond the unknown fields

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Hidetaro argues that the poem's intricately woven lines do present a logical consistency and that the apparent syntactic interruptions are carefully retrieved in the later lines, perfecting the semantic structure of the text. See Sugimoto Hidetaro, *Ito Shizuo*, Kindai Nihon Shijin-sen 18 (Modern Japanese poets series 18), Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1985: 15-28. Kevin Doak follows Sugimoto's view and elaborates further on the problematic conception of the modern subject as expressed in Ito's works. I have referred to Doak's translation of Ito's poems quoted in his book, and made changes where I thought it more appropriate for the purpose of this thesis to present a literal translation rather than considering the literary quality of the translated poem. See "Return to Parnassus" in Doak, *Op.Cit.*, 50-77.

30 *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 24.

Where the sun will bring happiness[31]

Once again presented in the voice of the realist "I", this piece offers itself like a kind of a prayer, imploring to someone of a higher order that "whom I love" be "made to believe" in the world "beyond the unknown fields". The last half of the poem which I cite below reveals that the pleading "I" is desperately trapped, unable to move, and only able to ask for "a flower of pure white" to "be bloomed" on the "rough, cold rock" where he stands, alone. Here are the last six lines:

And
Let a flower of pure white be bloomed for my repose
My old person has unbearably
Walked too far in his song of a hometown
Let it be, only in this place
Of rough, cold rock.

It is possible to read in this piece that the wandering "I" has gone so far that his realist "half" can no longer witness his actions and directly "order". The main motif here is the realist "I"'s sense of being left behind, his ultimate renunciation of the faraway "home" and the readiness to perform his self-burial by asking "a flower of pure white" -- a clear image of death -- to commemorate his "repose".

This poem, "At a cold place", holds a symbolic place in the development of Ito's poetry after *An Elegy to My Beloved*. Compared to the first collection, the poems in his second collection, *Natsubana* [Summer Flowers], published in 1940, are much simpler in style and thematic composition. The technique of deliberately distorting the standard syntax that characterized the works in the previous collection is applied only sparingly, allowing the reader to grasp the semantic structure of each poem relatively easily. *Summer Flowers* includes a poem entitled "Clinging to an August rock" ["Hachigatsu no ishi ni sugatte"], which contains an image that suggests a thematic

[31] *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 32.

development from "At a cold place". The first two stanzas of the fifteen-line poem read as follows:

Clinging on to an August rock
The butterfly blessed with happiness, this instant, ceases to live.
Once I have come to acknowledge my fate,
How can anyone live
In this violent summer's sun?

Fate? Yes, it is,
Ah, we are a luminous body of solitude!
It is, the white world of the exterior.[32]

What is the central message of this poem? We notice immediately that the image of the rock is carried over from "At a cold place", and here, we are to witness the very event of the death of the poetic subject. Using the image of a butterfly dying in the summer's heat, the poem expresses how the subject, which had earlier been presented as the realist "I" clinging on to his place in the "real" world with the hope of his other "half" continuing his search for home, gives up his will to "be". This realist "I" represents nothing other than the modern subject who identifies his position by objectifying the exterior, thereby creating a decisive distance between himself and the external world. Nature, that repeatedly appeared in *An Elegy to My Beloved* as the object of longing, can be interpreted in this context as the eternally distanced exterior with which one can no longer become one with, and the wandering "half" of the "I" can be seen as an expression of the desire to return to the state before the invention of the modern "eyes".

"At a cold place" had suggested the uncertainty of the modern subject in retaining such a desire. In "Clinging on to the August rock" we no longer find the tension between the two "halves" of the divided "I". In fact, it seems, the dying of the desire to "return" also means the death of the will to

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32 *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 63.

uphold his subjectivity as a modern individual, deprived of an organic relationship with the past. In "Clinging on to the August rock" the dying subject turns into "a luminous body of solitude", radiating its glow in its last attempt to "be", but in vain, as the following line declares that nothing is left but "the white world of the exterior". The realist "I" has vanished, together with its other "half", and so has its source of identity, the otherness of the modern landscape. As if to confirm this message of the dying subject, the poem concludes with an image of a wolf dying of starvation and collapsing in the snowfields, his eyes gradually losing their light and turning blue.

"Clinging on to the August Rock" can be read as a proclamation of the drastic change that took place in Ito's approach to poetry around this time. In other poems in *Summer Flowers* we find how the breakdown of the high-strung relationship between the two "halves" of the modern subject and the eventual renunciation of the modern subject to adhere to its precarious place have resulted in the ushering in of a poetic space of an entirely new kind. Firstly, the setting of many of the poems acquires a strongly personal overtone. The poetic subject is no longer the idealistic "I", split between the two conflicting desires, but a figure that largely overlaps with the poet himself. The scenes unfolded in the poems are often those reflecting certain moments of the poet's everyday life. The elements of nature such as the sun and the flowers frequently appear in this collection as well, but they are no longer the abstract notions of the sun as the source of eternal light, or of the flowers as the symbol of beauty with their bright "crimson" hue and a pleasant "scent" ("The freezing valley"). In this collection the sun brings light into the poet's study or shines on the plants in his garden. In most of the poems we can tell the time of day of the poem's setting and the quality of light that dominates the poetic scene.[33] The more gentle light of the morning or the evening sun, or even the dim light of

[33] Though the bright hot sun does appear in some of the poems, it is represented in quite a different context and with an entirely different implication to that of *An Elegy to My Beloved*, as in *Summer Flowers* the strong sunlight is not an object of desire but a threat to one's existence. Let us recall that in "Clinging on to the August Rock" the "violent summer's sun" brought death to the butterfly, and the poetic subject "I".

the moon, or the faint green light of a distant lighthouse constitute the major tone of the collection. The central time in "The water flower" ["Suichuka"] is "the time when all of nature glows with is own light / in the time between night and day in the month of June"[34] Similarly, "Viewing the lighthouse" ["Todai no hikari wo mitsutsu"] begins with the following lines: "Reflecting on the dark sea waters, the green light of the lighthouse / How gentle it is / Flickering and turning / All throughout the night / Wanders through my night"[35]. Unlike the aggressive, penetrating sunlight of midday in *An Elegy to My Beloved*, in *Summer Flowers*, both the clear morning light "between night and day" and the faint green light of a faraway lighthouse gently envelop the poetic subject and allow him to calmly view the surrounding scenes.

Related to this, another feature of the works in *Summer Flowers* that reflects a turn in Ito's attitude to poetry is the intimate relationship between the poetic subject and the surrounding landscape. After the declaration of the death of the "I", nature loses its menacing power and gradually becomes integrated with the poetic subject's everyday life. We should note that the "night" in "Viewing the lighthouse" is referred to as "my night". The poetic subject is finding himself as a part of nature, living with the flow of time together with the surrounding landscape that presents its varying faces in the cycle of day and night.

These features of *Summer Flowers* are taken further in Ito's third collection, *Haru no Isogi* [The haste of spring], published in 1943, and his last collection, *Hankyo* [*Resonance*], published after the war in 1947. Nature becomes thoroughly integrated with the poet's everyday life, or rather, it becomes the extension of the poet's self, reflecting in its myriad expressions his varied emotions. Let us look at one example of how the poetic subject sees himself reflected in the transient faces of

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[34] *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 64.

[35] *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 67-68.

nature. The title of the poem is "Hundreds and thousands" ["Hyakusen no"].

Hundreds and thousands of leaves turning red
The trembling harp of the fields resounding

The sadness
Gradually ripening
Is like a sour fruit
Being distilled with sweetness
In sunlight

I express my gratitude to the autumn sun[36]

It is no coincidence that "the autumn sun" was chosen for "I" to express his gratitude. Traditionally, the autumn season has been regarded as the time of sadness, when one becomes most sensitive to the changing natural landscape, as the varying features of autumn remind humans of the ephemeral nature of their existence. According to Japan's poetic tradition, the autumn light is always frail, the autumn air is crisp and clear, and the cool autumn breeze arouses in one's heart a penetrating sense of melancholy.[37] The poet here is no doubt assuming that the readers will associate the images presented in this poem with the traditionally accepted images of the season and read in the lines a

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36 *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 106.

37 For a detailed and systematic analysis of how culturally specific images related to various seasonal landscapes were nurtured in Japan's poetic tradition and the profound influence these conventional patterns in viewing nature have had on the Japanese sensibility, see Kawamoto Koji, Chapter One, "Aki no yugure" ["The autumn evening"] in *Nihon shiika no dento: shichi to go no shigaku* [The tradition of Japanese poetry: the poetics of seven and five syllables], Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1991 (translated as *The Poetics of Japanese Verse*, Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 2000). Centering his discussion on how "the autumn evening" came to be systematically linked with the sense of melancholy, Kawamoto argues how a thorough network of connotations related to seasonal changes was established through the successive publications of the imperial poetic collections between the 10th and 13th centuries. Although the image of the sun does not frequently appear in traditional Japanese poetry, the emphasis on the coolness of the autumn air and the dimness of the autumn evening assumes the sunlight to be frail and gentle, deprived of any associations with aggressiveness.

specific kind of sadness nurtured in the centuries-old pre-modern tradition of Japanese *tanka* poetry.

Also characteristic in this poem is the way the poetic subject sees his own emotional state reflected in a fragment of the natural landscape. The imagery is focused on a single fruit hanging from a branch and gradually ripening in the gentle autumn sun, which the poetic subject associates with the deepening of his sadness. This sadness is combined with a sense of renunciation and the willingness to accept one's fate, as this process of "ripening" is described also as a process of sourness turning into sweetness. The fruit will eventually drop to the ground, but it seems the poet is willing to let it drop, rather than allow it to resist the flow of nature. That the poetic subject feels his existence in perfect harmony with nature is well shown in the last line where he expresses his "gratitude".

The sense of renunciation as expressed in the above poem is repeatedly disclosed in the poems in *The Haste of Spring*. In "The end of summer" ["Natsu no owari"] the poetic subject speaks in a plain voice about how he has given up any attempt to confront and fight the reality of his time and environment. The following is the last stanza of the poem.

