

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

FACULTY OF ARTS

SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES  
DEPARTMENT OF JAPANESE AND KOREAN  
STUDIES

DISSERTATION:

Autonomy  
In  
Modern Japanese Literature

Submitted by:

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In Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D).

DECEMBER 2007

## PhD Dissertation: Autonomy in Modern Japanese Literature

### ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to examine the manner in which the concept of autonomy (*jiritsu*) is treated in modern and contemporary Japanese literature. This examination will be performed by analysing the autonomous attitude of a contemporary Japanese writer Nakagami Kenji (1946–1992). This dissertation focuses on examining Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing. We will explore the manner in which his act of writing appears to be a paradox between self-identification and the integration into the collective. Then, we will observe the possibility in which Nakagami's ambivalent attitude is extended to cover Maruyama Masao's relative definition of autonomy and Karatani Kōjin's interpretation of Immanuel Kant's notion of freedom and responsibility.

Nakagami's attempt is certainly not confined to only his works. The notion of autonomy may be applied to perceive a similar thought that was represented by previous writers. We will also examine various never-ending autonomous attempts expressed by Sakaguchi Ango, Miyazawa Kenji and Nakahara Chūya. Moreover, we will analyse how Nakagami's distrust of the modern Japanese language and his admiration of the body as an undeniable object are reflected in his major novels in detail and attempt to extend this observation into the works of the theatrical artists in the 1960s such as Betsuyaku Minoru, Kara Jūrō, Hijikata Tatsumi and Terayama Shūji and contemporary women writers such as Tsushima Yūko, Takamura Kaoru, Tawada Yōko and Yoshimoto Banana. These writers and artists struggled to establish their autonomous freedom as they encountered the conflict between their individual bodies that personifies their personal autonomy and the modern Japanese language that confines them in the fixed and submissive roles in present-day Japan.

In this dissertation, I would like to conclude that Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing can be an eternal self-legislation, that is, his endless attempt to establish autonomous freedom, which evolves from the paradox between the individual (body) and the collective (language).

だれもひとつの島ではない。だれもそれ自体で完全なものではない。すべての人間は大陸のひとかけら、全体の一部、もし海によって土が洗い流されれば、欧州は小さくなる。あるいは岬も、あるいは汝の友人たちや汝自身の土地も同じこと。あらゆる人の死は私を削り落とす、なぜなら、私は人類の一部なのだから。ゆえに、決して誰がために鐘は鳴ると問うなかれ、それは汝のために鳴っているのだから。

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*.

**In memory of my father**

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## Acknowledgement

I wish to express my special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Yasuko Claremont for providing critical comments in writing this dissertation and also for her valuable advice on the first draft. I appreciate her continuous encouragement that not only determined the fundamental direction of my thought but also helped in not diverting from it when writing this dissertation. Further, I extend my special gratitude to my sub-supervisor Dr. Mats Karlsson for reading the draft and providing many helpful suggestions. I could not have been able to complete this study without the understanding and time provided by the members of the Japanese Studies Department. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Associate Professor Elise Tipton, Professor Hugh Clark, Dr. Roman Rosenbaum and many staff members in the Japanese Studies department for their helpful critical comments, guidance and kindness.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Agnes Syrokomla-Stefanowska who spent many hours in proofreading the final draft. I am also extremely grateful for the intelligent advice, encouragement and friendship offered by Barry Claremont. I thank Dr. Ōkita Taketoshi of Osaka University for his assistance in collecting books and materials. In addition, I particularly thank him for immeasurably helpful discussions on the Kantian philosophy and Nakagami Kenji's literature. My special thanks are for Paul Arkell and Shinji Kakizaki for their hospitality shown when I visited Sydney in the past five years; without their help, I might have never been able to achieve this. I also thank Higashi Teruhiko who provided me an opportunity to contribute several papers to their annual magazine *Goō*; further, I thank many staff members in the Kumano JK Project for their generous support and friendship. I need to also thank Dean Hajime Yamamoto and my colleagues at Kansai Gaidai University for their assistance and support that helped me to write this dissertation. Finally, I would like to thank my mother and sister for their long-standing support, which made it possible for me to study in Sydney.



## INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I would like to examine the manner in which the concept of autonomy (*jiritsu* 自律) is treated in modern and contemporary Japanese literature. This will be done through an analysis of the autonomous attitude of a contemporary Japanese writer, Nakagami Kenji (中上健次 1946–1992). Nakagami was an illegitimate child, born in the *burakumin* (Japanese outcast) ghetto of Shingū City in Wakayama prefecture (known by the old name of the province, Kishū) one year after the end of World War II. His complex ancestry and the *burakumin* neighbourhood provided the background for the gravity of his thought-provoking works. Nakagami won the Akutagawa Prize for his story *Misaki* (岬 The Cape) in 1976, which ushered him into the Japanese *bundan* (the literary circle) as a promising writer. His own harsh experiences provided the themes and motifs that were consistently manifest in his works—especially, *Karekinada* (枯木灘 Sea of Dead Trees, 1977) and *Chi no hate shijō no toki* (地の果て至上の時 The Sublime Time at the End of the Earth, 1984), which are the sequels to *Misaki*. The three stories are known as *Akiyuki sanbusaku* (秋幸三部作), the trilogy of Akiyuki. His other works include *Keshō* (化粧 Makeup), which was written between 1974 and 1977; *Sennen no yuraku* (千年の愉楽 A Thousand Years of Pleasure, 1982), a story that treated outcast young men as semi-divine entities; *Nichirin no tsubasa* (日輪の翼 The Wings of the Sun, 1984); *Kumano-shū* (熊野集 A Kumano Collection, 1984); *Kiseki* (奇蹟 Miracle, 1989); *Sanka* (讃歌 Hymn, 1990); *Keibetsu* (軽蔑 Scorn, 1992); and *Izoku* (異族 The Different Tribe, 1993), which was one of his posthumous, unfinished works. These

works have recurring themes. Many of Nakagami's works including the Akiyuki trilogy are set in Kumano,<sup>1</sup> and are known as the 'Kumano saga'. Converging and diverging concurrently, each story in the Kumano saga is intricately interlinked with other stories that have the outcast community in Kishū as their backdrop. Nakagami is the first Akutagawa Prize winner who was born after the war and belongs to a generation whose youth witnessed the tumultuous period of student protests, a high economic growth rate and the rapid diffusion of industrialization, consumer culture and mass communication. Since the early 1970s and until his death in 1992, Nakagami produced controversial novels and essays and gained a reputation as one of the most important and influential contemporary Japanese writers. In 1996, his literary oeuvre comprised fifteen volumes of complete works, *Nakagami Kenji zenshū (NKZ)*. Over the past few decades, there have been a considerable number of studies on Nakagami's literature, both nationally and internationally. Nakagami's texts have been read and examined from various viewpoints: narratology, intertextuality, comparative literature, feminism, gender, body, racism, social minority groups and so forth.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kumano is the old name of Wakayama prefecture (Kishū). It is well known as a sacred site to both Shinto and Buddhism since ancient times. For example, there are three sacred shrines (Kumano sanzan: Kumano hongū, Kumano hayatama jinja in Shingū, Kumano nachi jinja in Nachi) where successive emperors visited. Therefore, numerous old tales and narratives grew out of this area. This area was added to the World Heritage List in 2004.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see, Eve Zimmerman, 'In the Trap of Words: Nakagami Kenji and the Making of Degenerate Fictions', in Stephan Snyder and Philip Gabriel (eds), *Ōe and Beyond*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999, 130–152 and *Out of the Alleyway Nakagami Kenji and the Poetics of Outcaste Fiction*, Harvard University Asia Center, 2007; Mats Karlsson, *The Kumano Saga of Nakagami Kenji*, Edsbruk: Akademitryck, 2001; Nina Cornyetz, *Dangerous Woman, Deadly Words*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999; Livia Monnet, 'Ghostly Women, Displaced Femininities, and Male Family Romances: Violence, Gender, and Sexuality in Two Texts by Nakagami Kenji', *Japan Forum* (8:1 1996): 13–34; Noriko Miura, *Marginal Voice, Marginal Body: The Treatment of The Human Body in the Works of Nakagami Kenji, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Salman Rushdie*, Dissertation. Com, USA, 2000; Alan Tansman, 'History, Repetition, and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji', *Journal of Japanese Studies* (24:2 1998): 257–288; Karatani Kōjin, *Sakaguchi Ango to Nakagami Kenji*, Tokyo: Ōta shuppan, 1996; Watanabe Naomi, *Nakagami Kenji ron: Itoshisa nitsuite*, Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1996; Yomota Inuhiko, *Kishu to tensei*, Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1987; Iguchi Tokio, *Kiki to tōsō: Ōe Kenzaburō to Nakagami Kenji*, Tokyo: Sakuhinsha,

By focusing on the works and critical remarks of Nakagami Kenji—mainly, the essays written in the 1970s, the comments made during lectures, round-table discussions and in fiction—I would like to highlight the ambivalent nature of his writings. This dissertation is an attempt to illustrate whether the ambivalent attitude in Nakagami’s process of writing fiction is to be regarded as an autonomous action, or more precisely as a continuing act of autonomous decision-making. The aim is to explore the manner in which the notion of autonomy may develop from dichotomous, contradictory or fluid situations as opposed to monothetic, holistic or static ones. Viewed from this perspective, the dissertation suggests that the notion of autonomy derived from Nakagami Kenji’s ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing can be considered as an act of autonomous decision-making that is constantly altered according to the existing situation. Moreover, I would like to examine whether this type of autonomous attitude arising from a conceptual conflict is observed in the works of other modern/contemporary Japanese writers.

Since the hostage crisis involving three Japanese civilians in Iraq in April 2004, the word *jiko-sekinin* (自己責任 self-responsibility) or *jiko-kettei* (自己決定 self-determination) has been a topic of debate in Japan. Many publishers have been working to publish new books on the issue of self-determination, freedom or free will, which is related to moral responsibility.<sup>3</sup> The issue of autonomy—or in more concrete terms, the right of self-determination or the freedom to make our own decisions—has been one of the most controversial subjects in many fields of study, for instance,

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2004.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Karatani Kōjin, *Rinri 21*, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2000; Takeda Seiji, *Ningen-teki jiyū no jōken—Hēgeru to posutomodan*, Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004; Miyadai Shinji and Nakamasa Masaki, *Nichijō · kyōdōtai · aironī—Jiko-kettei no honshitsu to genkai*, Tokyo: Sōfūsha, 2004; Saitō Jun’ichi, *Jiyū*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2005; Ōya Takehiro, *Jiyū to wa nanika—kanshi shakai to ‘kojin’ no shōmetsu*, Tokyo: Chikuma shinsho, 2007.

political thought or medical ethics.<sup>4</sup> In these fields, one may notice that a decision made by an individual is always called into question: ‘To what extent should an individual assume responsibility for his or her actions in the case of activities carried out by voluntary peace groups in Iraq or voluntary euthanasia?’ The answer is always complex and in some cases, ironic. To the best of my knowledge, the notion of autonomy in modern/contemporary Japanese fiction has not really been studied, especially not in English. Indeed, an examination of the concept of autonomy in modern/contemporary Japanese fiction and poetry from the perspective of the conflict between freedom and moral responsibility would be interesting. In addition to Nakagami Kenji, in this dissertation, I have chosen writers, poets and dramatists whom I considered to be reasonably central—that is, writers whose work revealed significant elements related to the concept of autonomy—for example Sakaguchi Ango (坂口安吾 1906–1955), Miyazawa Kenji (宮沢 賢治 1896–1933), Nakahara Chūya (中原中也 1907–1937), Betsuyaku Minoru (別役実 b. 1937), Hijikata Tastumi (土方巽 1928–1986), Terayama Shūji (寺山修二 1935–1983), Kara Jūrō (唐十郎 b. 1940), Tsushima Yūko (津島佑子 b. 1947), Takamura Kaoru (高村薫 b. 1953), Tawada Yōko (多和田葉子 b. 1961) and Yoshimoto Banana (よしもとばなな b. 1964). This is certainly not a complete list of modern/contemporary Japanese writers who express the concept of autonomy in their works. Further, I do not intend to compare the texts of these writers using the approach of comparative literature. In this dissertation, I wish to explore the possibility of using the degree of autonomy as a means of reinterpreting the works of modern/contemporary Japanese writers. I hope this study will generate an interest in the issue of self-determination and moral

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Tateiwa Shin'ya, *Yowaku aru jiyū e: Jiko-kettei, kaigo, seishi no gijutsu*, Tokyo: Seidosha, 2000.

responsibility, and serve as a catalyst for the creation of a connection to other areas of study on the subject of autonomy.

Nakagami Kenji creates his literary universe through a sort of ambivalent world view. He adopts the view that the dichotomy between the two (*nikō tairitsu* 二項対立) will never be dialectically reconciled or end with unipolar domination; rather, it repeats its pattern endlessly.<sup>5</sup> Nakagami does not attempt to destroy the conceptual dichotomy between the two because he considers the two poles as preconditions for each other. Further, he views this type of antinomy as a powerful impetus to continue to write his novels. In my view, Nakagami demonstrates his autonomous attitude through this continued act of writing, which he considers as an endless conflict between the establishment of his identity and his dependence on others. From this perspective, Nakagami Kenji's autonomy can be described as conditional and perpetual—autonomy that rejects absolute universality or the reconciliation of two conflicting interests. He accepts all that happens to us as the human condition, and makes his decisions based on the situation at a given time. However, he is never content with a particular decision for a long period; instead, depending on the changing circumstances, he continues to modify it frequently.

Using Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitude towards the act of writing as a starting point, this dissertation attempts to illustrate that the notion of autonomy is extended to encompass the view that two polarized ideas that are generally regarded as mutually exclusive may accommodate one another and can be considered as mutually complementary. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2000), the word autonomy is defined as '1. the freedom for a country, a region or organization to

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<sup>5</sup> Nakagami, 'Futatsu no kōkyū saron (二つの後宮サロン)', *Goō* (牛王) (Vol. 4 2006): 81.

govern itself independently; 2. the ability to act and make decisions without being controlled by anyone else'. The dictionary definition clarifies that the concept of autonomy can be closely linked to the issue of self-determination or more precisely, the freedom of will to choose our actions. Further, free will is inseparably connected to the idea of moral responsibility, because a person's ability to control his/her destiny should always be considered in the context of the social collectives that surround the individual. In this regard, autonomy is a word fraught with antinomy. It is always extended to a discussion of the free will–determinism antinomy. In Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy, autonomy refers to self-legislation, that is, the determination of will that 'gives itself its law, and is distinguished from a heteronomous will whose law is given by the object'.<sup>6</sup> The principle of autonomy is closely linked to the discussion on the freedom of the will that is 'independent of any determination by alien causes'.<sup>7</sup> However, the discussion as to whether free will is not influenced by any alien causes is one of the continuing metaphysical arguments. The conflict between free will and causal determinism has been one of the most controversial philosophical subjects over the centuries. If determinism is a reality and freedom of will is an illusion, our actions, like all other events, can be determined by a cause-and-effect relationship. They may merely be the consequences of prior events. If this is the case, this view implies that we are not responsible for our actions. Nevertheless, we believe that we are, if only partially, responsible for what we have done. Thus, the issue of whether the individual is purely/partially autonomous or dependent on various human collectives, such as nation states, firms and households, is always problematic. In this context, from the viewpoint of Nakagami Kenji's autonomous attitude, which lies in the eternal conflict

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<sup>6</sup> Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, 88.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

between autonomy and dependence, this dissertation suggests that personal autonomy—which is related to self-determination, self-identification and free will—and dependence on the collectives—which is related to a commitment to social responsibility or moral law, solidarity with others and the sense of social belonging—can indeed coexist and complement each other, rather than competing with one another.

In order to understand the complementary nature of the autonomous attitude in the literature of Nakagami Kenji more clearly, this dissertation applies the concept of both individual and social autonomy derived from Maruyama Masao's analysis of Fukuzawa Yukichi's freedom, Karatani Kōjin's interpretation of Kantian autonomy and responsibility and Ferdinand de Saussure's paradoxical view of *langue* and *parole*. The subjects these scholars examine are certainly not identical; further, they treat entirely different matters. However, in this dissertation, I attempt to illustrate the approaches of these scholars to two polarized values that are considered to be mutually exclusive. All these scholars reject the notion of an ultimate method to demonstrate a one-dimensional sense of values and discuss a complementary approach to the treatment of the paradox between the individual element and the whole. The dichotomy between the individual and the collective, for instance, autonomy and dependence, the self and others, free will and determinism, *langue* and *parole*, is regarded to be mutually complementary rather than antithetical. One pole serves as a precondition for the other and vice versa. For example, a Japanese political scientist and theorist Maruyama Masao (1914–1996) regards the system of democracy to be paradoxical, and there are always 'difficulties involved in reconciling the individual and the collective in post-war

Japan’.<sup>8</sup> Maruyama demonstrates two types of autonomy: ‘personal autonomy’, which is attained by the individual ‘whose action bears “the principle of self-regulation, or responsibility as [its] corollary”’,<sup>9</sup> and ‘social autonomy’, which refers to ‘a pluralistic society in which multi-dimensional individuals preserve their mobility in society’.<sup>10</sup> Maruyama asserts that successful social autonomy cannot be realized unless it is premised on personal autonomy; conversely, successful personal autonomy is achieved only when the pluralistic society relentlessly allows the individual to be fluid and relative, depending on the existing situations.

The philosopher and literary critic Karatani Kōjin (b. 1941) reinterprets the concept of autonomous freedom posed by Immanuel Kant. He explains that Kant’s morality is attained by bracketing the spheres of the beautiful or happiness. Moreover, for Kant, morality is a matter of freedom rather than goodness or badness. Karatani goes on to explain that freedom is synonymous to being *causa sui* (*jiko-gen’in-teki dearukoto* 自己原因的であること), that is, ‘self-motivated, subjective, and autonomous’.<sup>11</sup> Let us carry out a more concrete examination of Karatani’s point of view on freedom, which for him, is the notion that we should attribute the cause of all occurrences to ourselves. In order to be free, should we really attribute the cause of any incident to ourselves? According to Karatani, firstly, from a theoretical perspective, we should accept the fact that everything that happens is determined by the law of causality; consequently, we do not possess the freedom to choose our actions. However, Karatani emphasizes the fact that at the same time, we should be aware that the ideas of freedom and responsibility emerge from the practical stance of bracketing external causality. We are morally

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<sup>8</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 102–104.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 3–4.

<sup>11</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique on Kant and Marx*, 115.



responsible for our actions when causality is bracketed, that is, when we regard ourselves to be free agents. Theoretically, we do not act of our own free will; however, practically, we are able to view ourselves as free agents, in order for us to be responsible.<sup>12</sup> According to Karatani, in order to be free, Kant believed that one must obey the command: 'be free!'. In this respect, Karatani points out that there is no enigma in Kant's words: "he can do something because he is aware that he ought to do it," which simply means that freedom can spring only from the imperative of being free'.<sup>13</sup> This interpretation leads Karatani to regard Kant's transcendental standpoint as something that is described as a functionally autonomous alternation between the theoretical and the practical attitude. Based on this account, free will is possible when we possess stances that are simultaneously theoretical and practical.

Similarly, Ferdinand de Saussure defines language (*langue*) as an abstract systematic collective, whose essence has been continuously evolving from various individual utterances (*parole*), and can be regarded as a mere 'social product whose existence allows the individual to use the language faculty'.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, Saussure points out that the two objects, language (*langue*) and individual speech (*parole*), presuppose each other and cannot exist without each other.

Nakagami Kenji regards his act of writing as a ceaseless attempt to seek autonomous freedom and as a means to establish his self-identity. However, this quest for autonomy manifests itself in two ambivalent attitudes, that is, the self-differentiation that recognizes his self as absolutely his own and the desire to integrate himself into others. Nakagami believed that the two attitudes coexist in a complementary manner

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 117–118.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistics*, 66a.

when he writes. In this sense, his act of writing must always be considered to be conditional, and it will be renewed endlessly in accordance with the changing values of the time. Where then does Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards the act of writing stem from? The ambivalent nature of his writing could be induced by his distrust of *kotoba* (language).<sup>15</sup> Nakagami casts grave doubt on the Japanese language as a means to write his novels. He considers the Japanese language as a power apparatus that imposes the law/system of the modern nation-state or social morality on the people. For Nakagami, the inherent nature of *kotoba* is such that it leads to the reproduction and spread of conventional ideas. However, at the same time, *kotoba* is his only means of destroying the old order and creating a new sense of values in his writings. This ambivalent perception of *kotoba* poses a serious dilemma for Nakagami as a professional writer. He stated that 'Language is deceptive!' (*Kotoba wa uso da!*), and his distrust of *kotoba* was evident in his early essays of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>16</sup> Having regarded *kotoba* (the Japanese language) as a modern invention derived from the *genbun icchi*<sup>17</sup> movement (the movement for the vernacularization of written Japanese) of the early Meiji period, Nakagami observes a flaw in the Japanese language itself: it functions as an invisible power apparatus that strengthens the canonization of Japanese cultural or national identities in accordance with the historical process of Japan's modern nation-state. Thus, Nakagami considers modern Japanese as a type of dubious,

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<sup>15</sup> The Japanese term *kotoba* is a word with many shades of meaning. Its definitions range from language in general or one's speech act to a word/term, phrase or expression. Unless otherwise specified, hereafter, I will use the term *kotoba* to refer to language in general.

<sup>16</sup> For example, see Nakagami Kenji, 'Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku' and 'Toki wa nagareru...' both in *NKZ* Vol.14, 220–242. In 1996, his literary contribution comprised fifteen volumes of complete works, *Nakagami Kenji zenshū*. Wherever necessary, I use the abbreviation *NKZ* for *Nakagami Kenji zenshū*.

<sup>17</sup> The Japanese term 言文一致 is romanized as '*genbun'itchi*' in *Kenkyūsha's New Japanese-English Dictionary, Fifth Edition*, Tokyo: Kenkyūsha, 2003. However, I will use '*genbun icchi*' throughout this dissertation.

hastily formed product forged by state power for the benefit of the modern nation-state, and makes a sharp distinction between the standard Japanese derived from the *genbun icchi* movement and the indigenous dialect of his birthplace, Kishū. On this issue, this dissertation applies Karatani Kōjin's discussion on common-sense notions found in modern Japanese literature, which are termed as 'landscape' or 'confession'; Haruo Shirane's debate over the cultural formation of the 'canon'; and Suzuki Tomi's analysis of 'I-novel discourse' (*shishōsetsu gensetsu*).<sup>18</sup> Karatani, Shirane and Suzuki reveal that what has been considered as common sense or natural in modern Japanese literature, such as the I-novel discourse and the notion of landscape or confession, is actually a historical and cultural product. They expose the origins of these common-sense notions in Japanese literature, which were concealed as soon as they were produced, as though they had always existed. The process of inventing these types of authorized texts or fixed ideas, that is, canons, repeats itself endlessly.

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Nakagami Kenji viewed *kotoba* as a modern invention that creates a uniform and monolithic ideological system—in his words, the archetype of narrative (*monogatari no teikei*). He emphasizes the fact that the archetype of narrative hampers the freedom of novels (*shōsetsu*). In his series of essays entitled 'Monogatari no keifu' (Notes on the Genealogy of the Prose Narrative, 1979), Nakagami displays his ambivalent attitude towards *monogatari*.<sup>19</sup> The Japanese word *monogatari* refers to a tale, story or narrative in general; nonetheless, it is a word with wide-ranging implications. Although Nakagami attempts to provide a

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<sup>18</sup> Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, translated and edited by Brett de Bary, 11–96. The original text, *Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen*, was published by Kōdansha in 1980. Shirane and Suzuki, *Inventing the Classics*, 1–27. Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, 1–12.

<sup>19</sup> Nakagami Kenji, 'Monogatari no keifu', in *NKZ* Vol.14, 117–256.

definition of *monogatari*, his definition appears to be a little intricate, ambiguous and at times, ambivalent. He compares *monogatari* to various terms/expressions that indicate a linear narrative of progress: a piece of music with fixed chord progression, popularization, dependence on the law/system that becomes more prominent under the autocratic rule of a militarist regime, nature (*shizen*), capitalism and so forth.<sup>20</sup> He then proceeds to state that this law/system in *monogatari* can be found throughout the country. It appears that Nakagami is attempting to discuss refraining from the extensive usage of this *monogatari* and to discover a new form of writing that would solve the problem of the canon formation of Japanese cultural or national identities, in accordance with the historical process of Japanese modernization. However, at the same time, he does not deny his natural inclination towards *monogatari*. He fully understands that we cannot escape the restrictions placed upon our freedom by the law/system, which easily becomes less prominent when we take the existence of the law/system surrounding us for granted. At times, Nakagami enjoys the use of *monogatari*; however, he simultaneously fights the inclination towards *monogatari* and attempts to depart from the extensive use of the archetype of narrative. He does not intend to advocate the disuse of *monogatari*; rather, he wishes to create an awareness of its existence. He continues his ambivalent, but simultaneously determined, attitude to refuse to abide in the same place and be indifferent to the system/law that conceals its origin and appears to have an *a priori* existence almost as soon as it is established.

Instead of *kotoba*, which is regarded as an unreliable means to invent an imaginary *monogatari* due to its latent ambiguous, abstract and arbitrary nature, Nakagami Kenji recognizes his body as an undeniable object; this, in turn, makes him aware of his own

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 121, 126, 129, 137 and 141.

existence as an object in this world. This awareness creates another dilemma for him, namely, that he, as a writer, has to use *kotoba* to express this awareness, which dawned on him by rejecting *kotoba*. In order to understand Nakagami's celebration of his body more clearly, I employ Douglas N. Slaymaker's analysis of Sakaguchi Ango, Noma Hiroshi and Tamura Taijirō. Slaymaker attempts to clarify the manner in which Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy of existence became equated with the physicality of postwar Japan, as expressed in the works of postwar existentialist writers (*sengo-ha*). He asserts that during the immediate postwar years, 'the body offered antidotes to the bankruptcy of the traditional and military values which characterized the previous fifteen years of war', and 'many Japanese people's celebration of the carnal body (*nikutai* 肉体) suggests a punning contrast to the national polity (*kokutai* 国体), the focus of their desecration'.<sup>21</sup> For Nakagami Kenji, who considers *kotoba* as a system that binds him, *nikutai* can be a type of asylum to which he escapes. However, ironically, this is a world in which there are no words—only objects before they are named.

Thus, Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent perception of writing had developed into a strong distrust of language and an emphasis on the body, which is perceived as an object that has not been given any name, that is to say, an object that has not been tinged with the notion of the collective. In this dissertation, I shall also attempt to extend Nakagami's scepticism towards *kotoba* and inclination towards *nikutai* to include contemporary artists/writers, and explore whether they had shared or inherited this type of perpetual attempt to establish their autonomy or subjective freedom through the conflict between *kotoba* and *nikutai*. Therefore, this dissertation further aims to

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<sup>21</sup> Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, 1–2.

explore the manner in which Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitude towards *kotoba* and *nikutai* bears a marked similarity to the thinking of the theatrical artists of the 1960s, such as Betsuyaku Minoru, Hijikata Tastumi, Terayama Shūji and Kara Jūrō; and to contemporary women writers across different generations, such as Tsushima Yūko (b. 1947), Takamura Kaoru (b. 1953), Tawada Yōko (b. 1961) and Yoshimoto Banana (b. 1964). I will focus on the sense of insecurity and unstable circumstances of these writers at the time when they respectively established their autonomous attitude in their literary universe in postwar Japan. Further, I will examine the manner in which they face the uncertainty with regard to the language they use and/or how they turn to their bodies as the fount of their literary universe. These writers perceive the profound paradox in their written works because their attempts to destroy the fixative or conventional nature of language must be expressed by the very language they distrust.

### **Why is autonomy to be examined in the field of contemporary Japanese literature?**

With the advance of globalisation, particularly since the September 11 terrorist attacks, there has been a renewed interest in the issue of liberalism. Mindful of the unipolarisation of the world economy around the US, the growing tendency towards nationalism and the profusion of a massive consumer culture and the Internet, a reappraisal of subjective freedom or autonomy in the name of democracy is now being called into question. In the field of Japanese literature, too, the ethical issues relating to autonomous freedom and responsibility have been the subject of controversy.

In an Asahi newspaper article dated 25 March 2005, Ōe Kenzaburō (b. 1935) quoted Maruyama Masao's remarks on the definition of freedom from his article, 'Nihon ni

okeru jiyū ishiki no keisei to tokushitsu' (The Formation and Characteristics of Liberal Consciousness in Japan), written soon after the end of World War II. In this article, Ōe suggests that we need to remind ourselves of Maruyama's definition of freedom, which is synonymous with personal autonomy, that is to say, the ability of logical self-determination (*risei-teki jiko kettei*) rather than freedom resulting from the elimination of man's environmental constraints. Ōe introduces Maruyama's assertion that there is more to freedom than that which enables the satisfaction of human desire. He emphasises that we should take moral responsibility for our actions when we identify freedom as our free will to choose our actions. Moreover, Ōe described the status of contemporary Japanese literature in the 1980s as being in a predicament and lamented the fact that there was an absence of an active attitude (*nōdōteki na shisei*),<sup>22</sup> which Ōe viewed as the attitude that developed from the individual who attempts to integrate his/her changes in surrounding familial, social/political and cosmological circumstances and to present a model of individual with a vision for the future at the time.<sup>23</sup> Writers such as Murakami Haruki (村上春樹 b. 1949) in the 1980s were criticized for their passive attitudes and were branded as writers creating sub-cultures that were mere reflections of Tokyo's vast consumer culture. Ōe indicated that this crisis of Japanese literature stemmed from the attitudes of young Japanese intellectuals and the literati of the 1970s and 1980s who excessively utilized cultural theories based on post-structuralism or post-modernism, for instance, the works of figures such as Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Lacan and Kristeva.<sup>24</sup> He described this phenomenon as a mere transplantation or translation of new Western concepts into Japanese, which is

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<sup>22</sup> Ōe, 'Sengo bungaku kara konnichi no kyūkyō made', in *Saigo no shōsetsu*, 206–209.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>24</sup> Ōe, 'Japan's Dual Identity: A Writer's Dilemma', in *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 59–103.

similar to ‘the one-way journey from abroad’, and criticized the ‘passive’ attitude of the young intellectuals who did not make any efforts ‘to analyze them [new theories] carefully in terms of their application to the specific situation in Japan’.<sup>25</sup> It is in this context that Ōe referred to the necessity of the active attitude, which I read as a form of personal autonomy. As if to prove Ōe’s remarks, there has recently been an increase in research into the issue of ‘freedom’ or self-determination (*jiko-kettei*) in the area of contemporary Japanese thought or literature.<sup>26</sup> Living in an age that is coloured and toned by the legacy of post-modernism—such as the ‘mass consumer culture’ and the lack of the ‘I’ notion or autonomy— it would be momentous for us to reconsider the issue of ‘autonomy’ or subjective freedom.

### **The end of grand narrative**

Many scholars working in various academic disciplines in the 1980s were influenced and stimulated by French post-structuralists or post-modernists such as Michel Foucault or Jacques Derrida. Today, more than twenty-five years after the wide prevalence of post-modernistic theory in the groves of academe, there has been some criticism or review of those concepts of post-modernism because of their ambiguity of rhetoric and terminology.<sup>27</sup> This is what Asada Akira has to say on the recent ideological tendency: ‘[T]he pluralism and territorial transgression that are called post-modernism are inevitably assimilated into the capitalistic consumer society as long as they remain a

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Karatani Kōjin, *Rinri 21*, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2000; Azuma Hiroki and Ōsawa Masachi, *Jiyū o kangaeru—9·11 ikō no gendai shisō*, Tokyo: NHK Books, 2003; Nakamasa Masaki, *Derida no yuigon*, Tokyo: Sōfūsha, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Dower, *Iwanami kōza nihon tsūshi bekkān*, 230.



superficial game in semiotics.’<sup>28</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō also acutely criticizes the fact that the young Japanese intellectuals of the 1970s and 1980s had dealt with the structuralism-based cultural ideas as an ephemeral trend. He states: ‘At the height of the ongoing process of accepting and discharging new theories, phrases such as “a performance of ideas” or “a playground of texts” came into common usage. These expressions seemed remarkably appropriate for those who could cope only passively with the kaleidoscope of ideas.’<sup>29</sup> Did the ‘fashion conscious’ intellectuals of ‘Japan’s grotesquely bloated consumer society’ in 1980s merely live and die for post-modern wordplay as a new cultural fashion from Western Europe and America, as suggested by Asada’s or Ōe’s remark?

Under these circumstances of the prevalence of an inactive attitude, what kind of impact did the concepts of post-modernism actually have on the scholarship of Japanese Studies today? John Dower explains that those concepts of ‘decentralization’ or ‘deconstruction’ related with post-modernism, or rather, the various structuralism-based cultural/literary theories, have truly penetrated the whole area of modern Japanese studies. However, it does not mean that those ideas have replaced the past approach.<sup>30</sup> Dower continues to say, however, that because of the baptism of post-modernism, the comprehensive and integrated theories or normative models in accordance with the historical process of modernization have decayed or may have completely vanished. What does Dower really mean by the decay of the comprehensive and integrated theories? Jonathan Culler defines today’s ‘literary theory’ (theories from ‘post-structuralists’ such as Foucault or Derrida) as ‘a pugnacious critique of

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<sup>28</sup> Asada, *Posuto modan kara posuto modan e*, Tokyo: Kobayashi garō, 1990.

<sup>29</sup> Ōe, ‘Japan’s Dual Identity: A Writer’s Dilemma’, 85.

<sup>30</sup> Dower, *Iwanami kōza nihon tsūshi bekkā*, 234.

common-sense notions, and further, an attempt to show that what we take for granted as “common-sense” is in fact a historical construction.<sup>31</sup> In this respect, what is known by the name of traditional Japanese cultural values or uniqueness were re-examined and depicted as nothing but a ‘modern invention’.<sup>32</sup> Thus, we see, as Dower has indicated, the universal models represented by the Marxian framework or the modernization theory were criticized as a manifestation of the cultural hegemony of Western modernity, and regarded as the mere classical, chronological causal explanatory scheme in order to explain a centre-oriented Western modernization. The modernizationists, for example, viewed Japanese modern history as a process of universal modern transformation, that is, a gradual evolutionary progress towards the Western standard of liberal democracy in a lineal process. However, this kind of normative, universal approach was re-examined and gradually decayed in the 1980s. From the point of view of literature, Suzuki Tomi summarizes this matter as follows: ‘Since the 1980s, various literary texts as well as historiographical narratives have been re-examined with a post-modern scepticism towards the notion of the subject as an autonomous, controlling consciousness, and with the shared recognition that the subject is culturally and historically constructed within specific discursive positions, including differences such as race, gender, and class.’<sup>33</sup> What is more, Aoki Tamotsu explains cultural relativism (*bunka sōtai shugi*) against Western cultural hegemony over and modernization of the world.<sup>34</sup> He illustrates the dilemma of Western scholars (especially American) who lost their reliable ground or a universal model in multifarious societies in the 1980s. Scholars today are facing a cultural pendulum which is swinging so violently between the respect of the

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<sup>31</sup> Culler, *Literary Theory*, 1–17.

<sup>32</sup> Vlastos, ‘Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History’, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, 186.

<sup>34</sup> Aoki, *Bunka no hiteisei*, 7–48.

self-determination of people, egalitarianism or humanism and overemphasizing cultural particularity, ethnocentrism or absolutism. The notion of ‘undecidability’ asserted by advocates of ‘deconstruction’ deprives a contemporary person of normative theories or ‘grand narrative’. Concerning this issue, Tessa Morris-Suzuki, denying the paradigm based on the view of history as linear progress, takes a similar view. She points out that the body (system) of knowledge that had been constituted in the modern period has disintegrated during the past twenty years. Scholars in the halls of academe today have now been asked to begin searching for a new body of knowledge for our time.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Jonathan Culler pointed out that ‘as a critique of common sense and exploration of alternative conceptions, theory involves a questioning of the most basic premises or assumptions of literary studies’ such as ‘What is the “I” or subject who writes, read, or acts?’ and the like.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the rational subjectivity or autonomy (‘the notion of the subject as an autonomous, controlling consciousness’), which enables a modern person to establish ethics (*rinri*)/morality as theorized by Descartes or Immanuel Kant, was decentralized and dismantled into the system of difference, that is, multifarious discourses (discursive fields) of various minority groups or individuals who dwell on the periphery of our contemporary society. Carol Gluck describes the present situation as ‘messier and more dispersed than before’.<sup>37</sup> Having noticed the absence of any normative model or ‘grand narrative’, she asks the question how one can create a standpoint for his/her assertion.

Under these circumstances of contemporary thought of the 1970s and the 1980s, Ōe Kenzaburō described the situation of contemporary Japanese literature as a

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<sup>35</sup> Morris-Suzuki, *Hihan-teki sōzōryoku no tame ni*, 10–35.