Similarly, I was sitting with vacant thoughts
It wasn't exactly that I was tired
Facing the sea, there was no other way but to simply let my heart be as it was
What this meant did not matter to me anymore
Only, something grand was quietly on its way to decline
And the sand occasionally blowing in the wind was hurting my legs[38]

Reading this piece against the context of the time of its publication, it is clear that this sense of decline is closely related to the social and political circumstances of the day. It was in fact in this third collection that Ito's so-called "war poems" were included. Before moving on to discuss the problematic relationship between Ito's poetry and the war, however, I will briefly touch on another major thematic feature of *The Haste of Spring*.

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38 *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 108-109.

The seasonal settings of the two examples shown above were autumn and the end of summer. *The Haste of Spring* is characterized by Ito's persistent evocation of the theme on the fleeting time, the transience and frailty of human existence and the constant change of the natural landscape.[39]

A well-known piece entitled "The spring snow" ["Haru no yuki"] focuses on the exquisite lightness of spring snow, hardly staying on the tree branches or on the wings of little birds sleeping in the trees.[40] The birds have not yet started singing, and a serene silence fills the entire scene. Contrasted to the whiteness of the snow is the assumed blackness of a large tombstone of an emperor of ancient times.[41] This nine-line poem starts with the following lines:

Spring snow falling on the imperial tombstone
Seemingly vanishing as soon as it lands
On the branches of the glittering trees with no leaves[42]

The images of the snow and the tombstone not only present a stark contrast in colour but also are

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[39] The images that distinctly suggest these themes are carefully chosen. For example: the flowers that wither in no time such as the morning glory and the evening glory; the insects with connotations of short-lived nature such as the cicadas and fireflies; the time of day that reminds one that all things are impermanent, particularly the dusk; and in regard to season, references to spring and autumn as opposed to summer and winter dominate this collection.

[40] The novelist Mishima Yukio's *Spring Snow*, the first volume of the tetralogy written just before his death, took its title from this poem.

[41] Biographers of Ito Shizuo have indicated that Ito's house in Osaka was located near the tomb of a fifth century emperor, Hanzei Tenno, as we know from the legendary/historical writings of the early eighth century. See, for example, Odakane Jiro, *Shijin Ito Shizuo* [The poet Ito Shizuo], Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1971; Miyake Takeji, *Ito Shizuo: Sono jinsei to shi* [Ito Shizuo: His life and poetry], Tokyo: Kashinsha, 1982; Ihara Tetsuo, "The poetry of Ito Shizuo: Between light and darkness", in *Nihon Kindai Bungakuron*, Tokyo: Chuo Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1989.

[42] *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 90-91. Though not shown in the translation, the rhythm of this poem follows the traditional five and seven syllabic structure.

effectively juxtaposed to emphasize the evanesence of the present as opposed to the seemingly eternal history of the imperial system. The silence of the delicate, etheral snow, turning into transparent dew without leaving a trace of its colour or shape, is absorbed into the silence of the tomb that has borne the weight of history through the centuries.[43]

We notice how far Ito has come from the time he wrote *An Elegy to My Beloved* when he was struggling to establish his modern subjectivity through the image of a willful self confronting nature. We observe in these later works how thoroughly such a modern self has vanished. It must be said, however, that Ito demonstrated a remarkable consistency in the way he allowed his poems to evolve. Admitting the drastic nature of change that occurred between his first and second and third collections, I am nevertheless convinced that Ito's fundamental attitude toward writing remained the same throughout his career. It is attributable to his faithfulness to the sensibilities of his time and the persistence he demonstrated in his struggle to define the place for the self vis-a-vis the changing environment.

Such "faithfulness" has been related critically by some critics to the change of tone in Ito's poetry during the years of militarism.[44] The "faithfulness" could easily be interpreted as being synonymous

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[43] That the recognition of the contrast between the tombstone and the snow was the central idea in the composition of this poem can be seen in Ito's diary written at the time in which he states: "Spring snow falling on the imperial tombstone. I am struggling to work out how I should write the verses to follow". See "Diary, January 1942" in *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 265. A more detailed analysis of this poem is in Toshiko Ellis, "Ito Shizuo no Shizen: 'Wagahito ni atauru aika' kara 'Haru no yuki'made", in Kawamoto Koji (ed) *Uta to shi no keifu* [The historical development of songs and poetry], Sosho hikaku bungaku [Studies on comparative literature], vol.5, Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1994: 349-380.

[44] See for example, Matsumoto Ken'ichi, "Ito Shizuo to Yasuda Yojuro: Ironi kara shizen e" ["Ito Shizuo and Yasuda Yojuro: From irony to nature"], Sugaya Kikuo, "Utsukushii shi no shijin" ["A poet of beautiful poems"], "Ito Shizuo no sensoki" ["Ito Shizuo's war years"] , in *Gendaishi Tokuhon 10: Ito Shizuo* [*Contemporary Poetry Reader: 10 Ito Shizuo*], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1983: 53-61; 62-70; 71-79.

with a kind of opportunism, simply allowing oneself to flow with the current of the times. As I noted earlier, Ito did write poems which fall without ambivalence into the category of the so-called "war poetry".[45] These poems were included in *The Haste of Spring*. Seven particular poems are generally regarded as Ito's typical war poems, as they openly endorse Japanese militarism and present the unfolding war as a "holy war" led by the grand emperor/God.[46]

Ito himself was reluctant to include these "war poems" in the postwar publication of his selected poems.[47] Rather than looking in detail at the content of these controversial poems, I believe it is more important to examine why Ito felt urged to write these poems and did write them with such little

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[45] The general use of the term "war poetry" ["sensoshi"] to refer to all poetic works written for the purpose of endorsing Japanese militarism is a post-1945 phenomenon. In the 1940s these works were more commonly referred to as "patriotic poetry" ["aikokushi"], and only those that were written at the battlefield or were written based on the experience at the battlefield were called "war poetry". The derogatory use of the term "war poetry" prevailed immediately after Japan's defeat and is now commonly applied to all the works written between 1937 and 1945 that contain a strong element expressing the support for what was then called "The Great East Asian War". For an extensive analysis of these poems and a discussion on the problematic nature of the concept itself, see Imamura Fuyuzo, *Gen'eikai daitoasenso: senso ni mukiawasareta shijintachi* [Dissolving the illusion: the poets who had to confront the war], Fukuoka: Ashi Shobo, 1989; Sakuramoto Tomio, *Kuhaku to sekinin: senjika no shijintachi* [The blankness and responsibility: poets during the war years], Tokyo: Miraisha, 1983.

[46] Imamura, *Ibid.*, 59-60. Imamura has classified these war poems into three categories, which are: 1) those which express a determined will to follow the imperial order; 2) those which regard the "Great East Asia War" as a revival of the mythical ages of Japanese Gods; 3) those which regard the war as a "holy war" guided by the emperor/god's sacred will.

[47] See Isoda Koichi, Kawamura Jiro, Fujii Sadakazu's discussion, "Kyozetsu to gyoshi no zessho" ["The beautiful voice of gaze and rejection"] , in *Gendaishi Tokuhon 10: Ito Shizuo* [*Contemporary Poetry Reader: 10 Ito Shizuo*], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1983.

resistance.[48]

We have looked at how Ito's poetry evolved in the direction of a congeniality with nature. The inclusion of the natural surroundings as observed by the poet corresponded to the weakening of the will to uphold the modern subject, whose identity was secured by placing itself in opposition to nature. What we have found in some of the representative pieces of *The Haste of Spring* was a state of the self comfortably in harmony with the surrounding nature, in which the beholder found a reflection of his own sentiments and emotions. The representation of nature was also characterised by an emphasis on its everchanging aspect, that is, as a world in a state of constant change where its constituents present myriad faces in the incessant flow of the time.

Ito's association with the war may be partly explained in relation to the poet's approach to nature as described above. One of the critics of Ito's poetry, Matsumoto Ken'ichi, has argued that *The Haste of Spring* demonstrates how Ito acquired a means to equate "reality" to "nature".[49] Reality, in this sense, included the everyday life of the poet as a high school teacher and a father of two children as well as the social and political environment that surrounded him. Extending this point further, Matsumoto argues that even Japan's advance into militarism and the war, for Ito, came to be seen as part of a "natural flow", against which the poet had no means to resist. It is well known that Ito, living in Osaka in Western Japan, took to keeping a scrupulous day-to-day record in his diary of the announcements on Japan's military advances broadcast through the radio. On the day Japan's

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[48] Also in the context of our discussion, there is not much significance in attempting a detailed analysis of the war poems, because war poems in general present few individual differences. Despite the fact that a huge number of "war poems" were written by a great number of poets, the poetic diction of these poems presents a strikingly similar pattern.

[49] See Matsumoto Ken'ichi, "Ito Shizuo to Yasuda Yojuro: Ironi kara shizen e" ["Ito Shizuo and Yasuda Yojuro: From irony to nature"], in *Gendaishi Tokuhon 10: Ito Shizuo* [*Contemporary Poetry Reader: 10 Ito Shizuo*], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1983: 58-59.

ultimate defeat was announced, he wrote:

The fifteenth: immediately after listening to the Emperor's announcement. The sun is shining without any change. It is shedding strong, crystal-clear light upon the fields and the trees, and the white clouds are serenely floating in the sky. Cooking smoke arises from individual houses. But the war has been lost. I can't believe that nature has shown no change.[50]

These words by Ito suggest the extent to which Ito had come to see nature and politics as one. Literally reading this passage, it suggests that Ito had expected to see a disastrous change in nature if something as disastrous as Japan's defeat were to occur. The passage also suggests how emotionally close Ito had come to the ideology of the state.

By accepting Japan's political progressions as part of nature's course, the possibility for Ito to produce a critique of the dominating discourse diminished completely. Indeed, he worked with extreme seriousness to synchronize his voice with that of the state, though we find that even in his typical "war poems", there is no tone of intoxication and unreserved passion to uphold "the just cause" of the "Great East Asian War", which characterised many other war poems. Ito wrote in the foreword to *The Haste of Spring* that he wished to present "a branch of plum flowers to the spring of Great East Asia".[51] Expressing his support for the "holy war", Ito's "war poems" chiefly focus on his thoughts for the soldiers at the battlefields who were being led by the "Military Gods" ("gunshin") to give up their lives. The smallness of his own existence and the feebleness of his poetic voice against the grandness of the time comprise the main thematic structure, and that smallness is often associated with the smallness of his everyday life, centering on the images of himself as husband and father, living with his family through the time of holy exaltation, inevitably accompanied by the

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[50] Details of Ito's diary and his attitude toward the war are introduced in Odakane Jiro, *Shijin Ito Shizuo* [The poet Ito Shizuo], Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1971, Chapters 10-12: 245-312.

[51] *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 78.

sadness of the loss of so many lives.

It is thus not surprising that Ito's engagement in writing poetry faced a major crisis when the war was over, bringing no change to nature but simply a reality of confusion and devastation. His last collection, published two years after the war, was symbolically entitled *Resonance*, suggesting that there was little left for him to create anew. Most of the works in this collection focus on uneventful, particular moments in the poet's everyday life. That the poet himself was aware of his crisis is well expressed in "After completing a poem" ["Shisakuno ato"], a part of which I will quote as the last example of Ito's poetry.

Throwing the pen out of my hands
I just threw myself
Upon what I had written
(.....)
Into the bright room with the window widely open
The street-lights have already crept in.
My eyes are still gleaming
With remnants of desire to see something undefined
But as I stare at it with no particular reason
My pupils, urged by internal harmony
Become vacuous
(.....)

The lines following this section describe the plants and insects in the garden seen or imagined by the poet. And the poem concludes:

Like a dark shadow of the trees getting immersed into water
I feel myself sinking deeply into sleep[52]

Though Ito continued to write sparsely until the year of his death, this poem already suggests that he was left with little strength, or little reason, to continue writing. Ito's health declined rapidly the

[52] *Ito Shizuo zenshu*: 121-122.

year after the publication of *Resonance*, and the poet died at the age of forty-seven in 1953.

Needless to say, the stylistic and thematic evolution that we have thus far seen in Ito's poetry through his four poetic collections cannot be simply seen either as a product of personal experience or as a response to the demands of the times. It was a combination of both, together with some other factors as well, and there is little sense in attempting to pin down definitively the reasons for changes in literary texts to particular external factors. At the same time, it is clear that Ito's writing would not have evolved in the way it did if it were not for those particular socio-cultural changes taking place in Japan in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. In the first place, Ito's work probably would not have caught the attention of his contemporaries if the *Cogito* group had not welcomed his arrival onto Japan's poetic scene with so much enthusiasm. The later changes in Ito's work also would not have occurred had he not been writing at a time when the meaning of modernity for Japan and Japanese culture was being problematized on such a wide scale at various levels of the social spectrum. Furthermore, the persistence in dealing with the theme of nature as we have seen in Ito's poetic pursuit was a tendency shared by a large number of poets at the time and its significance can be properly recognized only when it is read against the cultural context where a call for a return to the Japanese tradition was widely heard.

I will discuss the significance of Ito's poetic contribution in the overall context of the time later in this chapter. In the following, I will proceed to discuss one more poet, Miyoshi Tatsuji, who is also known for his persistence in dealing with the theme of nature, though in quite a different way to that of Ito Shizuo.

4) Miyoshi Tatsuji: A modern traveller into tradition

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Miyoshi Tatsuji (1900-1964) is known as one of the

representative poets of *The Four Seasons*. Miyoshi, too, began his poetic career with a keen interest in contemporary poetic movements. An interest in creating a new kind of poetry was stronger in Miyoshi than in Ito at least at the beginning, for Miyoshi was briefly a member of *A* and one of the founding members of *Poetry and Poetics*, which I discussed in Chapter Four. Unlike Ito, in whose works even of the earliest period we saw a deep sense of anxiety about the realization of the modern subject, Miyoshi wrote works that are suggestive of the young poet's ambition to create a new poetic language through various experimentations with style and presentation and the application of certain literary techniques introduced from the West.[53] Though Miyoshi's first contact with literature was through the making of *haiku* in his highschool days in Osaka, by the time he completed his university education in Tokyo with a major in French literature, he had acquired sufficient knowledge of the French language to translate works of French literature into Japanese for publication. In 1929 he completed the Japanese translation of Emile Zola's *Nana*, and in the following year published a translation of Charles Baudelaire's *Spleen de Paris*.

Miyoshi's first poetic collection, *Sokuryosen* [*Survey ship*], was published in 1930. In this collection we find a number of experimental poems employing a variety of poetic styles that reflect the poet's attempt to explore innovative forms of the poetic language. However, unlike Ito's early works, there is little trace of Miyoshi having struggled with the idea of the modern subject or with the problems related to the deep-rooted contradictions of Japanese modernity. Despite the apparent boldness in the treatment of the poetic language, we should note that even his ealiest poems never

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53 Miyoshi's poetic style in his early works is extremely varied. In some of his works, Miyoshi applied the form of fixed-style poetry in which the verses are divided into a set number of lines. He also experimented with new prose styles without any division by lines. A frequent use of onomatopoeia and the personification of non-human creatures is also characteristically seen in his early works. A typical example of the latter is "Spring" ["Haru"], which takes the form of a goose and a lizard mumbling to themselves. Critics have noted the wit and humor in the pieces like this probably derived from Jules Renard's works which were widely read among the poets at the time.

deviate as extensively as many of the contemporary modernist poets did from the traditional approach to poetry, particularly in terms of the treatment of the subject and the depiction of nature, which, needless to say, are closely linked.

Nature in Miyoshi's early poems does not appear in its defamiliarized state standing in opposition to the observing subject, as we saw in Ito's *An Elegy to My Beloved*. At the very foundation of Miyoshi's poetic works is the perception of nature as a part of the human world, or perhaps, the perception of humans as a part of the natural world. The idea of nature as the embodiment of otherness to human existence is more or less absent in Miyoshi's poetry.

This point may lead us to question why Miyoshi should be included in our discussion on Japan's modernist poets in the first place. It may seem that apart from his involvement in one of the major modernist movements and the stylistic newness of his early poems, there is little reason to discuss his works as a product of Japanese poetic modernism. I wish to stress, however, that the inclusion of his poems in the present discussion does have a certain significance, as his works would not have been written without the overwhelming influence of the modernist movements. Miyoshi was by no means a traditionalist in the limited sense of the word, and even the poems that have a number of characteristics of the traditional approach to poetry were written as a reaction to the modernist endeavours, in which Miyoshi himself was a participant. This is a different case from that of some poets who firmly adhered to the traditional poetic styles such as *tanka* and *haiku*.[54] The stylistic diversity in Miyoshi's *Survey Ship* can be seen as a product of his creative experiments with poetic

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[54] I am not dealing with the poets who wrote in the traditional *tanka* and *haiku* forms in this thesis. It should be noted, though, that "modernist" innovations were attempted within these genres as well, and what came to be called "modern haiku" and "modern tanka" were actively created. Masaoka Shiki's Haiku Innovation Movement is well known. In this sense, it is difficult to identify the place of the "traditionalists" in the context of Japan in the 1920s and the 1930s, for no poet had the option to be free of the modernist trend. Even the *tanka* and *haiku* poets did not make any attempt to "return", but rather sought for a means to express the modern sentiment in traditional styles.

language as well as evidence of the poet's ambivalent stance in regard to the treatment of tradition in the creation of new poetry.

Miyoshi was an extremely prolific poet. Between the publication of *Survey Ship* in 1930 and the conclusion of the war in 1945, he published fifteen poetic collections. Between 1945 and his death in 1964 he published six more collections. Compared to Ito's poetic development, the changes in style or thematic construction in Miyoshi's works through his long poetic career are relatively insignificant, though it is possible to point out certain tendencies that characterize the works of a particular period. In general, we can observe a gradual diminishing of interest in experimenting with new styles and new themes, and the strengthening of the inclination to return to the classical tradition, positively seeking to incorporate classical themes in modern free-style poetry.[55]

In attempting to form an overall picture of Miyoshi's poetic career, we cannnot ignore the fact that Miyoshi produced a large number of poems during the years of Japanese militarism and was one of the most widely-read poets of the time. Whereas with Ito, critics can possibly deal with his so-called "war poems" as a minor divergence from the poet's more important concerns, the case for Miyoshi is rather hard to defend.[56] Miyoshi's "war poems" are exemplary of the genre, faithfully representing the state ideology through the abundant use of stereotyped images to present the Japanese militarists'

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55 Unlike most of the poets of the time, Miyoshi continued to produce works in the traditional *tanka* and *haiku* forms even after he embarked on writing in the modern free-verse style. The number of these pieces written in the traditional forms is relatively small. I will omit a discussion on these works from the present thesis.

56 Whereas Ito wrote seven pieces which obviously fall into the category of "war poems", Miyoshi's war poems add up to at least eighty-two. Both Ito and Miyoshi wished to delete their "war poems" from their collected works in the postwar years. Miyoshi requested that publishers withdraw his "war poem" collections. For a discussion on Miyoshi's "war poems", see Ogawa Kazusuke, *Miyoshi Tatsuji Kenkyu* [*Miyoshi Tatsuji*], Tokyo: Kyoiku Shuppan Senta, 1975, Chapter Eight.

activities as contributing to the emperor's "holy war".[57] In fact, they are so representative of the genre that, ironically, there is little in these poems that allows us to identify Miyoshi's original vision of the time.[58]

Instead of going through the works of each of Miyoshi's poetic collections, in the following I will present a few examples of his work to indicate how Miyoshi's poetry underwent a gradual change with the changing of Japan's socio-cultural conditions. Once again, we find that the examination of the characteristic tendencies in the representation of nature in Miyoshi's poems is crucial in our understanding of the poet's understanding of his own position, society and culture.

As I noted earlier, Miyoshi's first collection, *Survey Ship*, contained works of various stylistic and thematic features. On the one hand, we see works that resemble typical "l'esprit nouveau" poems, showing Miyoshi's proximity to poets such as Anzai Fuyue and Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, discussed in Chapter Four. "Enfance finie" is one such example, which begins with the following lines:

Far beyond the sea is an island ..., A camellia dropped in the rain. Spring inside a bird cage, spring in a bird cage without a bird.

All the promises have been broken.

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57 Most of Miyoshi's "war poems" can be classified as belonging to the third type as analyzed by Imamura Fuyuzo, i.e. a "holy war" guided by the emperor's sacred will. See footnote 34.

58 Miyoshi's critic, Ogawa Kazusuke, has noted that one of the reasons why Miyoshi's "war poems" have not become an object of interest for many critics is because they are a mere product of the journalistic demands of the time and can be at best regarded as successful "war poems" if they deserve to be called "poems" at all. Ogawa also notes that the pressure for Miyoshi to write these poems was much bigger for Miyoshi than for Ito, because Miyoshi had been much more widely received by literary journalism than Ito, and was enjoying his status as one of Japan's leading poets together with another poet, Takamura Kotaro. See Ogawa Kazusuke, ***Miyoshi Tatsuji Kenkyu*** [*Miyoshi Tatsuji*], Tokyo: Kyoiku Shuppan Senta, 1975, Chapter Eight: 255-259.