<sup>36</sup> Culler, *Literary Theory*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Gluck, ““Meiji” for our time”, in Helen Hardacre and Adam L. Kim (eds), *New Directions in the Studies of Meiji Japan*, 28.

predicament.<sup>38</sup> He deplores the fact that Japanese literature in the 1980s had lost its power which had enabled it to create a new model of human beings with a vision for the future, and that there was an absence of an active attitude among contemporary Japanese writers. Such writers as Murakami Haruki were unsparingly criticized because of their passive attitudes as nothing but sub-culture. In his Nobel Prize speech in 1994, Ōe declared himself to be ‘a writer who wishes to create serious works of literature distinct from those novels which are mere reflections of the vast consumer culture of Tokyo and the subcultures of the world at large.’<sup>39</sup> In the meantime, Ōe pointed out that the ‘postwar writers’ such as Ōoka Shōhei (大岡昇平 1909–1988), Takeda Taijun (武田泰淳 1912–1976), Shiina Rinzō (椎名麟三 1911–1973) and Noma Hiroshi (野間宏 1915–1991) were the only “serious” writers in the history of contemporary Japanese literature.<sup>40</sup> Tsurumi Shunsuke and Kuno Osamu also had a high regard for their attitudes, which indicated democratic subjectivity (*shutaisei*) and existential personal autonomy in modern and contemporary Japan.<sup>41</sup> As we can see from the above, living in the contemporary era which is/has been pervaded by the bequest of post-modernism such as ‘a superficial game in semiotics’, ‘mere reflections of the vast consumer culture of Tokyo and the subcultures of the world at large’ or the lack of grand narrative, ethics, ‘I’-notion or subjectivity, it is extremely difficult for each of us to possess an active attitude or personal autonomy and to create a new model with a vision for our future as Ōe strongly suggested.

Let us look more carefully into Ōe’s criticism on the young intellectuals and literati

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<sup>38</sup> Ōe Kenzaburō, ‘Sengo bungaku kara atarashī bunka no riron o tsūka shite’, in *Saigo no shōsetsu*, 197–237.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 217–237.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 206–207.

<sup>41</sup> Tsurumi Shunsuke and Kuno Osamu, *Gendai nihon no shisō*, 185–211.

of the 1970s and the 1980s and the influx of French cultural theorists' ideas. As we noted above, as early as in 1986, Ōe had already alerted the young intellectuals of those days to the decline of *junbungaku* and also lamented the almost automatic influx of new cultural theories based on post-structuralism and post-modernism, or rather, mere transplanting or translating new Western concepts into Japanese, which is like 'the one-way journey from abroad'.<sup>42</sup> Ōe explains that although those new cultural theories from France, Russia and America permeated the whole nation's intellectual climate in the latter half of 1970s and the first half of 1980s, the intellectuals at the time did not make any effort 'to analyse them carefully in terms of their application to the specific situation in Japan'. He severely criticized the passive attitude of the young intellectuals who merely accepted the new theories and then discharged them without a close examination. Ōe sarcastically describes this one-way process as follows:

[T]hat young Japanese intellectuals, true to our national character, analyzed and diachronically systematized the various structuralism-based theories and counterarguments in order to "accept" and—to use a term not usually considered its antonym—"discharge" those theories. To accept Foucault, Barthes had to be discharged. Only after Lacan was dismissed could Derrida be accepted—but merely to make room for the next thinker. [...] Cultural heroes came and went. However, the curtain dropped on this period as soon as these advocates found there was no thinker or thought left for them to add to the conveyor belt from Europe and the States.<sup>43</sup>

Here, Ōe deplors the fact that the new theories imported from Western Europe or America were not re-examined in the Japanese context, and thus we see the Japanese

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<sup>42</sup> Ōe, 'Japan's Dual Identity: A Writer's Dilemma', in *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 59–103.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

intellectuals were/have been unable to create a cultural theory of their own. Ōe consolidates the issue of the decay of *junbungaku* in contemporary Japan as follows:

When Japan's effort to modernize ran into the fatal impasse of the Pacific War, the Japanese made a serious search for a set of principles to guide them in making a fresh start, and the aim of the postwar writers was to give literary expression to such principles. However, the intellectuals of the 1970s and 1980s have neither followed up on these principles nor taken a critical stance toward them. They have ignored them [the postwar writers], turning their backs on the ambitions and actual accomplishments of that earlier generation, and severed any connection with it.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, Ōe considers that because of the prosperity of the subculture in the 1980s, young people who reaped the benefits of consumer-driven culture became more conservative.<sup>45</sup> Ōe criticizes that they are going to discard literary activities because they merely consume the new cultural theories one after another and do not internalize them as the postwar writers had once done.<sup>46</sup>

Ōe's criticism is not only levelled at cultural trends and the intellectuals at the time but also at Japanese contemporary literature itself and its readers today like us. Ōe asserts that the decay of *junbungaku* and the vogue of new cultural theories should be 'viewed not in contrast but as one entity'.<sup>47</sup> This should be the problem for each of us, the ordinary people dwelling in Japan's gigantic consumer society today. However,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>45</sup> Ōe, *Saigo no shōsetsu*, 232–237.

<sup>46</sup> How Ōe can criticize the passive attitude of young literati in the 1980s for the vast consumer-driven society is a question which may be too involved a subject to be treated here in detail. See Ōe, 'Sengo bungaku kara konnichi no kyūkyō made', in *Saigo no shōsetsu*, 199–237. Ōe discusses the matter from the perspective of sociology, too.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 92–93.

having felt that a universal model or grand narrative was dismantled by post-structuralists or post-modernists, words in language (*kotoba*) today lose their exact meaning and a meaning of a word is considered as a mere historical, cultural product in pursuing a consumeristic culture and society. Under these circumstances, how do we actualize our subjective freedom and positive personal autonomy? How could we succeed to a set of principles, which the postwar writers had once proposed, in order to create ‘a model of a contemporary age which encompasses past and future’?

There is much truth in Ōe’s remarks, however, considering the vast consumer culture and the subcultures of contemporary Japan at large, there is also much truth in Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel statement that ‘those who came after, the so-called post-postwar generation, invent and inhabit a world with a very different coloration and tone and based on a very different experience—one, however, that is perhaps not, a priori, reducible to that of the “vast consumer culture of Tokyo”.’<sup>48</sup> Then, in terms of the discussion of the post-modern time that Ōe fears, what precisely is the coloration and tone of the contemporary era that we inhabit? Philip Gabriel discusses the contemporary writer, Shimada Masahiko (b. 1961) and introduces Asada Akira’s illustration of our contemporary society:

Asada Akira sketches a vision of capitalism’s “global trajectory” encompassing three stages: elderly capitalism, adult capitalism, and infantile capitalism. In contrast to the model proposed by Maruyama Masao and others of the formation of the mature adult *shutai* (individual subject) as the enabling condition of Japan’s modernity, Asada identifies in contemporary Japan less a process of maturation than a country growing “progressively more infantile” at the same time that its capitalist economy soars [.] [⋯]

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<sup>48</sup> Snyder and Gabriel, ‘Introduction’, in *Ōe and Beyond: Fiction in Contemporary Japan*, 3.

Contemporary Japan is a country of childlike obsessions — for machines by engineers, for wordplay, parody, and “child games of differentiation” by advertisers and consumers. It is both a “playful utopia and at the same time a terrible ‘dystopia’,” dystopic in that the image of Japan as mammoth theme park describes one reality and conceals another[.]<sup>49</sup>

In Asada’s article, Japan is viewed as ‘other-oriented’ children who are playing ‘freely’ within a certain protective area under the guardianship of some adults, that is, we may say, under the protection of U.S. forces. Asada points out that this protected area is the core of the Japanese ideological mechanism, which is described as a “soft” subsumption by a seemingly horizontal, centreless “place”.<sup>50</sup> Taken in this light, living in the contemporary era which is/has been coloured and toned by the legacy of post-modernism such as ‘mass consumer culture’, ‘infantile capitalism’, or the lack of ‘the mature adult *shutai*’, the realization of one’s self-determinism or one’s freedom and moral responsibility can be considered as a complicated task that defies any single approach.

As we can see from the above arguments, the notion of ‘I’, self, subjectivity or autonomy, as theorized by Descartes or Immanuel Kant, has been doubted by post-structuralists or post-modernists. The autonomous subjectivity had been dispersed into specific discourses which are culturally and historically constructed. Moreover, new theories do not lie in one plot narrated from a diachronic interpretation, which produces typical heroes and villains in a history by causality; but in the multiple plots or story lines explained by the motives of the historical human actors as a sense of

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<sup>49</sup> Gabriel, ‘Dream Messengers, Rental Children, and the Infantile: Shimada Masahiko and the Possibilities of the Postmodern’, 219–244.

<sup>50</sup> Asada, ‘Infantile Capitalism and Japan’s Postmodernism: A Fairy Tale’, 628–634.



synchronic and contingent entities. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the attention of new cultural theorists had shifted or ‘decentralized’ from the nation-state to the periphery of modern society: the ordinary people, their resistance to the state and the conflicts between them. The state, groups and individuals could not be ascribed to a monolithic or homogenous pattern. Converging and diverging concurrently, they are all different. The new concepts in contemporary (or, if anything, ‘post’-postmodern) Japan which we have discussed bring “multifarious Japan” from the past to the place we are standing right now, and asks each of us the question of who we are and where we are standing. Thus, new theorists surely demonstrate the very interesting interpretation that makes it possible for minority groups or people dwelling on the periphery of our society to come to the fore of the historiography in our time. Their attempt is well worth bringing up and pursuing as-yet-unrecognized factors in a modern history of Japanese literature.

On the other hand, as John Dower and Morris-Suzuki indicated, because ‘various literary texts as well as historiographical narratives have been re-examined with a post-modern scepticism’, or the Japanese language, being considered as a modern product, has lost its power as a means for analysis; the comprehensive and integrated theories, normative models or grand narrative in accordance with the historical process of modernization have declined greatly over the past twenty years, and such notion as autonomous subjectivity or self-determination has unsparingly been criticized or may have been completely rejected. Morris-Suzuki describes this conversion caused by the influx of new theories brought about by Foucault, Derrida or Benedict Anderson and so forth over the last twenty years as the collapse of the body of modern knowledge.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, ‘deconstruction’ gave rise to the excessive, or rather, boundless subdivision

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<sup>51</sup> Morris-Suzuki, *Hihanteki sōzōryoku no tame ni*, 22–61.

of minority groups on the grounds of differences such as race, gender, and class. ‘Deconstruction’ fell into the trap it had laid itself, producing a finer subdivision of the minority theory, which goes on endlessly. It is in this context that many scholars recently drew our attention to the growing tendency towards nationalism or neoconservatism among the young generation not only in Japan but elsewhere in the world.<sup>52</sup> Karatani gives a concise summary of what was being discussed:

A similar situation [that is, the wartime ideology of “overcoming the modern”<sup>53</sup>] prevails in the Japan of the 1980s. Japan has become a highly developed information-consumption society, in which meaning is information and desire is the desire of the Other [*tasha*], because the “subject” of the nineteenth-century West has never existed in Japan, nor has there been any resistance to the modern. In 1980s Japan (a Japan “liberated” from its obsession with modernism), parody, pastiche, and collage have become dominant trends. But in the Japanese context, this amounts to a rehabilitation of the nineteenth century. It is a revival of that mode within which late Edo society saw itself as a “paradise of fools.” There is an almost pathological play with language, with the reign of the superficial on the one hand, and the regeneration of ultranationalistic ideology on the other.<sup>54</sup>

Here, Karatani acutely questions the way out from today’s nationalistic tendency as well as the ideological/cultural relativity of post-modernism by which Ōe has been bewildered in contemporary Japan. Each of us now needs to confront the fundamental issue of how we can perceive our autonomous freedom and moral responsibility as its

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<sup>52</sup> In Chapter IV, I will discuss about a growing tendency towards linguistic nationalism based on the observation of the recent Japanese language boom and Japanese young people’s apathy towards the discussion of nationalism.

<sup>53</sup> This famous debate was held during the war time in July, 1942 in Kyoto on the theme of overcoming modernity, ‘*Kindai no chōkoku*’. Many intellectuals attended the debate, for example, Kobayashi Hideo, Kamei Katsuichirō and others.

<sup>54</sup> Karatani, ‘One Spirit, Two Nineteenth Centuries’, 627.

basis, so as not to stray off into totalitarianism or ultranationalism. What is our autonomy or freedom? Who is 'I'? What is the meaning of moral responsibility? With the storm of cultural relativism and pluralism, it is not an easy task for each of us to answer all these questions.

Morris-Suzuki proposes that we now need to create a new ground of intellect today, what she calls 'critical imagination (*hihanteki sōzōryoku*)' in order to stand up to today's growing tendency of cultural nationalism, neo-conservatism or, to use Morris-Suzuki's term, 'nihilistic form of nationalism' that is derived from our widespread disillusionment with what is called ideal politics.<sup>55</sup> She urges us to create a course of new language to *re-consider*, *re-evaluate* and review the world today. Having felt that a universal model or grand narrative of modern times was dismantled by post-structuralists or post-modernists, and the notion of 'self' or 'subject' had been considered as a mere historical, cultural product in pursuing a centre-oriented Western modernization; the issue of autonomy can be an issue that needs further consideration. The system of modern knowledge collapsed into the post-modern discursive spaces and our personal autonomy threatens to be in grave danger. Being on the verge of a crisis of our autonomy, how could we succeed to a set of principles, which it is said the postwar writers had once possessed, in order to create 'a model of a contemporary age which encompasses past and future' or to gain a power of 'critical imagination'? The examination of personal autonomy may be crucial to the issue of how each of us creates a new ethical framework which is associated with the issue of freedom and moral responsibility so as not to allow ourselves to drift towards a one-dimensional sense of values such as ultranationalism or totalitarianism. To enhance such a perception of our

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<sup>55</sup> Morris-Suzuki, *Hihanteki sōzōryoku no tame ni*, 41–61.

autonomy and nurturing our critical imagination, literature is an area that enables us to explore our autonomy in both a theoretically and a practical stance. I hope to convey my belief that the notion of autonomy expressed in the literature of Nakagami Kenji can be used as a stepping stone to the examination of our own autonomy in a self-motivated way.

### **Brief summary of each chapter**

Chapter I focuses on the examination of Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing. We will explore the manner in which his act of writing appears to be a paradox between the self-identification and the integration into the collective. Nakagami considers that two poles of a dichotomous framework serve as a precondition for each other and coexist complementarily. For this reason, he views this kind of dichotomy between the two as his strong impetus to make him write novels endlessly. We then observe the possibility in which Nakagami's ambivalent attitude is extended to cover Maruyama Masao's relative definition of autonomy—the mutual coexistence between personal autonomy and social autonomy—which was derived from Fukuzawa Yukichi's understanding of freedom. Moreover, we will discuss how Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards the act of writing bears notional resemblance to Karatani Kōjin's interpretation of Immanuel Kant's notion of freedom and responsibility, which emerge from two paradoxical stances that coexist simultaneously—one's practical individual action at any given time and one's theoretical recognition that one should accept the external causalities surrounding the individual.

In Chapter II, we will look closely at the manner in which Nakagami Kenji's search

for autonomy appears as a never-ending task that confronts the paradox between the individual and the collective. Focusing on Nakagami's major novels written between 1976 and 1984, especially, the trilogy of Akiyuki, we will examine how the protagonist, Akiyuki, has developed into an individual who possesses autonomy and moral responsibility. In addition, Nakagami's various attempts to violate the archetype of narrative will be examined. For instance, after Nakagami depicts an archetypical relationship between an innocent protagonist and evil others in a novel, he relativizes it immediately by representing the similar relationship repeatedly in his successive novels with subtle shifts of relationship between the central characters. Furthermore, Nakagami does not reject the tradition of Japanese literature such as *monogatari* and *shishōsetsu*. In his anthologies of short stories, Nakagami dares to lay these two extremes of Japanese literature and *shōsetsu* together, demonstrating *shōsetsu* as a genre that may transcend the archetype of *monogatari*.

Chapter III suggests that Nakagami's endless search for autonomy found in a paradox between the individual and the collective may be applied to perceive a similar thought that was represented by previous writers. Various never-ending autonomous attempts expressed by Sakaguchi Ango, Miyazawa Kenji and Nakahara Chūya will be examined.

Chapter IV portrays the issue of linguistic nationalism and the ongoing canon formation through the examination of the recent Japanese language boom in Japan. Moreover, we will examine how the national language of Japan was created as an ideology of the modern nation-state in Japan. Then, we speculate on the reason why Nakagami Kenji had developed his scepticism towards the Japanese language.

Following the contextual examination in Chapter IV of the ideological aspects of the modern Japanese language that was formed as an exclusive national language in the

process of building a modern nation-state, in Chapter V, we will consider Nakagami's doubt about any fixed notions that were expressed by ambiguous Japanese terms which was fraught with internal paradoxes. We will focus attention on the analysis of how Nakagami's distrust of the modern Japanese language is reflected in his major novels in detail, and attempt to extend this observation of distrust of language into the works of the theatrical artists in the 1960s such as Betsuyaku Minoru. We will then examine the poems and poetics of Miyazawa Kenji and Nakahara Chūya who also show their scepticism towards the Japanese language in their literary universe.

Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing is derived from not only his distrust of the Japanese language but also his admiration of the body as an undeniable object. Chapter VI examines the manner in which Nakagami Kenji emphasizes the body that has not been tinged with the law/system of the collective in his literary works. We will then discuss how his ardour for the body has much in common with Sakaguchi Ango, the postwar existentialist writer and Nakahara Chūya. I then attempt to enlarge this argument to include the theatrical artists in the 1960s such as Betsuyaku Minoru, Kara Jūrō, Hijikata Tatsumi and Terayama Shūji who display their strong distrust of language, which is inextricably linked with their emphasis on the body as a means of expression.

It is contemporary women writers that display the notion of autonomy in postwar Japan. Chapter VII, we will explore the novels and essays of contemporary women writers, Tsushima Yūko, Takamura Kaoru, Tawada Yōko and Yoshimoto Banana. These women writers struggled to establish their autonomous freedom as they face the conflict between their individual bodies that personifies their personal autonomy and the modern Japanese language that confines women in the fixed and submissive roles

in present-day Japan.

In this dissertation, I would like to arrive at the conclusion that Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing can be an eternal self-legislation, that is, his endless attempt to establish an autonomous freedom, which evolves from the paradox between the individual (body) and the collective (language). Nakagami's attempt is certainly not confined to his works alone. I hope I will be successful in showing that his endless quest for autonomy through his act of writing can be a new stepping-stone to reinterpret modern Japanese literature.

## **Notes**

Japanese names are written in Japanese order of surname first followed by given name.

Translations into English are by me except where otherwise stated. Wherever deemed necessary, I have given the original Japanese wording of translated excerpts.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONCEPT OF AUTONOMY THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF AN AUTONOMOUS ATTITUDE IN THE LITERATURE OF NAKAGAMI KENJI**

In this chapter, I would like to attempt to examine the notion of autonomy utilizing Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitude as it appears in the process of writing his literary works. To put it more concretely, this chapter will analyse how Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards the act of writing appears to be two kinds of autonomies, namely, the autonomy of the individual and the autonomy of the collective, which coexist complementarily. Nakagami felt that his act of writing (novels) creates two conflicting attitudes, first to attempt to establish a firm self-identity, and secondly to be aware of the external causalities that restrict the personal autonomy. Nakagami became aware that there are the law/system of collective such as, to use Nakagami's term, the logic of the modern nation-state, the archetype of narrative or the predetermined progressive code in a piece of music, which inhibits one's freedom to choose one's actions, that is to say, one's self-determination. He did not negate these collective limits but accepted them for what they are when he attempted to seek his real identities. Perceiving any collective limit as the external causalities, which inevitably surround the individual, Nakagami does not give up his self-determination in order to create new values through his act of writing depending on the circumstances of the time. He did not attempt to end this dichotomy between the individual and the collective because he considered that the two poles served as a precondition for each other, and he believed that its binary distribution has been continuing and will continue recursively.



Nakagami viewed this kind of antinomy as a powerful impetus to make him write novels permanently. Thus, Nakagami recognizes that this conflict between his effort to establish his self-identity and his emotional dependence on others served as a fundamental driving force for him to keep writing. On these grounds I have come to the conclusion that Nakagami's continuous search for his self-identity through his act of writing may be explained by the notion of autonomy which ties in with the limit of external causalities; or Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing may account for the freedom of individual, which is closely related to one's moral responsibility. When he gave a lecture in 1990 two years before his death, Nakagami said that this kind of dichotomy which will be repeated permanently may create an exciting narrative (*monogatari*) and should be considered as one of principles of literature (*bungaku genron* 文学原論).<sup>1</sup> I would like to examine the manner in which his ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing can be associated with the notion of autonomy, and investigate how his perception of writing as eternal conflict between self and others can be served as one of today's literary theories.

### **Writing as mutually exclusive dichotomy: two ambivalent attitudes of Nakagami Kenji in writing novels**

According to Immanuel Kant, 'an autonomous will gives itself its law, and is distinguished from a heteronomous will whose law is given by the object because of its relation to the will.'<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, if the will seeks the law that is not determined by itself and 'goes outside itself and seeks this law in a property of any of its

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<sup>1</sup> Nakagami, 'Futatsu no kōkyū saron', *Goō* (Vol. 4 2006): 81.

<sup>2</sup> Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, 88. For further details of autonomy of the will/heteronomy of the will, see Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 240–242.

objects—the result is always heteronomy.’<sup>3</sup> Thus, according to Kant, ‘Autonomy of the will is the property [that] the will has of being a law to itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition).’<sup>4</sup> If ‘natural necessity is a heteronomy of efficient causes’ because ‘every effect was only possible according to the law that something else gets the efficient cause to act as a cause’, our freedom (of will) is nothing but autonomy (of the will)—that is, ‘the property that a will has of being a law to itself’.<sup>5</sup> Howard Caygill summarizes this as follows: ‘[T]he will must will its own autonomy and that its freedom lies in thus being a law to itself’ and this freedom is ‘independent of any determination by alien causes and formal/universal in that it does not stand in any relation to an object.’<sup>6</sup> Caygill points out that Kant’s autonomy of the will that has no influence of any heteronomous principle or object has been a controversial topic since Hegel. A few questions now arise: Are our decisions or acts truly made by our free will with no effects of causal determination? Are our acts merely the necessary effects of prior causes? If so, are we not responsible for any actions of ours? How are we preparing to answer these questions? Is it possible for us to examine the meaning of our autonomy or freedom of the will in more concrete terms from the viewpoint of literature? We shall focus our attention on the meaning of our autonomy (or self-determination) using the manner in which Nakagami’s major novels, *Misaki*, *Karekinada*, *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, which are well known as the Akiyuki trilogy, were written.

Let us begin by looking at Nakagami’s early essays that show his ambivalent attitude towards writing novels, and this may present a good example to explain the notion of

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<sup>3</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, 241.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>6</sup> Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, 89.

autonomy as a mutually exclusive dichotomy. After graduating from the local high school in Shingū City, Wakayama prefecture, Nakagami Kenji came to Tokyo in 1965 at the age of 19. Although Nakagami's parents sent him an allowance to prepare to enter Waseda University, he spent his days listening to modern jazz at several underground cafés in Shinjuku and indulged in alcohol and drugs for a few years. Moreover, at the height of the storm of the student movement in the 1960s, he tentatively attended student demonstrations against the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty. While young Nakagami continued his demoralized way of living, he became a member of a literary coterie magazine (*dōjinshi*) called *Bungei-shuto* (文藝首都 The Capital of Literature) and began his writing career contributing his early works. During this period, Nakagami took an avid interest in Nagayama Norio (1949–1997)<sup>7</sup>, a juvenile delinquent who indiscriminately shot and killed several people in 1968. Nakagami wrote a number of essays on this nineteen-year-old criminal. In two essays entitled 'Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku' (The report from a criminal, Nagayama Norio, 1969) and 'Toki wa nagareru...' (Time passes..., 1975), Nakagami, having a glimpse of the criminal's harsh childhood, comments that Nagayama could not help resorting to a 'greater' violence (i.e., murder) because his inner self (*naimen*) was repeatedly assaulted by an unidentifiable irrationality inherent in modern society.<sup>8</sup> Nakagami explains that there is an antagonism between self and others (*tasha* 他者)—any kind of collective

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<sup>7</sup> Nagayama Norio is also well known as a writer. At the time he was in prison, he wrote a few bestselling books. In 1990, he was recommended to become a member of *Nihon Bungeika Kyōkai* (日本文芸家協会 The Japan Writers Association); however, the recommendation was rejected by the board. Nakagami Kenji protested against this decision and resigned from the association with Karatani Kōjin and Tsutsui Yasutaka. Nagayama's death sentence was finalised in August 1990, and he was executed in August 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Nakagami Kenji, 'Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku' and 'Toki wa nagareru...', in *NKZ* Vol.14, 220–242. The original text was taken from Nakagami Kenji, *Tori no yō ni Kemono no yōni*, Tokyo: Hokuyōsha, 1976.

such as a group of other people, community, nation-state or organization—in one’s life. According to Nakagami, self and others naturally repel each other, and sometimes others violate one’s individual realm, discourage the individual initiative or infringe on one’s autonomous freedom. Nakagami points out that Nagayama could not identify himself by using language (*kotoba*) because he had been constantly violated by others, and for that reason he had lost his substance (*naibu*). In life, it is sometimes necessary for us to stretch the truth in order to smooth our relationship with others. We sometimes tame our ego and attempt to work with a given situation. However, Nagayama could not accommodate himself to other people’s protocol. He could not go along with the crowd as he rejected any kind of deception or any superficial relationship with others.

In this sense, Nakagami admits that Nagayama cast his reflection on Nakagami himself, by saying that he could have been in the same position as Nagayama. There are many people, who suffer from social alienation like Nagayama Norio; however, most of them get along without committing a crime. Nakagami also experienced a sense of alienation from society, and deemed himself to be just one among many Nagayama Norios who could not commit a crime. However, unlike many Nagayama Norios, the only reason Nakagami managed not to commit a crime was due to the fact that he sought to vent his feelings in the form of writing, that is, ‘*kakukoto* (書くこと)’. For Nakagami, writing was the ultimate, inevitable means to survive the irrational violence of dehumanisation in the current modern society. He goes on to say:

Look at Nagayama Norio as you would look at yourself, in one way or the other. When you have superficial relationships with others and resolve to

end those relationships, you have no choice but to resort to the following measures: violence (i.e. crime), suicide, religion, insanity or writing (*kakukoto*) [the creative art of writing]. Estranging yourself from having superficial relationships with others is the same as being able to enjoy exercising your subjective freedom of private rights to the maximum. As for Nagayama, [...] social alienation had inhibited his personal autonomy from being linked to the law of nature (as if it were mother), and his inner self was alienated from others, perhaps even eroded by them. In order to end his self-alienation, Nagayama had no choice but to choose his last resort from violence, suicide, religion, insanity or writing. Nagayama simply chose violence, that is, an indiscriminate murder which you, one of many Nagayama Norios, could just not choose yet.<sup>9</sup>

In this excerpt, we can observe Nakagami's strong determination to become a primordial being (*kongenteki sonzai*) who is able to exercise the freedom of private rights in a true sense so that he can end the superficial relationship with others. Thus, Nakagami cannot stand any diplomatic remarks for the sake of respectability and attempts to expose one's hypocrisy or deception as well as his own in order to have heart-to-heart communication with other people. Nakagami regarded *kakukoto* as his last resort as a means to depart from Nagayama's fate. In order to terminate this kind of deception (the superficial relationship with others), Nakagami had no choice but to choose his last resort from the ultimate options of contemporary society: violence, suicide, religion, insanity or writing.

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<sup>9</sup> Nakagami, 'Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku', 228–229. Please note that all translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Thus, Nakagami evaluates the motives behind Nagayama's crime in a positive manner. In contrast, however, when Nagayama Norio wrote his memoirs (*shuki* 手記) in prison five years later, Nakagami proposed a completely contradictory view. This time Nakagami severely criticised Nagayama's memoirs on the belief that Nagayama depicted himself as a victim of the state, the society and the laws/system of the modern nation-state. In his memoirs, Nagayama blamed his act of murdering four people on his wretched, poverty-filled upbringing. He wrote that his poor living conditions drove him to committing crime. Nakagami could not tolerate the fact that Nagayama, who chose writing, attributed the responsibility for his crime to the modern nation-state or society and not to his own actions.

As we have observed, on the one hand, Nakagami positively recognises that his motive behind writing is substantially comparable in function to the motives that set Nagayama on the path to his crime. On the other hand, he ultimately rejected his findings upon ascertaining the cause of Nagayama's crime. What is interesting to me here is the contradiction in Nakagami's attitude towards Nagayama's actions, that is to say, there is a paradoxical view in Nakagami's positive evaluation of Nagayama's criminal act and his adverse criticism of the latter's act of writing a memoir. How should we estimate Nakagami's relative evaluations of Nagayama?

**Writing in perpetuity: Writing for aspiring to the Avici Hell (*mugen jigoku* 無間地獄)**

Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing generates an eternal conflict that he describes as follows:

Let's assume that there is a dichotomy between the individual, a Nakagami Kenji (*yui'itsusha* Nakagami Kenji 唯一者中上健次) and the collective, many Nakagami Kenjis (*musū no* Nakagami Kenji 無数の中上健次). I put this binary frame on the site of writing and attempt to cast this kind of dichotomy into words. Others called readers read my writings and they may point out that what 'I (the individual, Nakagami)' am thinking about can be found everywhere (*zara ni arukoto* ざらにあること). Yes, it surely is. There is not much difference of opinion among people. Many Nakagami Kenjis always tease me about my writings. They look on my writings as commonplace and warn me that language itself may fight back against what I am writing if we do not give much thought to it. But, 'I', the individual Nakagami always think that my mental bruises should be only mine. Many Nakagamis cannot just say that my bruises are not a big deal. To sum up, writing something using language (*kotoba*) connotes two contrasting attitudes. On the one hand, it connotes my desire to act with one heart and mind with everyone (*tasha*, others), or my wish that everyone understands me perfectly. I tell myself, "Hey, you! Please understand me, stark-naked, from the ends of my viscera to the secret parts of my sexual desire and hold me tight." On the other hand, at the same time, there is a firm repellent feeling expressing that "I am what I am wherever I go" and rejects an identification with anyone. This dichotomy [between the establishment of self-identity and the integration with others] resides in the realm of 'I' and this is one of the major factors that make me write [novels] perpetually. This binary frame connotes my

own jeremiad (*uramitsurami*, 恨みつらみ), a state of abject helplessness between life and death and the like. With this kind of dichotomy between self and others in Nagayama's mind, I believe that he said "No!" to the structure of modern self (*jiga* 自我) or a *déraciné* that modern man is said to possess. I wish to keep denying them, too.<sup>10</sup>

Here, we can observe two contrasting desires/attitudes of Nakagami in his writing. One is the intense craving for the unity of his self and others. The other is the denial of any collusion between his self and others, that is to say, the establishment of his self-identity. For Nakagami, these two attitudes towards writing manifest themselves as the strong identification with others and the self-autonomy. Two attitudes coexist, confronting or alternating each other, and this dichotomy lasts forever. Two poles are never unified into one on the site of writing permanently. Nakagami considers that this endless dichotomy between the two became the prime force of his act of writing. Nakagami obstinately asks himself a question: "What does writing mean to me?" He goes on to say:

Why am I writing? For a new application of Japanese literature? This is all crap! [...] I want to destroy everything. [...] I would like to build a world like Yoknapatawpha County [like William Faulkner had built]. I don't need an everlasting happiness. I don't need God's help. As Nagayama Norio's crime [the serial murders] aspires to the Avici Hell, I

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<sup>10</sup> Nakagami, 'Hanzaisha Nagayama Norio kara no hōkoku', 232.



will keep writing and aspiring to the same ceaseless hell.<sup>11</sup>

In this early essay, Nakagami defines Nagayama's crime against all the irrationalities of modern Japan (or more concretely, others who violate Nagayama's self) as 'the reverse crime against modern society (*gyaku-hanzai* 逆犯罪).<sup>12</sup> Nakagami admits that his prime mover for writing coincides with an impulse that causes Nagayama to commit this kind of reverse crime. Moreover, Nakagami calls Nagayama's serial murders 'the Avici Hell' which means ceaseless hell and he declares that he dares to aspire to this ceaseless hell to write permanently.

As we have seen before, for Nakagami, writing (*kakukoto*) can be found in the dichotomy between the establishment of self-identity and the collusive relation between the self and others. Because Nakagami regards this dichotomy as an everlasting confrontation that cannot be resolved by means of a synthesis, this dichotomy between the two becomes a factor that leads him to the ceaseless hell of writing perpetually. Writing is also his last resort in order to escape from the fate of many Nakagamis. In order to terminate the superficial relationship with others, Nakagami has to employ his only means from the ultimate options of contemporary society: violence, suicide, religion, insanity or "to write". Nakagami cannot tolerate being self-deceiving in dealing with people for the sake of artificial socialization. For Nakagami at the age of 23, writing is his final, inevitable choice to estrange himself from having superficial relationships with others and this act goes on forever.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.,236. For a discussion of difference between Nakagami and Faulkner, see Mats Karlsson, *The Kumano Saga of Nakagami Kenji*, Edsbruk: Akademityck, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 223.

## Paradox in the literature of Nakagami Kenji

When Nakagami wrote the essay entitled ‘The report from a criminal, Nagayama Norio’ in 1968/1969, it became clear that Nakagami perceived the mutually exclusive dichotomy between self and others and recognized it as an endless well for his literature. Then, how does this perception of endless dichotomy manifest itself among the major works of Nakagami Kenji? It seems to me that Nakagami’s texts are loaded with antithetic concepts or paradoxical facts characterizing his novels. Tsushima Yūko, who made her literary debut in the same decade as Nakagami, made an interesting comment on this matter during a discussion at the 2004 Kumano University Seminar (2004 *Kumano Daigaku Seminā*) in Shingū as follows:

It is hard to describe it, but I think we can find many contradictions (*mujun*) in all the works of Nakagami Kenji. They are not resultant contradictions but something like self-contradictions that were brought about by himself aggressively or subjectively (*kōgekiteki mujun* 攻撃的矛盾 or *jikakutekina jiko-mujun* 自覚的な自己矛盾). Therefore, I presume that it may be very difficult for literary critics to consolidate these contradictions into words. There are always two contrary ideas/states in his works, and the two poles keep engaging in a fierce clash and never coalesce with each other. I think Nakagami produced all his works through this kind of dichotomous world-view. For this reason, his works reject any kind of commentaries given by literary critics. [ … ] Immediately after he improvises an idea in his mind, he denies what he

has just mentioned. This attitude makes his idea contradict itself. [...]

On the other hand, I think this is a great charm of his fiction.<sup>13</sup>

In this excerpt, Tsushima acutely points out the contradictions that frequently appear in the novels of Nakagami Kenji and the fact that Nakagami himself was aware of it. She gives the favourable view that these contradictions become a positive attribute of Nakagami's works though it is very difficult to describe it in lucid terms. Similarly, the literary critic, Satō Yasutomo clarifies that there is a sentence pattern that frequently appears in Nakagami's major works: "It's X. **No**, that is **not only X but also Y.**" or "It's X. No, it is not X; rather Y." (*X da. Iya, Y da. Xだ。いや、Yだ。*)<sup>14</sup> The following are a few random examples I found in *Karekinada*:

体の大きなその男蠅の王龍造がここに居る。その子の秀雄がそこに居る。秀雄の兄ではない。いや腹違いの兄だという気持ちは秀雄と町で出あう秋幸の心のどこかにあったはずだった。 [Emphasis mine]  
*Karada no ōkina sono otoko hae no ō Ryūzō ga koko ni iru. Sono ko no Hideo ga soko ni iru. Hideo no ani dewa nai. Iya, harachigai no ani da to iu kimochi wa Hideo to machi de deau Akiyuki no kokoro no dokoka ni atta hazu datta.*

The big man, Lord of the Flies, Ryūzō, is here. His son, Hideo is over there. Akiyuki is not Hideo's elder brother. **But, he is in a way.** He is Hideo's half-brother born of a different mother. This sentiment surely existed somewhere in his heart whenever Akiyuki came across Hideo in

<sup>13</sup> Tsushima, Symposium: 'Nakagami Kenji to kindai bungaku no owari', *Waseda bungaku* (November 2004), p.40.