Look, a reflection of the clouds in the sea, and in the clouds a reflection of the earth.

And look, a stairway in the sky. [59]

The originality of this piece can be seen in the free combination of images to express a sense of loss and emptiness as one leaves behind the innocent years of childhood to enter the yet unknown world of adolescence. That this sense of loss is accompanied by a vague sense of hope is suggested in the image of a stairway in the sky. At the same time, the uncertainty of such a hope and the unreliability of the vision of the futureares highlighted by the fugitive image of "the earth" reflected in the clouds reflecting on the surface of the sea, as imagined by the poet. The poem ends with the line, "Yes, I will, I will, let us set out on a lon journey". Hence the title, "Enfance finie", the years of childhood have finished.

It is easy to see even in translation that "Enfance finie" is unconventional in its style, its diction, its use of vocabulary and its construction of the images. The free use of colloquial Japanese and the imaginative combination of images were a shared characteristic of many of the works by the "l'esprit nouveau" poets of *Poetry and Poetics*. Miyoshi was a skillful poet in this regard and produced a number of works that contributed to establishing the reputation of the "l'esprit nouveau" style.[60]

On the other hand, Miyoshi wrote works that were highly conventional in style and thematic construction. The very first poem of *Survey Ship*, entitled "The spring promontory" ["Haru no misaki], is written with a syllabic structure almost identical to the traditional *tanka* style of five-seven-five-seven-seven syllables, and the familiar combination of a sea bird and the rippling waves

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59 The title of this poem is "Enfance finie" written in French. The original poem is in *Miyoshi Tatsuji Zenshishu* [A complete poetic collection of Miyoshi Tatsuji], Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1974: 34-35. All the citations of Miyoshi's poems are taken from this collection.

60 "Enfance finie" first appeared in *Poetry and Poetics*, no.4, June 1929. Most of the poems included in *Survey Ship* were first printed in *Poetry and Poetics*, *A*, *Shii no Ki* [Chinquapin Tree] and other poetic journals.

constitutes the central image of this extremely short, two-line poem.

Spring promontory, a seagull at the end of a journey.
Floating, further away.[61]

The only reason why this is read as a "modern poem" and not as the traditional *tanka* is because it has a title, and because the verse is divided into two lines. Another piece entitled "Snow" is one of the most widely acclaimed of Miyoshi's works, and also depends heavily on the traditional vision of nature.

Snow falls and piles on Taro's roof, sending Taro to sleep.
Snow falls and piles on Jiro's roof, sending Jiro to sleep.[62]

Numerous interpretations have been given to this short and simple verse.[63] "Taro" and "Jiro" used to be the most common boys' names in Japanese, and thus the use of these ordinary names is effective in emphasizing that the snow falls on the roof of every house in the village this evening at a time when mothers are putting their children to sleep. The repetition of the same phrase in the two lines apart from the names of the children produces the image of the steady and continuous fall of the

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61 *Miyoshi Tatsuji zenshu*: 2

62 *Miyoshi Tatsuji zenshu*: 3. This translation is by Donald Keene in *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era*, vol.2, Poetry, Drama, Criticism, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984.

63 I will not go into a detailed analysis of the poem as it is not of direct relevance to the present study. See Irisawa Yasuo, "Taro wo nemurase...", *Gendaishi Tokuhon 7: Ito Shizuo* [*Contemporary Poetry Reader: 7 Miyoshi Tatsuji*], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1985: 165-171, Ogawa Kazusuke, *Miyoshi Tatsuji Kenkyu* [*Miyoshi Tatsuji*], Tokyo: Kyoiku Shuppan Senta, 1975: 209-212.

snow. The ending sound of each line, *tsumu*, in the Japanese original, is also suggestive of the softness and quietness of the snow.

The point to be noted for the present discussion is the suggestive relationship between human life and nature as expressed in this verse. Though it is hard to render the same effect in translation, the poem puts forward a strong impression that there exists a perfect harmony between human existence and surrounding nature. Snow is presented not as a threat but rather as something like a warm blanket covering the village houses, peacefully putting the children to sleep. Human existence is congeraally enveloped in the natural system.[64]

Pieces such as "The spring promontory" and "Snow" depend heavily on the conventional readings of Japan's premodern poetry. The intimate relationship with nature and the vision of human existence as a part of nature constitute a dominant theme in many other pieces by this poet even of this earliest period. In "A breakfast facing the pond" ["Ike ni mukaeru asage"], the poetic subject is sitting at his breakfast table by himself, immersed in a sentiment of loneliness. Here again, the "light autumnal rain", like the softly falling snow, gently covers the landscape. "The almost unnoticeable" drizzle throws a light veil over the poetic subject and his dwelling.[65] The image of a veil being thrown from the sky is also highlighted in "The perambulator" ["Ubaguruma"] through the repetition of the following phrase: "something light and sad is falling / a path on which something the colour of hydrangea falls". Critics have given different interpretations of "something with the colour of

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[64] The use of the image of snow to express the organic relationship between human life and nature can be found in many of the well-known *haiku* of the premodern period as well. Yosa Buson, for example, wrote: Charcoal fire under the ashes, my secluded home is also in the snow. For a discussion on the affinity between Miyoshi's "Snow" and the *haiku* poets, see Haga Toru, *Yosa Buson no Chiisana Sekai* [The Small World of Yosa Buson], Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1986: 47-62; Hirakawa Sukehiro, "Buson, eryuaaru, purebeeru" [Buson, Eluard, Prevert], *Yuriika*, Tokyo: Seidosha, August 1972.

[65] *Miyoshi Tatsuji zenshu*: 14.

hydrangea".[66] Whether it is an image of featherlike snowflakes falling from the sky or whether it refers to clear autumn air tinged with the colour of the evening sun does not make any difference to the overall theme of the poem.[67] The sense of nostalgia attached to the scene of a motherly figure pushing the perambulator is expressed through the atmosphere created by the constant falling of "something with the colour of hydrangea". With the rhythmic repetition of this phrase, the landscape becomes saturated with the gentle touch of nature.

Another point to note is the recurring theme of nostalgia in Miyoshi's early poems. In another well-known poem in *Survey Ship* entitled "Nostalgia" ["Kyoshu"], the poet says: "Oh, the sea -- in our language, you are inside the character for mother. And, oh, mother, in the French language, the sea is inside you".[68] Miyoshi's sense of nostalgia is often linked to the sense of longing for one's "mother", which, in turn, often overlaps with the image of nature, particularly of the sea. It is thus not coincidental that the very first poem of Miyoshi's first collection, "The spring promontory", presents a picture of a bird floating in the sea "at the end of a journey". The sea, or the mother, is the object of eternal longing in Miyoshi's poetry, a place of ultimate return. It is symbolic that Miyoshi began his poetic career with a piece centering on the image of an ultimate return. Miyoshi was already longing for "the end of a journey" at the beginning of his career. It is not surprising, then, that his poetic development did not present a dramatic unfolding of new world visions.

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66 *Miyoshi Tatsuji zenshu*: 2-3.

67 See, for example, Shimizu Akira, "Miyoshi Tatsuji ni tsuite" ["On Miyoshi Tatsuji"], *Gendaishi Tokuhon 7: Miyoshi Tatsuji* [*Contemporary Poetry Reader: 7 Miyoshi Tatsuji*], Tokyo: Shichosha, 1985: 192; Sakamoto Etsuro, Footnotes in Nihon no Shiika, Vol.22, Miyoshi Tatsuji, Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1975: 8.

68 The Chinese character used in Japanese for "sea" is "海", which includes as a part of it the character for "mother", written as "母". In French, the word for "sea" -- "la mer", constitutes a part of the word for "mother" -- "la mere".

Let us now have a look at some of Miyoshi's later poems and see how his poetic world underwent a gradual change. "The great Mount Aso" ["Osaso"] is a poem in a collection, "Bai" ["Clouds of Dust"], included in a 1939 bound volume entitled *Haru no Misaki* [The Spring Promontory ]. I will cite the first and the last few lines of the poem.

The horses are standing in the rain,
Amongst them are one or two colts, the horses are standing in the rain.
A bleak and dreary rain is falling.
The horses are eating the grass.
.....
Soaking wet in the rain, they stay quietly clustered in the same place.
It would not be surprising even if a hundred years had elapsed in this single instant.
The rain is falling. The rain is falling.
A bleak and dreary rain is falling.[69]

In the original Japanese text, the repetition of the sound "*teiru*", coming from the progressive form of the verbs at the end of each line, works effectively to create the impression of the rain falling continuously. The steady repetition leads to an image of stillness, which in turn arouses in the observer a feeling that an indefinite length of time has passed. In the third from the last line, the observer/poet imagines the scene freezing for an instant, letting one hundred years lapse.

The poet's perception leaps beyond the landscape unfolding in front of his eyes and momentarily enters into the realm of eternity. This experience of having a glimpse of eternity in nature is characteristic of the works of Miyoshi's later period. Throughout his career Miyoshi wrote a large number of poems centring on images of nature. As mentioned earlier, the poet's basic approach to nature remained more or less the same, but there are certain distinctive characteristics in the representation of nature depending on which period the work was written. One is this perception of

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69 *Miyoshi Tatsuji zenshu*: 148-149. Translation by Donald Keene; I have changed the second line, which was, "Two or three horses and some colts, standing in the rain" to the way presented above so as to make it closer to the original phrasing, though Keene's translation reads much more smoothly read in English.

eternity within or through nature that characterizes his later works. We have seen that the sense of nostalgia constituted a dominant theme in Miyoshi's earliest works. Nostalgia -- or more broadly, a vague sense of a deep loss -- permeates Miyoshi's work from the earliest to the latest periods, but the expanse of time suggested in the later works is of a scale that is evocative of the time that flows beyond any personal or communal experience. The past extends to an indeterminate point where it mingles with eternity, cancelling the notion of the linear progression of time; hence, the impression of stillness as we have seen in "The great Mount Aso". In comparison, the notion of time in "Enfance finie" or "The perambulator" for example, is more closely attached to personal memories and is often expressed through the image of the passing seasons. "The perambulator" ends: "With a row of birds that hurry ahead on their migrating voyage / the season passes across the sky".

Together with time, we also notice that the representation of space undergoes a gradual change in Miyoshi's poetic works. As we have seen in "The great Mount Aso", the span of vision widens dramatically in his later works. As a critic has pointed out, there seems to be a correlation between the scale of nature imagery and the depth of the nostalgic sentiment provoked by the poet.[70] The further one can see, the further one is able to reminisce back in time. The expanse of space and the expanse of time are intertwined within one vision, and thus, in his later works images of the vast and often limitless reaches of the natural world predominate. With its extraordinary breadth and its images charged with meaning to evoke a sense of an eternal time, the landscape sometimes acquires a quality suggestive of a certain cosmic order.

Where, then, is the place of the subject in these later works by Miyoshi? This question will eventually bring us back to the earlier question concerning Miyoshi's involvement in the war, and further, to the question of how Miyoshi contributed to the rise of Japan's "cultural renaissance". As

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[70] See Kan'no Akimasa, "Kino no koe, kyo no uta: Miyoshi Tatsuji ron" ["The voices of yesterday, the songs of today: On Miyoshi Tatsuji"], *Shigaku Sozo* [Poetic Creation], Tokyo: Shueisha, 1984: 259-306.

indicated, it is hard to pin down clear turning points in Miyoshi's poetic developments. Even with the war, his fundamental attitude did not change, and that was precisely why his voice became thoroughly mingled with the discourse of the state. As the distinct nature of Miyoshi's subject is expressed most clearly in his latest poems, I will cite a couple of examples from his postwar works, "Pampas fields" ["Susukino"] and "Water reflections in vastness" ["Suikobibo"] in *Rakuda no Kobu ni Matagatte* [Travelling on a camel's hump] published in 1952, and "Leaves have fallen" ["Ochiba tsukite] in *Momotabi no Nochi* [After one hundred times] published in 1962.

As far as this river extends further and further
Winding through the withered fields of dried pampas grass
As far as I am captivated by this landscape ("Pampas fields")[71]

All creations on this earth, mixed with the colour of ink
Have become silent and do not speak
I am a traveller in the dusk, passing here by chance ("Water reflections in vastness")[72]

The dusk having dressed itself in its proper clothes
Is approaching
A landscape approaching towards me
Landscapes have been
Always and everywhere suited to myself
For one hundred years I have been gazing at it.
The sunlight coming through the branches so small, quiet and supple
The branches that stretch out together to rock the evening sun
Good bye
Hello
From the ever distant past, the moon has risen
And with it my memories have risen ("Leaves have fallen")[73]

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[71] *Miyoshi Tatsuji zenshu*: 589-590.

[72] *Miyoshi Tatsuji zenshu*: 617-618.

[73] *Miyoshi Tatsuji zenshu*: 642.

I have chosen these three examples as the relationship between the subject and the surrounding nature is most clearly illustrated in these poems. In "Pampas fields", the "I" is "captivated" by the landscape. In "Water reflections in vastness", the poetic subject is regarded as "a traveller" who is "passing ... by chance". In the last example, the poetic subject states that wherever he goes the landscape has always been "suited" to him. What is striking in these three examples is the subject's passivity vis-a-vis his surroundings. There is no sign of the subject's struggle to confront or actively counter the vision that unfolds in front of him. Whether he is "captivated" by it or is simply "passing" through it as a "traveller", the subject feels that what he beholds has always been "suited" to him. Such passivity is most eloquently expressed in the last example. It is the landscape that approaches toward him, and, accepting it as being "suited" to him, or willingly making himself "suited" to the landscape, the subject, instead of responding to it, chooses to keep "gazing" at it, as he probably has been doing "for one hundred years".

Unlike Ito's poems, there is little in Miyoshi's works that indicates the poet's attempt to objectify the external world in order to establish himself as a modern subject. On the contrary, Miyoshi seems to have devoted his energies to harmonizing himself with the external world, which is predominantly represented in the images of nature. Miyoshi was consistent in adhering to this fundamental stance; consequently, the evolution of his poetic world demonstrates the poet's growing desire to minimize the subjective self to achieve such harmony. Metaphorically speaking, the subject becomes smaller and smaller as the years pass. Whereas in his earlier works there was room for the personal sentiment of the beholding subject to be expressed directly or indirectly, his later works show that the poet's efforts are directed to suppressing such a voice, actively negating the expression of subjectivity.

This does not necessarily mean, however, that the poet was comfortably accepting the landscape that approached him. We can see in the above examples that the external world that surrounded the

poetic subject is far from being a paradisial one, union with which would be blissful. On the contrary, the vast landscape through which the poetic subject travels is characteristically dark and desolate, especially in his later works. In "Pampas grass", the fields are "withered" and the grass is "dried"; in "Water reflections in vastness", the surrounding landscape is described as "mixed in the colour of ink" and unyieldingly "silent"; and in "Leaves have fallen", the scene is set at autumn dusk, which in traditional Japanese poetry was associated with a distinct sentiment of "melancholic loneliness".[74]

Despite the severe criticisms directed toward Miyoshi in the postwar years for his positive involvement in Japan's war efforts, Miyoshi continued to enjoy a reputation as an established poet through the 1950s and the 1960s and retained a wide readership. One of the keys to understanding this phenomenon probably lies in the level of sophistication attained by this poet in his later years. This is quite a different case from that of Ito Shizuo, whose creative voltage declined rapidly after the war years. The sense of devastation experienced by Ito and Miyoshi after Japan's defeat was not the same. For Ito, for whom the war had been envisaged as an extension of his domesticated nature, the fact that the Japanese myth of the war came to a sudden halt was simply irrational, depriving him of the ground for further creative activity. For Miyoshi, his fundamentally passive stance toward history ironically saved him from falling into silence. Even though he did disapprove of his war poems in the immediate postwar period and claimed that the entire intention of the war was at fault, asserting even that the Emperor should abdicate the throne as soon as possible, this did not take away from him the urge to continue writing as a lonely poet, travelling through the newly emerging

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[74] See Kawamoto Koji, *The Poetics of Japanese Verse: Imagery, Structure, Meter*, Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 2000, Chapter One "Autumn Dusk".

landscape that provided no consolation to him.[75] Miyoshi spent the last sixteen years of his life living by himself in Tokyo and died at the age of sixty-four.

As I noted earlier, a sense of a deep loss and an earnest desire to return was strongly expressed in Miyoshi's earliest works, and this was often associated with the image of the mother and the sea as a source of life and the place of an ultimate return. This theme of yearning for one's origin becomes more vague in his later works, though the recurring image of the solitary traveller in a wilderness is suggestive of loss and a longing for a faraway home. That this home will never be reached was indicated by the immensity of the landscape. We also saw in the later works that the traveller possessed little desire to achieve a return and was rather willingly allowing himself to become an eternal wanderer, "gazing" at the landscape unfolding in front of him. The act of reminiscing only led to a recognition of the vicissitudes of life, glimpses of moments when the vanishing subject seemed to merge with the limitless expanse of the landscape.

The idea that a human life is nothing more than a fleeting moment in the eternal cycle of lives, together with the perception of human existence as being a part of the natural world, constitutes an integral theme in traditional Japanese poetry. One possible reason why Miyoshi's works appealed to the reading public, before, during and after the war, is that his works skillfully incorporated this familiar theme in modern verse form. What is more essential, moreover, is the fact that this familiar theme was tactfully recontextualized in the cultural context of the 1930s and the 1940s. Miyoshi did

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[75] Miyoshi wrote a serial essay entitled "The nostalgic Japan" ["Natsukashii nihon"] in 1946. In this essay he discusses at length the fault and the immorality of the war that Japan had just experienced and claims that the emperor should accept responsibility for the path that Japan had taken and immediately abdicate the throne. He contends that the mere act of repenting will take Japan nowhere and that instead Japanese citizens must concentrate their efforts on starting a new history. The essay appeared in four parts in the journal *Shincho* in 1948 but was discontinued after the mentioning of the emperor's abdication. The essay is included in *Miyoshi Tatsuji Zenshu* [*Complete Works of Miyoshi Tatsuji*], vol.8: 33-38. For the details of Miyoshi's stance after the war, see Ishihara Yatsuka, *Rakuda no Kobu ni Matagatte* [*Riding on a Camel's Hump*], Tokyo: 1987, Chapter 14: 215-243.

not impress his readers as a traditional poet; he was definitely modern. And this sense of modernity contained a much deeper implication than the fact that his poems were presented in the modern verse form.

This point brings us back to the position of Miyoshi as a representative poet of the journal *The Four Seasons*. Miyoshi was one of the founders of *The Four Seasons* and contributed significantly to the lasting success of this journal during Japan's turbulent years. In 1930, Miyoshi, together with Kitagawa Fuyuhiko and a few others, left *Poetry and Poetics* and started *Poetry · Reality*. The poets, who had become critical of the excessive emphasis on the technical innovations of the "l'esprit nouveau", joined together to publish *Poetry · Reality*, calling for a new poetic language in touch with reality. Miyoshi, however, did not stay for long with this group, which quickly began to express its inclination toward Marxism. The poets who gathered to found *The Four Seasons* in 1934 shared a new sensibility, opposed to both the "l'esprit nouveau" and the Marxist streams. However, it was not simply due to the fact that the other streams were in difficulties and decline that the poets began to gather around new journals. A new type of sensibility was on the rise, which brought forth the "cultural renaissance" of the 1930s. Before moving on to discuss the important differences between *Cogito* and *The Four Seasons*, I will briefly note the main characteristics of *The Four Seasons*, which should provide us with further suggestions for understanding Miyoshi's poetry in its historical context.

A quick look at the early issues of *The Four Seasons* is sufficient to show that one of the objectives of the journal lay in the revival of the tradition of lyrical poetry. It is important to note, though, that this revival was not meant as a mere "return" to the tradition. Miyoshi was not the only one who had formerly acquainted himself with the "l'esprit nouveau" poetry. In fact, the two other founders of the journal, Hori Tatsuo and Maruyama Kaoru, were both once fervent students and admirers of modern and contemporary Western literature. Hori Tatsuo chiefly wrote novels and

novellas, which revealed the strong influence of Jean Cocteau and Raymond Radiguet.[76] Maruyama Kaoru was a poet who worked closely with the *Poetry and Poetics* group. His first poetic collection of 1932, *Ho・Ranpu・Kamome* [Mast/Lamp/Seagulls], has been commonly acclaimed as a representative work of "l'esprit nouveau".