<sup>14</sup> Satō Yasutomo, 'Chi no hate kara no tegami' (地の果てからの手紙), *Goō* (Vol. 3 2005): 280–283.

this town.<sup>15</sup>

土は秋幸だった。いや、土だけでなく土をあぶる日、日を受けた木、  
梢の葉、息をする物すべて秋幸だった。[Emphasis mine]

*Tsuchi wa Akiyuki data. Iya, tsuchi dake denaku tsuchi o aburu hi, hi o  
uketa ki, kozue no ha, iki o surumono subete Akiyuki datta.*

The soil is Akiyuki. **No, that's not all of it.** It's not only the soil but  
the sun warms the soil, the trees glow in the sun, the illuminated leaves.  
All living creatures manifest themselves in Akiyuki.<sup>16</sup>

郁男と秀雄を殺した。仕方がなかった。二人を殺さなければ、秋幸  
が殺された。秋幸はそう思った。いや、秋幸は、秀雄が、あの時、  
郁男に殺された秋幸自身であり、実際には首を吊って自死する郁男  
のような気がした。[Emphasis mine]

*Ikuo to Hideo o koroshita. Shikata ga nakatta. Futari o korosanakereba,  
Akiyuki ga korosareta. Akiyuki wa sō omotta. Iya, Akiyuki wa Hideo ga,  
anotoki, Ikuo ni korosareta Akiyuki jishin de ari, jissaini wa kubi o tsutte  
jishi suru Ikuo no yōna ki ga shita.*

Akiyuki killed Ikuo and Hideo. It was impossible to do otherwise. If  
Akiyuki did not kill them, Akiyuki could be killed. That was the only  
way he could think of. **No, not only that!** Akiyuki felt that Hideo  
could have been Akiyuki who might be killed by Ikuo, and also Hideo

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<sup>15</sup> Nakagami, *Karekinada*, in *NKZ* Vol.3, 331.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

could have been Ikuo who had killed himself in reality.<sup>17</sup>

It will be clear from these examples that Nakagami set out two paradoxical facts at the same time in *Karekinada* using the word “*iya*”. The point I wish to emphasize here is that these two facts are always mutually complementary and the antagonism between the two will never become unified in Nakagami’s fiction. Satō also argues that, by using “*iya*”, Nakagami may backtrack and correct what he wrote earlier, implying, “Wait a minute, that’s not all of it!” Immediately after he proposes a certain perspective, he is starting to add a different dimension with “*iya*”. In other words, “*iya*” can be used to alternate his idea at the moment of his remark by adding to what he has just said. Satō describes this as something like Nakagami’s conjuration that will not make him stand still in the same place forever.<sup>18</sup>

Eve Zimmerman also found a paradox in the fate of the main characters, ‘six young men of the Nakamoto clan, outcasts of the *roji* (alleyways) of Shingū’, who appeared in *Sennen no yuraku* (*A Thousand Years of Pleasure*, 1982).

The explanation for the early death of each Nakamoto is as simple as the blood that flows through their bodies: sacred but stemming from an impure source, this potent combination of opposites can only support life for a short time. In fact the narrative of *Sennen no yuraku* flows in and around a central paradox—that the blood of the Nakamotos is sacred *because* it is thoroughly impure (“*jibun no naka ni nagareru sono yodonda, iya sore yue ni kiyoraka na chi*”). The power of paradox lies in its ability to upset the categories by which we organize our world.<sup>19</sup> [Emphasis mine]

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 459.

<sup>18</sup> Satō Yasutomo, ‘Chi no hate kara no tegami’, 283.

<sup>19</sup> Zimmerman, ‘In the Trap of Words’, 134.

Thus, Zimmerman also clearly recognizes the paradox in the fiction of Nakagami and says that '[Nakagami's] paradox makes every category interchangeable and rational ordering of the world impossible'.<sup>20</sup>

We have observed some examples of contradictions/paradoxes that frequently appeared in Nakagami's major works, *Karekinada* and *Sennen no yuraku*. Let us now look into how Nakagami himself perceives the paradoxical nature characterizing his fiction. On this matter, Nakagami made a very important comment in his lecture in 1990. Nakagami established a lecture course open to the public known as Kumano Daigaku (Kumano University) in 1990.<sup>21</sup> He started its preparatory course in Shingū city in 1989 and commenced a reading club to read *Inochi to katachi—Nihon bi no minamoto o saguru* (いのちとかたち—日本美の源を探る—, Anima and Form—Search for the origin of Japanese beauty—) written by a literary critic, Yamamoto Kenkichi (1907–1988).<sup>22</sup> During a meeting held in April 1990, Nakagami talked about a tug-of-war among the Fujiwara clan in the Heian period and indicated that there are two conflicting concepts, *tamashii* (たましひ/魂) represented by *The Tale of Genji* and *zae* (ざえ/才) represented by *The Pillow Book*, in Japanese classical literature. Nakagami explains briefly that while '*tamashii*' is something that comes from one's spontaneous spiritual nature, '*zae*' is something that is associated with our creative acts of literary forms or esprit. We shall make no further inquiry into the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>21</sup> The summer seminar of Kumano Daigaku continues to be held annually in Shingū City by volunteers, mainly Nakagami's classmates and childhood friends. I have been attending the seminar since 2004.

<sup>22</sup> The lectures from this meeting have been compiled in a book entitled *Nakagami Kenji to yomu "Inochi to katachi"* in 2004. See, Takazawa Shūji (ed.), *Nakagami Kenji to yomu "Inochi to katachi"* (中上健次と読む『いのちとかたち』), Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 2004.

these terms ‘*tamashii*’ and ‘*zae*’; to argue this point would carry us onto another discussion from the purpose of this chapter. Nakagami continues to lead us to his main point that we can find this kind of dichotomy not only in Japanese classical literature but also, arts, society, politics, in every aspects of our life. What Nakagami emphasizes here is that this binary frame will never be dialectically reconciled. He stresses that it continues perpetually. He gives the example of the battle between Rangda and Barong that appeared in traditional Balinese mythology and explains the endless dichotomy as follows:

Yes, that form indicates just what I explained before, the eternal battle between Rangda and Barong in Bali. They keep fighting an indecisive battle, sometimes winning, sometimes losing, the battle is never over. Rangda can never live in concord with Barong, and thus the endgame of this battle is spinning out endlessly.

So, when all is said and done, the dichotomy between the two (*nikō tairitsu* 二項対立) will repeat its pattern ultimately. Each end will never win or lose. Two ends will never be reconciled to each other. They just reiterate their own structure forever. And I think this eternal conflict can be considered as one of the principles of literature (*bungaku genron* 文学原論). This kind of endless dichotomy should be the most interesting part or the ultimate pleasure [of literary creation].<sup>23</sup>

As we can observe here, Nakagami regards the dichotomy as a never-ending binary

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<sup>23</sup> Nakagami, ‘Futatsu no kōkyū saron’, 81.

frame. He further postulates that this eternal dichotomy operates to generate fiction and develop it. Nakagami sees the eternal dichotomy between the two as something like a rule of game or what he calls, the archetype of *monogatari* (物語 narrative). He explains that this endless dichotomy as a narrative rule heats up the set of moves with regard to characters in the narrative domain and entertains the readers of the fiction. The never-ending battle between a hero and a villain; the war in the most archetypal love story, *Romeo and Juliet*, which is being waged between the Capulet and the Montague; the long time rivalry between two grand champions in sumo; these examples will suffice to show that the eternal dichotomy works as a stimulant to make a narrative more exciting. Nakagami, however, warns us that, at the same instant, this kind of endless dichotomy has a strong effect on our perspective and traps us in a certain narrative domain. He emphasizes that if we make good use of the dichotomous nature that functions as a vitalization of *monogatari*, it functions as a facilitator of an exciting *monogatari*; but if we do not, it turns into something that confines us to the world of fantasy. This perception of the eternal dichotomy as the apparatus that generates an exciting *monogatari* reminds us again of Nakagami's ambivalent perception of writing. In order to terminate the superficial relationship with others and establish his own real identity, Nakagami had been at pains to seek his autonomous selfhood through the act of writing.

However, his search for autonomy seems never to end because he sees the act of writing as the eternal dichotomy between the two actions: self-identification and dependence on others. For this reason, he declares that he would keep writing aspiring to the same ceaseless hell as Nagayama Norio did when he repeated his crime of murder, that is, the Avici Hell. Combined with Tsushima and Satō's points of view



on the dichotomous nature of Nakagami's fiction, we may summarize Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards the act of writing as a continuing will to search for his autonomy which vacillates between two desires: desire to search for his own identity and desire to integrate himself with others. Having his consciousness that every being is in an eternal dichotomy between the individual and the collective, it would appear to me that Nakagami continues to seek his autonomy through writing for ever.

### **Maruyama Masao's two autonomies: Personal autonomy and social autonomy**

Let us then consider how we can relate Nakagami Kenji's continuous literary act as a source of a new value judgment on the notion of autonomy. At this juncture, it is relevant to regard the notion of autonomy developed by a Japanese political scientist and political theorist, Maruyama Masao (1914–1996). In an Asahi newspaper article dated 25 March 2005, Ōe Kenzaburō<sup>24</sup> quoted Maruyama Masao's remarks on the definition of freedom (*jiyū*) from his article, 'Nihon ni okeru jiyū ishiki no keisei to tokushitsu' (日本における自由意識の形成と特質 The Formation and Characteristics of Liberal Consciousness in Japan), written soon after the end of World War II.<sup>25</sup> Ōe believes that it is necessary to re-evaluate Maruyama's definition of freedom, which is synonymous with personal autonomy, that is, 'the ability of logical self-definition (*risei-teki jiko kettei* 理性的自己決定)<sup>26</sup> rather than freedom resulting from the elimination of man's environmental constraints (*kōsoku no ketsujo* 拘束の欠如). Maruyama asserts that there is more to freedom than that which enables the

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<sup>24</sup> Ōe, 'Tsutaeru kotoba, Jiyū wa "risei-teki na jiko kettei"', *Asahi Shinbun*, 25 March 2005, p.10.

<sup>25</sup> Maruyama, *Maruyama Masao zenshū dai 3 kan*, 153–160. Original in *Teikoku daigaku shinbun*, August 1947.

<sup>26</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 103.

satisfaction of human desire. He emphasises that freedom should be identified as an autonomous ‘action on the part of value-consistent individuals’ who assume responsibility for it.<sup>27</sup> What does the notion of personal autonomy posed by Maruyama over half a century ago mean to Ōe or Japanese literature today? Why did Ōe, one of the most influential contemporary Japanese writers, demonstrate the necessity of having the ability of logical self-definition proposed by Maruyama Masao who is eminent as a political theorist?

As early as 1986, Ōe had already criticised young Japanese intellectuals and literati of the 1970s and the 1980s who excessively utilised cultural theories based on post-structuralism and post-modernism, for instance, the works of Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva and the like.<sup>28</sup> He deplores the fact that new theories were not re-examined in the Japanese context; as a result, it is observed that the Japanese intellectuals were/have been unable to create a cultural theory of their own. Furthermore, Ōe describes the status of Japanese literature in the 1980s as a predicament and lamented the fact that there was an absence of an active attitude (*nōdōteki na shisei* 能動的な姿勢), that is, the active attitude maintained by an individual who is involved in his/her surroundings such as family, society and universe, among contemporary Japanese writers. In addition, he stated that Japanese literature had lost the power that had enabled it to create a new model of human beings with a vision for the future. Writers such as Murakami Haruki were unsparingly criticised for their passive attitudes and were branded as members of the sub-cultures that were mere reflections of Tokyo’s vast consumer culture.<sup>29</sup> It is in this context that Ōe referred to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.,102.

<sup>28</sup> Ōe, ‘Japan’s Dual Identity: A Writer’s Dilemma’, in *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 59–103.

<sup>29</sup> It must be debatable whether the works of Murakami Haruki should be branded as ‘sub-cultures’. We need mention here only why we need to go into the details about the notion of autonomy

the necessity of an active attitude as a personal autonomy. Living in an age coloured and toned by the legacy of post-modernism such as the ‘mass consumer culture’ and the lack of the ‘I’ notion or autonomy, Ōe sounded the alarm to alert us that this is the time to reconsider the issue of ‘autonomy’ or subjective freedom. As we have observed in the previous section, when Nakagami questioned himself what writing meant to him, he perceived writing as his endless attempt to seek his own identity with the awareness of a mutually exclusive dichotomy between self and others. Though Ōe Kenzaburō lamented that he could not find the active attitude which I consider a form of autonomy in the works of contemporary Japanese writers, it seems to me that Nakagami’s literary works between late 1970s and early 1980s that reflected his endless attempt as above may provide a clue to perceive the notion of autonomy that Ōe searched for. With these points in mind, let us now attempt to extend the observation of Nakagami Kenji’s ambivalent attitudes found in his act of writing into the notion of autonomy proposed by Maruyama Masao.

Being dissatisfied with Japanese Marxists’ unidimensional way of viewing existence and value,<sup>30</sup> Maruyama’s notion of autonomy is derived from his earlier study on John Locke and Fukuzawa Yukichi.<sup>31</sup> Maruyama makes a comparison between Locke’s interpretation of freedom and those proposed by Thomas Hobbes, Sir Robert Filmer and others. Whereas Maruyama views Hobbes’s freedom being a ‘passive version of freedom’ as the absence of external constraint, he sees Locke’s freedom as a more active or ‘positive freedom’ which ‘included in its meaning “a more positive, rational capacity

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proposed by Maruyama Masao.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Inoue Kiyoshi, *Tennō no sensō sekinin*, Tokyo: Gendai hyōronsha, 1975.

<sup>31</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 10–105. See also Victor Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, 17–193.

for self-determination”<sup>32</sup> Influenced by Locke’s interpretation of freedom which ‘stressed the rational, active individual as its vehicle’,<sup>33</sup> Maruyama develops his perspective which emphasized individuals who have democratic subjectivity (*shutaisei*) and personal autonomy which has to be understood as a form of self-limitation, especially as self-legislation. This is also defined by Victor Koschmann as follows: ‘By raising the concept of “freedom” from a passive perception of the “absence of restraint” to a positive, constructive concept of self-legislation — the subjective freedom by which people impose norms upon themselves —’.<sup>34</sup>

Koschmann illustrates well how Maruyama finds a complementary relation between the individual and the state in the work of Fukuzawa Yukichi.<sup>35</sup> Koschmann points out that in Maruyama’s short essay on Fukuzawa, which was written during World War II (1943), Maruyama poses a question of ‘both the nature of the Japanese state and the degree of autonomy displayed by people’, as can be seen in the following quotation:

[U]nless the state is such that each member of the nation feels in close touch with it, makes it his own, and is conscious of its course as his own destiny, how will the state be able to maintain sturdy independence under trying international circumstances. [...] Fukuzawa saw that what was missing above all from Japan’s traditional consciousness was the spirit of autonomous personality [...] [H]e could never conceive of national independence in the absence of individual autonomy.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 171.

<sup>33</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 103.

<sup>34</sup> Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 171.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 178–189.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 178–179. Koschman has scrutinized the issue of subjectivity in both prewar and postwar Japan including the issue of how the notion of subject had been treated by Marxist theorists. As the fuller study of the genealogical study of subjectivity in modern Japan lies outside the scope of this thesis, I shall make no further discussion on ‘subjectivity’ at this point. See also Maruyama Masao, ‘Fukuzawa ni okeru chitsujo to ningen’, in Matsuzawa Hiroaki and Uete Michiari (eds), *Maruyama Masao shū, dai 2 kan*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996, 219–222.

This perception of the complementary relation between the individual and the state laid paradigmatically the firm foundation of Maruyama's later works during the early postwar period, which were relevant to the concept of autonomy. Rikki Kersten lucidly summarises Maruyama's perception of autonomy in the early postwar period. She states that Maruyama points out the fact that 'democracy is a system founded on paradox' and there always exist 'difficulties involved in reconciling the individual and the collective in post-war Japan'. Thus, Kersten distinguishes between two types of autonomy advanced by Maruyama: 'personal autonomy', which is attained by the individual whose action carries 'the principle of self-regulation, or responsibility as the corollary of his/her action',<sup>37</sup> and 'social autonomy', which refers to 'a pluralistic society in which multi-dimensional individuals preserve their mobility in society'.<sup>38</sup> This characteristic complementarity of autonomy is best expressed by Kersten in the following words:

Essentially, successful social autonomy was not possible unless it was premised on personal autonomy. However, the affinity between social autonomy and the collective threatened to violate personal autonomy. Conversely, personal autonomy only fulfilled a democratic role when it connected with the public realm via active social autonomy.<sup>39</sup>

Maruyama also stresses that Fukuzawa found a basis of argumentation in the relativity of value judgments. Koschmann summarizes this well:

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<sup>37</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 102–104.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Fukuzawa virtually never makes a value judgment in the abstract and never treats value as an entity fixed a priori. His perceptions, therefore, must always be understood to be conditional. Maruyama expresses this by saying that Fukuzawa's statements always need to be taken as if they were "in brackets" (*kakkotsuki* 括弧付き). That is, they are valid only within the limits of a particular situation or point of view, and should not be taken as universally applicable or absolute.<sup>40</sup>

Koschmann adds that, at the same time, Maruyama never views Fukuzawa as 'merely a thoroughgoing relativist' who does not translate one's ideas into action.

Fukuzawa emphasized that one should always establish a "basis of argumentation"—take an autonomous position towards the world in order to grasp its significance. Maruyama says that Fukuzawa was saved from "aimless opportunism" by an inner "truth principle" that provided the degree of detachment sufficient to allow an independent judgment. Yet, according to Maruyama, Fukuzawa never grounded this principle in any metaphysical system. He "certainly did not reject the notion of objective truth; however, he denied that this 'true principle' confronts us as an already fixed and stationary existence. Rather, his basic way of thinking was that it assumed specific form only within a particular situation."<sup>41</sup>

Koschmann cites a good example from Maruyama's 1947 essay, 'Fukuzawa Yukichi no tetsugaku' (The philosophy of Fukuzawa Yukichi)<sup>42</sup> and explains how 'Maruyama's emphasis shifts from the relativity of value judgments to the quality of the subjectivity that is capable of making such judgments.' The significant part is translated by Koschmann:

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<sup>40</sup> Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 182.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>42</sup> I also refer to the original from Maruyama, 'Fukuzawa Yukichi no tetsugaku', in Matsuzawa Hiroaki and Uete Michiari (eds), *Maruyama Masao shū, dai 3 kan*, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1995, 163–204.

[For Fukuzawa] only a tough, subjective spirit can resist treating values as fixed a priori, and instead constantly allow them to be fluid and relative to the concrete situation. While assessing each particular circumstance, and establishing an approach and a standard for action according to that assessment, it is also necessary to avoid becoming caught in a single perspective; one constantly has to maintain the spiritual composure necessary to rise above the existing conditions, and to adjust to the formation of a new situation. In contrast, a spirit poor in such subjectivity becomes firmly rooted in a particular situation and set in one view, and as a result abstractly absolutizes a single value standard that is actually bound to a particular context.<sup>43</sup>

The point I wish to stress from these excerpts is that the concept of autonomy which Maruyama found in Fukuzawa's various writings such as *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* (An Outline of a Theory of Civilization) shows two contrasting autonomies between the individual and the collective. Here, personal autonomy is premised on the active operation of social autonomy and vice versa. The two autonomies are premised on each other's active operations. For this reason, one's autonomous decision-making can always be relative to the concrete situation at the time. It will never be fixed on the idea, which is *a priori*. When the autonomy that Maruyama saw in Fukuzawa's philosophy operates actively, it is possible for an individual to exercise his/her freedom to create new values depending on the given situation at the time, getting actively involved with his/her collective such as family, firm, society, social organization or the nation-state and the like. Koschmann also explains that 'as the capacity to make judgments according to standards that arise in relation to lived, historical situations, it

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<sup>43</sup> Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 183.

implies tireless engagement with a historically changing environment.<sup>44</sup>

Viewed in this light, we notice that there is an interesting analogy between Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing and Maruyama's relative discussion on the discourse of autonomy in postwar Japan. We may recall that Nakagami finds an eternal conflict between the individual (the establishment of self-identity) and the collective (the integration with others) when he writes his works. Nakagami's act of writing is seen as a means to establish his autonomous selfhood, rejecting others or the law/system of the collective while clinging to them. For this reason, he regards writing as something endless like a ceaseless hell. We can observe here that his act (of writing) like a ceaseless hell is analogous with Maruyama's notion of autonomy: one's continuous attempt described as 'tireless engagement' to 'make new judgments with a historically changing environment', that is, the mutual exclusive dichotomy between the individual and the collective, which functions as an apparatus for a precondition to each other. Of course, Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards writing and Maruyama's notion on autonomy are not the same, however what I wish to suggest in this dissertation is that the two paradoxical notions such as autonomy and dependence, the individual and the collective, self and others, can be seen as not only mutually exclusive opposites but also complementary opposites. In this complementary dichotomy, each end can be served as the other's precondition. The individual should be aware of the importance of being a member of the collective, with its respect for national or cultural attachment, the commitment for moral responsibility and so forth. Conversely, any collective that consists of individuals should recognize the value of freedom to choose one's action, personal autonomy and so forth. In the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



sight of complementary dichotomy, one's decision-making can always be in motion, fluid and relative according to its historically changing environments rather than held in the solid, absolute stasis. In my reading of Nakagami's essays and fiction, it may safely be assumed that the points made so far apply in principle to any dichotomy between the two as well as Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards the act of writing.

Let us think back to what Nakagami says about Nagayama Norio's memoirs. Nakagami severely criticises Nagayama's act of writing in the belief that he depicted himself as a victim of the state, the society and the laws/system of the modern nation-state. Nakagami questions him critically: 'If you want to use our language (*kotoba*) as your last resort, it should at least be utilised to penetrate into your inner self! (*Semete soono kotoba wa uchigawa ni sasattekure. せめて、その言葉は内側に刺さってくれ*)'<sup>45</sup> In this excerpt, Nakagami criticises Nagayama, whose *kotoba* employs the logic of the nation-state (*kokka no ronpō*) that Nagayama ironically regarded as his enemy. For Nakagami, on the one hand, his own writing operates to oppose the logic of the nation-state or the superficial relationship with others, which encroaches on one's private sphere. For this reason, his writing operates as 'the creator of value', which is maintained only by autonomous individuals who bear 'the ability of logical self-definition' and assume ethical responsibility for their actions. But simultaneously, his writing entails the risk of falling into the totalitarian inclination or centralization. Thus, when Nagayama Norio justifies his crime by means of writing and thus evades his responsibility, Nakagami dismisses his act of writing as a deception. When Nagayama states that it was inevitable for him to murder four people because of his poverty, Nakagami questions him unsparingly as to the manner in which he made a way into his

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<sup>45</sup> Nakagami, 'Toki wa nagareru...', 239–242.

inner self and evaded his moral responsibility.<sup>46</sup>

Nakagami points out that people possess a kind of guilty conscience towards social dropouts because people who are defined by the notion of the nation-state or the law/system do not take any measures against dehumanization caused by the modern nation-state and turn a blind eye to it, and this guilty conscience arouses people to delude themselves into believing that social dropouts are something formidable,<sup>47</sup> and finally this thought evolves into a fantastic ideology or rather, the sense of discrimination as an invented system or paradigm of modern society, what he calls, the invented *monogatari* (narrative). He denounces this kind of fantastic ideology, saying, ‘Language is deceptive! (*Kotoba wa uso da!*).’ If people use this kind of delusive language, there is simply no truth. It is easy for us to blame the nation-state, what Benedict Anderson had called an ‘imagined community’. Nakagami incisively criticizes Nagayama who blames the modern nation-state or contemporary society for the violence of alienation or poverty but does not scrutinize his act of violence. As it turned out, Nakagami realises that what Nagayama told of his experiences may be another ‘imagined’, invented *monogatari* where Nagayama can live in peace and reiterate constantly. Thus, the invented *monogatari* acts like ‘canon’ that appears as if it existed *a priori* as soon as it was produced and is re-produced endlessly. Thus, while Nakagami began to formulate his deep scepticism towards language (*kotoba*) during the early years of his career, language can be ironically his only reliable last resort as a means to terminate his self-deception that originated from his superficial relationship with others. Here, it seems reasonable to suppose that Nakagami’s act of writing

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> This explanation is more fully developed in Mark Morris, ‘Gossip and History: Nakagami, Faulkner, García Márques’, in *Japan Forum* (8:1 1996), 35–50.

appears to be two kinds of autonomies, namely, the autonomy of the individual who continues to make new judgments according to the concrete situations on the spot and the autonomy of the collective that allows individuals to reject ‘true principle’ made by others (the law/system of the nation-state) as ‘an already fixed and stationary existence’. For both Nakagami and Maruyama, the dichotomy between the two coexists complementarily and eternally.

### **Autonomy and responsibility: Karatani Kōjin’s interpretation of Kantian autonomy**

Let us now attempt to look deeper into the notion of autonomy that was characterized by its complementary aspect through the examination of Immanuel Kant’s concept of freedom and responsibility. Karatani Kōjin reinterprets Kantian ethics relating to autonomous freedom and responsibility in his book, *Transcritique On Kant and Marx* (2003). He explains that ‘when one considers a certain thing to be universal, it is always merely based upon historically engendered common sense’, that is, the ‘community’s codes’ (*kyōdōtai no kisoku* 共同体の規則). If morality is conceptualised from such a ‘community’s codes’, then it is *heteronomous* (*taritsu-teki* 他律的) and not autonomous (*jiritsu-teki* 自律的). Let us once again return to the discussion of Nakagami Kenji’s attitude towards Nagayama Norio. When Nagayama Norio composed his memoirs in prison, he recorded his life, depicting himself as a victim of the state, society and its laws/system. Nakagami considers Nagayama’s narrative, which attempted to evade the responsibility for his crime, to be spurious. He may have instinctively perceived that there is no difference between Nagayama’s act of writing and the system of the modern nation-state, civil society or ‘community’s codes’,

which violate the autonomous freedom of individuals. This is because, in this context, Nagayama treats morality as something that exists *a priori* and that transcends individuals. Once Nagayama begins justifying himself in his crime using language supported by this morality, that is, the logic of the nation-state, his autonomy is vested in the ‘community’s codes’.

Let’s recall that Maruyama’s stress on Fukuzawa Yukichi’s relative statements that ‘always need to be taken as if they were “in brackets”’. ‘That is, they are valid only within the limits of a particular situation or point of view, and should not be taken as universally applicable or absolute.’ Similarly, Karatani argues how modern science, moral and aesthetic judgments come into existence:

When we confront the world, we have at least three kinds of judgment at the same time: cognitive judgment of true or false, ethical judgment of good or bad, and aesthetic judgment of pleasure or displeasure. In real life, they are intermixed and hard to distinguish. Scientists make observations by bracketing ethical and aesthetic judgments: Only by this act can the objects of cognition come into existence. In aesthetic judgment, the aspects of true and false and good or bad are bracketed, only at the precise moment that artistic objects come into existence. These operations are emphatically not done naturally. Rather one is always *ordered* to bracket by the external situation. And being accustomed to it, one forgets that one brackets, and thinks that the objects — scientific or artistic or moral — exist by themselves.

Morality appears to exist objectively. At least that is the way we are taught. But the morality considered in this manner is unequivocally one that belongs to community’s codes. Therein moral norms are transcendent to individual.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Karatani Kōjin, *Transcritique on Kant and Marx*, translated by Sabu Kohso, Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2003, 114–115.

In Nagayama's memoirs, he re-narrates his life, placing himself in the position of victim of the state, society and the law/system. When Nakagami sees Nagayama's *monogatari* as a spurious one which seeks to evade the responsibility for his crime, he thinks that there is no difference between Nagayama's manner to blur his responsibility and the system/law invented by the modern nation-state or the civil society, that is, 'community's codes'. Here, Nagayama sees the moral as something that exists *a priori*. Once Nagayama begins justifying himself in his crime using language backed by the morality, that is, the logic of the nation-state or the logic of the citizens; his morality is the one that belongs to the 'community's codes' and is not autonomous. Nakagami condemns Nagayama's act of writing in such a manner as self-deception.

With this kind of 'bracketing' in mind, Karatani further drives us to the important definition of autonomous freedom: 'Kant's moral world is attained by bracketing [feelings of pleasure/displeasure or happiness]. [...] for Kant, morality is finally a matter of freedom rather than goodness or badness. If not for freedom, there is no good or bad. Freedom is synonymous to being *causa sui*, self-motivated, subjective, and autonomous.'<sup>49</sup> According to Karatani's interpretation, we should trace the cause of any incident to our free will to choose our actions.

The question then arises regarding where we can find such freedom. Karatani goes on to elaborate that Kant actually approves the fact that what we consider as determination of free will is always already determined by complex causalities.<sup>50</sup> If that is the case, then how can we possibly be primarily responsible for our own acts? Karatani explains this antinomy, one of the ongoing philosophical antinomies between the laws of nature (causality), that is, 'Spinozian determinism' and freedom, which is

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

also proposed by Kant:

We do things differently from our intentions, and it is extremely rare that what we intend is actually realized. The most crucial point here is that of responsibility, the responsibility for the result. Only when we are considered free agents, though we are not at all in reality, do we become responsible. [...] When we have done something wrong without knowing that it would be harmful (or sinful), are we still responsible even if we did not know it? Those who have the potency to know that it was harmful are said to be responsible.<sup>51</sup>

[...]

In reality, we can have various choices, and without knowing to what extent the choices are compelled by the necessity of nature. As a result, we come to acknowledge, to a certain degree, decisions determined by causality and, to a certain degree, those determined by free will. Suppose there is a criminal. There are many causes for his crime, personal as well as social. If one named every possible cause, it would turn out that he had no free subject [*jiyū na shutai* 自由な主体], and thus no responsibility. Upset by such a defense and vindication, people would claim that he must have also had freedom of choice. Therefore, common sense would be to accept that humans are determined by various

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 117. For detailed arguments on this, see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 544. For example, I would like to quote some of the very important remarks made by Kant: ‘In order to clarify the regulative principle of reason through an example of its empirical use—not in order to confirm it (for such proofs are unworkable for transcendental propositions)—one may take a voluntary action, e.g. a malicious lie, through which a person has brought about a certain confusion in society; and one may first investigate its moving causes, through which it arose, judging on that basis how the lie and its consequences could be imputed to the person. With this first intent one goes into the sources of the person’s empirical character, seeking them in a bad upbringing, bad company, and also finding them in the wickedness of a natural temper insensitive to shame, partly in carelessness and thoughtlessness; in so doing one does not leave out of account the occasioning causes. In all this one proceeds as with any investigation in the series of determining causes for a given natural effect. Now even if one believes the action to be determined by these causes, one nonetheless blames the agent, and not on account of his unhappy natural temper, not on account of the circumstances influencing him, not even on account of the life he has previously; for one presupposes that it can be entirely set aside how that life was constituted, and that series of conditions that transpired might not have been, but rather that this deed could be regarded as entirely unconditioned in regard to the previous state, as though with that act the agent had started a series of consequences entirely from himself. This blame is grounded on the law of reason, which regards reason as a cause that, regardless of all empirical conditions just named, could have and ought to have determined the conduct of the person to be other than it is.’

causalities, while acknowledging their free will. Kant, however, rejected this kind of middling solution. First we should think that there is no such thing as free will. When we think we do something by our free will, we do so only because of our unawareness of its being determined by external causes. After realizing this, it is finally possible to ask how freedom is possible. From the beginning, neither freedom nor responsibility emerges out of the *theoretical* stance that queries the cause. According to Kant, the criminal's responsibility arises when the causality is bracketed, that is, when he is a free agent. In reality, he does not have freedom *sensu stricto* [jijitsuujō 事実上]. But, he has to be deemed free in order for him to be responsible. Such is the *practical* standpoint.<sup>52</sup>

Kant thought that freedom lay in the duty to obey (or command). This is a tricky point where logic tends to falter, because obeying commands seems to be the opposite of freedom. (As I return to later, many accusations concentrate on this point.)<sup>53</sup> But it is clear that Kant did not identify duty with that which is imposed by the community's code. If the command of duty is of community, to obey it is a heteronymous act, and not free. In order to be free, then, what kind of command does one have to obey? That is no other than the command: "be free!" There is no contradiction here. Neither is there any enigma in Kant's word: "he can do something because he is aware that he ought to do it," which simply means that freedom can spring only from the imperative of being free.<sup>54</sup>

It is natural for us to blame the nation-state, community or society—what Benedict Anderson termed an 'imagined community'. When Nagayama Norio investigates the cause of his acts of violence, he, too, ends in blaming the modern nation-state or contemporary society to which he attributes responsibility for his crime on many counts. In these circumstances, Nagayama's choices are compelled by the necessity imposed by the law of nature, and his decisions are determined by causality. Thus, when

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>53</sup> On this accusations, see Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

<sup>54</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique on Kant and Marx*, translated by Sabu Kohso, 118.

Nagayama writes a story of an ill-fated life bracketing his freedom that is caused by the individual act, he simultaneously surrenders his freedom or autonomy that exists side by side with the moral responsibility. For Nakagami, such writings by Nagayama are transformed into a fantastic ideology, an invented *monogatari*, and he is instinctively aware, as a contemporary writer, that if people employ this kind of delusive *monogatari*, they unwittingly surrender their autonomy to complex causalities.

At this point, it is necessary for us to deal more carefully with the significant question of Kant's transcendental attitude: a discussion of where the command, 'be free!' that is, the imperative of being free, comes from. Karatani Kōjin draws out an answer to this question by referring to Kant's moral law as follows:

This imperative "be free!" ultimately contains the imperative to treat others [*tasha* 他者] as free agents. Kant's moral law is little more than the command: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end [*mokuteki* 目的], never merely as a means [*shudan* 手段]." And it is only thanks to the imperative that the personalities of the others come into existence. Within the theoretical stance [to clarify the regulative principle of reason], neither my personality nor that of any others [as free agents] can exist. Only in the practical domain do they appear. Thus Kant's laws of morality are synonymous to being practical.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, Karatani stresses that Kant's transcendental standpoint comes from 'the existence of the others' (*tasha*) and goes on to say that this imperative (of being free) comes from

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 119. For detailed arguments on this, see Immanuel Kant, 'Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals', in Thomas E. Hill Jr. and Arnulf Zweig (eds), *Oxford Philosophical Texts, Kant Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 229. Kant argues: 'Now I say, a human being, and in general every rational being, does exist as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be used by this or that will as it pleases. In all his actions, whether they are directed to himself or to other rational beings, a human being must always be viewed at the same time as an end.'



Kant's transcendental attitude itself—that entails the imperative: 'bracket it!' [bracket the natural causes, that is, the *theoretical* stance that queries the cause] This interpretation leads Karatani to regard Kant's transcendental standpoint as something that is called functionally autonomous alternation between the theoretical attitude and the practical attitude by saying that 'Kant's ethics cannot be sought only in his accounts of morality. Being theoretical at the same time as being practical—the transcendental stance itself is ethical.'<sup>56</sup> And he concludes: '[T]he lesson of the Kantian transcendental critique is to keep both stances at the same time. One has to know how to bracket and unbracket at the same time.'<sup>57</sup> For reasons mentioned above, Karatani points out that 'the causes of the criminal case come not only from personal feelings [that derived from the practical stance] but also from social relations [that were based on the theoretical stance].'<sup>58</sup> Here, as Nakagami sees the conflicting dichotomy between self-identity and integration with others, we can observe the conflict between self and others as well. First, we should be aware that we do not have any freedom to choose our actions because we are indeed bound by the external causalities—the cause and effect relationship—from the theoretical standpoint. However, at the same time, we are still able to decide to be free to choose our actions from the practical standpoint. But we must not forget that, at this time, we should take full responsibility for our actions in order to have freedom.

As expressed by Karatani's reinterpretation of Kantian ethics, in order to be free, we ought to obey the command: 'be free!' or 'be *causa sui*, self-motivated, subjective, or

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 121. See also Immanuel Kant, 'Critique of Practical Reason', in Mary Gregor (ed.) *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Kant Critique of Practical Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 60: 'The rule of judgment under laws of pure practical reason is this: ask yourself whether, if the action you propose were to take place by a law of the nature of which you were yourself a part, you could indeed regard it as possible through your will.'

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 119.

autonomous!’ In concrete terms, we ought to accept our fate, which is determined by the law of nature, that is, the external causalities, as if it is deemed to be something that is *causa sui* in order to attain our freedom and accept responsibility. Considered in this light, Nakagami Kenji accepted the very fact that he was a contemporary writer born in the *buraku*, outcast community, in Kishū at any given time and space, but he never stays in a convergent state of *burakumin* for long in order to be free, thereby ‘becoming’ a new entity that is not required to return to its origin as a place fixed *a priori*, which was fabricated by the syntax of modern language or the logic of the collective such as the modern nation-state or society.