So, what then, brought these poets together to inaugurate a journal that expressed a different orientation from those that belonged to the "l'esprit nouveau" or other streams? Most important was a growing sense of a need to provide a new ground for poetic activities, based on an adequate concern for the indigenous tradition of Japanese culture. This sensibility was strengthened as the critical view of the "l'esprit nouveau" orientation came to be more widely shared, particularly its emphasis on stylistic newness and the consequent lack of interest in the historical and cultural context in which poets worked. Miyoshi and two others shared an aspiration to create a kind of poetry that demonstrated a renewed consciousness of the modern poetry's necessary link with the lyrical tradition of Japanese poetry. The founders of *The Four Seasons* were not so strongly committed to delineating their vision of poetry, compared to other modernist groups that enthusiastically produced manifestos to appeal to their readers. However, it is clear that a certain approach to poetry was being promoted through the publication of this journal, as can be seen in the notes written by its editors:

> It is not our intention to form a group to give rise to a new cultural current or to embark on one of those ever-unstable poetic movements in the narrow sense. What we wish to do through the publication of our journal is to contribute to the succession of a lofty and unchanging tradition of poetry, (...) with the purity of spirit and a righteous attitude.[77]

What these words indicate is a desire to believe in a tradition that is "lofty", untainted by the rapid

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[76] Hori Tatsuo also contributed to *Poetry and Poetics*. His short story "Yameru Hito" ["The Ailing"] was published in the journal's separate-volume supplement and received wide acclaim.

[77] "Shiki shosoku" ["Shiki tidings"], *Shiki*, no.1, February, 1936.

changes in the literary environment they live in. As it is not something to be regained immediately, the emphasis is placed on the attitude toward it, that is, to be "pure" and "right" in their approach.

At the same time, the typically modernist background of the founders prevented the journal from becoming overtly traditional. On the contrary, the journal abounded in translations and critical reviews of modern Western poetry, and the original works that appeared in the journal did not look like traditional poetry as such. As the members of the journal gradually increased, the works of the contributors naturally became more varied, presenting diverse stylistic and thematic tendencies. However, the journal largely succeeded in retaining its overall programme, at least until the 1940s: presenting a mild mixture of the traditional lyrical sensibility nurtured by the centuries-old *tanka* tradition and the modern approach to poetry, most strongly influenced by the "l'esprit nouveau" poets' inclination to regard poetry as an intellectual linguistic composition.[78] The avant-garde aspect of the preceding "l'esprit nouveau" journals was significantly weakened, and the journal eventually established its reputation as representing a sophisticated sensibility, founded on a moderate balance between the old and the new.

Miyoshi was just the poet to represent such a sensibility. He was a poet with a taste for the old, who was also equipped with the knowledge of and the skill to apply the new approaches to poetry. Though it may appear paradoxical at first, *The Four Seasons* sought to revive Japan's lyrical tradition through the application of an intellectual approach to poetry. It is easy to assume, then, that there was hardly any basis in *The Four Seasons* to create a stage for critical visions of Japan's militaristic advances. A specific type of lyricism, combined with the traditional admiration for nature, worked relatively well in a social and political environment, seeking to urge its people to acquire a renewed vision of the authenticity of the culture's tradition.

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[78] In 1936, the members of *The Four Seasons* had increased to fourteen. After a number of *Cogito* poets joined, the membership reached twenty-eight.

5) The refracted trajectory back to tradition: Japan as irony

In conclsion, I come back to the significance of *Cogito* and *The Four Seasons* in the context of Japan's "cultural renaissance". As noted in the beginning of this chapter, these two journals survived into the 1940s when the freedom to publish literary works was extremely constricted.[79] This, of course, suggests that the orientations suggested in these journals did not cause a fundamental conflict with the principal ideology of the state. It is too hasty to conclude, however, that these journals simply followed the current of the times and worked in support of the ideology of the state. Firstly, the two journals were clearly different in their orientations, at least until the last phase of their respective histories.[80] Secondly, *Cogito* and *The Four Seasons* maintained a secure distance from the literary organizations that were established to express an official support for the state, and at least in that limited sense succeeded in retaining their literary independence from the dominant ideology.[81]

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[79] The journal, *The Japan Romantic School*, also played a significant role in boosting the atmosphere of "the cultural renaissance", though its period of publication was relatively short. It published twenty-nine issues between 1935 and 1938. I will refer to the significance of this journal, too, so far as it is relevant in the following discussion.

[80] *Cogito*'s last issue was published in September 1944. The last issue of *The Four Seasons* was published in June 1944. The journal was restarted in 1946, but only continued for slightly more than a year, and then started again in 1967. The significance of the post-1945 publication of *The Four Seasons* is small enough to be excluded, at least from the present discussion. The distinct differences between the two journals began to blur from around 1940.

[81] An organization with the name of "Nihon Bungaku Hokokukai" ["Japan Literature Association to Serve the State"] was established in 1942, the purpose of which was to disseminate the ideology of the state. The organization devoted its energies to the publication of literary works to instigate support for the nation's wartime efforts by citizens and organized regular meetings of writers and poets, called "The Great East Asia Literary Conference". Representatives from China and Manchuria were also present at these meetings. For a discussion on the nature of these wartime efforts, see Imamura Fuyuzo, *Op,Cit.*; Sakuramoto Tomio, 1983, Chapter One: 5-33.

In fact, a closer look at *Cogito* reveals that its stance was unambiguously different from that of the state. This is most clearly evident in the language of its acknowledged leader Yasuda Yojuro, whom I will discuss in the following section. With regard to *The Four Seasons*, the fact that it was able to continue publishing in the 1940s can be largely attributed to its non-political character, though, as I previously suggested, this apparent non-political orientation and its emphasis on lyrical purity not only worked to avoid outright confrontation with the state but also acquired a specific political strength in the highly charged atmosphere of the time.

Ooka Makoto has presented a comparative analysis of the two journals, stressing the dissimilarity in their basic orientations.[82] According to Ooka, even though both journals called out for the reassessment and the revival of Japan's literary tradition, their respective approaches to tradition were entirely different. Whereas *Cogito*, or more specifically its mouthpiece Yasuda, held that Japanese lyrical poetry could be revived only as "irony", for the poets of *The Four Seasons*, such a perception of "irony" was anything but compelling. Ooka thus concludes that it was the eventual weakening of this acute sense of "irony" by the poets of *Cogito*, particularly Ito, that brought about the virtual merging of the two journals in the last few years of their publication. Ito became a member of *The Four Seasons* in 1941 together with Yasuda Yojuro and two other *Cogito* members.

What, then, was meant by "irony", as Yasuda used it? In order to understand the significance of the poetic activities of Ito and Miyoshi in the contemporary historical and cultural context, I will briefly outline the main points in Yasuda's argument concerning his conception of irony.

Clearly, the emergence of the idea of irony was rooted in the broadly shared consciousness of the day that the issue concerning the status of culture in modern Japan was becoming more and more

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[82] See Ooka Makoto, [illegible] 185.

problematic. While there arose a call for Japan's "cultural renaissance" on the one hand, it was also becoming evident on the other hand that the culture to be revived was most vaguely defined. In essence, it was by then impossible to deny that Japan was so thoroughly trapped in the modern order that any attempt to turn back would be destined to futility. It was this acute sense of an irretrievable loss and the acknowledgement of the futility of the effort to revive tradition that brought about the idea that the whole attempt to confront modernity was nothing but "irony". As Kevin Doak discusses in his theoretical analysis of the background to the emergence of the Japan Romantic School, Yasuda embarked on the romantic project to overcome Japan's modern dilemma just when the sense of alienation from history and the willingness to reflect upon Japan's native tradition was beginning to be shared by a large number os intellectuals.[83] The poet of the earlier generation, Hagiwara Sakutaro, too, had been adamantly claiming that modern Japan had lost everything.[84] Yasuda went beyond grieving over the loss and desired to resurrect eradicated history, being aware at the same time of the contradiction in the attempt itself. Thus he did not call for a mere return; instead he devoted his energies to presenting Japan as an aesthetic construct. Based on a firm belief in the artificial power of poetry, Yasuda's efforts became focused on dissolving the contradictions of modernity by poetically lamenting the loss and through it allowing the notion of the collectivity of Japanese ethnicity to be resurrected. In Yasuda's mind, since the immediate contact with native traditions had already become impossible, the only means for Japan to emancipate itself from the forces of modernity was to embrace a romantic dream of the lost past, which in the end was extended

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[83] Kevin Doak presents a convincing theoretical discussion on the social, cultural and historical conditions that led to the emergence of the romantic movement in Japan in the 1930s. An in-depth analysis of the evolution in Yasuda's thought is also presented. See Doak, *Op.Cit.*,"Prologue" pp.i-xliii, and Chapter One, "Toward an Ironic Praxis: Yasuda Yojuro and the Aesthetics of Totality": 1-27.

[84] Hagiwara was one of the founding members of *The Four Seasons*, actively contributed to *Cogito*, and joined the Japan Romantic School in 1937.

to an aspiration for an artistic reunion with the ancient times when the Japanese people lived in perfect communion with the gods. Since a detailed analysis of the multi-faceted logic of Yasuda's romantic project is too complex, and not of direct relevance in the present study, I will only note that his idea of irony was based on the fundamental recognition of the futility of the project, and yet chosen as the only means to present a critique of the state of modern Japanese culture.[85]

One point that should not be overlooked is that this idea of an artificial return to the past through the power of poetry was nurtured on a different base from that of the development of the state ideology and should not be interpreted as a cultural tendency immediately growing out of the official body of the state or moving toward assimilation with it. To draw from Doak's argument again, the kind of nationalism advocated by Yasuda is best described as ethnic nationalism, and should be clearly distinguished from state nationalism.[86] Yasuda's vision in leading the Japan Romantic School was to provide a new basis for the cultural identity of the Japanese people, independent of the conception of Japan as envisioned by the state. In Yasuda's eyes, what may be called "Japanism", a stance embodied by the state, was only a re-modelled version of Western forms of nationalism, and lacked the ideological framework to question the contradictions inherent in the construction of

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85 Oketani Hideaki presents a comparative analysis of the difference in the conception of the "return to Japan" in Hagiwara Sakutaro, Ito Shizuo and Yasuda Yojuro. For Hagiwara there was absolutely no place of return. For Ito, it was a return to the life of a "common man". And for Yasuda, the desire for a return developed into an aesthetic project which embrace a historical vision that extended to the age of the ethnic gods. See Oketani Hideaki, *Kindai no naraku* [*The bottomless abyss of modernity*], Tokyo: Kokubunsha, 1984, "Nihon romanha no kaiki" ["The return of the Japan Romantic School"]: 127-157, "Yasuda Yojuro Tsuito" ["In memory of Yasuda Yojuro"]: 219-231. For a discussion on Yasuda's aesthetic philosophy, see also Ooka Makoto, *Op.Cit.*, "Yasuda Yojuro Noto: Nihonteki biishiki no kozo shiron" ["Notes on Yasuda Yojuro: A study on the structure of Japanese aesthetic sensibility"]: 92-165.

86 Doak, *Op.Cit.*, "Prologue", pp.xvi-xx. Doak argues that the major reason why historians have been largely unsuccessful in grasping the specific form of Japanese nationalism is because many have failed to consider "ethnic nationalism" as seriously as they have "official nationalism", i.e. nationalism promoted by the state. Doak stresses that what the Japanese romantics turned to in their critique of modernity was not official nationalism but "ethnic", or "popular", nationalism.

Japanese modernity itself and thus was not able to conceive the ironic condition of modern Japanese culture. For Yasuda, the urgency lay in producing a new cultural whole, a unique entity on its own, that would provide the potential power for Japan to break out of the entire structure of modernity that had become the order of the international community. Yasuda believed in the power of poetry as a vehicle of expression, that would link the past and the present and contribute directly to the production of the cultural whole. His enthusiasm was thus directed to the publication of *Cogito*, and later, of *The Japan Romantic School*, which held a clearer ideological orientation.

The signs of Yasuda's ethnic nationalism gradually converging with state nationalism began to appear around 1939, around the time when he began to shift his focus from the vision of Japan as an aesthetic construct to a more immediate vision centered on the aesthetics of death. This shift in focus coincided with the strengthening of Yasuda's interest in the political events taking place, which eventually led to the waning of the critical power of his discourse and the strengthening of his willingness to cooperate with the statist movements. According to the logic of Yasuda's aesthetics of death, Japan as an aesthetic ideal could find its moments of realization only in the individual's experience of death, particularly on the battlefields; only in this way could this aesthetic construct overcome its inherent dilemma: that its potential effectiveness lay in its "irony".[87]

Let us come back to our two poets again to examine for the last time how their works stood in relation to the dominant social and cultural trends of the time. It was Yasuda who strongly requested Ito to join *Cogito* in 1933. He saw in Ito's poems the expression of "irony", rooted in the poet's profound sense of anxiety as he tried to identify a place for himself in the Japanese tradition of lyrical

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[87] See Doak, *Ibid.*, 20-27; Oketani Hideaki, *Yasuda Yojuro*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1996 (First print 1983), Part I, Chapter 8, "Idainaru haiboku no yokan" ["A premonition of a grand defeat"]: 117-133; Hashikawa Bunzo, *Nihon romanha hihan josetsu* [An introduction to the criticism of the Japan Romantic School], Tokyo: Miraisha, 1995 (First print in 1960), Part I, Chapter 7, "Beiishiki to seiji" ["Aesthetics and politics"]: 87-100. For the original works of Yasuda, see "Nihon romanha ni tsuite" ["On Japan Romantic School", in Yasuda Yojuro Zenshu, vol.6: 241-250.

poetry, only to find himself caught in the dilemma of a subjective yearning to return to a harmonious past, all the time knowing such an yearning was anything but meaningful in a culture in which the retrieval of the past was an utter impossibility. We saw that Ito took this thought to the point of saying that there had never been a time when the people lived in harmony with one another or with nature, that the whole idea of an ultimate "home" was itself nothing but an illusion, or "vain homework".[88] Such a sense of loss and ironic awareness was close to Yasuda's perception of the state of Japanese culture, which led him to start *Cogito*, and eventually *The Japan Romantic School*. Though Yasuda, too, was more than aware that the entire attempt to revive the past was doomed to fail, he conjured up the idea of "irony" to develop a critical discourse against the dominating ideology of modernity to which Japan had fallen victim. The uncritical reception of the logic of the modern and the enforced acceptance of national pride in progress was thus called into question by Yasuda.

Ito was not an ideologue like Yasuda, but it is clear that Yasuda immediately read in Ito's poems the embodiment of the same kind of consciousness that had given rise to the call for Japan's "cultural renaissance". The language of Ito's poetry -- unarguably modern, yet contorted, broken into parts and standing on the brink of incomprehensibility -- also illustrated Ito's refracted vision of modernity. As we have seen in our examination of the change in Ito's approach to poetry, the critical edge inherent in Ito's early works quickly dulled as the poet retreated from confronting the contradictions of Japanese modernity through the presentation of the poetic subject torn between conflicting forces. Ito's eventual self-positioning as a common citizen and his faithful adherence to everyday life in the times of national crisis allowed his poetic language to be absorbed in the discourse of war, virtually depriving it of any critical potential. Accordingly, a decisive change in the representation of nature appears in his later poems. The acceptance of nature as the poet's natural surroundings was combined with a renewed interest in the traditional vision of human existence as a part of the flow of

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[88] See p.16 of this chapter.

nature, with the emphasis being placed on the uncertainty and the transient nature of individual lives. The consequence of such a vision was the creation of a wholly passive subject in Ito's poetry, who willingly adapted himself to the wartime environment, and who, when nature remained "beautiful" at the moment of Japan's political devastation, found himself deprived of the power to sustain his poetic creativity.

For the poets of *The Four Seasons*, as we have seen in the case of Miyoshi, the changing social, cultural and political environment in Japan of the late 1930s and the early 1940s had less immediate impact on the creative attitude than it did to a poet like Ito. Though lacking in an ironic vision of Japan's cultural crisis, the journal's emphasis on the value of Japan's lyrical tradition did not fundamentally conflict with the voices calling for Japan's "cultural renaissance". The apparent political neutrality of *The Four Seasons* worked well in a society in which critical political values were being discreetly replaced by cultural values, which in turn acquired a power to work politically. The reappraisal of Japan's lyrical tradition and the sentiment that accompanied it, revolving around the awareness of the brevity and uncertainty of human lives, was just such an example. Reinforced by the renewed sense of a loss of Japan's cultural past, this kind of sentiment quickly became charged with political implications and consequently made a significant contribution to the establishment of Japan's wartime discourse. It was only a matter of time, then, before the poetic language of *The Four Seasons* became mixed with the voices supporting Japan's militaristic advances in Asia. We need not be reminded that many of the so-called war poems abounded in traditional images of nature. It was not coincidental at all, therefore, that so many Japanese poets in the early 1940s, regardless of the schools they to which they belonged, sang of the beauty of Japanese landscapes, the brevity of human lives, of union with nature, and the willingness to allow nature -- sometimes disguised in the form of Japanese mythical figures -- to take its course. During the last few years of their publication, from around 1941 to 1944, the distinction in the orientations

between *Cogito* and *The Four Seasons* became increasingly ambiguous. Though these journals did manage to claim literary independence by reserving a minimal distance from other publications that were directly aimed at the proliferation of the state ideology, it had become clear by then that their potential to function as a critique of the dominating discourse had been thoroughly vanquished.

I have demonstrated in this chapter how the new trends in poetic endeavours, emerging in the wake of the demise of the avant-garde and Marxist movements, set the stage for the production of a new kind of poetry, which reflected much more strongly than the poetic works of the preceding periods the poets' concern for the cultural state of modern Japan in relation to the country's indigenous tradition. The rise in this kind of poetic-cultural consciousness was closely related to the more general socio-cultural trend known as the movement toward Japan's "cultural renaissance", which in turn was inseparable from the political changes taking place at the time, leading the Japanese state into war with China, imperial expansion into the neighboring nations, and eventually into war with the United States. I have stressed more than once that the poetic movements unfolding during this time were not a mere response to the political developments, though it is true that the poets' literary independence was largely undermined as the political pressures from the above became increasingly strong. More important, however, was the fact that many Japanese poets willingly created works that directly or indirectly echoed the general orientation suggested by the state, without the poets themselves acknowledging the cost of their activities in broader historical terms. We have seen in the examination of the evolution of the poetry of Ito Shizuo and Miyoshi Tatsuji how undramatic the "conversion" to the state ideology was, making it difficult to condemn them for renouncing their attempt to resist the dominating discourse. The atmosphere created by the rise of the "cultural renaissance", and consequently the permeation of a broader sentiment expressing the desire to "return to Japan", after more than half a century of the national effort to Westernize, coincided so well with the nation's advance into militarism and the war that even the overtly aggressive militaristic actions were aestheticised and idealized, and sometimes mythologised, in the name of culture. The

creative urge shared by the poets to revitalize their lost culture and to re-establish Japan's cultural authenticity, which many regarded as sacrificed as a means to preserve the state in the encounter with modern Western powers, was able to gain the support of the state, which was then struggling to form itself into a new socio-political entity, intent on reversing the logic of the Meiji Restoration of "leave Asia and enter the West" in order to "leave the West and enter Asia".

## Conclusion

In the 1920s and the 1930s every Japanese poet confronted a situation in which he was compelled to define his position against his society and culture, which in turn reflected his vision of Japan's position in the modern world. The readings of the works of the poets dealt with in this thesis have illustrated various modernist responses to the socio-cultural modernization of Japan and its consequences. Inspired by the newly introduced avant-garde and modernist artistic and literary movements of the West, the Japanese poets also embarked on their own avant-garde and modernist projects, and in their pursuit of new poetry grappled with the fundamental dilemma of Japanese modernity, presenting various visions of the state of their culture and society in relation to its history as well as to its position in the contemporary world. The discussion in the previous chapters has shown how the poets with different interests and inclinations, coming from different social backgrounds and writing in different socio-cultural and political environments, negotiated with the problem of tradition, subjectivity and the meaning of poetic engagement. The avant-garde poets challenged the modern tradition of post-Meiji Japan, largely excluding from their view the issues related to the significance of Japan's premodern tradition. The examination of three poets in this group has shown, however, that, with the foundation of Japan's modern tradition being so uncertain, the meaning of their actions was immediately questioned, resulting in Takahashi redirecting his efforts to the search for indigenous tradition, Ogata immersing himself in questioning the validity of the modern subjectivity, and Hagiwara struggling, with little success, to define his object of challenge. The internationally oriented poets of *Poetry and Poetics* also faced a similar problem, and their grounds for their activities were fundamentally shaken as the state began to close itself against foreign influences with the deepening of imperialist expansion. The trajectory of the poets representing the "cultural renaissance" and their refracted vision of the native tradition revealed most clearly the principal nature of the cultural dilemma of modern Japan.