## CHAPTER II

### SEARCH FOR THE AUTONOMY THAT GROWS OUT OF THE INDIVIDUAL/COLLECTIVE DICHOTOMY IN THE FICTION OF NAKAGAMI KENJI

Nakagami Kenji's family background was very complex. He had two half-brothers and three half-sisters with a different father, and two half-brothers and two half-sisters with different mothers. Nakagami at the age of eight moved to a new house with his mother who started to cohabit with another man who became his stepfather eight years later. Moreover, the most profound trauma for Nakagami was his half-brother's suicide when Nakagami was thirteen years old. Nakagami's own eventful life experiences had provided motifs for his works, and were repeatedly manifested in his works, namely, *Misaki* (1976), *Karekinada* (1977), *Chi no hate shijō no toki* (1983). These are well known as the trilogy of Akiyuki who is the protagonist throughout them. Furthermore, there were *Keshō* (Makeup), written between 1974 and 1977; *Sennen no yuraku* (1982), *Kumano-shū* (1984) and so forth. In these novels, the same events such as the suicide of Nakagami's half-brother appear again and again. Moreover, immediately after he proposes a certain perspective in a novel, he starts to make a different dimension of it in the following novel. Many of leitmotifs and characters in these novels recur frequently with the topos of Nakagami's text, in Nakagami's term, the *roji* (路地, alleyway) in Kumano. In most of Nakagami's text, the *roji* is used as the metaphorical term for the *hisabetsu buraku* (the discriminated communities) which were formed by a descendant group of outcast people known as *burakumin* in premodern Japan. Under the Tokugawa Shogunate system, outside the four castes of

*shi-nō-kō-shō* (warrior-farmer-artisan-merchant) were the outcast groups of *burakumin*, that is, *eta* and *hinin* (literally ‘plentiful dirt’ and ‘not human’) such as the certain occupational groups of people who butchered animals for food or leather, people who carried corpses and some of travelling entertainers. During the round-table discussion with Yasuoka Shōtarō and Noma Hiroshi in 1977, Nakagami made reference to the ongoing issue of *hisabetsu buraku* for the first time and touched on the fact that his birth house was situated in an outcast ghetto in Shingū City.<sup>1</sup> His concerns about discrimination against *burakumin* may have provoked Nakagami to continue to seek his identity in his literary universe.

As the fundamental standpoint of his writing, we have observed that Nakagami’s act of writing creates two ambivalent attitudes, first to establish a firm self-identity, and secondly to identify himself with others (*tasha*). Nakagami did not attempt to end this dichotomy between the two by assuming that two poles function as a precondition for each other. For this reason, his act of writing seems to manifest itself in two kinds of attitudes simultaneously, that is to say, the autonomy of the individual and the dependence on the collective, which coexist complementarily. In this sense, his act of writing must always be considered to be conditional. Nakagami viewed this kind of antinomy as a powerful impetus to make him write novels perpetually. In this respect, the literature of Nakagami Kenji may provide an excellent means for transformation into autonomous individuals who bear ‘the ability of logical self-definition’ and the moral responsibility as Nakagami depicts an individual who can possess the continuous self-determination in the trilogy of Akiyuki. This chapter suggests that Akiyuki’s attitude towards the end of *Chi no hate shijō no toki* resembles Kant’s transcendental

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<sup>1</sup> Takazawa, *Nakagami Kenji jiten*, Tokyo: Kōbunsha 21, 2002, 247–248.

attitude which displays both theoretical and practical standpoints at the same time. Akiyuki's awareness of his own crime in *Chi no hate*, which I interpret as his continuous self-determination and moral responsibility, may provide some instruments for the active attitude proposed by Ōe Kenzaburō as we have discussed in the Introduction. In this chapter, I would like to examine how Nakagami's search for autonomy that appeared as an ambivalent, endless strife was reflected in his major novels written between 1977 and 1984.

### **Nakagami Kenji's attempt to break the archetype of *monogatari* through the Akiyuki trilogy**

After he published *Karekinada* in 1977, Nakagami Kenji started to show his concerns with the issue of *monogatari*, especially, the archetype of *monogatari*.<sup>2</sup> Although the word *monogatari* can be a word with many impalpable shadows of meaning, it is simply defined in *Kenkyusha English-Japanese Dictionary 5th Edition* as 'a tale; a story; a narrative; a talk'. In addition, the Japanese word *monogatari* refers to the classical literary genre as typified by *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji). The term *monogatari* also indicates a field of literature, *monogatariron* (narratology).<sup>3</sup> Nakagami often uses the term *monogatari* to refer to a discourse which has a fixed, stylized form that determines a set of narrative statements. However, his definition of *monogatari* is also usually elusive and sometimes paradoxical. As we have examined

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Nakagami Kenji and Matsuda Osamu, 'Taidan—Monogatari no teikei to iu koto', *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* (23:16 December 1978): 16–35.

<sup>3</sup> Eve Zimmerman has discussed in detail the term *monogatari* with *shōsetsu*, see Zimmerman, 'A Language of Rebellion: Myth, Violence and Identity in the Fiction of Nakagami Kenji', PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, UMI Dissertation Services, 1997. For the differences between *monogatari* and *shōsetsu*, see also Noguchi Takehiko, *Ichigo no jiten—shōsetsu* (Dictionary of One Word: Fiction), Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1996.

in Chapter I, Nakagami emphasizes that any type of binary distribution will never be dialectically reconciled and it continues perpetually. He explains that this eternal dichotomous framework operates to generate and develop fiction, the rule of the game or what he calls, the archetype of *monogatari*. He explained that this dichotomy between the two as a narrative rule provokes the narrative domain and thrills the readers of the fiction with it. However, at the same time, this kind of dichotomy has a strong effect on our perspective and locks us into a certain narrative domain. He emphasized that if we treat this dichotomy carefully, it functions as a facilitator of an exciting *monogatari*, but if we do not, it confines us to the visionary world of *monogatari*. Being well aware of this kind of spell of *monogatari* at that time, Nakagami attempted to escape from the snare of *monogatari* which can be sometimes regarded as the law/system of the collective. His love and hate sentiment towards Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965) who is dubbed a great *monogatari* writer indicates well Nakagami's antinomic observation towards the archetype of *monogatari*. In Nakagami's series of essays entitled 'Monogatari no keifu' (Notes on the Geneology of the Prose Narrative, 1979), while Nakagami criticizes Tanizaki as the writer who unconsciously adapted himself to the law/system of *monogatari*, he recognizes Tanizaki as a *monogatari* writer of the highest calibre in the history of modern Japanese literature.<sup>4</sup> Mark Harbison also describes Nakagami's dilemma as follows:

Shortly after winning the Akutagawa Prize, Nakagami began to say that he has fallen into a dilemma, that he is trapped on a pendulum that swings between two extremes: in thrall to the Japanese *monogatari*, at the same time he is obsessed with demolishing "the law, the system, the *monogatari*

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<sup>4</sup> Nakagami, 'Monogatari no keifu Tanizaki Jun'ichirō', in *NKZ* Vol. 15, 145–156.

of Japanese literature”.<sup>5</sup>

In this section, I would like to enter into a detailed discussion of how Japanese *monogatari* as one of ‘tradition’ of Japanese literature was understood by Nakagami and how ‘he deconstructs the law, the system, the *monogatari* of Kumano as brutally as he explodes his vision of the Ally [*roji*] in the I-novels.’<sup>6</sup>

Nakagami’s complex understanding of the archetype of *monogatari* is well portrayed in ‘Monogatari no keifu’. Nakagami examines the works of the writers such as Satō Haruo (1892–1964), Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, Ueda Akinari (1734–1809), Orikuchi Shinobu (1887–1953) and Enchi Fumiko (1905–1986). From the diligent perusal of their works, Nakagami attempts to search the true colours of *monogatari*.<sup>7</sup> Nakagami finds a kind of narrative grammar, a linear narrative of progress, as it were, the law/system of the collective in *monogatari*. His definitions of *monogatari* cover a lot of ground: the dichotomy between discriminating and being discriminated against, a piece of music which has the fixed chord progression, popularization (*tsūzoku-ka*), one’s attitude that depends on the law/system which becomes visible under the autocratic rule of a militarist regime, capitalism, and nature (*shizen*), that is to say, the law of external causality.<sup>8</sup> Some of these perceptions of discourse were probably influenced by what

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Harbison, ‘The Immortal’, in Van C. Gessel and Tomone Matsumoto (eds), *The Shōwa Anthology, Modern Japanese Short Stories 2, 1961–1984*, Tokyo: Kōdansha International, 1984, 413–414.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.

<sup>7</sup> Nakagami, ‘Monogatari no keifu’, in *NKZ* Vol. 15, 117–230. The original texts first appeared in *Kokubungaku*, (24:2, 3, 5, 6, 9 and 13 February–October 1979).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 121, 126, 129, 137 and 141. On this matter, some scholars indicate that what comes in conflict with self or the individual in premodern Japan should be not others or the collective such as community, social organization or nation-state but nature (*shizen*). To follow up this matter further would involve us in other factors than the paradox between the individual and the collective. It may not be necessary for the purpose of this dissertation to enter into a detailed discussion of the relationship between an individual and nature. For detailed arguments for this matter, see, for example, Noda Ken’ichi (野田研一), *Shizen o kanjiru kokoro—Neichā raitingu nyūmon* (自然を感

Karatani Kōjin calls ‘*fūkei* (landscape)’, ‘*naimen* (interiority)’, and other invented ideological concepts found in the mind of an introverted modern man, which is what we take for granted as ‘common-sense’ or concepts taken as natural.<sup>9</sup> Nakagami goes on to say that this law/system in *monogatari* can be found throughout the length and breadth of the country. Referring to Lévi-Strauss who revealed the close affinity between the structure of myths and that of musical scores or formula which is perceived as something unfolding itself horizontally in a linear manner, Nakagami found the same hidden structure in *monogatari* depicting its structure as a fixed discourse like a chord progression, for example, *jo-ha-kyū* (beginning, break out, tangent) or *ki-shō-ten-ketsu* (the four-part organization of Chinese poetry; introduction, development, turn and conclusion).<sup>10</sup>

Nakagami often compares the dismantlement of *monogatari* with free jazz developed in the 1960s. He appreciates the music of Albert Ayler or John Coltrane. In his collected essays, *Hakai seyo to Airā wa itta* (Ayler said, ‘Destroy!’ 1979), Nakagami equates John Coltrane with James Joyce. In an essay entitled ‘Toki wa nagareru...’, Nakagami also states, ‘Even if we could write a novel in the same way as Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, we are still bound by the chord progression. As long as we possess the fixed chord progression, there is no longer essence. The same can be said for language. Language with the fixed chord progression is also deceptive.’<sup>11</sup> He focuses on the fixed chord change in music and points out that there is the law/system called the fixed chord change in jazz music, too. He portrays some free jazz musicians

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じるころ ネイチャーライティング入門), Tokyo: Chikuma purikē shinsho, 2007; Kawamura Jirō (河村次郎), *Jiga to seimei* (自我と生命), Tokyo: Moe shobō, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, translated and edited by Brett de Bary, 11–96. Fuller discussion about this matter will be presented in Chapter V.

<sup>10</sup> Nakagami, ‘Monogatari no keifu’, 209.

<sup>11</sup> Nakagami Kenji, ‘Toki wa nagareru...’, in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 242.



who cozy up to it or conversely some musicians who destroy the chord progression.<sup>12</sup> The first scholar to give much attention to this matter was Alan Tansman. He commented as follows:

Akiyuki's attempted escapes into music have the theoretical backing of Nakagami the critic. In a series of essays on John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Thelonius Monk, and other jazz musicians, Nakagami likens the tale (*monogatari*) to a musical form in which one creates new chords to destroy old ones. To destroy the tale, which both provides an escape from modernity and can also become another prison, he must blow apart all chords and get as far as possible, as quickly as possible, from law and system (*hō, seido*). Nakagami insists that he must play a free jazz like Coltrane's, which blows to a limit one cannot even sense as a limit, and destroys the chords from which free jazz develops. Free jazz is "nothing but destruction." It is the free jazz of Coltrane that allows Nakagami to attack his enemy (and his friend), the tale, by ignoring the progression of chords that develop the tale and twisting them: free jazz "attempts to become endlessly free from all past chords". Akiyuki, too, attempts to become endlessly free of all past chords. The endless repetition of his digging records his attempted escape from the land and the tales that hold him prisoner—as do Nakagami's repetitions record his attempted escape not only from modern literature, but from language itself.<sup>13</sup>

In *Misaki* and *Karekinada* that were written in 1976 and 1977, the protagonist, Akiyuki is absorbed in doing physical labour everyday, that is, 'digging' the ground. He immensely enjoys blending with the soil which he digs, his physical labour itself. Tansman depicts *monogatari* as 'all past chords' which confine Akiyuki in the certain

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<sup>12</sup> Nakagami, 'Kōdo to no tatakai', in *NKZ* Vol. 15, 27–31. On this topic, see also Michael Molasky, 'Nakagami Kenji no hakai shinwa', in *Sengo nihon no jazu bunka: Eiga · bungaku · angura* (戦後日本のジャズ文化 映画・文学・アングラ), Tokyo: Seidosha, 2005, 254–264.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Tansman, 'History, Repetition, and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji', *Journal of Japanese Studies* (24:2 1 998): 271.

discourse of modernity, and portrays Akiyuki's repetitions of 'digging' the earth as Akiyuki's (or Nakagami's) attempted escape from the concealed law/system of modernity or modern language itself. In his early essays that were written in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Nakagami equated the physical labour with the return to the world of the object, which is considered to be free from the law/system of modern language.<sup>14</sup> Nakagami calls this his half suicide because the writer has to cling to the language despite of his/her disbelief in it. In this sense, Akiyuki's repetitions of 'digging' can truly be considered to be a form of his escape from the law/system of *kotoba*. However, at the same time, Akiyuki's repetitions of physical labour can be seen as his obedience to the world of object which is still bound by the larger collective notion, that is, the law of nature or the external causalities. In addition to this, here, we can notice the striking discrepancy in Nakagami's attempt to be free from *kotoba* as his repetitions of his physical labour, that is, his attempt to escape from language itself is written in the language itself. In this sense, no matter how Akiyuki attempted to escape from *monogatari*, he could not be completely free from the certain discourse of collective notion as long as it is expressed by the language. In this sense, Akiyuki's escape written by *kotoba* never seems to end. Yet Nakagami did not stop writing in spite of this discrepancy between the practical and theoretical aspects of language.

Nakagami sees the concealed structure of *monogatari* or the progression of chords in the modern language itself, and he assumes that the defined words that grew out from the *genbun icchi* system of the Meiji period is unconsciously bound by the logic of the

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<sup>14</sup> We shall to return this point in Chapter VI. See, for example, Nakagami, 'Sakka to nikutai' (作家と肉体), in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 199–204 or Nakagami, 'Shohatsu no mono' (初発の者), in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 193–195.

modern nation-state or the rule of the Emperor. In ‘Monogatari no keifu’, Nakagami regards writers who resign themselves into the hands of *monogatari* as writers who are heavily dependent on the law/system of the collective such as the military nation.<sup>15</sup> Thus, he developed this kind of radical perception of *monogatari* as a matter of nature, nation, law or morality itself, which generates the ongoing canon formation.

What is, then, the law/system of *monogatari*, or rather, the discourse (the progression of chords) of *monogatari* that Nakagami understood? In the series of seminars, *Buraku seinen bunka-kai* (The Cultural Society for Outcast Youth) in 1978, Nakagami explains thoroughly what is the set of narrative statements to every *monogatari* — an archetypal pattern.<sup>16</sup> Having been inspired by *Utsuho monogatari* (The Tale of Utsuho, 984), Nakagami explains that *utsuho* literally means a cavern or hollow depicted as a mythical space, which sharpens our feelings of awe or reverence for our unknown territories.<sup>17</sup> Nakagami indicates that he cannot find this kind of mythical space, *utsuho*, in one of the most famous Japanese classics, *The Tale of Genji*. *Utsuho monogatari* is a story of an unmarried noble woman who is a daughter of the poetical genius, Kiyohara no Toshikage, and her son, Fujiwara no Nakatada, who was born out of wedlock. In this respect of the illegitimate child, *Utsuho monogatari* can be regarded as a *kishu-ryūri-tan* (noble exile myth). Nakatada’s mother lost her parents as well as her nanny when she was young, and lived with an old woman who was a servant of her nanny. She accidentally spent a night with a court noble of high position, Fujiwara no Kanemasa, and gave birth to a boy. However, the mother and son who

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<sup>15</sup> Nakagami, ‘Monogatari no keifu’, 121.

<sup>16</sup> Nakagami, ‘Hirakareta yutakana bungaku’, in Karatani and Watanabe (eds), *Nakagami Kenji to Kumano*, 36–106.

<sup>17</sup> It would be interesting to compare this perception of *utsuho* with, what Asada calls, “a seemingly horizontal, centreless place” or Nishida Kitarō’s philosophy, “*mu no basho*”, a place of nothingness, or emptiness in Zen Buddhism. There is, however, no space here to discuss this in detail.

lost their servant a few years later wandered in the mountains to look for food, and finally came upon a hermit at a mountain hollow (*utsuho*) in Yoshino. After a lapse of another several years, Kanemasa happened to see the mother and son when he was hunting with a falcon in the mountain of Yoshino, and he took them to Kyoto. Nakatada amazed his father, Kanemasa, with his talent for playing a Japanese harp inherited from his grandfather, Kiyohara no Toshikage. Nakatada's extraordinary musical talent for playing the harp allowed him to rise through the ranks in court.<sup>18</sup>

With this perception of *utsuho*, Nakagami creates a model of protagonists in his novels. That is a 'pure' or 'innocent' child who has had an experience of his/her life being threatened or with abandonment, and has been deeply hurt by someone from his/her affinity group. Thus a protagonist will appear in the figure of an orphan or an illegitimate child (or a prince) who unconsciously or fatalistically falls into a crime/sin such as incest or patricide/matricide. Nakagami goes on to say that from this 'innocent' child's point of view, the world of adults or parents (or a king), which is an enigma to children, can be narrated as an archetype of *monogatari*. These adults always appear to be something 'black-hearted and mysterious' to the 'innocent' children. In a *monogatari* or a myth like the story of Oedipus, this adult may often make his appearance as a king or an emperor and the child as a prince or an imperial prince. Nakagami concludes that this kind of relationship between a 'pure' child (prince) and an 'evil' adult (king) can be one of the powerful archetypes of *monogatari*. To put it more concretely, this archetype can be regarded as the process of how this innocent child (prince) became aware of his own crime and how he exposed the secret of the adult (king). Nakagami says that exposing the secret of the king could be the same as

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<sup>18</sup> Nakagami, 'Utsuho kara no hibiki', in *Nakagami Kenji to Kumano*, 39–40.

exposing the very secret of ‘*monogatari*’, which is equalized to ‘*shizen*’, laws of nature, the cause and effect relationship, which gives rise to all sorts of phenomena in the world including the social discrimination against *burakumin*. Nakagami does not negate the deeds of the adult no matter how evil they are. He exposes them and accepts them as the part of external causalities. At this moment, the pure child may become aware that the one to blame is not only the evil others but also himself/herself in varying degrees as s/he realizes that all events between the individuals and others are regulated by the complex external causalities surrounding us. While the pure child theoretically accepts the deeds of others as the part of the cause and effect relationship, the child also practically reflects on what s/he has done and the moral responsibility made of his/her own free will. In my reading of *Chi no hate shijō no toki* that was written in 1983, the pure child, Akiyuki, recognizing the responsibilities for his own harmful acts, turns into an adult subject who exercises autonomous freedom and takes moral responsibility.

This dichotomy between a pure child and an evil adult may permeate various aspects of our life. For example, let us put this archetypal relationship between an ‘innocent’ self and ‘evil’ others into the context of the student riots in the 1960s. In the conflict between students and the University authorities, we can see the similar archetype between the students who regarded themselves as a pure and righteous entity and the ‘corrupt’ authorities. The theatrical dramatist, Yamazaki Tetsu describes the so-called ‘All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee’ (known as ‘Zen-kyō-tō’ 全共闘) as a kind of students’ representation of their innocence, putting the blame on the ‘corrupt’ (*kitanai*) university authorities, the *kitanai* nation-state or *kitanai* society.<sup>19</sup>

The same observation applies to John Dower’s illustration of Japanese modes of

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<sup>19</sup> Yamazaki Tetsu, *Shōnen jiken bukku, ibasho no nai kodomotachi*, 38–39.

thoughts during the war. He talks about the uniqueness of Japanese modes of perception: elaborating mythohistory, which emphasizes the divine origins of the Japanese imperial line and the exceptional racial and cultural homogeneity of the Japanese people.<sup>20</sup> The Japanese declared themselves to be inherently virtuous and ‘pure’ or to be purer than others. The war in Asia and the Pacific was, for example, a ‘holy war’ or ‘total war’ to create a ‘new world order’ which enabled all nations and races to assume their ‘proper place’ in the world, and which was traced back to the founding of the Japanese state and ‘Yamato race’ by the Emperor Jimmu 2600 years ago.<sup>21</sup> The war was regarded as an act that could purify the self, the nation, Asia, and the whole world.<sup>22</sup> Here, the same archetype of *monogatari* (i.e. a dichotomy between a pure child and evil others) may be evidence, no doubt, of this wartime prejudice: the Japanese whose national character is cloudless, pure, and honest versus the Westerners whose hearts are filthy and impure. These dichotomies between the pure and the evil in our everyday life may help us seize Nakagami’s understanding of the law/system in *monogatari* more clearly, being closely linked with any ‘*sabetsu/hisabetsu*’ dichotomy (the dichotomy between discriminating and being discriminated against) or the nationalistic leanings in contemporary Japan. As we have discussed, we cannot place the entire responsibility of social problems on the extreme poles such as the people who discriminate against social minorities or ultranationalists. In order to identify the causes of any social problems, we should keep making our new judgments practically while we theoretically observe the individual circumstance of each problem in a society

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<sup>20</sup> Gender perspective should be considered in future study of Nakagami Kenji.

<sup>21</sup> According to *Nihon shoki* (The Chronicle of Japan), the Emperor Jimmu was the first emperor of Japan. However, it is now accepted that this can be regarded as a myth and cannot be regarded as a fact.

<sup>22</sup> John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 203–233.

from the viewpoints of both the perpetrators and victims. Nakagami explains that the archetype of *monogatari* may heat up and fortify one's one-sided judgment that is often found in a story such as *kanzenchōaku* (rewarding the good and punishing the bad).<sup>23</sup> However, Nakagami considers that the archetype of *monogatari* should not be rejected but recognized as the part of the law of nature, that is, the external causalities which always coexist with our autonomous freedom to choose our actions. Now that we are sure about the archetype of *monogatari* that Nakagami was confronted with, we can go on to consider the manner in which Nakagami actually attempted to expose it through his entire writing career.

In the first novel of the Akiyuki trilogy, *Misaki*, the protagonist, Akiyuki, who is a 24-year-old labourer, lives with his mother, stepfather and stepbrother in the *roji* of a city by the sea. Akiyuki's biological father, Ryūzō, is also living in the same city as well as Akiyuki's two half-sisters with different mothers, whom Akiyuki has not met yet. Although Akiyuki ignored his biological father whenever Akiyuki came across him, he could not help but feel the weight of Ryūzō's eyes no matter where he went in the city. The existence of Ryūzō and the rumours about his misdeeds in the past constantly rasp on Akiyuki's nerves and upset Akiyuki's equilibrium. Akiyuki also felt and was irritated that he was a chip off his biological father, and wished to sever all ties with Ryūzō. In *Misaki*, Akiyuki is illustrated as a young man who wishes to be immaculate and pure. For this reason, Akiyuki even preserves his virginity. The following are three random examples from *Misaki*:

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<sup>23</sup> Nakagami, 'Futatsu no kōkyū saron', *Goō* (Vol. 4 2006): 80.

離れの四畳半が、彼の部屋だった。壁に一枚、女優のグラビアが貼ってあった。他になにもなかった。[···] 部屋を飾りたてたり、部屋に物を置くのは、彼の性に合わなかった。[···] 部屋で、寝て、起きる。今でもそうだった。女のことさえ、考えたくなかった。やっかいな物一切を、そぎ落としてしまいたかった。<sup>24</sup>

Akiyuki lived in a four-and-a-half-mat room detached from the rest of the house. On one wall was a poster of an actress. That was it. [···] [H]e wasn't the type to decorate or buy furniture. [···] He went to bed in his room and woke up in his room. It was the same now. And women? They didn't even cross his mind. He would remove all impurities.<sup>25</sup>

彼は苦笑した。一人、妙にさめた。どこへ行っても、男と女のわいせつな話ばかりだと思った。[···]

木がゆれていた。ゆっくりと葉をふるわせていた。余計なものをそぎ落としたい。夢精のたびに、そう思った。<sup>26</sup>

Wherever he went, all anybody talked about was sex. [···]

The trees were swaying, giving their leaves a gentle shake. Rid yourself of all excess—that's what he thought every time he had a wet dream.<sup>27</sup>

「お兄ちゃん、ちょっと寄らへん」と女の一人が声を掛けてきた。彼は、返事をしなかった。「寄って行ってよ」と女は、彼の腕に手をまわした。酒に化粧のにおいがした。金はあった。酒を飲み、女を買う相場の金は持っていた。だが、女を知らなかった。知りたくなかった。余計なもの、やっかいなものに自分をかかわらせ、汚したくなかった。いや、ひとたびそれを知ると、とめどなくのめり込み、どろどろになり、女とみれば見境いなしに手をつけたあの男と同じ

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<sup>24</sup> Nakagami, *Misaki*, in *NKZ* Vol. 3, 174.

<sup>25</sup> Nakagami Kenji, *The Cape*, translated by Eve Zimmerman, 19–20.

<sup>26</sup> Nakagami, *Misaki*, in *NKZ* Vol. 3, 180.

<sup>27</sup> Nakagami Kenji, *The Cape*, translated by Eve Zimmerman, 27.



になってしまいそうな自分が不安だった。<sup>28</sup>

“Come here, handsome,” a woman called to him [Akiyuki]. He didn’t answer. “Stop in for a while,” said the woman, now taking him by the arm. He could smell makeup and liquor. He had money. Enough money to get drunk and buy a woman. But he’d never had a woman and he didn’t want one now. Didn’t want to dirty himself in something pointless and messy. No, no, he worried that if he did it just once, he’d become obsessed with it and end up with his mind in the sewer just like that man [his biological father, Ryūzō], who couldn’t keep his hands to himself.<sup>29</sup>

What these excerpts make clear at once is that the protagonist, Akiyuki, is depicted as an illegitimate, innocent child who seeks his biological father’s enigma, which faithfully reflected the archetype of *monogatari* as we have discussed before. Through *Misaki*, Akiyuki’s biological father was indicated not by his name, Ryūzō, but *ano otoko* (that man) from Akiyuki’s point of view. Moreover, *Misaki* ends with Akiyuki and his half-sister (Ryūzō’s daughter) entering into an incestuous relationship. We can be fairly certain that *Misaki* is a *monogatari* that depicts a relationship between a ‘pure’ child (prince) and an ‘evil’ adult (king), and this can be the beginning of the *monogatari* about an abandoned child of virginal innocence, who is fatalistically falling into a sin such as incest or patricide/matricide.

The sequel to *Misaki*, *Karekinada* (Sea of Dead Trees) was written between October 1976 and March 1977. It depicts the summer long experiences of Akiyuki who was 26 years old. Akiyuki does physical work for a construction company that Akiyuki’s stepbrother inherited from his father (Akiyuki’s stepfather). The discourse of

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<sup>28</sup> Nakagami, *Misaki*, in *NKZ* Vol. 3, 187.

<sup>29</sup> Nakagami Kenji, *The Cape*, translated by Eve Zimmerman, 36.

*Karekinada* also faithfully observes the archetype of *monogatari* of an innocent child. In *Karekinada*, we are shown a vivid illustration of Akiyuki's biological father as a man of flesh and blood with his name, Hamamura Ryūzō. It provides a more realistic and graphic portrait of 'evil' Ryūzō who is tainted with scandalous images and is called Lord of the Flies (*Hae no ō*)<sup>30</sup> behind his back by the people of the city. Akiyuki constantly hears a series of rumours about Ryūzō's evil deeds: he was a vagabond who wandered into the town and started to work under a parvenu of the city; he set houses on fire and defrauded the *roji* squatters of land; he cheated heavily indebted forest holders out of large parts of their forest lands, and so on. Ryūzō even dismisses Akiyuki's tearful confession with a laugh when Akiyuki and his half-sister, Satoko (Ryūzō's daughter out of wedlock), came to see Ryūzō to confess their incestuous affair. At one period, Ryūzō started to trumpet his lineage by saying that he is descended from Hamamura Magoichi, who was regarded by Ryūzō as a feudal warlord who was routed in a pitched battle against Oda Nobunaga.<sup>31</sup> Ryūzō asserted that Hamamura Magoichi exiled himself to Arima in Kumano,<sup>32</sup> and Ryūzō erected a monument of the Hamamuras to his ancestral memory on a top of a hill in Arima. Akiyuki listened to his tale, and attempted to reveal the deception of Ryūzō's descent story. Akiyuki went to Arima to ascertain whether what Ryūzō was saying was true, and there he found that people in Arima were scoffing at Ryūzō's belief. Akiyuki realized bitterly that Ryūzō's claim turned out to be a big joke.

On the other hand, Nakagami depicts Akiyuki as a being in communion with nature.

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<sup>30</sup> Lord of the Flies (*Hae no ō*), or sometimes, a shit of flies (*hae no kuso*), is Nakagami's metaphoric expression for someone who is abominated by others in *Karekinada*.

<sup>31</sup> Oda Nobunaga is one of the most powerful feudal rulers in the Sengoku era (the Warring States period) of the 16th century.

<sup>32</sup> Kumano is one of the settings of the Akiyuki trilogy. It is well known as a sacred site to both Shinto and Buddhism since ancient times.

Akiyuki, working in perfect harmony with nature in mountains, seems to purify himself with his manual labour.<sup>33</sup> Examples of Akiyuki's close association with nature abound in *Karekinada* as follows:

川は光っていた。[···] 明るく青い水が自分の開いた眼から血管に流れ込み、自分の体が青く染まっていく気がした。そんな感じはよくあった。土方仕事をしている時はしょっちゅうだった。汗を流して掘り方をしながら秋幸は、自分が考えることも判断することもない力を入れて掘りすくう動く体になっているのを感じた。土の命じるままに従っているのだった。硬い土はそのように、柔らかい土にはそれに合うように。秋幸はその現場に染まっている。<sup>34</sup>

The river shines. [···] Akiyuki felt the bright, shining water flowing through his wide-open eyes into his blood vessels, and felt his body turning bright blue. He often had the same sensation. It occurred a lot when he worked at the construction site. When he dug in the soil with beads of sweat, Akiyuki felt his body moving, digging, turning the soil over as if the labour was second nature to him or his body was controlled by something beyond the limits of his judgment. Akiyuki was at the mercy of the soil. He conformed in full with the needs of hard ground as well as soft ground. He was steeped in the construction field.

What is immediately apparent in this excerpt is that Akiyuki, in *Karekinada*, not only feels in union with nature but also has an unconscious obedience to the external causalities that embrace the archetype of *monogatari* as we have discussed before.

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<sup>33</sup> This point is argued by Eve Zimmerman as well. See, Zimmerman, 'In the Trap of Words', 143–145.

<sup>34</sup> Nakagami, *Karekinada*, in *NKZ* Vol. 3, 248–249.

Whatever he does seems to arise spontaneously beyond Akiyuki's will. In this respect, it is not possible to affirm that, in *Karekinada*, Akiyuki is depicted as an individual who establishes his own autonomy. He was bound by the fixed narrative discourse, that is, the law/system of *monogatari*, which portrays the predetermined conflict between an innocent self and evil others. As if he was guided by the chord progression that is premeditated by the archetype of *monogatari*, Akiyuki, in a fit of rage, killed his younger half-brother, Hideo, when he encountered Ryūzō and Hideo on the night of a lantern festival. Akiyuki pours out his heart as follows:

その男は、いま何が起こったのか知っただろうか？ 男にはっきりと教えてやりたかった。その男の子供を、その男の別の腹の息子が殺した。その男の遠つ祖、浜村孫一の血の者が、浜村孫一の血の者を殺した。すべてはその男の性器から出た凶いだった。<sup>35</sup>

That man [Ryūzō] knows what happened right now? Akiyuki wanted to let him know clearly. Ryūzō's son was killed by another son with a different mother. A man who is in Hamamura Magoichi's blood killed a man in the same bloodline. All evil came from the genitalia of that man.

Thus, in *Karekinada*, Akiyuki is depicted as a man who abandoned his freedom of choice of action to his father, Ryūzō, which made it appear as if it were the law of nature that ruled over his actions, and consequently he did not develop any sense of moral responsibility. All he does is to coexist with nature that subsumes both good and evil deeds and to cling to its law. He remains an innocent child who was abetted by the spell of *monogatari* in all his deeds, even siblicide.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 454–455.

It seems to me that the most outstanding achievement of Nakagami Kenji is the manner in which he wrote *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, the sequel to *Karekinada*, in 1983. In *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, Nakagami attempts to relativize the archetype of *monogatari* which exercises strong control over Akiyuki's actions in *Misaki* and *Karekinada*. Akiyuki came back to the *roji* as an individual who has established his own autonomy. *Chi no hate shijō no toki* begins with the description of Akiyuki who was now 29 years old, and had just walked out of prison after serving three years. During the time Akiyuki spent in prison, a redevelopment project started in the city and it destroyed the community of people who lived in the *roji*. Akiyuki forced back a shriek when he found that the hill where the *roji* was situated had been levelled and had become a vacant lot. However, he also noticed a change in his way of looking at things:

朝の歓楽街を歩いていると秋幸は、二十六の時とはまるっきり異なったもう一人の秋幸のような気がした。二十六の時の今時分は朝の四時には起きて働いていた。夏は夏の、冬は冬の季節の中で絶えず自分の周囲にあった日の光をもう二度と見る事も感じる事もない。朝の日は今もあったが、単なる風景のようで物足りなかった。<sup>36</sup>

Walking on the street of the amusement area in the morning, Akiyuki felt that he was not the same as his old self at 26 and became another self in a completely different way. Akiyuki woke up and started to work by four o'clock in the morning at that time. He felt that he would neither see nor sense the sunlight that used to coexist with him regardless whether it was

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<sup>36</sup> Nakagami, *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, in *NKZ* Vol. 6, 43.

winter or summer. Though Akiyuki is still able to sense the sunlight now, he feels empty inside as the sunlight appears to be a mere landscape.

Here, we notice that Akiyuki can no longer enjoy the sense of oneness with nature. Akiyuki now pauses to realize that nature with which he strove for oneness reappears to be external to him for the first time. Akiyuki's eyes turned away from the amoral world of the *roji* that subsumes everything around him and opened to the outside world. He accepted it as reality and started to interact with society from the perspective of his own interaction with the outside world. In *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, Akiyuki speculates about what other people experience in the world and how they are thinking or feeling. He also begins to observe the changes in the world and in individual lives. Akiyuki questions himself about a range of matters that are related to the relationship between the individual and the environment: history, discrimination against the people in the *roji*, religion, nature, economic value of labour and so forth. He admits that all of us, being associated with the outside world, are constrained by all of these external causalities in varying degrees. One day, Akiyuki interrogated Ryūzō as to whether he committed the evil deeds that people gossiped about. Ryūzō attempted to offset his evil deeds by saying that:

「悪じゃけど、どっちもまた正しい事じゃと思うんじゃ。切手ほどの土地からはじめて、息子のおまえに後をついでくれと胸張って頼めるほどの山も土地も持った。わしとの競争で落ちた者がどっさりおる。[···] 地主のそこへ行って頭下げ、お世辞を言うた。そうやって軌道に乗せて来たわしも悪じゃけど、混じりっ気ないど。無垢じゃと思わんかい？」<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 332–333.

‘I must admit that both [the logging and the protection of old growth forest] were evil, but at the same time, I think that both deeds were right. I began with the tiny plot of land like a stamp, but now I have so many forests and so much land that I can take great pride in announcing that I will ask you to take them over. I have got ahead by riding roughshod over many rivals. I went around land owners, threw myself at their feet and fawned on them. By doing so, I got my business on track. I was evil, but I was pure in my intention. Don’t you think that I am innocent?’

Akiyuki felt that Ryūzō’s remark recognizing himself as not only an evil man but also an innocent man might be a deliberate provocation to make Akiyuki angry. Akiyuki considered that Ryūzō may attempt to lead Akiyuki to kill him. At this moment, Akiyuki was about to obey one of the most powerful and classical narrative discourses, that is, patricide which is found in the plot of *Oedipus the King*. However, Akiyuki did not rise to this bait. Here, Nakagami nullifies the narrative grammar of *monogatari* by inverting the relationship between an innocent child and an evil father. In this crucial moment, Akiyuki emerges not as an innocent child but as an adult subject who possesses the sense of both autonomy and responsibility. Akiyuki reflects on himself:

刑務所の中で秋幸は自分のしてしまった取りかえしのつかない行為を反復し、本質的には無垢で何も知らない弟の秀雄に秋幸がやった事を、言葉の説明をつけず心にそっくりそのまま彫り込んで、自分に生のある限り持ちつづけて行こうと決意した。浜村龍造のせいでもなかったし、ましてや、二十四の歳で路地の家の柿の木で首をつった種違いの兄の郁男のせいではなかった。ただ、秋幸が秀雄を石

で打ち殺した。<sup>38</sup>

In prison, Akiyuki regarded what he had done to his intrinsically innocent half-brother, Hideo, as an irreparable crime and had replayed the incident in his mind many times. He felt that it could not be explained by words, for that reason he tried to imprint the incident for what it was in his memory forever. Here, Akiyuki had a strong determination to hold on to it as long as he lived. That was not Hamamura Ryūzō's fault. Nor the fault of Ikuo, Akiyuki's 24-year-old elder half-brother, who hung himself on the persimmon tree at their old house in the *roji*. It was none other than Akiyuki who stoned Hideo to death.