The question that arises from this, then, is how their poetic endeavours were understood and evaluated in the years following Japan's defeat in 1945, and how we should look at the continuity, or the lack of it, between pre-1945 poetry and the so-called "contemporary poetry" of the postwar period. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the general societal and cultural inclination in the post-1945 period was to move away from the dark ages of the past and to start a new page in history. This tendency was evident in poetry as well, the basic stance of postwar poetic movements characterised by their willingness to leave behind the unsuccessful attempts of prewar modernist poetry and start a new history of contemporary Japanese poetry.

The most influential movement was led by the *Arechi* group, which published annual poetic anthologies, *Arechi* [*Wasteland*], between 1947 and 1958.[1] Most of its members were born around 1920 and had been conscripted into the military forces during the war. Some of them had also been involved in the "l'esprit nouveau" journals, such as *The New Territory* and *VOU*, at one time. Asserting that their prewar poetic endeavours had resulted in failure, chiefly due to the excessive concern for the artistic effect of the poetic language and a grave lack of concern for the ideological significance of their activities, the poets of *Wasteland* advocated the retrieval of ideology and

[1] Strictly speaking, the *Arechi* movement was inaugurated in the prewar period, publishing its first issue in March 1939. It published five issues until April 1940. It is the second and the third *Arechi* movements I am referring to here, which was started by a new group of poets apart from Ayukawa Nobuo, who survived the war. Two of the original members had died in battle, and one had committed suicide. See *Nihon Kindai Bungaku Daijiten*, vol.5: 19-20. It should also be noted that the earliest of the postwar poetic movements was marked by the activities of the *Matinee Poetique* group, which published works written during the war years. The first collection came out in July 1946. Their call for the revival of music in poetry and their attempt to create fixed-style rhymed verses was rooted in their critical view of the "l'esprit nouveau" poets, whose works largely neglected the effect of sound in poetry. However, the *Matinee Poetique* movement was harshly criticised by many contemporary poets as being anachronistic and not reflecting the reality of the times and was concluded in July 1948. See Naka Taro, Takayanagi Makoto, Tokisato Jiro (eds), *Nihon no gendaishi* [Contemporary Japanese poetry], Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1987: Takayanagi Makoto, "Showa koki no shi" ["Poetry of the latter half of Showa"] : 63-147. The general introduction on postwar poetry in this section is taken largely from Takayanagi's discussion.

meaning in poetry. The well-known slogan presented by its leader, Ayukawa Nobuo (1920-1986), that the central concern of the poets should be not "how to write" but "what to write", well summarises the intended direction of the movement.

Another journal, *Retto* [The archipelago], was started a few years after the inauguration of *Wasteland*, in 1952. Whereas *Wasteland* can be seen as a critical reorientation of the prewar "l'esprit nouveau" poetry, *The Archipelago* can be regarded as representing a renewed departure from the prewar proleatrian poetic stream. Embracing a leftist vision of culture and society, the poets of *The Archipelago* critically examined the weakness and the limitations of prewar proletarian poetry and devoted themselves to the creation of a new type of proletarian poetry, which not only incorporated in its content their ideological vision but also paid adequate attention to the poetic form in which it was presented. According to *The Archipelago* poets, the eventual halt of the prewar proletarian poetic movement was not simply a result of its being forced to silence by the state authorities but was also related to the fact that there lay an inherent limitation in prewar proletarian poetry due to its failure in exploring the possibilities of the poetic form and style that best represented their vision. *The Archipelago* published twelve issues and was concluded in March 1955.

The last of the major poetic movements of the immediate postwar period was represented by the poets who gathered around a journal named *Chikyu* [The earth] in 1950.[2] The activities of this group revealed a close affinity with the lyricist poetic inclinations of *The Four Seasons*. Advocating "neo-romanticism", the poets in this group attempted to incorporate social consciousness in lyrical poetry in order to overcome the apparent limitations in the lyricist pursuit of

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[2] The group participating in *Chikyu* [The Earth] initially gathered around a journal called *Chigusa* in 1937, which was renamed *Chikyu* in 1943 and continued its publication until 1945. The same group published two more issues in 1947. It is the third movement started in 1950 led by this group that I refer to here.

*The Four Seasons*, which, they saw, could find no means of resistance to the prewar and wartime social and political conditions. What these poets meant by "neo-romanticism" remained unclear, however, and the movement itself had little impact on the overall poetic scene of the postwar period.[3]

This sketch of the Japanese poetic scene in the wake of the nation's total defeat interestingly reveals that despite their unanimous claim that a new history of "postwar poetry" had to be started, the relationship between the poetic groups presented a striking resemblance to that which constituted the poetic scene of the prewar period. Each of the three major journals represented the three dominant streams of the late 1920s and the early 1930s, attempting to present a revised vision of poetry in respective ways within that framework.[4] Another point worth attention is that many of those who played a central role in the publication of the prewar poetic journals were not directly involved in the publication of these journals, thus, there was a distinct break in the membership despite the apparent continuity in the orientations of the journals. It was not that the representative poets of the prewar period had stopped writing poetry altogether; Anzai, Kitagawa, Ito and Miyoshi, all continued to write after 1945 but were less active in their involvement with a particular movement.[5] Related to

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[3] Another poetic journal, *Rekitei* [Historical path], was also restarted in 1947. This journal held as its principle a refusal to adhere to any particular literary stance and intended instead to represesent a diversity of views and attitudes toward literature. This stance was maintained both in its prewar and postwar publications, and thus an examination of this journal was excluded in the previous chapters as well, because it did not conform to any particular stream or movement.

[4] There is a number of work on post-1945 Japanese poetry, though, to my knowledge, little has been discussed about the structural relationship between the pre-1945 groups and the post-1945 groups. Literary historians seem to agree on the point that there were three major poetic streams in the postwar era. Compare, for example, Takayanagi, *Op.Cit.*, with Kokai Eiji, "Gendaishi no jokyo" ["The situation of contemporary poetry"], *Kindaishi kara gendaishi e*, Tokyo: Yuseido, 1966: 209-228.

[5] In the case of the proletarian poets, one of the central figures of the prewar proletarian movement, Nakano Shigeharu, played a leading role in the publication of *Shin Nihon Bungaku* [New Japanese literature], which attracted a number of the former members of The Proletarian Writers' Association. The journal was started in 1946 and presented a strong ideological orientation

this point, it can be said that in the post-1945 period the significance of poetic movements themselves had lost much of its relevance in the socio-cultural context which had experienced a dramatic shift after 1945. Even though the movements that largely resembled in structure those of the prewar period were restarted, the collective drive to pursue a certain direction in poetry did not gain the momentum that it had before the war. It is rather the achievements of individual poets writing from diverse positions that have marked significant points in the history of post-1945 Japanese poetry.

In the overall context of this thesis, what I wish to bring to attention here is that various attempts to reflect upon the weaknesses of prewar modernist poetry in order to create a new history of postwar poetry did not lead to a general and systematic exploration of the fundamental dilemma embedded in the structure of Japanese modernity, which was inevitably linked with the way in which the prewar poetic movements had developed. As the examination in the previous chapters has shown, the central concern of all the major movements, despite the differences in their points of view, was the question of what it meant to be modern, progressive, and up-to-date in Japanese poetry, and linked to this, implicitly or explicitly, was the question of how to deal with the fact that the works were written in Japanese, in the specific Japanese social and cultural context. The urge to work in the international context and the particular historical consciousness shared by Japanese poets with regard to their own cultural tradition caused an unavoidable conflict. And the cause of this conflict clearly lay in the fact that "international", for the Japanese poets of the time, meant nothing other than "the West". From the vantage point of the present, though, it becomes clear that this fundamental perception did not change even in the years following 1945. Even though the idea of "the West" was significantly dominated by "America" in the postwar years, the event of the nation's total defeat did not lead in any way to the resolution of the conflict between the universal and the particular in terms of the question of cultural identity.

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(representing the ideology upheld by the Communist Party until a rift occurred between the party and the journal in 1950). It concentrated mostly on prose works and critical studies.

This thesis has attempted to highlight the basic structure of this conflict by focusing on the 1920s and the 1930s when the patterns for dealing with this question were manifested most clearly. These patterns persisted in the postwar years as well, exhibited through the activities of the poets who strove to launch a new history of Japanese poetry by negating the achievements of their predecessors. What we can read in these developments is a typical modernist attitude, that is, a will to break with the past, to push forward in an attempt to open a new horizon, and in that process to exclude those whose visions differ. As our reading of the Japanese modernist poems has shown, modernism works on the principles of choice and exclusion. In the modern Japanese context, the choices were made between the past and the present, the native and the foreign, which were mingled with the ideas of belatedness and progress, the periphery and the centre, the dominated and the dominating, the particular and the universal.

It is only in the last few decades that a discursive trend to challenge this modernist paradigm has emerged, the forces of which are directed to the breaking down of these binary oppositions as well as the units of these oppositions, the most predominant of them being the nation. It must be acknowledged, however, that the acceleration of the socio-cultural urge to break down the modernist boundaries does not immediately suggest that the examination of modernist history will eventually become insignificant. The prevalent postmodernist theories may serve to describe certain contemporary phenomena, but they do not serve to break down the historical construction upon which we stand. In contemporary Japan, into which Western social and cultural products have been so thoroughly integrated, the tension between the native and the foreign is much less felt compared to the periods we have looked at in this study. However, this does not mean that the inherent dilemma of Japanese modernity has been resolved. Postmodernist theories have offered a perspective from which to embrace a plurality of views, unrestricted by that represented by the nation. It is only through such a perspective, freed from the interests of national history, that we can attempt to view and explore the nature of modernity in its totality. The intention of this thesis lay in making the first

step toward the acquisition of such a perspective.

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