Being aware of the law/system of collectives that undermines one's freedom of action, Akiyuki determines to be an individual who has the freedom to choose his actions, which can be morally evaluated. Here, Akiyuki shows two abilities that coexist complementarily: to observe the outside world from a theoretical stance and to continue to make his own decision from a practical stance. We can say with fair certainty that Nakagami Kenji succeeded in portraying the process of an individual who not only perceives the various environmental constraints surrounding him but also continues to search for the autonomous self through writing the Akiyuki trilogy.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>39</sup> There is no space for an extended discussion on Nakagami's *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, however, the Akutagawa Award-winning novelist and literary critic, Okuizumi Hikaru points out that in *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, the protagonist, Akiyuki, having perceived his sin, is depicted as a mature adult *shutai* (individual subject) who possesses others (*tasha*). See Okuizumi Hikaru et al., 'Sai/sabetsu, soshite monogatari no seisei: Hanmo suru 'roji' no tekusuto o megutte', in Karatani Kōjin and Watanabe Naomi (eds), *Nakagami Kenji to Kumano*, Tokyo: Ōtashuppan, 2000: 216–259.



### **Breaking the spell of *monogatari*: *Shōsetsu*, *shishōsetsu* and *monogatari***

When *Karekinada*, Nakagami Kenji's first full-length novel, was published in 1977, the literary critic, Etō Jun (1933–1999) praised its achievement highly, saying that: 'Reading *Karekinada*, I couldn't help feeling that after seventy years Japanese naturalism had finally fulfilled its promise. However, Nakagami's is not a borrowed naturalism; he creates characters through the pulse of his own heart, which drinks in earth and blood. [...] he is able to sing about the pain people feel in this world.'<sup>40</sup> Karatani also called the work 'one of the most outstanding masterpieces in the history of modern Japanese literature'.<sup>41</sup> What was the 'promise' which Japanese naturalist writers could not fulfil but Nakagami carried through? Has he added some new value to Japanese naturalism? These questions will lead us further into a more radical consideration of 'modern' Japanese literature itself. Did modern Japanese literature leave something important behind? What is Japanese naturalism, which bloomed as *shishōsetsu*, (the I-novel), in the process of the development of modern Japanese literature? How practically did Nakagami attempt to break the spell of *monogatari*, which we discussed in the previous sections? As a contemporary writer, where was Nakagami's standpoint and what did he attempt to do from there?

Karatani explains that Japanese naturalism is different from its European origin. He says that, if anything, it is a mixture of *shishōsetsu* and *monogatari*, for example, an amalgam of Shimazaki Tōson's (*shishōsetsu*) and Izumi Kyōka's (*monogatari*) works.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Translated by Eve Zimmerman. See Eve Zimmerman, 'Afterword', in Nakagami Kenji, *The Cape*, translated by Eve Zimmerman, 180.

<sup>41</sup> Karatani, 'Sanjussai, Karekinada e', in *NKZ* Vol. 3, *Geppō*, May, Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> Karatani, 'Sanjussai, Karekinada e', 5–7. See also Irena Powell, *Writers and Society in Modern Japan*, London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1983, 61–62. On this matter, to define the Japanese naturalist's mode of thought, it is useful to quote from Itō Sei's analysis of Shimazaki Tōson,

Karatani points out that both *shishōsetsu* and *monogatari* were a kind of mutation, which stemmed from Western modern literature. Japanese off-springs of Western literature, *shishōsetsu* and *monogatari*, and Western literature are alike but quite different in nature. That is why both *shishōsetsu* and *monogatari* have been criticized by the critics who espouse Western logic. However, they continue to exist up to the present. On this account, both *écritures* can be defined as the mainstream that makes the foundations of modern Japanese literature today. Karatani concluded that no matter how deviant from its European origin they are, Nakagami did not ignore these basic grounds for Japanese literature and dared to confront them of his own accord.<sup>43</sup> On the one hand, Nakagami dared to utilize two extremes of Japanese literature—*shishōsetsu* and *monogatari*—in his works, on the other hand, he tried to find ‘*shōsetsu*’ (novel) that he regarded as a new form of literature which was considered to be different from *shishōsetsu* and *monogatari*.<sup>44</sup> Nakagami clung to the institutional form of Japanese literature, that is, *shishōsetsu* and *monogatari*, but at the same time, he posed a new form, *shōsetsu*, in order to continue to make new judgments, adjusted for individual circumstances.

This is well illustrated in Nakagami’s two anthologies of short stories, namely, *Keshō* and *Kumano-shū*. *Keshō* was written between 1974 and 1977. In this anthology, Nakagami deliberately placed mythical *monogatari* and *shishōsetsu* style stories based on facts alternately. In *Keshō*, the protagonist appears in a number of different guises.

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introduced by Irena Powell as follows: ‘...his [Tōson’s] mode of thought, revealed in his style, “was neither purely rational [as in the Western logic], nor meekly submissive to the old conventions, but proceeded along the middle ground without destroying either side, and yet enabled the author to assert himself to gain fulfilment,” and there lies his strength.’

<sup>43</sup> Karatani, ‘NKZ Vol. 3, *Geppō*, May’, 5–7.

<sup>44</sup> Karatani Kōjin and Sekii Mitsuo, ‘Taidan: Tōsō suru chisei to bungaku’, in Karatani, *Sakaguchi Ango to Nakagami Kenji*, 282. See also Karatani Kōjin, ‘Monogatari • shishōsetsu • shōsetsu’, in *Gunzō nihon no sakka 24 Nakagami Kenji*, Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1996, 242–275.

In the narrative (*monogatari*) style stories, for example, he manifested the protagonist as a mendicant monk in an old tale or a lumber worker and the like, while in the *shishōsetsu* style stories, as a man (based on Nakagami himself) whose wife and children run away from him reminiscing repeatedly about his dead brother or the hundreds of birds he kept. Wandering from mountain to mountain in Kumano, these protagonists from both styles of story are intertwined with other stories' events or personages in the mythical landscape of Kishū. Nakagami, then, wrote *Karekinada* as 'shōsetsu' in which he attempted to employ a new style, the narrative of old women who lived in the *roji*,<sup>45</sup> after publishing *Keshō* in 1977. Similarly, in 1984, he wrote the *shōsetsu*, *Chi no hate shijō no toki* after publishing *Kumano-shū*, a collection that mixed alternately a story of the *shishōsetsu*-style and one of the *monogatari*-style.

### **Breaking the spell of *monogatari*: Repetition of archetype in Akiyuki trilogy**

Thus, because his style utilized both *shishōsetsu* and *monogatari*, a few critics sometimes viewed Nakagami as a naturalist writer. Though Karatani did not deny this kind of evaluation of Nakagami, he, however, advanced his idea a little further. Nakagami's first novella, *Misaki*, is a story about a young man called Akiyuki, who is growing up in Shingū in the Kii Peninsula. Nakagami employed many materials for *Misaki* from his own intricate life as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>46</sup>

These motifs that originated from the incidents in Nakagami's childhood reappeared through his following long novels and were examined again and again especially in

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<sup>45</sup> In Chapter V, I will attempt to give a more precise account of the narrative of old women in the *roji*.

<sup>46</sup> Nagashima, 'Nakagami Kenji Shōden', in *Gunzō nihon no sakka*, 288–298.

*Karekinada*, *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, *Keshō*, *Sennen no yuraku* and *Kumano-shū*. These works had continuously treated the same incidents as leitmotifs of Nakagami's literary universe.<sup>47</sup> Central to this issue is the recurrence of a basic form to every story — an archetypal pattern or *genkei* — in his works.<sup>48</sup> Throughout the trilogy of *Misaki*, *Karekinada* and *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, the 'archetype (*genkei*)' of these stories, that is, a fratricide as in the story of Cain and Abel, an incestuous relationship with one's own sister and conflict with the father were reiterated over and over and eventually shifted from the protagonist, Akiyuki, to other characters.<sup>49</sup> Nakagami boldly describes an incident from a certain perspective, however he never adheres to the same view. Alan Tansman summarizes Akiyuki's repetitions as follows:

Nakagami's constant use of repetitions, in his novels, of images and stories makes us feel that his writing is a performance, a reiteration of itself and of nothing else, a copy of copies. Ironically, his repetitions also seem to be repeating something prior to language, giving the illusion of recollection, not merely reiteration. They give the illusion of—indeed, they *create*—nostalgia.<sup>50</sup>

Karatani clarifies that this repetition of an archetype leads us to a form of '*kankei no kankei*' (a relation of relations), which enable all characters to identify themselves as the same human being after all. Each person and each event is different, but through the

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<sup>47</sup> Zimmerman, 'Biographical Note', in Nakagami Kenji, *The Cape*, translated by Eve Zimmerman, 191.

<sup>48</sup> Zimmerman, 'In the Trap of Words', 133–134. Nakagami uses the word *teikei* (定型) or *genkei* (原型) to describe the archetype of narrative. *Genkei* was used in Zimmerman's interview with Nakagami in 1989.

<sup>49</sup> See Zimmerman, 'In the Trap of Words', 140–142. See also Karatani, 'NKZ Vol. 3, *Geppō*, May', 10–13.

<sup>50</sup> Tansman, 'History, Repetition, and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji', 265.

lens of this form, the same process repeats itself ubiquitously beyond time and space.<sup>51</sup> This reminds me of Betsuyaku Minoru's viewpoint of 'anonymous malice (*mukimei-sei no akui*) in which a nonexistent individual subject or a causal correlation within a closed system acts like a protagonist in his plays.<sup>52</sup>

As Zimmerman and Yomota Inuhiko closely analysed the shifts of many relationships among various personages in Kumano saga, I will not repeat them fully for the moment.<sup>53</sup> Zimmerman, for example, examines a few shifts in conflicts between brothers: the conflict between Akiyuki and an elder half-brother, Ikuo who was the son of Akiyuki's mother Fusa, by her first husband; and the conflict between Akiyuki and his younger half-brother, Hideo who shares Akiyuki's biological father. This repetition of the archetype of *monogatari* is expressed best by the following quotation when Zimmerman says:

When Akiyuki smashes Hideo's head with a rock, he becomes his elder brother, Ikuo:

Suddenly Akiyuki realized it. His body shook. He was exactly like Ikuo who had died at the age of twenty-four when Akiyuki was only twelve. In place of Ikuo, Akiyuki had killed Akiyuki. [*Akiyuki wa Akiyuki o koroshita.*<sup>54</sup>]

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By doubling the mythic archetype back upon itself and using it as a tool of liberation, Nakagami finds a solution to the dilemma of repetition and the problem of the archetype (*genkei*). Through the fluid identities of

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<sup>51</sup> Karatani, 'NKZ Vol. 3, *Geppō*, May', 12.

<sup>52</sup> We will discuss this matter fully in Chapter V. Betsuyaku Minoru (別役実, 1937) is one of the leading dramatists in Japan. See, Betsuyaku, *Beketto to ijime* (ベケットといじめ), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2005, 40–87.

<sup>53</sup> See Zimmerman, 'In the Trap of Words', 140–142. See also Yomota Inuhiko, *Kishu to tensei • Nakagami Kenji*, Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1996, 151–187.

<sup>54</sup> Nakagami, 'Karekinada', 457.

Akiyuki, Ikuo, and Hideo, Nakagami has managed to shift and transform the narrative that binds us. Moreover, through the manipulation of mythic archetypes Nakagami has written a *shishōsetsu* that has no authoritative consciousness: it is a pseudo-autobiography that lacks a center.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, in *Karekinada*, Akiyuki, the protagonist, has become aware of the existence of the repetition of the old archetype. To do this, Nakagami hung on to *monogatari* tightly to the end, but he tried to release the spell of *monogatari* at the last minute. Nakagami attempts to dismantle the law/system in *monogatari* in writing novels (*shōsetsu*). In this respect, Yomota or Hasumi Shigehiko first observed in full detail how Nakagami tried to liberate *shōsetsu* from the barren circuit of recurrence of the same archetype of *monogatari*.<sup>56</sup> Yomota, for example, explains that one's novel is to say 'no' to his/her own previous novel and Nakagami is one of the few contemporary writers who actively put this into practice. With his perception of the endless recurrence of old archetype, Nakagami releases the firm framework of *monogatari* through shifting the position of *monogatari* itself little by little in his polyphonic series of works. Although *monogatari* incessantly tried to induce Akiyuki (or Nakagami himself) to trace the recurrence of the archetype of *monogatari* as in the plot of Oedipus, unlike most modern and contemporary writers, Nakagami did not fall into the trap which was prepared by *monogatari*. He was well aware of its existence, and dared to plunge into the archetype of *monogatari* and tried to disintegrate it.

Moreover, this conception of recurrence makes it possible for a lower-class person to

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<sup>55</sup> Zimmerman, 'In the Trap of Words', 142.

<sup>56</sup> A close study on this matter was made by Yomota, *Kishu to tensei • Nakagami Kenji*, or Hasumi Shigehiko, *Shōsetsu kara tōku hanarete*, Tokyo: Kawade bunko, 1994. (The original text was published by Nihon bungeisha in 1989.).

transform into a noble entity without changing his/her status. It makes it possible to create ‘*sen ni shite ki naru mono*’ (being menial and sacred at the same time).<sup>57</sup> Thus, in *Sennen no yuraku*, Nakagami succeeded in creating a hollow space, *utsuho*, which erased the boundary between noble and humble, high and low, and morality and immorality on the same ground in the outcasts’ community, which Nakagami calls in his works the *roji*, alleyway. In the novel, despite her illiteracy, Oryū no oba, a midwife in the *roji*, remembers the whole of people’s lives from their birth and narrates the stories of six young men of the Nakamotos. ‘The blood of the Nakamotos is sacred *because* it is thoroughly impure (“*jibun no naka ni nagareru sono yodonda, iya sore yue ni kiyoraka na chi*”).’<sup>58</sup> Oryū no oba tells about eminently beautiful young men who had to suffer premature death as libertines because of that bloodline. The six young men are described as if they were semi-divine entities. Eve Zimmerman pointed out that the Nakamotos (中本), as their name indicates “origin of the middle”, straddle the categories pure/impure, sacred/profane, male/female or human/ animal.<sup>59</sup> On this account, the *roji* itself here converted into the space where ‘the moral dimension seems irrelevant’, ‘traditional categories lose their weight’ or, to use Nakagami’s term, ‘*utsuho*’ or ‘a neutral place hanging in midair’.<sup>60</sup> It is useful to quote from Zimmerman’s remark here as follows:

Although Miyoshi, the thief, commits murder, Oryū no oba claims that he is innocent; and when Miyoshi tells Oryū that he wants to settle down and

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<sup>57</sup> See Watanabe Naomi, ‘Akiyuki to “*roji*”’, in *Gunzō nihon no sakka 24 Nakagami Kenji*, 65–71. The original text can be also found in Watanabe Naomi, *Nihon kindai bungaku to sabetsu*, Ōta Shuppan, 1994.

<sup>58</sup> Zimmerman, ‘In the Trap of Words’, 134.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 134–140.

<sup>60</sup> Nakagami, ‘Shōsetsu o sogai suru mono’ (小説を阻害するもの), in Takazawa Shūji (ed.), *Gendai shōsetsu no hōhō* (現代小説の方法), Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 2007, 34–35.

reform, she nearly tells him that ‘his world is no more than a fretful dream; no matter how free we believe ourselves to be, our actions do not matter—we are all dancing on the Buddha’s palm’.

As we can see from this example, the repetition of the archetype leads every entity into the state of interchange and makes a rational order in the normative logic irrelevant.<sup>61</sup>

Yomota also describes this space as if it were a maternal space in the *archaique* time.<sup>62</sup>

These works struck Etō Jun who said at the time: ‘What a radical denial of modern Japan this is!’<sup>63</sup> However, what makes Nakagami a prodigy of contemporary Japanese literature does not confine itself to the achievement creating such a mythical utopia, *roji*. Nakagami published *Chi no hate shijō no toki* in 1983, just one year after *Sennen no yuraku* had been published. In *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, the *roji* was razed to the ground and had completely vanished because it was reserved for a redevelopment area. The theme, conflict with the father, had become suspended in midair because of the suicide of the protagonist’s (Akiyuki’s) biological father, Ryūzō. The archetype repeated from *Misaki* disintegrated here. Karatani explained that modernity always subsumes the normative model such as ‘father’ for us to overcome, however, in *Chi no hate*, this kind of normative model has been destroyed by itself.<sup>64</sup> Asada Akira,

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<sup>61</sup> The tales of the Nakamotos in the *roji* seem to create the utopia before history or words, that is, the ‘myth’. In 1978, in his path-breaking study of the temples (i.e. *enkiridera*), market-places (i.e. *raku*), guilds, autonomous cities, which severed their connection with the authorities, during the medieval period in Japan, Amino Yoshihiko shed a new light on the perception of “asyl” or a haven in society. This perception of “*muen*” (severing their connection with the authorities) in asyl might give a good account of Nakagami’s “*roji*.” Creating such a mythical world — the *roji* in *Sennen no yuraku* — it seems to me that Nakagami brought “asyl” back to life in the present day. See Amino Yoshihiko, *Muen-kugai-raku (zōhoban)*, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987. (The first edition was published in 1978.). Both Amino and Zimmerman pointed out that this kind of entity that is unrelated to the state power was examined in Victor Turner, ‘Liminality and Communitus’, *The Ritual Process*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, 95–130.

<sup>62</sup> Yomota Inuhiko, *Kishu to tensei*, 156–159.

<sup>63</sup> Watanabe Naomi, ‘Akiyuki to “*roji*”’, 70.

<sup>64</sup> Karatani, ‘Shōsetsu to iu Tōsō’, in *Gunzō nihon no sakka 24 Nakagami Kenji*, 197–199. The original text first appeared in *Gunzō* (June 1989).



sharing his analysis with Karatani, pointed out the post-modern nature of Nakagami's work. Asada explains that after the disappearance of modern criterion, the reiteration of the mythical story that possesses no historicity is the only way in the post-modern period.<sup>65</sup> He stresses that this perception is clearly reflected in the trilogy of *Misaki*, *Karekinada* and *Chi no hate shijō no toki*. This is what Zimmerman has to say on the matter: '[In *Sennen no yuraku*,] Perhaps by playing with the mythical archetype and the problem of belief, Nakagami hoped to find a place of perfect rest, a place where one could dwell at peace with words, a place beyond time, history, and problem of identity. Yet at the same time, he realized that such a wish was a utopia fantasy: one could never recapture the point of origin.' The reflection of this view seems to lead Nakagami to destroying the *roji* in *Chi no hate*. Karatani pointed out that the power of affirmation in the world of Oryū no oba could not conceal the world of Akiyuki any longer.<sup>66</sup>

Through *Misaki* to *Sennen no yuraku*, the focus of Nakagami's thought was 'decentralized' from the centre to the periphery of modern Japan, and created a utopia without a boundary between high and low, the innocent and the malicious. However, immediately after he achieved that, in *Chi no hate*, he then completely 'deconstructed' the whole world he created. Nakagami was aware of those concepts of 'decentralization' or 'deconstruction' related with postmodernism before they had truly penetrated the whole area of modern Japanese literature in the beginning of 1980s.<sup>67</sup> On this account, the works of Nakagami may have awoken each of us to the spell of the fixed discourse of *monogatari* or the modern myths as if they had existed *a priori* from

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<sup>65</sup> Asada Akira, 'Nakagami Kenji o sai-dōnyū suru', in *Gunzō nihon no sakka 24 Nakagami Kenji*, 29–30. The original text first appeared in *Hihyō kūkan*, (No. 1 1994).

<sup>66</sup> Karatani, 'NKZ Vol. 3, *Geppō*, May', 15.

<sup>67</sup> See the conversation between Karatani and Kawamura Jirō, 'Nakagami Kenji: Jidai to Bungaku', in *Gunzō, nihon no sakka 24 Nakagami Kenji*, 153.

the ancient period. I agree with Alan Tansman in thinking that Nakagami's attempt to battle against a voice that speaks for a unified identity is never completely successful.<sup>68</sup> It seems to me, however, that Nakagami's attitude or rather his approach towards writing his novels still presents us with the possibility of shaping our autonomous freedom and the power of self-determination through 'his battle to extricate himself from narratives of the past while yet clinging to them',<sup>69</sup> and continues to call on us to be on the alert for the process of forming 'canon' which are often backed by the masterpieces of Japanese classics found in school textbooks, being regarded as *utsukushii nihongo* (beautiful Japanese language). In Chapter IV, I shall try to give a more detailed account of the process of canon formation in contemporary Japan and how Nakagami perceived this matter.

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<sup>68</sup> Tansman, 'History, Repetition, and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji', 275.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

### CHAPTER III

## NAKAGAMI KENJI'S AUTONOMY AS A STANDPOINT ELICITING A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF MODERN JAPANESE LITERATURE

In Chapter II, we have examined the manner in which Nakagami ceaselessly searched for autonomy that appeared as an ambivalent attitude towards the act of writing, and how it was reflected in his major novels, *Misaki*, *Karekinada* and *Chi no hate shijō no toki*. It may be safely assumed that Akiyuki's awareness of his own crime in *Chi no hate* can be regarded as his continuous self-determination and moral responsibility. If we take another look at contemporary/modern Japanese literature through the lens of Nakagami's complementary autonomy, that is, this continuous act of autonomy found in a conflicting binary frame between self and others, we may observe that a new perspective of Japanese literature comes to the fore. It may indicate the possibility of a new genealogical study of modern Japanese literature. The aim of this chapter is to look at modern Japanese literature and to determine whether Nakagami's endless autonomous action found in a mutually exclusive dichotomy could be traced back to the thought expressed by previous writers. In my readings of modern Japanese literature apart from Nakagami Kenji, I would like to propose that there are some writers who perceived and seriously contemplated the notion of autonomy in the past: Nakahara Chūya (中原中也 1907–1937), Miyazawa Kenji (宮沢 賢治 1896–1933), Sakaguchi Ango (坂口安吾 1906–1955) and the postwar existentialist writers. My findings are not by any means a complete list of all writers who demonstrate the idea of autonomy, however, I am hoping that my view serves as a stepping-stone to further study on the

degree of autonomy expressed in modern Japanese literature.

**Postwar existentialist writers: Intersubjectivity, configurations, and simultaneous presence of freedom and responsibility**

Let us examine the works of other contemporary/modern Japanese literati who may possess the notion of autonomy. Ōe Kenzaburō, Tsurumi Shunsuke and Kuno Osamu are all of the firm opinion that, in the history of modern Japanese literature to date, the so-called postwar existentialist writers (*sengo ha/sengo jitsuzon shugi sakka* 戦後派／戦後実存主義作家) were the only people who possessed a positive personal autonomy that was associated with the moral responsibility for their actions. I agree with their point that the postwar existentialist writers successfully demonstrated the idea of autonomy, however I cannot bring myself to accept the point that they are the ‘only’ practitioners of autonomous self in modern Japanese literature. This chapter suggests that their notion of autonomy is not limited to their school of writers but resembles the endless autonomous action found in the mutually exclusive dichotomy as expressed by Nakagami Kenji.

In his Nobel Prize speech in 1994, practicing what he preached above, Ōe declared himself to be ‘a writer who wishes to create serious works of literature distinct from those novels which are mere reflections of the vast consumer culture of Tokyo and the subcultures of the world at large’.<sup>1</sup> In the meanwhile, he also pointed out that, in the history of contemporary Japanese literature, the postwar writers (*sengo-ha*) such as Ōoka Shōhei, Takeda Taijun, Shiina Rinzō and Noma Hiroshi were the only ‘serious’ writers who were rich in diversity and possessed an active attitude and personal

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<sup>1</sup> Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 121.

autonomy. Ōe highly praised the role played by these writers in initiating a literary movement. He explained that although this literary movement began immediately after Japan's defeat in the War and lasted only about ten years, it had widened the scope of contemporary Japanese literature and had promoted its diversification.<sup>2</sup> It is important to bear in mind that their literary movement took place around the same time as Maruyama Masao proposed two types of autonomy: personal autonomy and social autonomy, which were argued in Chapter I. While personal autonomy is attained by the individual whose action carries 'the principle of self-regulation, or responsibility as the corollary of his/her action', social autonomy refers to 'a pluralistic society in which multi-dimensional individuals preserve their mobility in society'.<sup>3</sup> We must not forget that Maruyama pointed out the fact that 'democracy is a system founded on paradox' and 'difficulties involved in reconciling the individual and the collective in post-war Japan' have always existed. As we have seen before, Ōe stresses the necessity of having the ability of logical self-definition proposed by Maruyama Masao.

Ōe examines the literary movement that was brought about by the postwar writers who attempted to revive what the Japanese had abandoned in the process of pursuing a centre-oriented modernization. Ōe believes that this may show us a set of principles or ethics that make it possible for us to create 'a model of a contemporary age which encompasses past and future'.<sup>4</sup> If so, what exactly were the principles that the contemporary writers could not propose but the postwar writers did? For example, Ōe points out the fact that soon after experiencing the War as a real event, the postwar writers tried very hard to "relativize" the value of the emperor, who had had absolute

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<sup>2</sup> Ōe, *Saigo no shōsetsu*, 206.

<sup>3</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 102–104.

<sup>4</sup> Ōe, 'Japan's Dual Identity: A Writer's Dilemma', in *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 66.

power, and free the Japanese from the course of a system that had haunted their minds'.<sup>5</sup> Noma Hiroshi, for example, attempted to liberate former outcast communities in the novel in five volumes, *Seinen no wa* (Ring of Youth, five volumes, written between 1947 and 1971). Thus, a number of postwar writers 'actively sought a direction for their country contrary to that which it had taken in the past': a way for us to re-evaluate the periphery of Japan such as Okinawa or the *burakumin*, or a way for us 'to live as an integral part of the third world, in Asia'.<sup>6</sup> Such principles sought by the postwar writers are expressed best by Ōe when he says:

In the history of modern Japanese literature, the writers most sincere in their awareness of a mission were the 'postwar school' of writers who came onto the literary scene deeply wounded by the catastrophe of war yet full of hope for a rebirth. They tried with great pain to make up for the atrocities committed by Japanese military forces in Asia, as well as to bridge the profound gaps that existed not only between the developed nations of the West and Japan but also between African and Latin American countries and Japan. Only by doing so did they think that they could seek with some humility reconciliation with the rest of the world. It has always been my aspiration to cling to the very end of the line that literary tradition inherited from these writers.<sup>7</sup>

In their book *Gendai nihon no shisō* (The Thought of Contemporary Japan, 1956), Tsurumi Shunsuke and Kuno Osamu also have a high regard for the postwar writers known as 'postwar existentialists' such as Haniya Yutaka (埴谷雄高 1909–1997), Takami Jun (高見順 1907–1965), Shiina Rinzō, Takeda Taijun on the grounds that they were the only practitioners who could demonstrate not only their personal freedom but

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>7</sup> Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 117–118.

also self-responsibility for their actions.<sup>8</sup> Let us review carefully the manner in which the concept of Japanese existentialism is expressed among the *sen-go-ha* people in their teens and early twenties at the end of War. First of all, Tsurumi and Kuno point out that crime (*hanzai*) epitomises Japan's postwar devastation following the defeat in the War. They go on to explain that: 'In order to survive in the burned-out ruins after the war and depending on black market commodities, ordinary citizens found themselves with no other choice but to break the law.'<sup>9</sup> Tsurumi and Kuno investigates the examples of the crime committed by the ordinary people of this generation and depicts them as follows:

In that way, the crime of *sen-go-ha* derived from the belief that all of society is irredeemably bad. Seen in this way, they commit a crime with the motivation to try to pursue the responsibility for these unlawful actions in their very own way. They do not content themselves with simply being violated by society, quite on the contrary, their philosophy is to recriminate on society. In that manner, crime becomes a tool for self-affirmation.<sup>10</sup> [···] No matter how they dare to act, they assume full responsibility for their action. No matter what adversity they experienced, they never shifted the responsibility to others. [···] In their attitude, freedom and responsibility appear simultaneously. This simultaneous presence of freedom and responsibility distinguishes *sen-go-ha* from other groups of varied times, and this is the very reason

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<sup>8</sup> Tsurumi and Kuno, *Gendai nihon no shisō*, 184–185.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 191–192.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

why we regard the *sengo-ha* as ‘postwar existentialists’.<sup>11</sup> [...] The *sengo-ha* shows instinctive animosity towards any other group of people who say that they have been aware of the essence of the entire world. ‘Postwar existentialists’ locate themselves on the antipodes (*tairitsu chiten*) between any kinds of dogmatism such as the one between leftists and rightists.<sup>12</sup>

Judging from this excerpt, it seems reasonable to suppose that *sengo-ha*’s unlawful acts, which indicate the simultaneous presence of freedom and responsibility, resemble the form of Nakagami Kenji’s ambivalent attitude towards writing, facing the simultaneous presence between the search for self-identity and integration with others. *Sengo-ha*’s unique moral responsibility that locates themselves on the antipodes where they never unipolarize any regime has much in common with Nakagami Kenji’s perception of writing as an endless attempt to seek freedom in a dichotomy between self and others. Their notion characterized with the simultaneous presence of freedom and responsibility also resembles Kant’s notion of freedom that is synonymous to taking personal responsibility for the actions they choose because both notions stress that we ought to make ourselves responsible for our own deeds. The literary critic, Odagiri Hideo indicates that these postwar existentialists were strongly influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism, which was introduced to Japanese academics around 1947.<sup>13</sup> Here, it may be useful for us to explore the manner in which Sartre defined existentialism at that time by reviewing the record of his lecture, ‘Existentialism and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>13</sup> Odagiri, *Gendai bungaku-shi, gekan*, 565.



Human Emotions' which was held in 1945.

The philosophies of Descartes [· · ·] to the contrary, through the *I think* we reach our own self in the presence of others, and the others are just as real to us as our own self. Thus, the man who becomes aware of himself through the *cogito* also perceives all others, and he perceives them as the condition of his existence. He realizes that he can not be anything (in the sense that we say that someone is witty or nasty or jealous) unless others recognize it as such. In order to get any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person. The other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge about myself. This being so, in discovering my inner being I discover the other person at the same time, like a freedom placed in front of me which thinks and wills only for or against me. Hence, let us at once announce the discovery of a world which we shall call intersubjectivity; this is the world in which man decides what he is and what others are.<sup>14</sup>

Sartre's 'intersubjectivity' finds not only the presence of himself but also the presence of others in Cartesian *cogito*. His individual acts as endless practice as well as his acts in relation to others are both intricately intertwined and depend on each other. On this account, we can find a good reason for the similarity between *senjo-ha*'s attitude and Nakagami Kenji's attitude or Kant's moral responsibility interpreted by Karatani Kōjin.

Moreover, Sartre also argues that we cannot find in every man 'some universal essence' represented by human nature. He goes on to explain, 'What does not vary is the necessity for him [a man] to exist in the world, to be at work there, to be there in the midst of other people, and to be mortal there. The limits are neither subjective nor objective, or, rather, they have an objective and a subjective side.'<sup>15</sup> Sartre further

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<sup>14</sup> Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 37–38.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

explains the manner in which our practical actions could take place within these *a priori* limits that outline man's fundamental situation in the universe as follows:

Objective because they are to be found everywhere and are recognizable everywhere; subjective because they are lived and are nothing if man does not live them, that is, freely determine his existence with reference to them. And though the configurations may differ, at least none of them are completely strange to me, because they all appear as attempts either to pass beyond these limits or recede from them or deny them or adapt to them. Consequently, every configuration, however individual it may be, has a universal value.<sup>16</sup>

Sartre stresses that 'every configuration has universality in the sense that every configuration can be understood by every man.' He, therefore, defines configuration as something that is not given *a priori*, but something that are perpetually being made now in this time and this space. We may also agree with a fair certainty that this perception of Sartre's configuration that is being made perpetually bears a close similarity to Nakagami Kenji's perception of the act of writing as continuous self-determination as if it were aspiring to the ceaseless hell.

At this juncture, on the issue of the endless search for autonomy, it is relevant to consider Richard Rorty's definition of a 'liberal ironist' who 'regard[s] the realization of utopias and the envisaging of still further utopias, as an endless, proliferating realization of Freedom, rather than a convergence towards an already existing Truth.'<sup>17</sup> Rorty points out that the recent historicist turn that stemmed from those concepts of decentralization or deconstruction related with post-modernism 'helped us substitute

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 38–39.

<sup>17</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xiii.

Freedom for Truth as the goal of thinking and or social progress.’ He emphasizes, however, that even after this substitution has taken place, ‘the old tension between the private and the public remains.’ He goes on to say that there is no way in which philosophy, or any other theoretical discipline, will ever let us combine two quests such as self-creation and justice, private perfection and human solidarity in a single vision. Thus, he leads us to the idea of the ‘liberal ironist’ by saying that his attempt is ‘to show how things look if we drop the demand for a theory which unifies the public and private, and are content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable.’<sup>18</sup>

The sociologist, Miyadai Shinji (b. 1959) and the intellectual social historian, Nakamasa Masaki (b. 1963) also talk about this issue in their book, *Nichijō, kyōdōtai, aironī—jiko-kettei no honshitsu to genkai* (日常・共同体・アイロニー 自己決定の本質と限界 Everyday Life・Community・Irony—The Essence and Boundaries of Self-determination), which was published in 2004. They describe this matter as the recursive social structure that ensures our freedom, that is, relative self-determination depending on our daily on-site observation of a changing social context.<sup>19</sup> We have no choice but to act, accepting and discarding the ‘community’s codes’ simultaneously. Rorty indicates that the novel is one of the genres that makes us see others as ‘one of us’ rather than as ‘them’ and makes us see ‘the detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and of redescription of what we ourselves are like.’ In this sense, recall our earlier example in which Nakagami Kenji also perceives an act of writing as the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., xv.

<sup>19</sup> Miyadai and Nakamasa, *Nichijō, kyōdōtai, aironī*, 212–217: ‘*shakai-teki bunmyaku no henka o eikyū ni kansatsu shitsutsu senbiki no sentakusei o ishiki shitsuzukeru owarinaki saikisei* 社会的文脈の変化を永久に観察しつつ線引きの選択性を意識し続ける終りなき再帰性’ or ‘*hito no nasu kubetsu o ukeiretsutsu eikyū ni shinjizu ni jissen suru shika nai* 人のなす区別を受け入れつつ永久に信じずに実践するしかない’

endless search for autonomy within the universal condition of human beings (the external causalities).

### **Sakaguchi Ango's paradox: The theory of farce**

In Chapter I, we discussed the affinity between Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitude towards writing facing the simultaneous presence between the search for self-identity and the integration with others and Karatani Kōjin's interpretation of Kantian autonomous freedom and responsibility that is synonymous to being *causa sui*. Their endless autonomous act of being *causa sui* leads us further into a consideration of Nakagami's appreciation of the novelist, Sakaguchi Ango (1906–1955). Nakagami considers Ango as a writer who accepts any kind of bare, sobering reality for what it is. In his essay written in 1976, 'Sakaguchi Ango: sora kakeru ahōdori' (坂口安吾 空翔けるアホウドリ Sakaguchi Ango: Albatross in Flight), Nakagami quotes Ango's essay, 'Kyōso no bungaku' (教祖の文学 Literature of the Guru).<sup>20</sup> In this essay, Nakagami acclaimed Ango's criticism of one of the most prominent literary critics, Kobayashi Hideo. Nakagami cites the following from Ango's essay:

本当に人の心を動かすものは、毒に当てられた奴、罰の当たった奴でなければ、書けないものだ。思想や意見によって動かされるといふことのない見えすぎる目などには、宮沢賢治の見た青ぞらやすきとおった風などは見るできないのである。<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Nakagami, 'Sakaguchi Ango Sora kakeru ahōdori', in *NKZ* Vo. 14, 400–403. Sakaguchi, 'Kyōso no bungaku', in *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū* 15, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1991, 147–168.

<sup>21</sup> Nakagami, 'Sakaguchi Ango Sora kakeru ahōdori', in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 402. Sakaguchi, 'Kyōso no bungaku', 161.

A manuscript that touches one's heartstrings deeply must be written only by people who have been poisoned or received divine punishment. If someone has far too penetrating eyes that are utterly unmoved by one's thought or opinion, it will be impossible for him/her to see the blue sky or clear crystal breeze that Miyazawa Kenji had seen.

Ango implies here that Kobayashi will not be able to understand what was written by Miyazawa Kenji. Ango also severely criticizes Kobayashi's critiques of Saigyō or Minamoto Sanetomo<sup>22</sup> as being too aesthetic, and regards him as a guru who has been enlightened to the truth with an excessive degree of perception.<sup>23</sup> However, Ango stated that our life should be filled with much more conflict and contradiction than Kobayashi perceives. For this reason, he was irritated at Kobayashi's self-consistency in writing his critiques and his coherent explanation in which he perceived the sense of loneliness in the works of Saigyō and Sanetomo. What has to be noticed here is that the poem that Ango quoted from Miyazawa's book markedly reflects a paradoxical perspective. Here is Roger Pulvers's translation:

Speaking with the Eyes (Me nite iu 眼にて云う)

It's not long now  
It just won't stop  
Gurgling and gushing up  
I haven't slept all night and the blood keeps flowing and flowing  
It's blue and still out there

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<sup>22</sup> For this, see Kobayashi, 'Saigyō' and 'Sanetomo', in *Kobayashi Hideo zensakuhin 14: Mujō toiukoto*, 171–219.

<sup>23</sup> As Deguchi Yūkō indicated that Ango received an infamous reputation for his outspoken opinions about his senior writers, this evaluation of Kobayashi might be written with his pungent humour. See Deguchi, *Sakaguchi Ango hyakusai no itanji* (坂口安吾 百歳の異端児), 23.

It looks like death...and very soon at that  
 And yet I feel the most magnificent breeze  
 The pure light is within reach  
 As this clear wind rushes toward me  
 Swelling from a blue sky  
 The blue is the blue of a rush mat scarred by fire  
 Of waves of autumn blossoms formed  
 In flowers like hair, like young maple buds  
 Dressed in your black frock coat  
 Could you be on your way home from a medical conference  
 If death takes me now I cannot complain  
 Seeing how diligently and cleverly you have attended me  
 Could my indifference to suffering  
 Despite the constant flow of blood  
 Be a sign that the soul is now half-departed from the body  
 My soul torment is that because of this blood  
 I am unable to tell you this  
 In your eyes I am no doubt a wretched sight  
 But from here...after all  
 All I can see is that clear blue sky  
 And a transparent wind<sup>24</sup>

What this excerpt makes clear at once is Miyazawa's paradoxical viewpoint. We can easily find a lot of paradoxes in this poem. The ghastly grotesque sight of a man lying in a pool of blood is quite a contrast to 'the most magnificent breeze' 'swelling from a blue sky'. A dying man whose 'blood keeps flowing and flowing' (*gabugabu waiteiru* がぶがぶ湧いている) cannot see anything but 'a blue sky' and 'a clear, transparent wind'. Nakagami, Ango and Miyazawa seem to share a paradoxical perspective of their surrounding world, which may be considered as one of the

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<sup>24</sup> 'Speaking with the Eyes' is translated by Roger Pulvers in *Eigo de yomu Miyazawa Kenji shishū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1997, 80–83. Miyazawa Kenji, 'Me nite iu' (眼にて云う), in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 2*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1986, 506–507.

characteristics of their literature. Nakagami Kenji, in his essay titled ‘Sakaguchi Ango: Minami kara no hikari’ (坂口安吾・南からの光 Sakaguchi Ango: The Light from the South, 1985), stated that Ango considered himself as evil personified, and for that reason he could penetrate deeply into the good/innocent side of human nature as well as the odious side of it. He also stated that this kind of sheer perception of our real world could also be found in the works of Miyazawa Kenji.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Nakagami shared his paradoxical world-view as seen in phrases such as ‘The blood of the Nakamotos is sacred *because* it is thoroughly impure (*Sennen no yuraku*)’ with Ango and Miyazawa.

Nakagami Kenji shows us another good example of Ango’s paradoxical viewpoint in another essay on Ango, ‘Sakaguchi Ango: Farusu no kōsen’ (坂口安吾 フェアルス的光線 Sakaguchi Ango: A Ray of Farce, 1976). Nakagami quotes Ango’s essay, ‘FARCE ni tsuite (On Farce, 1932)’ in which Ango advocates that ‘the best appearance of art is reflected in “farce”.’

Farce is something that tries to acknowledge the existence of the whole about human beings affirmatively. It accepts no matter what it is as long as it is concerned with the reality of human beings, for example, fantasy, dream, death, anger, contradiction, dumbhead or mumbling goof, just anything and everything. Thus, farce is to accept anything affirmatively making no judgment either “yes” or “no,” that is something to affirm the denial as well as the affirmation, or even the things that had already been affirmed, that is to say, to affirm the affirmation of the affirmations,

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<sup>25</sup> Nakagami, ‘Sakaguchi Ango: Minami kara no hikari’, in *NKZ* Vol. 15, 510–511.

moreover, that is to continue eternally and everlastingly to affirm anything and everything about human beings. [ . . . ] To sum up the matter, to affirm everything about human beings means to take in at one go an amalgam of all the raging chaos and glaring contradiction that we find. No one can resolve the contradiction, that is, no one but an enthusiastic admirer of his/her eternal and indomitable perseverance in affirming the chaotic condition of human nature in the raw.<sup>26</sup>

What Nakagami sees in this quotation is Ango's firm standpoint which accepts the bare naked existence of human beings no matter what it is. From this point of view, Nakagami understands that the protagonists in Ango's novels who are depicted as an idiot, a prostitute or a madman, a disabled person or any suppressed person are simply everyday people who arise in our society. There is no empty rhetoric or exaggeration in his words. Ango depicts all human beings with their warts. There is a sheer reality in the lives of these people. Nakagami quotes in this essay a few verses from *Sakura no mori no mankai no shita* (桜の森の満開の下 In the Forest, under Cherries in Full Bloom, 1947), *Yonaga hime to mimio* (夜長姫と耳男 The Princess Long-night and the Big Ears Man, 1952) or *Hakuchi* (白痴 The Idiot, 1946).<sup>27</sup> Similar examples of the paradox between evil/impure and good/sacred are abundant. In Nakagami's works, too, we can observe his vivid representation of the unprivileged people on the periphery of modern society such as *burakumin*, Korean residents in Japan (*zainichi Korean*) or Ainu

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<sup>26</sup> Nakagami, 'Sakaguchi Ango: Farusu no kōsen', in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 410. The original text first appeared in Nakagami Kenji, *Yume no chikara*, Tokyo: Hokuyōsha, 1979.

<sup>27</sup> *Idib.*, 407–412. *Hakuchi* was translated by George Saitō as 'The Idiot' in Ivan Morris (ed.), *Modern Japanese Stories*, Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1962, 383–410. *Sakura no mori no mankai no shita* was translated by Roger Pulvers as 'In the Woods Beneath the Cherry Blossoms in Full Bloom' in *Eigo de yomu Sakura no mori no mankai no shita*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1998.



people, which may be derived from this sheer perception of human beings.

Karatani Kōjin also highly praises Ango's perspectives in his article entitled "Nihon bunka shikan" ron (An Essay on "A Private View on Japanese Culture", 1975). He introduces Ango's farsighted criticism of *A Rediscovery of Japanese Beauty* by Bruno Taut. Karatani sees Taut's viewpoints as nothing but one of those so-called *nihonjinron* (the conceptual discussion about the Japanese) that places Japan in a single cultural mould. Ango, examining whatever the problem in question and reflecting on himself, establishes here a firm footing as a modern writer who has a diverse perception of Japanese culture and penetrates *nihonjinron* as a fantastic ideology, perceiving it in the same way as the invented *monogatari* or canon formation.

Ango's affirmation of sober human reality can be considered as Karatani's interpretation of Kantian notion of freedom and responsibility as we have seen in the previous chapter. We may recall that, according to Kant, 'the rule of judgment under laws of pure practical reason is this: ask yourself whether, if the action you propose were to take place by a law of nature of which you were yourself a part, you could indeed regard it as possible through your will.' Karatani interprets this notion as follows: our freedom/autonomous action (and responsibility) only spring out when we act as if we follow our free will, applying the practical stance at the same time bracketing the theoretical stance. First, we must admit the fact that 'what we consider as determination of free will is always already that by the complex causalities.' With all that affirmation of sheer reality on the theoretical stance, we, at the same time, are able to be free if we are deemed to be free and to be responsible for our action on the practical stance. Let me stress again that 'freedom is synonymous to being *causa sui*,

self-motivated, subjective, and autonomous.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, Maruyama Masao recognizes the paradoxical world-view in Fukuzawa Yukichi's perception of human beings. He points out that while Fukuzawa regards human beings as nothing but a small maggot (*ujimushi*) among the vast region of space, he suggests that we should be proud of ourselves as we should be regarded as the very spirit of all things<sup>29</sup> (*banbutsu no rei* 万物の霊). On the one hand, he asserts that our life is deemed to be just frivolous play (*tawamure* 戯れ), on the other hand, he regards our conduct to be a serious duty. Victor Koschmann summarizes well Maruyama's positive recognition of Fukuzawa's paradoxical statements:

Maruyama argues that if one were to adhere single-mindedly to the viewpoint that life is play, he or she would most likely turn eventually to religious escapism or nihilistic hedonism; if, on the other hand, one absolutized the serious dimension, the results would be fetishism and loss of autonomy. "It is only when the seriousness of life and frivolity of life augment and functionalize each other there can truly be an autonomous and independent spirit." A functionally productive alternation between these dimensions is possible only when one is able to act "as if"—as if life were play in order not to become immobilized by the gravity of it all, and as if life were serious in order to resist the temptation of escapism or opportunism. Only thus, Maruyama seems to suggest, can one conceive of a socialized but independent, democratic subject without resorting to theological guarantees.<sup>30</sup>

On this account, in the same way as Karatani's analysis of making observations by bracketing, 'Maruyama expresses this by saying that Fukuzawa's statements always need to be taken "as if" they were "in brackets"'. We may recall here again that

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<sup>28</sup> Karatani Kōjin, *Transcritique on Kant and Marx*, translated by Sabu Kohso, 114–115.

<sup>29</sup> Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 185.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

Nakagami Kenji built up his ambivalent attitude towards writing, and his ambivalent attitude was considered as the impetus for him to write novels perpetually. Nakagami perceived that writing arises from an eternal conflict between one's logical self-definition and the collective notion, and is formed by the sum of individual acts, that sometimes act as if they existed *a priori*. In this respect, in a way similar to Maruyama's notion of autonomy, we may consider his act of writing as a 'tireless engagement' to 'make new judgments with a historically changing environment'. This dichotomy between the two never ends and has a way of repeating itself. With this dilemma between identification and differentiation, Nakagami continues to seek his real identity because he wishes to break off the superficial relationship with others and enjoy exercising his autonomous freedom. Nakagami Kenji attempted to make a painstaking effort to encounter his own self, at the same time, to recognize others (*tasha*) as differences (*sai* 差異) surrounding his self and find his sincere relationship with them without feigning. For Nakagami, writing subsists on this conflict between one's realization of autonomy and one's awareness of dependence on others. In a similar manner, it seems to me that Ango's notion of 'farce' recurs ceaselessly in affirming the chaotic human condition filled with contradictions.

### **Sakaguchi Ango's decadence and the home of literature**

In addition to the discussion above, Karatani Kōjin examines Ango's essay, 'Bungaku no furusato' (文学のふるさと The Home of Literature, 1941) which refers to Charles Perrault's well-known tale, *Little Red Riding Hood*. As it is well known, this story ends with the scene of the wolf, disguised as a grandmother, eating the little girl who

visited her grandmother. Ango describes this scene as follows: ‘In this, all of sudden, we are thrust off and perplexed by the broken promise. But in this empty margin of sudden termination, by a sudden blow to the eye, don’t we see a very tranquil and transparent home, a heartbreakingly tender home.’<sup>31</sup> In this passage, Ango calls something that thrusts us away as ‘*furusato* (home)’, in Karatani’s phrase, that is ‘the other’ (*tasha*) who dwells in our domain of ‘exteriority’ (*gaibu* 外部). Here, what Karatani turns his attention to is to consider ‘being thrust away by the other (*tasha ni yotte tsukihanasareru koto* 他者によって突き放されること)’. Karatani points out this kind of vivid perception of otherness (*tashasei* 他者性) or the veracity of confronting others is a truth little understood in our time but it is a very essential one when one differentiates one’s self against others. Here, we may observe Ango’s paradoxical attitude towards self-discernment and the search for others which thrusts us away but for that reason it can be defined as our home of literature.<sup>32</sup>

Nakagami, sharing these paradoxical perceptions of Ango’s literature with Karatani, describes Ango as a writer who stands no comparison with the other writers in the history of Japanese literature, and admits Ango’s strong influence on his own later works.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Nakagami inherited the notion of ‘farce’, which opposes any centripetal force that represents the convergence with the emperor ideology (*tennōsei* ideology) and what Karatani calls a quest for others or exteriority, from Ango. This perception of a recurring paradox is well illustrated in Nakagami’s following remarks in *Tori no yō ni Kemono no yōni*:

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<sup>31</sup> Karatani, ‘Buddhism, Marxism, and Fascism — On Sakaguchi Ango and Takeda Taijun’ (trans. Sabu Kohso) taken from Internet Homepage, Karatani Forum (<http://www.karataniforum.org/index.html>) on 25 August 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Karatani, ‘“Nihon bunka shikan” ron’, in Karatani Kōjin, *Sakaguchi Ango to Nakagami Kenji*, Tokyo: Ōta shuppan, 1996, 10–53.

<sup>33</sup> Nakagami, ‘Sakaguchi Ango: Minami kara no hikari’, in *NKZ* Vol. 15, 499–511.

I have been denying everything. And now I came to know the fact that my body and soul as a professional writer had been cultivated by that continuous denial. However, now, I realized that in my inner world, there occurred a complete reversal of the plot from denial to affirmation. Jumping illogically to a conclusion, but neither new novels nor new novelists exist anywhere. All things remain in the old shape. The old shape merely reappears in a different figure. It sounds as if it won't get anywhere, but I believe so.<sup>34</sup>

As we have observed in Chapter II, Watanabe Naomi also explains that the perception of Nakagami shook the identification in modern thought that reconciles such conflict between pure and impure or sacred and profane, and integrates the two contradictory elements into a state of equilibrium.<sup>35</sup> Watanabe portrays such an equilibrium as nothing but a product of a modern structure which has been ignoring the substance of *burakumin* or *sabetsu* in modern Japanese history. This is well illustrated in Nakagami's reportage, *Kishū: Ki no kuni ne no kuni monogatari* (紀州 木の国・根の国物語 *Kishū: Stories of the Land of Trees and Roots*, 1977/1978). Nakagami travelled in Kishū and faced the realities of discrimination against the *burakumin* there in 1977. In Asso, Nakagami witnessed a young man pulling out every hair from the tail of a rotten rump of horse-flesh. This experience made a dramatic impact on Nakagami, who describes it as more than a hideous shock, rather, as being struck by awe (*ifu* 畏

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<sup>34</sup> Nakagami Kenji, 'Shōsetsu no atarashisa to wa nanika', in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 339. The original text first appeared in Nakagami, *Tori no yō ni Kemono no yōni*, Tokyo: Hokuyōsha, 1976.

<sup>35</sup> Watanabe Naomi, 'Akiyuki to "roji"', 65–86.

怖).<sup>36</sup> Watanabe points out that, confronting *burakumin*'s sheer naked reality, Nakagami was deeply aware of some kind of ugly entity which modern logic or modern language could not capture because of its fierce imbalance. For Nakagami, this experience can be regarded as, in Ango's phrase, 'being thrust away by the other', and this may enlarge Nakagami's perception of others as a theme of his literature. Nakagami admits that the life is the abominable. Nakagami sees that it is possible for the people who could perceive this kind of fierce imbalance as a sheer reality of others to differentiate differences against discrimination in a true sense. Nakagami accepts the harsh discrimination against *burakumin* because he considers that the discrimination also grows out of the law of nature, which regulates the cause and effect relationship in the universe. For Nakagami, his ultimate aim may be not to eliminate it (it may be synonymous 'to cover up' or 'to conceal') but to make its presence recognized as difference everywhere in the world.

Sharing the perception of the theory of farce with Ango who affirms here and now, Nakagami accepts the bare existence of human beings no matter what it is. We should not overlook that Kantian autonomous freedom interpreted by Karatani could be a moral law 'as if' we are deemed to be responsible not only for our immediate actions but also some indirect incidents, which we have no intention to direct. In his best known essay written in 1946, *Daraku-ron* (墮落論 On Decadence), Ango made a statement similar to Sartre's notion of 'the configurations' that are not given *a priori*, but that are perpetually being made now in this time and this space. Ango attempted to answer the question of how our practical actions could take place within *a priori* limits which outline man's fundamental situation in the universe. Ango states:

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<sup>36</sup> Nakagami, 'Kishū: Ki no kuni, ne no kuni monogatari', in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 545–546.

After the war ended our freedom was completely restored, but when that freedom was restored we began to notice our own inscrutable limitations and the way they impinged on our freedom. Mankind cannot live in eternal freedom. The reason why is simply that we live, we die, and we think. [...] Humanity does not change. We have simply gone back to being human. Humanity will fall into decadence. [...] Our fall cannot be prevented; we cannot be saved. Humanity will live and humanity will fall. There are no simple paths to salvation.<sup>37</sup>

Immediately after stating this, Ango contrariwise asserts, 'We are not going to fall because we lost the war. We are going to fall because we are human, simply because we are alive. But can we save humanity from an eternal decline? [...] We are too weak to keep falling into decadence.' As we can see, Ango expresses a paradox here again. On the one hand, he suggests that we must save ourselves by discovering ourselves once we have fallen to the depths of decadence; on the other hand he points out that 'we are too weak to keep falling into decadence.' Or what does he mean by saying that we come to realize the fact that we are not really free when we have obtained all of our freedom? If we consider Ango's *daraku* (to keep falling into decadence) as ceaseless hell, that is, the continual rejection of 'true principle' made by others as 'an already fixed and stationary existence', then, it is only natural that Ango indicates that we are not able to fall into the depths of decadence simply because it is only when the self-legislation (aspiring to the state of decadence) and the integration with 'our own inscrutable limitations' functionalize each other, can there be autonomous freedom in a true sense.

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<sup>37</sup> Sakaguchi Ango, 'Darakuron' in *Shinchō* (April 1946), translated by Ian Smith as 'On Decadence' taken from Internet Homepage, Sakaguchi Ango and the Morality of Decadence (<http://mcel.pacificu.edu/aspers/sholars/Smith/SAKAGUCHI.html>) on 07 July 2006. Sakaguchi, 'Daraku-ron', in *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū 14*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1990, 511–522.

## Miyazawa Kenji's paradox: Writing as four dimensional-art

For the present, we may recall that Ango quoted Miyazawa's poem, 'Speaking with the Eyes' ('Me nite iu') from *Haru to shura* (Spring and Ashura) and observed Miyazawa's paradoxical view in it by stating that only a sinful person can see what Miyazawa portrays, that is, a transparent blue sky.<sup>38</sup> It may be useful to look more closely at some of the paradoxical features of the literature of Miyazawa Kenji. Reading the poems and essays written by Miyazawa, I would like to suggest that his literature may serve a good example of autonomy that arises from the eternal dichotomy between the individual and the collective as in the examples of Nakagami and Ango. A Japanese poet and children's literature writer, Miyazawa Kenji wrote numerous short stories and poems in his short life of 37 years. His short stories have been widely read not only by children but by people of all ages. Nakamura Miharū points out in his book, *Keisō chū no shutai: Sōseki · Dazai · Kenji* (係争中の主体 漱石 · 太宰 · 賢治 The Subject in Process—Sōseki, Dazai, Kenji, 2006) that Miyazawa's texts are a vast repository of paradox in a broad sense.<sup>39</sup> He gives a few examples that seem to support this. *Donguri to yamaneko* (どんぐりと山猫 Wildcat and the Acorns, 1921),<sup>40</sup> for example, provides a good example to indicate the paradoxical viewpoint that appeared in the works of Miyazawa. One day, the protagonist Ichirō receives a postcard from the presiding judge, Wildcat who asks Ichirō to help him in a difficult case. When Ichirō

<sup>38</sup> Sakaguchi, 'Kyōso no bungaku', in *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū 15*, 159–161. I use Miyazawa for the term referring to Miyazawa Kenji so that readers will not mistake Miyazawa Kenji for Nakagami Kenji.

<sup>39</sup> Nakamura, *Keisō chū no shutai*, 195. Nakamura explains that he was inspired by Julia Kristeva's term, *subject en procès* (subject in process).

<sup>40</sup> Miyazawa, 'Donguri to yamaneko', in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 8*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1986, 17–28. Its first impression appeared in *Chūmon no ooi ryōriten* (注文の多い料理店 The Restaurant of Many Orders) in 1924. 'Donguri to yamaneko' was translated by John Bester as 'Wildcat and the Acorns' in *The Tales of Miyazawa Kenji*, Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996, 22–43.



finds his way to Wildcat's court, Ichirō sees Wildcat struggling to try the case that involves a dispute among the acorns. They are having a feud over who is the best acorn among them. The one with the most pointed head? The roundest one? The biggest one? The tallest one? When Ichirō suggests a solution, Wildcat accepts his offer with great pleasure and speaks to the acorns as follows:

よろしい。しずかにしろ。申しわたした。このなかで、いちばんえらくなくて、ばかで、めちゃくちゃで、てんでなっていないくて、あたまのつぶれたようなやつが、いちばんえらいのだ。<sup>41</sup>

Right! Be quiet now! Here is my verdict. The best of you is the one who is least important, most foolish, most ridiculous, absolutely good-for-nothing, and completely crack brained!

Nakamura Miharu indicates that similar examples are abundant in the works of Miyazawa. He points out that this kind of paradoxical rhetoric, which has two conflicting meanings, can be observed quite frequently in the texts of Miyazawa. Although it cannot be introduced here for lack of space, Nakamura exemplifies the manner in which the paradoxical binary is expressed in other of Miyazawa's texts and poems from his book of poetry, *Haru to shura* (春と修羅 Spring and Ashura, 1924), mainly analysing his process of revising three poems.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to this, I would like to illustrate his paradoxical/ironical approach in elaborating his short stories by an unrepresented example, 'Neko no jimusho' (猫の事

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<sup>41</sup> Miyazawa, 'Donguri to yamaneko', translated by John Bester as 'Wildcat and the Acorns', 37–38.

<sup>42</sup> Nakamura, *Keisō chū no shutai*, 195–220.

務所 Cats' Office),<sup>43</sup> which appeared originally in a literary magazine, *Getsuyō*, (月曜 Monday) in 1926. This short story is set in a cats' office that deals with cats' public affairs in general. The official duties are exercised by Secretary-General, Black Cat and four clerks, namely, First Secretary, White Cat, Second Secretary, Tabby Cat, Third Secretary, Calico Cat, and finally, the protagonist cat, Fourth Secretary, Fireplace Cat (*Kama-neko* かま猫). Fireplace Cat has a habit of sleeping in a fireplace because he needs to warm himself. He cannot help doing it just because he has a thinner skin than other cats. For this reason, he is always blackened by chimney soot, and he has been severely bullied and harassed by the other three colleagues because of his scruffy appearance. Secretary-General, Black Cat, is the only one who is sympathetic about his nature and habit. Moreover, the other three cats are also very jealous of Fireplace Cat as he is a highly qualified and diligent member of staff. One day the other three cats made up a story to lead Black Cat to believe that Fireplace Cat has been seeking the post of Secretary-General. On this day, the three cats as well as the angry Secretary-General, Black Cat, did not give any work to Fireplace Cat, ignoring him all day. Fireplace Cat was so upset that he started crying. At the end of this short story, a huge mythical golden lion (*shishi* 獅子 Singh) suddenly appeared and ordered the office to disband. Interestingly, we can observe two different endings to this story because the initial manuscript was preserved. In his initial ending, Miyazawa wrote:

釜猫はほんたうにかあいさうです。それから三毛猫もほんたうにか  
あいさうです。虎猫も実に気の毒です。白猫も大へんあはれです。  
事務長の黒猫もほんたうにかあいさうです。立派な頭を有った獅子  
も実に気の毒です。みんなみんなあはれです。かあいさうです。か

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<sup>43</sup> Miyazawa, 'Neko no jimusho', in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* 8, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1986, 198–207.

あいさう、かあいさう。<sup>44</sup>

I feel very sorry for Fireplace Cat. And, I feel very sorry for Calico Cat, too. My heart bleeds for Tabby Cat as well. I have a great pity on White Cat. I feel awfully sorry about the Secretary-General, Black Cat. I sincerely sympathize with the Lion who has a splendid head. I feel sorry for all of them. So pitiful... So sad...

Compared with this subjective and emotional ending, his final manuscript goes on as follows:

かうして事務所は廃止になりました。  
ぼくは半分獅子に同感です。<sup>45</sup>

This is how the cats' office went out of existence.

I half agree with Lion's order.

From these excerpts, we can observe how Miyazawa denied the decision made by an absolute being or universal truth, which was expressed by the huge mythical golden lion in this short story. While he proposed a one-dimensional sense of value judgments by saying that every character is pitiful in his first draft, Miyazawa, in his final manuscript, rewrote the ending and left the final decision on the survival of the cats' office to us (readers) by saying, 'I half agree with Lion's order.' On this matter, Nakamura Miharu analyses the texts of *Bijiterian taisai* (ビヂテリアン大祭 Vegetarian Festival)<sup>46</sup> thoroughly and derives a similar view of the indecisive nature of Miyazawa's texts.

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<sup>44</sup> Miyazawa, 'Neko no jimusho—Shokikei' (猫の事務所—初期形), in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* 8, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1986, 477.

<sup>45</sup> Miyazawa, 'Neko no jimusho', in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* 8, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1986, 209.

<sup>46</sup> Miyazawa, 'Bijiterian taisai', in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* 6, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1986, 60–108.

The protagonist, *watashi* (I), took part in a long debate on the pros and cons of vegetarianism at an international Vegetarian Festival as a representative of vegetarians in Japan. The protagonist made an effective speech in defence of vegetarianism and finally succeeded in converting all opponents to vegetarianism. However, at the end of the debate, he was shocked to find that all the supporters and opponents were acting as a clique. All participants except *watashi* in the debate were actually hired by the organizers in order to make the event successful. All debates turned out to be a farce. Here is the ending of *Bijiterian taisai*:

けれども私はこのあっけなさにぼんやりしてしまひました。あんまりぼんやりしましたので愉快なビヂテリアン大祭の幻想はもうこわれしました。どうかあとのところはみなさんで活動写真のおしまゐのありふれた舞踏か何かを使ってご勝手にご完成をねがふしだいであります。<sup>47</sup>

My mind, however, went completely blank because of the anticlimax of this sudden ending. My mind was so blank that my delightful illusion about the Vegetarian Festival was shattered. I sincerely wish you would make up your own ending, using something like an ordinary ending such as a ballroom scene like those in the classic film musicals.

This example from *Bijiterian taisai* makes it clear that any kind of persuasive rhetoric, any kind of logical argument or assertion are farces and meaningless in this text.<sup>48</sup> Thus, a philosophy of enlightenment in Miyazawa's texts is destroyed by itself due to the anticlimax of a sudden reversal at the end. For this reason, Nakamura comes to the conclusion that this text will never be completed. He describes the ending as hanging in midair and says the dispute will never end, not finding any decisive conclusion. The

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>48</sup> Nakamura, *Keisō chū no shutai*, 251.

gaps between vegetarians and opponents are never filled and its binary frame and incommensurability lasts forever. Viewed in this light, this lasting incommensurability or indecisiveness in Miyazawa's texts may be equated with Nakagami Kenji's conflicting attitude towards writing that will last forever like ceaseless hell.

In addition, Nakamura points out that Miyazawa's best known story, *Ginga tetsudō no yoru* (銀河鉄道の夜 Night on the Milky Way Train),<sup>49</sup> contains the same indecisive discourse in its ending. Four different manuscripts of *Ginga tetsudō no yoru* exist. The first, the second and the third manuscript are categorized as early drafts written around 1924, and the fourth draft is currently regarded as the final manuscript which Miyazawa elaborated by 1931. The poet, Irisawa Yasuo (b. 1931) is well known for his expertise on Miyazawa,<sup>50</sup> and is one of the most active members who compiled the complete works of Miyazawa Kenji. In the same manner as Nakamura, through his long involvement with compiling Miyazawa's complete works and the full-scale investigation of his posthumous papers, Irisawa acutely points out the fact that we should not consider *Ginga tetsudō no yoru* that appeared in the compiled book as a final manuscript although it is based on the fourth manuscript. He emphasizes that the manner in which Miyazawa built up his literary works, as it were the essence of his literature, has a kind of characteristic that refuses any concept of 'final manuscript' or 'authorized edition'.<sup>51</sup> While most writers elaborate their draft, investing a good deal

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<sup>49</sup> Miyazawa, 'Ginga tetsudō no yoru', in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* 7, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1985, 234–298. 'Ginga tetsudō no yoru' (Night on the Milky Way Train) is translated by Roger Pulvers in *Eigo de yomu ginga tetsudō no yoru*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1996, 8–240. Also translated by the following translators or scholars: By John Bester as 'Night Train to the Stars', in *Night Train to the Stars and Other Stories*, Tokyo: Kōdansha International, 1992, 7–97. By Sarah M. Strong and Karen Colligan as 'Night of the Milky Way Railway', in *Masterworks of Miyazawa Kenji—Poems and Fairy Tales*, Tokyo: Sanmark shuppan, 2002, 19–112. By Joseph Sigrist and D. M. Stroud as *Milky Way Railroad* in a book form, Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of Irisawa Yasuo (入沢康夫), see, Claremont, *Japanese Prose Poetry*, 72–74.

<sup>51</sup> Irisawa, '“Ginga tetsudō no yoru” no honbun no hensen ni tsuite no taiwa' (「銀河鉄道の夜」の

of time and effort to it, with the aim to complete the final draft, Miyazawa regards each draft as a completed manuscript at the time, and immediately after its completion he attempts to move away from it and to step towards the next completion simultaneously. As Irisawa scrutinized closely Miyazawa's posthumous papers and reached the persuasive result in his article, I do not repeat it here.<sup>52</sup> What is important particularly from Irisawa's findings is that Miyazawa was clearly aware of this concept as one of his literary principles, and named this concept as four-dimensional art (*yojigen-geijutsu* 四次元芸術). Irisawa indicated that this notion is clearly epitomized in 'Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art' (*Nōmin geijutsu gairon* 農民芸術概論)<sup>53</sup> and 'Introduction to "Spring and Ashura"' (*"Haru to shura" Jo* 『春と修羅』序).<sup>54</sup> Roger Pulvers translated 'Introduction to "Spring and Ashura"' as follows:

### **Introduction to "Spring and Ashura"**

The phenomenon called I  
 Is a single green illumination  
 Of a presupposed organic alternating current lamp  
 (a composite body of each and every transparent spectre)  
 The single illumination  
 Of karma's alternating current lamp  
 Remains alight without fail  
 Flickering unceasingly, restlessly

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本文の変遷についての対話), in *Miyazawa Kenji—Purioshin kaigan kara no hōkoku* (宮沢賢治—プリオシン海岸からの報告), Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1991, 167–177. On this point, see also Mita Munetsuke (見田宗介), '“Ginga tetsudō no yoru” no kōzō', in his *Miyazawa Kenji—Sonzai no matsuri no naka e* (宮沢賢治—存在の祭りの中へ), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001, 46–56, and Kamata Tōji (鎌田東二), *Miyazawa Kenji—“Ginga tetsudō no yoru” seidoku* (宮沢賢治—「銀河鉄道の夜」精読), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001.

<sup>52</sup> Irisawa, '“Ginga tetsudō no yoru” no honbun no hensen ni tsuite no taiwa', 167–177.

<sup>53</sup> Miyazawa, 'Nōmin geijutsu gairon', in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 10*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1985, 15–32.

<sup>54</sup> Miyazawa, 'Haru to shura', in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 1*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1985, 15–32.

Together with the sights of the land and all else  
(the light is preserved...the lamp itself is lost)

These poems are a mental sketch as found  
Passage by passage of light and shade  
Maintained and preserved to this point  
Brought together in paper and mineral ink  
From the directions sensed as past  
For these twenty-two months  
(the totality flickers in time with me  
All sensing all that I sense coincidentally)

As a result people and galaxies and Ashura and sea urchins  
Will think up new ontological proofs as they see them  
Consuming their cosmic dust...and breathing in salt water and air  
In the end all of these make up a landscape of the heart  
I assure you, however, that the scenes recorded here  
Are scenes recorded solely in their natural state  
And if it is nihil then it is nothing but nihil  
And that the totality is common in degree to all of us  
(just as everything forms what is the sum in me  
So do all parts become the sum of everything)

These words were meant to be transcribed faithfully  
Within a monstrous accumulation in the brightness of time  
In the confines of the present geological era  
Yet they have gone ahead and altered their construct and quality  
In what amounts to a spark of sharply constructed light  
(or alternatively a billion years of Ashura)  
Now it is possible that both the printer and I  
Have been sharing a certain turn of mind  
Causing us to sense these as unaltered  
In all probability just as we are aware of our own sense organs  
And of scenery and of people's individuality through feeling  
And just as what is but what we sense in common  
So it is that documents and history...or the earth's past

As well as these various data  
Are nothing but what we have become conscious of  
(at the root of the karmic covenant of space-time)  
For all I know in two thousand years from now  
A much different geology will be diverted  
With fitting proofs revealed one after another from the past  
And everyone will surmise that some two thousand years before  
The blue sky was awash with colourless peacocks  
And rising scholars will excavate superb fossils  
From regions glittering of iced nitrogen  
In the very upper reaches of the atmosphere  
Or they might just stumble  
Upon the giant footsteps of translucent man  
In a stratification plane of Cretaceous sandstone

The propositions that you have before you are without exception  
Asserted within the confines of a four dimension continuum  
As the nature of the mental state and time in themselves

Miyazawa Kenji, 20 January 1924<sup>55</sup>

In this prologue to his book of poetry, ‘*watakushi* (I/Self)’ is expressed as the phenomenon of ‘the single illumination of karma’s alternating current lamp’; and thus the poems written by *watakushi*, that is, the alternating phenomenon as such, are depicted as nothing but a ‘mental sketch’ (*sinshō suketchi* 心象スケッチ) which seems to be common only in a certain degree to all of us. Thus, for Miyazawa, what was being written is perceived as nothing more than ‘what we have become conscious of’ ‘at the root of the karmic covenant of space-time’. Irisawa observes that, according to Miyazawa’s view of literature or literary work, everything is alternating continually

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<sup>55</sup> ‘Introduction to “Spring and Ashura”’ (*Hatu to shura* ‘jo’ 『春と修羅』序) is translated by Roger Pulvers in *Eigo de yomu Miyazawa Kenji shishū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1997, 14–23.



with time that is described as the ‘fourth dimension’ (*dai yon no jigen dearu jikan no jiku ni sotte* 第四の次元である時間の軸に添って).<sup>56</sup> Therefore, any manuscript of his on a certain day expresses a whole truth at the time. Accordingly, Irisawa ascertains that Miyazawa was never contented with any manuscript that is considered as his final draft by today’s literary critics. He points out that Miyazawa kept elaborating many manuscripts that had already been published in book form.

Judging from the above examples, we may reach the conclusion that Miyazawa shares his paradoxical view of what was being written as four-dimensional art with Nakagami Kenji’s ambivalent attitude towards writing as an endless attempt to search for autonomy observed in the preceding chapter. Though we can only find a few essays in which Nakagami talked about Miyazawa Kenji, Nakagami gave a favourable short critique of ‘Kaze no Matasaburō’ (風の又三郎 Matasaburo of the Wind).<sup>57</sup> Nakagami expresses a sense of affinity with Miyazawa in this essay by saying that ‘not only do we share phonetically the same given name, Kenji, but also I felt that we are fated to pursue the same literary tasks’.<sup>58</sup>

### **Nakahara Chūya: The Voice of the Living (*Inochi no koe* いのちの声)**

The foregoing discussions of autonomy, which Nakagami Kenji had in common with Sakaguchi Ango and Miyazawa Kenji, will lead us further into a consideration of Nakahara Chūya’s admiration of Miyazawa Kenji. Nakahara Chūya (1907–1937),

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<sup>56</sup> Irisawa, ‘“Ginga tetsudō no yoru” no honbun no hensen ni tsuite no taiwa’ (「銀河鉄道之夜」の本文の変遷についての対話), 169.

<sup>57</sup> Miyazawa, ‘Kaze no Matasaburō’, in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* 7, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1985, 299–353.

<sup>58</sup> Nakagami, ‘Matasaburō’, in *NKZ* Vol. 15, 270–273.

who is one year Ango's junior and 11 years Miyazawa's junior, is still one of the most popular and widely-read poets in today's Japan. Miyazawa died at 37 years old in 1933, that is, one year before Nakahara Chūya at 26 published his first book of poetry, *Poems of the Goat* (山羊の歌 Yagi no uta). The first complete works of Miyazawa Kenji were published in 1934, one year after his death in 1933. In the following year, Chūya contributed three articles on the complete works of Miyazawa to literary journals in quick succession.<sup>59</sup> Chūya reminisced about the days he first read Miyazawa's works, in his article, 'Miyazawa Kenji zenshū kankō ni saishite' (宮沢賢治全集刊行に際して On the Publication of the Complete Works of Miyazawa Kenji, 1935), by saying that he began to read Miyazawa's first book of poetry published in 1924, *Spring and Ashura* (*Haru to shura* 春と修羅), around 1925 or 1926. Chūya confessed that he was so impressed that he distributed many copies to his friends.

Inspired by Chūya's favourable remarks about Miyazawa's poems, Irisawa Yasuo, Kitagawa Tōru and many other scholars have been examining the various texts from Chūya and Miyazawa and discovered the common ground for their literary works.<sup>60</sup> Many scholars indicate how Chūya had received a great amount of influence from Miyazawa. There is plenty of evidence to show both poets' many common features in

<sup>59</sup> Nakahara Chūya, 'Miyazawa Kenji zenshū kankō ni saishite' (宮沢賢治全集刊行に際して), in *Sakuhin* (作品 January 1935). Nakahara Chūya, 'Miyazawa Kenji zenshū' (宮沢賢治全集), in Kusano Shinpei (ed.), *Miyazawa Kenji kenkyū* (宮沢賢治研究 April 1935). Nakahara Chūya, 'Miyazawa Kenji no shi' (宮沢賢治の詩), in *Retsuenzo* (レツエンゾ June 1935).

<sup>60</sup> Iida Momo and Nakamura Minoru, "'Ginga testudō no yoru" to "Yogisha no shokudō" o megutte' (「銀河鉄道の夜」と「夜汽車の鉄道」をめぐって), in their conversation (*taidan* 対談) appeared in *Nakahara Chūya kenkyū* (中原中也研究) (No. 8 2003): 3–52. Irisawa Yasuo, Kitagawa Tōru et al., "'Shinshō sukecchi" to "meiji izen" o megutte (<心象スケッチ>と<名辞以前>をめぐって)', in the round-table-discussion appeared in *Nakahara Chūya kenkyū* (中原中也研究) (No.8 2003): 53–78. Kitagawa Tōru, 'Miyazawa Kenji to Nakahara Chūya —Futatsu no purizumu— (宮沢賢治と中原中也—二つのプリズム—)', in Satō Yasumasa (ed.), *Miyazawa Kenji o yomu* (宮沢賢治を読む), Tokyo: Kasama shoin, 2002, 89–109. Irisawa Yasuo, "'sei" to "sei" Chūya ni okeru Kenji mondai (「生」と「聖」 中也における賢治問題)', in *Miyazawa Kenji—Purioshin kaigan kara no hōkoku* (宮沢賢治—プリオシン海岸からの報告), Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1991, 279–285.

their rhetoric. To follow this up further would involve us in other factors than ‘autonomy as paradox’ and would take us beyond the scope of this chapter. What I have tried to show from Chūya’s admiration of Miyazawa in this chapter is condensed into his poem, ‘The Voice of the Living’, which appeared as the last poem in *Poems of the Goat*.<sup>61</sup> It is a long poem in four parts, and I will explain some significant features between the parts.

The Voice of the Living (‘Inochi no koe’ いのちの声)

*“All my many deeds—how they wane beneath the sun”—Solomon*

I have already grown tired of Bach and Mozart.

I have completely grown tired of the flippant rhythm of Jazz.

I live like an iron bridge under a cloudy sky after rain.

What is beating a path to my door is always loneliness.

But I am not really buried into that loneliness.

I am looking for something, always looking for something.

I am terribly irritated in the midst of something immovable.

For this reason, my appetite and lust are worth next to nothing.

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<sup>61</sup> Nakahara Chūya, *Yagi no uta*, in Ōoka Shōhei et al. (eds), *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 1 kan*, Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 5–139. *Yagi no uta* was translated by Paul Mackintosh and Maki Sugiyama as *Goats Songs*, Herefordshire: Gracewing Books, 1993. It was also translated by Ry Beville as *Poems of the Goats*, Richmond: The American Book Company, 2002. However, as I found their translation of ‘Inochi no koe’ a little unfit, I attempted to translate it by myself.

Well, I don't know, I just do not know what I am looking for, I have never  
been able to figure what I am really looking for.

I do believe that there are not two but only one.

Well, I don't know, I just do not know what I am looking for, I have never  
been able to figure what I am really looking for.

I have never been able to figure how to find any hit-or-miss method to get  
there.

Sometimes I question myself as if I ridicule myself.

Is it a woman? Dainty food? Is it an honour?

At that very moment, my heart cries out—That's not it! This isn't it!

Neither this nor that!

Then what? Is it a song of the sky?—a resonant song from high in the  
sky in the morning?

In Part I of this poem, '*boku* (I)' is endlessly searching for something essential for him, he has never been able to figure out what he is looking for. This sentiment of '*boku*' may be identified with Giovanni, the protagonist of Miyazawa Kenji's *Ginga tetsudō no yoru*, who is searching for 'real happiness' in the course of his 'Four-Dimensional-Milky-Way-Dream Train' journey. In this short story, Giovanni could not identify what is real happiness either. He says to his companion, Campanella: 'But what is real happiness, Campanella? [···] I'm not scared of all that dark. [···] I'm going to get to the bottom of everything and find out what will make

people happy. We'll go together, Campanella, as far as we can go.'<sup>62</sup> However, the more 'boku' looks for what he is looking for, the more it seems to be going to drift farther and farther away. Similarly, in the last stanza of Part I, Chūya regards what he is searching for as 'a song of the sky—a resonant song from high in the sky (*sora no uta, asa, kōkū ni narihibiku sora no uta* 空の歌、朝、高空に、鳴り響く空の歌)', as if it transcends the bounds of natural causes and effects in our world. For this reason, in the second stanza, his mundane desires including his appetite or lust seem to vanish. All he can do is just to keep searching in vain for it 'in the midst of something immovable', and in the last stanza, crying out, 'That's not it! This isn't it! Neither this nor that! (*Are demo nai, kore demo nai, are demo nai kore demo nai!* あれでもない、これでもない、あれでもないこれでもない!)'.

In contrast to Part I, we read in Part II that Chūya accepts the mundane world for what it is, describing our world as the real world of 'the clever merchant' (*keibin naru shōnin no utsushimi no yo* 「慧敏なる商人」の「現身の世」) and admitting that our life is governed by this 'principle that constitutes our world as well as ourselves'.

## II

Nay! It must be something we cannot describe.

Sometimes I try to explain it in short,

But my life should not be something I can explain so easily that I believe  
my life is worth living.

That's life! Innocent bliss! Take things as they come! Everything and

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<sup>62</sup> Miyazawa, 'Ginga tetsudō no yoru' (Night on the Milky Way Train) translated by Roger Pulvers in *Eigo de yomu ginga tetsudō no yoru*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1996, 219–220.

anything is good!

No matter if we know it or not, whatever we end up doing are the things  
we want to do,

And if we won't be able to know precisely whether we are the winner or  
the loser,

Every one of us, being aware of it, can never be entirely happy with it

As long as we live in this world and continue to seek it as if it were the  
pleasure of absent-mindedness.

But if our happiness comes from the state of selflessness,

And the happiness exists in our real life dominated by the clever merchant  
who we regard as being fool,

We must admit that this world is so unfair,

Since all of us cannot live on without earning our daily bread.

But then again that's our life.

Since we live in this world, and this is not under our voluntary decision

And if this is the principle that constitutes our world as well as ourselves,

It might be good to soothe our mind by saying that there exists no extreme  
in this world.

Chūya's practical perception of others as the sober reality is based on his thought that he  
takes anything in relation to human beings as it comes. He proclaims in the first stanza

of Part II that: ‘That’s life! Innocent bliss! Take things as they come! Everything and anything is good! (*Soreyo genjitsu! Kegarenaki kōfuku! Arawaruru mono wa arawaruru mama ni yoi to iukoto!* それよ現実！ 汚れなき幸福！ あらはるるものはあらはるるままによいといふこと！)’. Even if the world is governed by the clever merchant, Chūya admonishes us to accept the fact that our real world runs simply in this way.

However, in Part III, Chūya is opposed to his previous remarks again and advances his belief that we need to possess individual passions by saying that: ‘Rage! Rage if thou are angry from the bottom of thy heart! [···] Even if it is on the eve of thy ultimate aim in life; Never, never neglect thy anger. (*Sareba yō wa, netsujō no mondai dearu. Nanji, kokoro no soko yori rippuku seba, ikareyo! Sa’are, ikaru koto koso na ga saigo naru mokuhyō no mae ni de are, kono koto yumeyume orosoka ni suru nakare.* されば要は、熱情の問題である。汝、心の底より立腹せば 怒れよ！ さあれ、怒ることこそ 汝が最後なる目標の前にであれ、この言ゆめゆめおろそかにする勿れ)’.

### III

Well, then, It’s all in thy passionate soul.

Rage!

Rage if thou are angry from the bottom of thy heart!

Here you are!

Even if it is on the eve of thy ultimate aim in life,

Never, never neglect thy anger.

Thy passion survives for a while,

And burns itself out eventually.

But the social effect of thy passion will remain

And it will prevent thee from modulating into the next action.

And, finally in the closing stanza in Part IV, in order to express his anger as the spirit of autonomous personality, he concludes that all he needs is nothing but his single carnal body.

#### IV

If only I can perceive nothing but my single carnal body under the evening  
sky,

No more words are needed.

Considering the examples quoted above, Chūya accepts that we are determined by various causalities represented by the world of the shrewd merchants, where we cannot find our free will. But then, at the same time, he exhorts us to live by our individual passionate spirit and attempts to destroy the world that is determined by external causes. Let us recall here that, in Karatani Kōjin's interpretation of Kant's morality, first, we should theoretically accept our fate that we are bound by the external causalities in order to possess our freedom and moral responsibility in a practical manner. According to



Karatani, in reality, we do not have free will *sensu stricto*. We, however, have ‘to be deemed free’ in order for us to be free and responsible for our action. Let’s recall that ‘Kant’s ethics cannot be sought only in his accounts of morality.’ It can be summarized in the following sentence: ‘Being theoretical at the same time as being practical—the transcendental stance itself is ethical.’ We can say with fair certainty that Chūya also keeps both the theoretical stance—one’s awareness of his/her fate that is bound by the world of the shrewd merchants—and practical stance—one’s passion before his/her ultimate aim in life—at the same time. Here again, as Nakagami Kenji possesses the conflicting dichotomy between self-identity and the integration with others when he writes novels, a similar ambivalent attitude between the individual and the collective may be observed in the substance of Chūya’s poetic invention.<sup>63</sup> Here, for further example, is the second stanza from ‘Blind Autumn (‘Mōmoku no aki’ 盲目の秋)’ in *Poems of the Goat*.

I really do not care about this, I really do not care about that.

Nothing else matters.

This doesn’t really matter, that doesn’t really matter.

I’m not going to let these bother me.

Autonomy is all we need!

I do not care about anything but autonomy.

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<sup>63</sup> The explanation of Chūya’s poetic invention is more fully developed in Kitagawa Tōru, ‘Josetsu—Chika seikatsusha no uta (序説—地下生活者の詩)’, in *Nakahara Chūya no sekai*, Tokyo: Kinokuniya shoten sensho, 1994, 5–37.

Autonomy, autonomy, autonomy, autonomy!

Autonomy is the only thing that does not judge one's deed.<sup>64</sup>

### **Towards the unexplored perspective of literary autonomy in the field of modern Japanese literature**

From the viewpoint of Karatani Kōjin's Kantian ethics for freedom and responsibility, if we take another look at modern Japanese literature, having the eternal conflict between autonomy and dependence as Nakagami Kenji has, the unexplored perspective of literary autonomy may emerge from the literature of Sakaguchi Ango, Miyazawa Kenji and Nakahara Chūya. Of course, the autonomy that is found in the literature of modern Japan is not exclusive to these three writers, however, I hope to propose a possible list of autonomous writers and become a stepping-stone to the study of autonomy in modern Japanese literature. At first, these three literati pay great attention to the external causalities and accept the complex causalities that are ruled by the law of nature. In other words, at the outset, they observe carefully the difference (*sai*) in every single human aspect and 'affirm' it no matter what it is. Then, through the act of writing, in order to have their own autonomous freedom, they seem to obey the command: 'be free!' or 'be *causa sui*, self-motivated, subjective, or autonomous'. That is to say, they accept their fates, which are determined by the external causes as if they regarded themselves as the individuals who take full responsibility for whatever

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<sup>64</sup> 「これがどうなろうと、あれがどうなろうと、そんなことはどうでもいいのだ。これがどういふことであらうと、それがどういふことであらうと、そんなことはなほさらどうだつていいのだ。人には自恃があればよい！ その余はすべてなるまゝだ…… 自恃だ、自恃だ、自恃だ、ただそれだけが人の行ひを罪としない」 Nakahara Chūya, 'Mōmoku no aki', in *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 1 kan*, 58–59.

they are or they do. To put it more concretely, it means that we accept whatever happens to us as if it ‘has to be deemed’ to be our intention to do just that. It means that we will not shift the responsibility for what happens in our life onto anyone and anything. In this sense, we do not have any freedom to choose our action. However, at the same time, each of us may consider how an individual practical action could take place in order to be free and ‘make new judgments with a historically changing environment’ within the *a priori* limits which outline man’s fundamental situation in the complex universe.

Viewed in this light, it seems reasonable to suppose that the writers/poets who were examined in this chapter attempted in varying degrees to put Kant’s transcendental standpoint into practice through producing their literary works. For Nakagami Kenji, his act of writing is described as aspiring to the ceaseless hell. The postwar existentialist writers such as Noma Hiroshi had scrutinized the unlawful acts of ordinary people during the chaotic period immediately after the War and portrayed the simultaneous presence of freedom and responsibility. For Sakagichi Ango, it is depicted as ‘farce’ or ‘falling into decadence’. In his poem, ‘Spring and Ashura’, Miyazawa Kenji depicts himself as an angry ‘Ashura’ who had lost his ‘true words’.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Nakahara Chūya describes this as a passionate soul such as rage before one’s ultimate aim in life that is determined by various causalities as typified by the world of ‘the shrewd merchants’.

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<sup>65</sup> ‘Haru to shura’ is translated by Sarah M. Strong and Karen Colligan as ‘Spring and Ashura’ in *Masterworks of Miyazawa Kenji—Poems and Fairy Tales*, Tokyo: Sanmark shuppan, 2002, 12–14.

## CHAPTER IV

### ONGOING CANON FORMATION: AN IDEOLOGY OF JAPAN'S NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE BOOM

As we have observed in Chapter I, for Nakagami, on the one hand, *kotoba* (language) operates to destroy the fixed concept that is incubated by a collective agency such as the modern nation-state or society, which infringes on one's freedom that is conflated with moral responsibility. *Kotoba* is Nakagami's exclusive means to operate as the creator of value, which is maintained only by autonomous individuals who bear the ability of logical self-definition and assume the moral responsibility for their actions. However, on the other hand, *kotoba* may bring about the possibility of fostering the transition to assimilation of individual people into their collective, or a more virulent form of nationalism or totalitarianism. Thus, this perception of *kotoba* held by Nakagami generates an endless conflict between the establishment of self-identity and dependence on others.

For Nakagami, this kind of ambivalent nature that is found in *kotoba* generates a fantastic ideology, an invented *monogatari*, and he is instinctively aware, as a contemporary writer, that if people employ this kind of delusive *monogatari*, they unwittingly surrender their autonomy to complex causalities. In sum, in his early days, Nakagami viewed *kotoba* as a deceptive means of modern invention, however, at the same time, *kotoba* was his last resort for freeing himself from dehumanization in a highly information-based, mass-consumer society. Thus, he developed mixed feelings towards *kotoba* that he used as a means of writing, and built up his love-hate feelings

towards *kotoba* through the late 1960s to the early 1970s. These mixed and ambivalent feelings for *kotoba* could be his starting point as a ‘serious’ writer, and a strong inducement for his writing career. When he started to write his novels in the late 1960s, the only reason Nakagami managed not to discharge a gun in the same way as Nagayama Norio was the fact that he had this potentially dangerous means, that is, ‘*kotoba*’, which he could barely believe in, to fight against the irrational violence in society.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, in order to grasp which elements of the Japanese language Nakagami Kenji deeply mistrusted, I would like to examine more closely the issue of canon formation and linguistic nationalism, and explore the reason why the Japanese language (*nihongo*) has become a cause of Nakagami’s ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing. Let us now look more carefully into the theoretical background of the critical attitude towards the idea of modern language, linguistic nationalism or canon formation. I would like to clarify which part of the Japanese language resulting from the *genbun icchi* system specifically Nakagami and the dramatists in the 1960s such as Betsuyaku Minoru and Terayama Shūji had misgivings about.

In terms of the question of the self or subjective freedom, Suzuki Tomi summarizes how ‘theory’ had exerted an influence on the notion of subject as follows:

Since the late 1960s, Western critics have attacked the assumption of the “self” or “subject” as an *a priori*, self-sufficient entity. Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, and others have questioned the notion of the subject as a controlling consciousness and as the ultimate origin of meaning. The subject has been presented

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<sup>1</sup> 「最後の1ミリほどで (only just, with extreme difficulty) ことばを信じて」 Nakagami Kenji, ‘Shohatsu no mono’ (初発の者), in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 1995, 193–195.

instead as a process and effect constituted by and resulting from the interplay of historically conditioned institutional, political, and discursive systems of differences. There has also been a growing awareness in the West of the historicity of Western modernity, spurred on in particular by the debate in the 1980s on post-modernism.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we can see that recent cultural theories from Foucault or Derrida make us rethink whatever is taken as common-sense or natural such as ‘I (*watashi*)’ or ‘self (*jiko*)’, and demonstrate that what has been considered as natural is actually an historical, cultural product.<sup>3</sup>

At this point, ‘invented traditions,’ the critical historical approach introduced by Eric Hobsbawm in 1983, is worth paying attention to.<sup>4</sup> This approach called numerous historians’ attention to the elaborate process of creating a ‘modern myth’, which is invented by both elites and civilians who produce public opinion in society in the name of ‘tradition’ or ‘cultural characteristics.’ An example of this kind of analysis is Carol Gluck’s memorable study of ideology in the late Meiji period, *Japan’s Modern Myths* (1985).<sup>5</sup> She explains that what drove ‘the *tennōsei* ideology’ (the Emperor system) forward was not only the government officials but also ‘civilians — journalists, educators and local notables who produced public opinion or a national orthodoxy.’<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Suzuki Tomi, *Narrating the Self*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> On this matter, Jonathan Culler also summarizes both ideas of Foucault and Derrida very concisely. See *Literary Theory*, 14. Culler consolidates the role of ‘theory’ as follows: Theory makes other arguments [...] whether maintaining that apparently natural social arrangements and institutions and also the habits of the thoughts of a society are the product of underlying economic relations and ongoing power struggles, or that the phenomena of conscious life may be produced by unconscious forces, or that what we call the self or subject is produced in and through the systems of language and culture, or that what we call ‘presence’, ‘origin’, or the ‘original’ is created from copies, an effect of repetition. See *Literary Theory*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Vlastos, ‘Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History’, 1–16.

<sup>5</sup> Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, 3–41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–10.

Similarly, Sheldon Garon raised the question of why Japanese people did not resist the oppressive state under the *tennōsei* ideology and militarism before 1945.<sup>7</sup> Garon examined how ‘modernization helped cement several key alliances between various social groups [mainly those from the new middle class] and the state [officials using an “emperor system” to manipulate people] in the first half of the twentieth century.’<sup>8</sup> More than 40 years earlier than Garon’s analysis, Maruyama Masao had already raised the question of how various groups or individuals within Japanese society relate to state power. In ‘Thought and Behavior Patterns of Japan’s Wartime Leaders’ (1949), Maruyama advanced his theory of ‘essentially irresponsible leadership’:<sup>9</sup> the so-called ‘system of irresponsibility’ (*musekinin no taikai*) in Japanese society. What is important here is the fact that unlike Marxist analysis of war responsibility which were unquestioningly committed to accusing the Emperor himself and war-time leaders, Maruyama enlarged the scope of this analysis and posed the trenchant question of the responsibility of the ordinary people, including contemporary readers like us, who allowed the nation to fall into a state of ultranationalism.

Added to this perspective, from the viewpoint of Japanese literature, Suzuki Tomi defines the problem of I-novel discourse (*shishōsetsu gensetsu* 私小説言説) as ‘a powerful and uncanny signifying without a fixed, identifiable signified, generating a critical discourse that inform[s] not only the nature of literature but also views of Japanese selfhood, society and tradition’.<sup>10</sup> She aptly points out that the notion of *shishōsetsu* is still extremely ambiguous and difficult to comprehend even though the

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<sup>7</sup> Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Garon, ‘Rethinking Modernization and Modernity in Japanese History: A Focus on State–Society Relation’, 350.

<sup>9</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 33.

<sup>10</sup> Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, 2.

term *shishōsetsu* was widely disseminated in modern Japanese society, being characterized as ‘a direct and faithful transcription or confession of his/her personal life,’ or ‘the text’s referential accuracy or faithfulness with regard to the facts of the author’s “real life”’. She continues to explain that this ‘uncanny’ and ‘elusive’ character of *shishōsetsu* has been working as ‘I-novel meta-narrative’, which evolved into the normative term that generates a uniform illustration of not only the nature of modern Japanese literature, selfhood, society and tradition, but also Japanese classical literature. Suzuki terms this critical discourse that permeates our present times as I-novel discourse. This modern apparatus for the interpretation of Japanese literature confines the diverse Japanese cultural and historical identities and traditions in a monolithic domain that is symbolized in words or phrases such as ‘immediacy, directness, lyricism, spiritual search for the self and unity with nature’. In addition, Suzuki points out that the I-novel meta-narrative was formulated within the binary frame between the Western novel and the Japanese I-novel. This binary frame facilitates a one-sided view of Japanese literary traditions such as ‘it is lyrical more than anything,’ ‘it emphasizes reality,’ ‘unlike the Western novel, it lacks fictitiousness and constructiveness’, and the like.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, this polarization brings about a value judgment as in the question as to which pole represents the more ‘true’ novel or more flawless society, and in this sense, the concept of I-novel discourse never appears to be ‘neutral or simply descriptive.’<sup>12</sup>

Suzuki views *shishōsetsu* as a literary and ideological paradigm rather than a particular literary form.<sup>13</sup> Relevant to this point is Suzuki’s following remark:

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<sup>11</sup> Suzuki Tomi, ‘Watashi-gatari no gensetsu ni tsuite’, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



I consider the I-novel issue ultimately as a historically constructed dominant reading and interpretive paradigm — which soon became a generative cultural discourse. Instead of simply examining the thematic and formal features of what standard literary histories narrowly categorize as I-novels, my study emphasizes the historical formation of a discursive field in which the corpus of the I-novel was retroactively created and defined and from which the standard literary histories emerged. My study attempts to place this dynamic “I-novel discourse” in the perspective of the broader historical context of Japan’s modernization, which has hitherto been described by this I-novel discourse.<sup>14</sup>

She goes on to say: ‘By the middle of the 1920s, when the notion of the I-novel emerged, these historically constructed and ideologically charged realities and new languages had become naturalized and their origins had been forgotten. The Japanese Naturalist texts and other modern *shōsetsu* regarded as autobiographical began to be received and read as a direct transcription of the author’s lived experience and of his “self,” which was considered to exist *a priori* and independently of language, itself now regarded as transparent vehicle for expressing the self.’<sup>15</sup> What Suzuki focuses on here is not to see whether her statement such as ‘the corpus of the I-novel was retroactively created’ is a historical fact or not, but what is important to her is to examine the manner in which we define the notion of *shishōsetsu*, to expose the historical process of how the notion of *shishōsetsu* was developed in the history of Japanese literature or to expose the manner in which the origin of the notion of *shishōsetsu* was created.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 47.

The points made so far in Suzuki's book apply in principle to Karatani's following remarks. As early as 1980, in his controversial book, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (*Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen*, 1980), Karatani Kōjin reveals that the origin of the ideological system in which we currently dwell can be traced back to the modern period between the early 1890s and the Taishō democracy. He explains that some common-sense notions found in modern Japanese literature—termed as 'landscape', 'interiority' or 'confession'—stem from the establishment of the system of the 'unification of the spoken and written languages' in the 1890s. Karatani proceeds to say that these common-sense notions were nothing but the modern apparatus (*kindai no sōchi* 近代の装置) of Japanese literature, and the origins of these notions were concealed as soon as they were produced, making it seem as though these notions had always existed. He writes that '[these notions] take on the appearance of an "object" that has been there, outside us, from time immemorial'.<sup>16</sup> For example, Karatani talks about 'interiority' as follows:

When contemporary scholars of literature speak of the struggle of Meiji writers to establish a modern self, they merely confirm an ideology in which we are already thoroughly steeped. They set up an opposition between the state, or political power, and faithfulness to interiority, or the self, unaware that 'interiority' is itself politics and that it is a manifestation of absolute authority. Those devoted to the state and those devoted to interiority complement each other. It was in the face of the overwhelming dominance of the West that establishment of both the modern state and interiority in the third decade of Meiji became ineluctable. That these developments took place should not be the focus of our critique. What we can criticize are contemporary modes of thought which accept these products of an inversion

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<sup>16</sup> Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, translated and edited by Brett de Bary, 11–96. The original text, *Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen*, (日本近代文学の起源) was published by Kōdansha in 1980.

as natural. In every case, scholars go back to the Meiji period to establish their foundations. While the images such scholarship constructs often conflict with each other, in conflicting they also complement each other, working together to camouflage their real origins. It is not enough for us now to revise our histories of literature. We must seek to expose the historicity of that very “literature,” of literature as a system which ceaselessly reproduces itself.<sup>17</sup>

Here, from both Suzuki’s ‘I-novel discourse’ as ideological paradigm and Karatani’s observation of the ideological system of modern Japanese literature in the interests of creating a modern nation-state, we should notice that the modern system or ideological paradigm appears as if it existed *a priori* and conceals its historicity. These studies indicate that what is considered to be an ancient practice or tradition is actually a creation of the modern era in collusion with the interests of creating a modern nation-state. What both Suzuki and Karatani emphasize here is the fact that the origins of these common-sense notions in Japanese literature are hidden as soon as they are established, as though they had always existed. It is important to bear in mind that ‘the narrative texts are related to, and in many cases contributed to, the historical formation of the fundamental ideological assumptions’<sup>18</sup> such as common-sense notions derived from the system of *genbun icchi* that Karatani posed as above.

The issue of this historical formation will lead us further into a consideration of the issue of ‘canon formation’. Shirane defines ‘canon’ as follows: ‘The term “canon” usually refers to authorized text, particularly in school curricula, or texts widely perceived to be worthy of interpretation and imitation. Canon in the narrow sense means the standard repertoire, the most highly prized or most frequently read or

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>18</sup> Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, 12.

performed works within a particular genre or institution.’<sup>19</sup> Shirane Haruo and Suzuki Tomi examine the manner in which these texts or authors had become privileged and had become the cultural icons of Japan’s tradition, and their study of Japanese classics indicates the canon formation of Japanese cultural and national identity in accordance with the historical process by which Japan’s nation-state was developed. Similar to Gluck’s or Garon’s research on alliances between various social groups, civilians and the state in the interests of creating a modern state, Shirane introduces John Guillory and Pierre Bourdieu’s study of canon formation and illustrates its nature as follows:

John Guillory has argued that the ideological or cultural value of the text in a canon does not lie in the texts themselves but in the processes and institutions that give the texts value. “Canonicity is not a property of the work itself but of its transmission” and its relation to institutions such as the school. Pierre Bourdieu, upon whom Guillory draws for his central thesis, has pointed to two fundamental forms of production: the production of the work and the production of the value of the work. In fact, for Bourdieu, “The production of discourse (critical, historical, etc.) about the work of art is one of the conditions of production of the work.” A canonical text in this sense is constantly *re*-produced. Canon formation is thus concerned not only with the immediate producers of the work—the authors, the scribes, the printers, etc.—but also with those agents and institutions (such as commentators, patrons, temples, schools, museums, publishing houses) that produce or *re*-produce the value of the text and that create the consumers and audiences capable of recognizing and desiring that value. Key questions, then, are how, by whom, and for what purposes this value is generated, maintained, and transmitted.<sup>20</sup>

Viewed from this angle, by referring to the critical historical approach to ‘tradition’ by

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<sup>19</sup> Shirane and Suzuki, *Inventing the Classics*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–3. On this subject, see also John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The problem of Lieterary Canon Formation*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Eric Hobsbawm and the analyses of ‘canon formation’ by John Guillory and Pierre Bourdieu,<sup>21</sup> Shirane Haruo and Suzuki Tomi attempt to historicize the formation of the canon and the social and political processes of how a particular classical text is developed and gains the status of being ‘the cultural icon of Japan’s “tradition”’. Carol Gluck summarizes a related matter well:

Sometime during the late 1880s and 1890s, the pronouncements of utter historical newness and absolute national essence came together to produce the disciplines of modernity. I think of it as ‘the canonical moment’, as if early one afternoon in the late 1880s, all the words coalesced and the narratives aligned. Henceforth there was *kokugo*, *kokubungaku* and *kokushi* (national language, national literature, and national history); *shūkyō*, *shisō*, and *shōsetsu* (religion, thought, and the novel) [... ] *tennō*, *kenpō*, and *kokutai* (emperor, constitution, and national polity). None was utterly new, but all were newly reified, or at least, redefined.<sup>22</sup>

It may be useful at this point to summarize the main points of these discussions.

1. What has been considered as common sense or natural in modern Japanese literature (I-novel discourse, the notion of landscape or confession) is in fact a historical, cultural product (the creation of the modern era).
2. The modern system, ideological paradigm or notion, which is considered to be natural, appears as though it existed *a priori* as soon as it was produced and conceals its historicity—its origin.
3. The process of producing these kinds of authorized texts, that is, canons (canon

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Gluck, “‘Meiji’ for our Time’, 15.

formation) recurs ceaselessly. A canonical text is constantly *re*-evaluated and *re*-produced.

Viewed in this light, the so-called *nihonjinron* (the conceptual discussion about the Japanese) has been severely criticized as a mere historical, cultural product which engenders a uniform perception that the Japanese are unique or Japan is a culturally homogeneous nation and the like. Peter Dale, for example, asserts that ‘the *nihonjinron* may be defined as works of cultural nationalism concerned with the ostensible “uniqueness” of Japan in any aspect, and which are hostile to both individual experience and the notion of internal socio-historical diversity.’<sup>23</sup> Cultural nationalism is expressed well by Shirane when he says:

As Eric Hobsbawm and scholars of nationalism have shown, seemingly nonpolitical spheres such as aesthetics, literature, and ethics have been critical—if not even more powerful than political institutions—in the process of constructing nation-states, whose members had to be unified through the development of a common *cultural* identity. One consequence was that cultural phenomena that had been specific to a particular region or social community often with the passage of time became identified with the nation.<sup>24</sup>

Shirane enumerates some examples such as kabuki and *kokugo* (the national language) to illustrate this remark. Seen from the viewpoint of the creation of a large sense of cultural homogeneity in the interests of the modern nation-state, Shirane argues that ‘at the ideological heart of the national literature movement was linguistic nationalism, the

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<sup>23</sup> See Peter N. Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*. London: Croom Helm, 1986.

<sup>24</sup> Shirane and Suzuki, *Inventing the Classics*, 12–13.

belief that the nation was founded on a common language, the “national language” based primarily on spoken Japanese’.<sup>25</sup> Shirane states further:

Meiji Japan, *kokumin*, generally translated in the following essays as “nation” and sometimes as “people of the nation,” was a constitutionally defined notion of the nation that lay between the nation-state and the various people that had been made new citizens of that state. This notion was used to integrate the people culturally, politically, and socially into the new Meiji state, to construct what Benedict Anderson has called an “imagined community,” a sense of a unified nation for disparate groups or localities that did not necessarily share common historical, religious, or ethnic roots.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, Suzuki indicates that ‘this sudden transformation [the *genbun icchi* movement] was not a purely literary phenomenon; rather, it was closely related to the institutional promotion of a “national language” after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95).’<sup>27</sup> In 1895, for example, Ueda Kazutoshi (上田万年 1867–1937)—a linguist who had just returned from Germany where he had witnessed the promotion of a standardized national language by the Deutscher Sprachverein (established in 1885)—argued that the establishment of a standard national language (*hyōjungo*, *kokugo* 標準語、国語) was the foremost priority of a modern nation-state’.<sup>28</sup> Suzuki gives Tanizaki’s narrative texts as an example, and points out that although Tanizaki Jun’ichirō ‘astutely’ penetrated the historical and ideological origins of the *genbun icchi* style and viewed it as merely ‘an artificial product of a newly established regime

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 13. A similar observation can be seen in *Sōzō no kyōdōtai (Imagined Communities)* by Benedict Anderson, 120–139.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 12–13.

<sup>27</sup> Suzuki, *Narrating the Self*, 45.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. For further details of how *kokugo* was formed as an ideology of the modern nation-state in Japan, see Lee Yeounsuk, ‘*Kokugo*’ to *iu shisō*, and Katō, *Nihongo-gaku no shikumi*, 26–29, 186–193.

interested in the centralization of the nation-state'; in the end, he reverted to Japanese tradition, stressing the possibility of spoken Japanese, which may still retain the 'unique characteristics of the original Japanese language'. Suzuki concludes that Tanizaki's construction and reinvention of the 'uniqueness of the original Japanese language' as well as retroactive construction of the historical origins and continuity of the I-novel tradition are emblematic of the process by which traditions are reinvented as a modern product. It will be clear from these examples that what Shirane or Suzuki perceives is to a considerable extent true for Nakagami Kenji's sceptical attitude towards the Japanese language that is bound by the law/system of a modern nation-state that enforced the system of *genbun icchi*.

Lee Yeounsuk, for example, examines how *kokugo* (the national language of Japan) was formed as an ideology of the modern nation-state in Japan in her book, '*Kokugo*' to *iu shisō* (An Ideology Called *Kokugo*, 1996). She states that the word *kokugo* meant language in general in the early Meiji period, but it began to refer to the national language around 1889 (Meiji 22). She examines thoroughly the process that the identity of the Japanese language as a national language was formed by the nation-state during the course of the Meiji period. According to Lee, the establishment of the national language would not have become possible unless the people who resided in the administrative district of Japan believed that there is only one common language called *nihongo* in Japan.<sup>29</sup> However, as Saussure had indicated that any language should be merely a social product, which is not called to be a complete system, *nihongo* should be regarded as just another example of the 'social fact' which is regarded as 'a certain

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<sup>29</sup> Lee Yeounsuk, '*Kokugo*' to *iu shisō*, i–ix.



average which will not be established, which will undoubtedly not be complete, in any individual'.<sup>30</sup> *Kokugo* (the national language of Japan) was also able to be formed only when the various language varieties derived from region, social class, gender or age were assimilated by an artificial means, or more precisely, by a national policy. In '*Kokugo*' to *iu shisō*, Lee scrutinizes closely the fact that the Japanese language was not regarded as an established complete system in the early Meiji period, and clarifies the process of forming the policy of a national language as a unified language towards the end of the Meiji era. Lee also examines the historical process of forming the system of *genbun icchi* focusing on several private associations that promoted the *genbun icchi* system during the 1890s. She states that *Genbun icchi kai* (言文一致会 The association of promoting the unification of the spoken and written languages) was the most powerful institution which made the implementation of *genbun icchi* pass in the both the House of Peers and the House of Representatives. In 1902 (Meiji 35) after the resolution passed in both Houses, *Kokugo chōsakai* (国語調査会 The government's expert panel on the national language) was established, and the implementation of the system of *genbun icchi* became one of *kokka jigyō* (国家事業 national project).<sup>31</sup> It cannot be discussed here in more detailed for lack of space, but Lee had focused on the well-known linguist, Ueda Kazutoshi who began *kokugogaku* (studies in the Japanese language), which was based on the modern linguistics in the 1890s and Hoshina Kōichi (保科孝一 1872–1955) who was one of Ueda's disciples. Lee attempts to clarify the correlations between the construction of the nation-state and the establishment of the national language policy by Ueda and Hoshina.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistic*, 69a.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 64–71.

<sup>32</sup> Over the past decade, a considerable number of studies have been made on the issue of the process of forming the national language (*kokugo*). See, for example, Yasuda Toshiaki (安田敏郎),

Nakagami Kenji was similarly aware of the fact that our act of naming *mono* (things/objects) is unconsciously fettered by the logic of the modern nation-state, to use Nakagami's term, the rule of the Emperor. This perception of the Japanese language as standard Japanese (*hyōjungo*) or the national language leads the playwright, Betsuyaku Minoru, to state that he can only find the intrinsic energy of language in various dialects (*hōgen*) not in standard Japanese. For Betsuyaku, standard Japanese appeared to be extremely flat and insipid or tasteless. He also considers that abstract words in a language can easily turn into obsolete words unless we continue to define the meanings of today's abstract words depending on current social conditions.<sup>33</sup> In a similar manner that Nakagami and Betsuyaku distrust the Japanese language, Terayama Shūji finds it impossible to suppose something like Japan's carnal body corresponding to the national language called *nihongo*. These aspects of the Japanese language or *kokugo* is a problem to which we shall return later in the next chapter.

### **The Japanese language boom and 'petit-nationalism'**

Taking these discussions into consideration, when we face our society today, what is true for modern people who are *re*-producing 'canon' in pursuing a centre-oriented

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'*Kokugo*' no kindaiishi (国語の近代史), Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 2006. Yasuda Toshiaki (安田敏郎), *Teikoku nihon no gengo hensei* (帝国日本の言語編制), Yokohama: Seorishobō, 1997. Brian J. Mcveigh, *Nationalisms of Japan*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004. Komori Yōichi (小森陽一), *Nihongo no kindai* (日本語の近代), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2000. Suzuki Yoshisato (鈴木義里), *Tsukurareta nihongo: Gengo to iu kyokō*, (つくられた日本語、言語という虚構), Tokyo: Ubun shoin, 2003. Kawamura Minato (川村湊), *Umi o watatta nihongo: Shokuminchi no 'kokugo' no jikan* (海を渡った日本語 植民地の「国語」の時間), Tokyo: Seidosha, 2004. See also *Daikōkai* (大航海) (No.46, 2003): 「特集日本語という幻想」 ('Tokushū Nihongo toiu gensō') and *Gendai shisō* (現代思想) (Vol.26-10, August 1998): 「液状化する日本語」 ('Ekijōka suru nihongo').

<sup>33</sup> Betsuyaku describes the Japanese language he speaks as *chūsei-teki* (中性的). Fuller discussion about Betsuyaku's distrust of language will be presented in Chapter V.

modernization is to a considerable extent true for Japanese people who set their mind on searching for the correct use of the Japanese language today. Before turning to a fuller discussion of Nakagami Kenji's sceptical attitude towards the Japanese language, it may be useful to examine a concrete example of ongoing canon formation in Japan. An illustration from the recent *nihongo* boom may be a notable example. Let us now attempt to enlarge the discussion of cultural (or rather, linguistic) nationalism into the issue of the recent Japanese language boom. Over the past few years, a number of scholars called our attention to a growing tendency towards linguistic nationalism based on the observation of the recent Japanese language boom and Japanese people's apathy towards the discussion of nationalism at large. For instance, Komori Yōichi raises a caution about linguistic nationalism regarding the Japanese language in present-day Japan. He argues that 'Japanese people who have lost faith in their country as a result of the seemingly endless recession and corruption at the highest levels of government and business seek a final refuge in their Japanese identity and the fact that they speak Japanese.'<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the psychologist and the critic, Kayama Rika calls young Japanese people's innocent or naive attitude towards nationalism 'the petit-nationalism syndrome'.<sup>35</sup> Komori and Kayama draw our attention to the risk that this kind of 'petit-nationalism' could develop into 'a more virulent form of nationalism at any time'.<sup>36</sup>

Overlapping the years of the bubble economy in Japan, the Japanese language boom crested all over the world at the end of the 1980s. Known to all, this boom, called the tsunami phenomenon, brought an enormous increase of in the number of students of

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<sup>34</sup> Komori, 'Nihongo būmu to nashonarizumu (Japanese and Nationalism)', *Nihongo kyōiku* (No.116, January 2003): 119.

<sup>35</sup> Kayama, *Puchi-nashonarizumu shōkōgun*, 33

<sup>36</sup> Komori, 'Nihongo būmu to nashonarizumu (Japanese and Nationalism)', 119.

Japanese and newly established Japanese language/studies programs at universities outside Japan. Booms, however, never last long. As Japan's bubble economy burst in the early 1990s, bringing the present long recession, the Japanese boom in the world began to cool down, and the newly established Japanese language departments have been obliged to reduce the scale of their programs. In contrast to the downturn in the Japanese fever outside Japan, there has been 'a boom in the appreciation of the Japanese language'<sup>37</sup> at home in recent years.

This 'nihongo boom' was touched off by the publication of *Nihongo renshūchō* (Japanese Language Workbook) in 1999, a book that sold a million copies written by the prominent linguist Ōno Susumu (b. 1919). In addition, another book that also sold a million copies in 2001, *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo* (Japanese You Want to Read Out Loud) by Saitō Takashi (b. 1960) has accelerated this unprecedented boom. Further, the sequel to the above book, *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo II* was published in the following year, and more than 5 million copies were sold all together by the beginning of 2004. Taking advantage of this 'nihongo boom', many publishers worked frantically to publish similar books on the Japanese language in order to recover from the prolonged recession. *Jōshiki to shite shitte okitai nihongo* (Japanese You Want to Know as Common-sense) was, for example, written by the doyen of Japanese linguists, Shibata Takeshi (b. 1918), in 2002, and dozens of kindred books were published one after another to date. Major bookstores now set up selling counters to display such books, which are mostly rehashes of the old ones. Some scholars have made important statements on this matter in order to look deep into the cause of this *nihongo* boom. Komori Yōichi, for instance, summarized the main points of *Nihongo renshūchō* as

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

follows:

The central point of *Nihongo renshūchō* is to clarify the rules of Japanese colloquial speech which the Japanese use unconsciously everyday. More than a million Japanese people purchased the book, because they felt some uneasiness about the correct use of their colloquial language, which was never taught in their school education—*kokugo kyōiku* (national language education)—after the war. In addition, the opportunities to come in contact with foreign people in our daily life increased during the bubble economy in 1980s, and these encounters raised our awareness that we are indeed incapable of explaining the rules of spoken Japanese to those foreign learners of Japanese. In this sense, *Nihongo renshūchō* pinpoints the blind spots of the postwar “national language education”, that is to say, the understanding of how we objectively see Japanese as a foreign/second language.<sup>38</sup>

National language education in Japan has hitherto indeed laid overemphasis on reading comprehension and appreciation of various major literary works, masterpieces of all ages and civilizations. On the contrary, logical and objective understanding of the Japanese spoken language has been missing from the national language education.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of *kokugo kyōiku* and *nihongo kyōiku*, a long dispute over the naming of ‘*kokugo gakkai* (the Association of National Language Studies) and ‘*nihongo gakkai* (the Society of Japanese Linguistics) is still fresh in our memory. The members argued that ‘*kokugo*’ does not sound

Suzuki Yoshisato also assumes that the purchasers of *Nihongo renshūchō* may be people who were born around 1950 and they may have less confidence in their Japanese usage as a foreign language for the reason stated above. On the one hand, these people often criticize the language of young people as a debased form of Japanese; on the other hand, they are deeply uneasy as to whether their own language usage is correct or not.<sup>40</sup> Under these circumstances, the middle-aged and elderly feel a sense of crisis regarding their language usage when they are asked not to view Japanese as “*kokugo* (national language),” which had overemphasized the interpretation and appreciation of Japanese literary works, but as “*nihongo*”, one of many languages in the world, as a second language or a foreign language.

Compared with *Nihongo renshūchō*, another best selling book, *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo* is not this kind of how-to book but an anthology of fine pieces of prose. It is comprised of various kinds of prose, such as the opening paragraphs of masterpieces of Japanese classics and modern literature, poems, famous lines from the kabuki, *Hyakunin isshu* (Hundred Poems by Hundred Different Poets),<sup>41</sup> *naniwa-bushi*<sup>42</sup> recitations, *gama no abura uri no kōjō* (traditional sales talk show of toad oil), *iroha karuta* (traditional Japanese playing cards), word play and the like. The central point of *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo* is to revive the oral tradition of Japanese and promote recitation in Japanese. Both Komori and Suzuki point out the reasons for the success

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appropriate in this time of globalization, and the Association’s name was changed to ‘*nihongo gakkai*’ in 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Suzuki, *Tsukurareta nihongo*, 212–217. One of the major publishers obtained information by means of questionnaires about the recent disarray of the Japanese language, the result showed that more than 90% of the high school teachers are displeased at the recent debased form of Japanese. See ‘Kokugo kyōshi no kyū wari kotoba no midare jikkan’ (90% of Japanese Language Teachers at School Felt the Corruption of Japanese Language), *Asahi shinbun*, 28 March, 2004, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> It is an anthology of waka poems which was compiled by a well-known poet, Fujiwara no Teika (or Sada’ie) (1162–1241).

<sup>42</sup> *Naniwa-bushi*, which is also known as *rōkyoku*, is a singing style of narrative to the accompaniment of the shamisen. It can be dated from the early Meiji period.

of this book as follows:

First, all of the prose or poetry in *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo* is from masterpieces of Japanese literature that repeatedly appeared in school *kokugo* textbooks from the past. Secondly, in prewar days, many people were passing down the phrases appearing in *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo*, such as *naniwa-bushi* recitations, sayings, *iroha karuta*, from generation to generation by oral tradition in their daily lives. Many pieces in this book may, therefore, evoke nostalgia in many people over 40 years old when they recite them.<sup>43</sup>

Komori argues that many people who read *Nihongo renshūchō* have now become preoccupied with the “correct” use of the spoken language, and *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo*, with perfect timing, furnishes these people with “beautiful” samples so that they can read aloud the examples of the ‘correct and beautiful *nihongo*’. Moreover, for younger people or children, when they recite these oral pieces in rhyme, for example a fixed form of classical verse in seven-five syllable metre, which provides a unique tempo and rhythm, the recitation itself must be something new and must stir up their curiosity. Moreover, based on the above book, Saitō Takashi has been supervising *Nihongo de asobō*, the educational TV programme broadcast by the NHK (*Nihon hōsō kyōkai* Japan Broadcasting Cooperation) since 2003. It remains hugely popular among many children as the young *kyogen* actor Nomura Mansai and the former *ōzeki* sumō wrestler Konishiki take part in the show. For the reasons given above, *Koe ni dashite*

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<sup>43</sup> Komori, ‘Nihongo būmu to nashonarizumu (Japanese and Nationalism)’, 2–3. Suzuki, *Tsukurareta nihongo*, 212–217.

*yomitai nihongo* was well received by a range of people, resulting in its record-breaking book sales and the ‘*nihongo* boom’ at home.

It is in this context that Komori calls our attention to nationalism regarding the Japanese language. He argues that Japanese people attempt to preserve their identity by reaffirming the Japanese language and ‘the fact that they speak Japanese’.<sup>44</sup> Komori, for example, introduces Tsuboi Hideto’s comment on the close affinity between Saitō’s strident advocacy of recitation in Japanese and the patriotic poetry recitation campaign (*aikoku-shi rōdoku undō*) during the war as social control.

Responding to this kind of criticism concerning his promotion of Japanese recitations, Saitō remains quite indifferent to the claims that he is nationalistic. He had originally been studying the philosophy of body, physical education, osteopathic therapy, the perception of one’s body in Yoga or Zen and the like. In consequence, Saitō merely argues that contemporary humans, especially children, have to learn how to control their breathing, focusing on their lower abdomen, *tanden* or *shitahara*, which is said to contain people’s energy. Saitō also advocates that we learn how to strain the pelvic region, which makes it possible for us to attain a posture of balanced readiness (*shizentai*) based on the techniques of Japanese traditional martial arts such as *jūjitsu*. He continues to say that we have forgotten this kind of body perception based on the abdominal breathing with the vision of one’s energy coming through one’s pelvic region, *tanden*. He points out that the Japanese used to possess this perception of body as a traditional body culture, the so-called *koshi-hara bunka* (the culture/custom of life which makes us lower our centre of gravity to the lower back and stomach for a stable

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<sup>44</sup> Komori, ‘Nihongo būmu to nashonarizumu’, 119.



posture).<sup>45</sup> Taken in this light, Saitō strongly asserts that the tradition of recitation in relation to one's elocution, that is, speaking from the diaphragm, the lower abdominal region, has been neglected in our everyday life as well as recent Japanese language education (*kokugo kyōiku*).<sup>46</sup> The postwar '*kokugo kyōiku*', indeed, does not attach much importance to the oral tradition of recitation but has a tendency to overemphasize the interpretation and appreciation of Japanese literary works.<sup>47</sup> I stress that I am not opposed to his assertion itself as a method of school education or health care to maintain a good posture. It may be clear that Saitō did not have any intention to promote Japanese recitations with the purpose of promoting a nationalistic idea. Here, whether or not he promotes Japanese recitations with the intention of instigating nationalism is not the point in question. What has to be noticed here is the fact that Saitō does not seem to have noticed the nationalistic aspect of his promotion of Japanese recitations. We must draw attention to our insensible motion or unintentional attitude, and must recall that one of the elements consist of 'the system of irresponsibility', namely 'submission to *faits accomplis*' that was analysed Maruyama Masao. According to Maruyama, submission to *faits accomplis* is 'the point of view that because something has happened one is obliged *ipso facto* to approve of it'.<sup>48</sup> For example, he explains that the consensus of the accused was that as it had already happened, it could not be

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Saitō, *Shintai-kankaku o torimodosu*, Tokyo: NHK Books, 2000 and *Kodomo ni tsutaetai < mittsu no chikara > : Ikiru chikara o kitaeru*, Tokyo: NHK Books, 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Saitō, *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo*, 199–209.

<sup>47</sup> The detailed discussion of the issue of national language (*kokugo*) and the history of the language policy for Japanese as 'canon formation' are well illustrated in Shirane's book, *Inventing the Classics*. We find the problem discussed on pages 220 to 249. See also Suzuki Yoshisato, *Tsukurareta Nihongo, Gengo to iu kyōkō: Kokugo kyōiku no shitekita koto* (Invented Japanese, Fictitiousness of Language—What the Japanese National Language Education Has Made), Tokyo: Ubu shoin, 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Maruyama Masao, 'Thought and Behavior Patterns of Japan's Wartime Leaders', translated by Ivan Morris, in Ivan Morris (ed.), *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, London: Oxford University Press, 1963, 84–134.

helped. They may have been opposed to it, but they felt there was nothing that could be done as the event had already occurred. Maruyama analyses these kinds of remarks of the accused and takes notice of the fact that reality is something ‘which has already been created’ or ‘which has arisen from somewhere in the past.’<sup>49</sup> Acting realistically means acting being bounded by the past and drifting along by ‘a blind inevitability flowing from a determined past.’ What is central here is not whether one does the right things or not, but the fact that *faits accomplis* has a greater power than anything else. If we were Saitō, and were consistent in our argument that our promotion of Japanese recitation had been simply conducted as part of our practice of regaining the traditional body culture in Japan, we might feel that the growing nationalistic tendency backed by the overheating Japanese language boom today was an unexpected incident which we did not intend to bring about. The question now arises: From this kind of standpoint, could we really assert that it could not be helped as the event had already occurred beyond our control? It seems to me that our explanation for the cause of the recent nationalistic tendency can be considered as the system of irresponsibility in microcosm. We should not overlook that what Saitō genuinely thinks right for our health care may incidentally promote nationalistic tendency. It must be noted that we, thus, sometimes unknowingly take part in strengthening state control. As we have argued in Chapter I, the notion of autonomy may remind us of exercising our free will as well as taking our moral responsibility so as not to allow the nation to turn into a state of ultranationalism. Awareness of our positive personal autonomy may turn into an ethical framework for us to accept responsibility not only for our immediate actions but also such indirect incidents that we had no intention to bring about.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 106.

There is further evidence to illustrate the manner in which Saitō is not aware of the nationalistic aspect of his advocacy of recitation in Japanese. In another TV programme of the NHK, *Nihongo naruhodo juku*, when Saitō was invited as a guest lecturer and made a point that we should restore the power of our mother language, he did not use the Japanese word *bogo* but *bokokugo*. Both *bogo* and *bokokugo* can be translated by the English word ‘mother tongue’. However, the word *bo-koku-go* consists of three Chinese characters: *bo* (stands for mother), *koku* (stands for a nation, state) and *go* (language). As can be seen from this, while *bo-go* clearly means ‘the language one learns at one’s mother’s knee’,<sup>50</sup> *bokokugo* refers to the language that is used in one’s home country. Viewed in this light, strictly speaking, the *bokokugo* for Japanese-born Korean residents in Japan whose mother tongue is Japanese should not be Japanese but Korean. Some Japanese linguists who are concerned with the danger of nationalism proclaim that they avoid using the word *bokokugo*, which implies the sense of nation-state consciousness.<sup>51</sup> Saitō has been unconcerned about this kind of sensibility to wording with a nationalistic flavour.<sup>52</sup> This may illustrate that Saitō has been just guileless and nonchalant about the issue of nationalism regarding the Japanese language. Tsuboi aptly describes Saitō’s unconcerned attitude towards the nationalistic aspect of his exhortation: ‘Read out beautiful Japanese and keep fit both mentally and physically’ as ‘*tai’ikukai-tekina meirōsa* (a cheerful jock mentality)’ because in Japanese sport’s clubs at school and at large, the junior is surely asked to obey his/her senior blindly or with a blithe spirit.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Kenkyūsha, *Shin waei chū jiten*.

<sup>51</sup> For detailed arguments on this, see Tanaka, *Gengo no shisō*, 45–62.

<sup>52</sup> See also Saitō, *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo*, 204–205.

<sup>53</sup> Komori, ‘Nihongo būmu to nashonarizumu (Japanese and Nationalism)’, 3. See also Kayama, *Puchi-nashonarizumu shōkōgun*, 33.

The psychologist Kayama Rika calls this kind of behaviour ‘the petit-nationalism syndrome’. She also analyses the “overnight” supporters of the Japanese national soccer team (who were new and fickle soccer fans) at the World Cup 2000 Korea/Japan, who wore the same blue uniform, had their faces painted with the rising-sun flag, and had no cares about singing *Kimi ga yo*, the national anthem, in unison or in swinging the national flag with joy. Kayama illustrates here that these young supporters are also free from care as to the issue of nationalism: they are uninterested in the history of the rising-sun flag or *Kimi ga yo*. Why do they swing *hinomaru* (the national flag) nonchalantly? Kayama surmises that the young supporters may answer matter-of-factly by saying something like: ‘We are Japanese, aren’t we? *Hinomaru*? Why not, it’s our national flag, isn’t it? It is nothing to do with nationalism in wartime. I grew up, with no thought about whether I am a right winger or a left winger’. This kind of unconcerned attitude of young Japanese people may indicate that Japanese history education has not been taking up the issue that the rising-sun flag or *Kimi ga yo* may offend the feelings of Chinese or Korean people. Kayama concludes that as far as one’s apathy towards nationalism is concerned, the same observation applies to both the ‘*nihongo* boom’ and the overnight soccer supporters during the World Cup.<sup>54</sup>

There is one further example that we must not ignore. The ministry of education approved the school textbook authored by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho o tsukuru kai*). The members of this society portray postwar history education as a self-tormenting view of national history; for this reason they advocate that we Japanese should not feel too much remorse for war crimes

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<sup>54</sup> Kayama, *Puchi-nashonarizumu shōkōgun*, 16–54.

anymore. Regarding this matter, Oguma Eiji and Ueno Yōko analysed the mentalities of the members of the above society. Oguma and Ueno name their attitude ‘nationalism as healing’ (*iyashi no nashonarizumu*) and conclude that the many members of the society are not some kind of radical/extreme right wingers as Oguma and Ueno had assumed.<sup>55</sup> They are, however, described as ordinary people who are afflicted with identity crisis in contemporary society today. According to Oguma, they are gnawed by some kind of anxiety. For this reason, in order to fill some sort of void in their lives, they need to hold gatherings in pursuit of some kind of emotional healing and stability. All they need is to secure their place in society.<sup>56</sup> Here, it seems reasonable to suppose that their views have much in common with those that Kayama analyses as ‘petit-nationalism’ among the ordinary young people in contemporary Japan. It is in this context that Komori and Kayama draw our attention to the risk of how this kind of ‘petit-nationalism’ could develop into ‘a more virulent form of nationalism at any time’.<sup>57</sup>

In spite of the loud warning bell regarding the growing tendency towards nationalism or neo-conservatism elsewhere in the world, when we watch the trends of public opinion today, the same principles apply to ‘petit-nationalism’ and to a considerable extent to our naked, unquestioning attitudes towards state control or social control in many aspects of our everyday life. Examples abound. The Self-Defense Forces were dispatched to Iraq without general consensus. The Hollywood movie *Last Samurai*

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<sup>55</sup> Oguma and Ueno, *Iyashi no nashonarizumu*, Tokyo: Keiō Gijuku Daigaku shuppan-kai, 2003, 8–9.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. I translated the summary from the original text in *Iyashi no nashonarizumu* as follows: 「少なくとも『史の会』で見ると、参加者たちのありようは、『右派団体のメンバー』という言葉からイメージされがちな人間像とは、いささか異なっている。むしろそこに見られるのは、ある種の不安と空虚さを抱えながら、いわば束の間の解放感と安定感を求めて、『歴史』という場所、『日本』という場所に群れつどう『普通の市民』たちの姿である。」

<sup>57</sup> Komori, ‘Nihongo būmu to nashonarizumu (Japanese and Nationalism)’, 119.

had a long run throughout Japan, and its advertising statement in *Asahi shinbun* was ‘The Pride Called *Nippon*’ (*Nippin to iu hokori*) or ‘The Pure Heart Called *Nippon*’ (*Nippon to iu junjō*). The box-office hit *Last Samurai* induced us to reread Nitobe Inazō’s *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan* (1900). With the catchphrases such as ‘The beauty and intensity of Japanese spirit!’, a lot of similar kind of books which provided the revised text of *Bushidō* with Japanese translation on the opposite page were newly published one after another in 2004.<sup>58</sup> In the annual textbook screening in 2007, the ministry of education ordered the revision of high-school textbooks dealing with the mass suicide driven by the Imperial Army. The order is that new high-school textbooks should no longer treat the fact that the Imperial Army urged civilians to commit mass suicide in Okinawa. Former Prime Minister Abe Shinzō wrote and published the book entitled *Utsukushī kuni e* (美しい国へ Towards a Beautiful Country, Japan) which became the best-selling book in 2006. He reported in March of 2007 that he would no longer offer an apology on the issue of the wartime comfort woman. From 2006 to 2007, *Kokka no hinkaku* (国家の品格 The Dignity of the State) written by Fujiwara Masahiko (藤原正彦) hit the best-seller list, selling two and half million copies. In *Kokka no hinkaku*, Fujiwara asserts that Japan’s postwar reconstruction was achieved by the people who maintained the spirit of *bushidō*. In the same way as the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, the comic artist Kobayashi Yoshinori continuously publishes a range of books and magazines and asserts that we should part with the self-tormenting view of our national history. Kobayashi proposes that the Japanese should revive ‘Japan’s tradition’, such as public

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<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Nitobe Inazō *hakase to bushidō ni manabu kai* (The Association which Learns from Nitobe Inazō and Bushido), *Bijuaru-ban Taiyaku Bushidō*, Tokyo: Mikasa shobō, 2004.

spirit or a sense of beauty, which have been lost in our society today.<sup>59</sup> It may be too much to say that the motivations of the numerous people who bought *Koe ni dashite yomitai Nihongo* (Japanese You Want to Read Out Loud) in order to recite and re-evaluate ‘the very best of Japanese in the good old days’ can be considered as a tendency to return to the good old ‘tradition’ with which Kobayashi concurred. From the point of view of ‘canon formation’ illustrated by Shirane or ‘the invention of tradition’ developed by Hobsbawm in the previous section, the same may be said, no doubt, of what Saitō Takashi calls ‘*nihongo* of the highest quality in the good old days’ or Kobayashi Yoshinori’s return to Japanese tradition or Japanese spirit that he defines as one’s good manners in public space or modesty and believes that they were very much alive before and during the War.

If we assume the notion of ‘the very best of Japanese in the good old days’ supposed by Saitō to be ‘canon formation’, that is, the social, political process of how a particular text or an author is developed and privileged as a cultural icon of Japan’s tradition, those canonical texts selected by Saitō as ‘jewels of the Japanese language’<sup>60</sup> in *Koe ni dashite yomitai Nihongo* can be constantly re-produced as has been pointed out. It is important to keep in mind that a canonical text is formed not only by the immediate producers of the work but also by ‘those agents and institutions (such as commentators, patrons, temples, schools, museums, publishing houses) that produce or re-produce the value of the text and that create the consumers and audiences capable of recognizing and desiring that value’.<sup>61</sup> Shirane points out several reasons why a text becomes canonical in Japan’s context of modernization. The important point to note here is the

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<sup>59</sup> Kobayashi Yoshinori, *Sensōron* 3, 285–310.

<sup>60</sup> Saitō, *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo*, 4.

<sup>61</sup> Shirane and Suzuki, *Inventing the Classics*, 2–3.

following reasons out of the ten proposed by Shirane: ‘the use of a text in a school curriculum’ and ‘the incorporation of a text into institutional discourse, particularly state ideology’.<sup>62</sup> Viewed in this light, Saitō indeed compiles *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo* (Japanese You Want to Read Out Loud) from masterpieces of Japanese literature: *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji), *Ise monogatari* (Tales of Ise, late 10<sup>th</sup> c.), *Heike monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike), Natsume Sōseki’s *Yume jūya* (Ten Nights’ Dreams), Mori Ōgai’s *Maihime* (The Dancing Girl), Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s *Kumo no ito* (The Spider’s Thread) and the like. These pieces repeatedly appeared in school *kokugo* textbooks since Meiji. However, Tanaka Minoru points out that the masterpieces of Japanese literature had been almost deleted from current junior high-school textbooks over the past thirty years.<sup>63</sup> In 2002, even the works of Sōseki or Ōgai had disappeared. To the contrary, riding the crest of the Japanese boom, Saitō published another book called *Risō no kokugo kyōkasho* (Ideal Textbook for Japanese Language) in 2002, in which he anthologizes the masterpieces of all ages including the works of such writers as Sōseki or Ōgai. All these observations convey an idea that Saitō’s *re*-production of such authorized texts today can be regarded as a compensation for a loss of ‘canon’ formed in the interests of a creating a modern nation-state.

In the same way, if we assume that the notion of ‘the very best of Japanese in the good old days’ proposed by Saitō is the embodiment of ‘canon’ or the modern concept or ideological paradigm which Suzuki or Karatani poses in the early stage of this chapter, that is, ‘an artificial product of a newly established regime interested in the centralization of the nation-state’, this notion may appear as if it exists *a priori* and conceals its historicity. If so, we are now in a position to say that Saitō, losing sight of

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>63</sup> Tanaka, “*Yomu koto no rinri*” o megutte, 249.



the historicity of what he calls ‘the very best of Japanese’, keeps promoting recitation in Japanese as part of a healthy lifestyle without any malicious intent.

Saitō compiled this book from many sources: *Kojiki* (Ancient Records and Myths), *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan), *Taketori monogatari* (Tale of the Bamboo Cutter), *Genji monogatari*, *Ise monogatari*, Tu Fu’s Chinese poetry, Confucius’s *Rongo* (The Analects), *Heike monogatari*, and even *Omorosōshi* (Ryukyuan folk songs of antiquity) and *yukar* (a cycle of myths and heroic legends of the Ainu people). Thus, he treats these various pieces from the multi-dimensional sources as ‘the very best of Japanese’. In his discourse, the diversity of languages that occurred in a chain of islands, which happened to be called the Japanese Archipelago in modern space and time, is treated as a monolithic and unitary entity called ‘*saikōkyū no nihongo* (the very best of Japanese)’. On what ground, does Saitō consider *Omorosōshi* and *yukar* to be ‘jewels of the Japanese language’? I have no space to discuss Amino Yoshihiko’s works or Oguma Eiji’s works, but they also endeavoured to historicize the canon formation of Japanese cultural and national identity in accordance with the historical process by which Japan’s nation-state was developed.<sup>64</sup> In addition, as we have seen in the previous section, Lee Yeounsuk portrays how *kokugo*, the national language of Japan, was formed as an ideology of the modern nation-state in the historical process of making Japanese language policy or its assimilation policy.<sup>65</sup> In terms of the viewpoint from both Suzuki’s ‘I-novel discourse’ as ideological paradigm or Karatani’s observation of the ideological concepts of modern Japanese literature as a result of the system of *genbun*

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<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Amino, Yoshihiko (網野善彦), “*Nihon*” to wa nani ka: *Nihon no rekishi* <00> (「日本」とは何か 日本の歴史 <00> What is Japan? The History of Japan 00), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2000. Oguma Eiji (小熊英二), *Tan’itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: Nihonjin no jigazō no keifu* (単一民族神話の起源 日本人の自画像の系譜 A Genealogy of Japanese Self-Images), Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1995.

<sup>65</sup> Lee Yeounsuk, ‘*Kokugo*’ to iu shisō.

*icchi* in the interests of creating a modern nation-state, Saitō does not recognize the all-important problem of how the narrative texts are related to the process of forming the concept of social control or national morality. Here, it is important to reconsider the following remarks by Karatani Kōjin: ‘Once a certain structure has been selected and identified as universal, history, of necessity, comes to be seen as linear.’<sup>66</sup> It seems to me that when Saitō Takashi found his ideal of national language education in reciting ‘the very best of Japanese’, he may have been trapped in linear national narrative or, to use Carol Gluck’s term, ‘the canons of modernity formed in the context of national power’.<sup>67</sup> Viewed in this light, when Saitō compiled *Koe ni dashite yomitai nihongo* by grouping together the various languages that have existed in the current Japanese archipelago merely as *nihongo*, that is to oversimplify the historicity of languages or to extinguish differences, in Karatani’s word, *sai* (differences). Karatani Kōjin argues that the consciousness of the individual in modern space and time retreats to his/her internal world, and lacks exteriority which makes it possible for him/her to recognize the diversity, “*sai*”.<sup>68</sup> When Saitō exhorts us to recite ‘*furuki yoki jidai no saikōkyū no nihongo* (the very best of Japanese in the good old days)’ or ‘jewels of the Japanese language’, how does he define *nihongo*, or what is its meaning for Korean residents in Japan or for Ainu people?

It seems to me that Saitō’s promotion of Japanese recitations today appears to be similar to the official campaigns (*kyōka undō*) during the decades of the liberal 1920s in the guise of a campaign of both physical and mental health care (*kokoro to karada ga jōbu ni naru*). Shirane pointed out that canonical texts refers especially to those in

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<sup>66</sup> Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, 16.

<sup>67</sup> Gluck, ‘“Meiji” for our time’, 21.

<sup>68</sup> Karatani, ‘1970 nen = Shōwa 45nen—Kindai nihon no gensetsu kūkan’, in *Shūen o megutte*, 8–51. This book was first published by Fukutake shoten, Tokyo in 1990.

school curricula. As we have seen in page 142, Carol Gluck also indicates that civilians such as educators or journalists unwittingly promote ‘the *tennōsei* ideology’.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, the recent Japanese language boom backed by Saitō’s promotion of Japanese recitations in Japanese in his best-selling book might be defined as an ongoing ‘canon formation’ driven forward by today’s civilians, to use Sheldon Garon’s term, ‘the rising new middle class’ like us.

Karatani’s views of the 1920s have much in common with those of Garon. Karatani’s original interpretation of periodization revealed the analogy between the forty-five years of the Meiji era and the first forty-five years of the Shōwa. As early as in 1990 when his book, *Shūen o megutte* (On the End), was written, Karatani warned that when the Shōwa Emperor passed away in 1989 (eighteen years after the 45<sup>th</sup> year of Shōwa), the social/political conditions resembled the beginning of the Shōwa era after the fifteen years of Taishō, that is, the time for a seed to germinate the ultra-nationalistic ideology in Japan. Likewise, Ōe Kenzaburō points out the fact that ‘young Japanese have become markedly more conservative’.<sup>70</sup> He also explains that the recent rise of conservatism may be derived from the attitudes of young followers of a subculture fad that swept through ‘an average, urban consumer society’ and ‘middle-class consciousness’.<sup>71</sup>

After the storm of postmodernism gradually awakened, we, Japanese people, having been labelled as middle class, may have lost an ideological model or ethical framework and have endlessly been looking for a true ‘self’ or autonomy. As we discussed, the

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<sup>69</sup> Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths*, 9–10.

<sup>70</sup> Ōe, ‘Japan’s Dual Identity: A Writer’s Dilemma’, in *Japan, The Ambiguous, and Myself*, 93.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

system of modern knowledge collapsed into the postmodern discursive spaces and our positive personal autonomy is in danger of dying out. As it turned out, have we become ignorant of our inclination towards nationalism or neo-conservatism? Do we ‘seek a final refuge in [our] Japanese identity and the fact that [we] speak the Japanese language’?<sup>72</sup> We need to bear in mind that we should consistently monitor our own deeds and thoughts so as not to act in conspiracy with the established power structure or, to put it more simply, a totalitarian state power. The perception of personal autonomy which ties in with the sceptical attitude towards language may be crucial to the issue of how each of us creates a new ethical system or framework for today so as to self-regulate and modify our action constantly with an unprejudiced view. So tackling this, we may create the alternative model proposed by Ōe Kenzaburō, that is, ‘a model of a contemporary age which encompasses past and future’ in order to overcome the growing nationalistic tendency which appears secretly under the cover of not only the improvement of national language education, that is, the promotion of Japanese recitations but also the official campaigns, welfare works, moral education and the like. Let us now explore the manner in which the sceptical attitude towards language is expressed in the works of Nakagami Kenji, theatrical artists in the 1960s such as Betsuyaku Minoru.

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<sup>72</sup> Komori, ‘Nihongo būmu to nashonarizumu (Japanese and Nationalism)’, 119.

## CHAPTER V

### SCEPTICAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS *KOTOBA* (LANGUAGE) IN MODERN JAPANESE LITERATURE

In Chapter I and Chapter II, we have observed that Nakagami Kenji's act of writing can be regarded as an autonomous action that brings out the continuous self-determination and seeks different values depending on the circumstances of the time. Let us recall again that Nakagami finds writing in the eternal conflict between the establishment of his self-identity and his desire for integration with others. Being aware that any binary frame will never be dialectically reconciled, in my reading of Nakagami, he succeeds in actualizing Kant's transcendental standpoint that is to keep both the theoretical attitude—his acceptance of the law/system of the collective, that is, the archetype of *monogatari*—and the practical attitude—his attempt to destroy such a law/system of the collective, that is, all past chords that repeatedly generate *monogatari* as a canon—at the same time. It seems to me that the tension between acceptance and destruction makes Nakagami continue to search for autonomy. It would be more correct to say that his awareness of the complementary relationship between the two attitudes made Nakagami to continually renew his self-determination according to the historically changing situations at the time. For this reason, he regards his act of writing as an endless attempt as if it was aspiring to the ceaseless hell.

This ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing, which was adopted by Nakagami Kenji in the late 1960s, developed into a strong scepticism towards *kotoba* as a language sign and an esteem for the carnal body (*nikutai*) as an object (*mono*). In Nakagami's lecture given in Frankfurt, Germany in 1990, he confessed that he was the

only literate member in his family. Nakagami considers the modern Japanese language that originated from the *genbun icchi* movement of the early Meiji period as an incomplete orthographic system that can not give a complete portrait of the world of his illiterate mother and siblings. Nakagami laments that it has been difficult to depict the world of the *roji* in the Japanese language, which he regards as a reflection of Japanese modernity that has neglected the world of minorities in Japan.<sup>1</sup> Nakagami was repulsed by the one-dimensional phrase that is typified by Kawabata Yasunari's 'Beautiful Japan', which Kawabata used in his Nobel Prize lecture in 1968. Though Nakagami admits that Kawabata's literary universe is surely fertile and beautiful, at the same time, he feels the insurmountable gap between his own Japanese and the collective term, 'Beautiful Japan', because Nakagami thinks that such a phrase is devoid of the concrete situation of an individual and its substance, that is, the world of his own outcast environments. As Saussure noted, if 'the language, considered at any moment, however far back in time, is always an inheritance from the preceding moment',<sup>2</sup> the language will reflect more or less the collective notions, all-inclusive fixed concepts from the past. Similarly, in my understanding of Nakagami's essays written in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Nakagami became aware that *kotoba* itself turns into a collective orthographic system which restricts one's personal autonomous freedom, that is, one's self-determination that chooses his/her actions. Perceiving this paradoxical nature of language, Nakagami considers the Japanese language as a product invented by the authorities for the sake of Japan's modernization, and perceives it as a collective idea that was born to be 'a certain average'<sup>3</sup> which will never be complete in

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<sup>1</sup> Nakagami Kenji, 'Watashi wa nihon-jin nano ka', in Karatani Kōjin et al. (eds), *Nakagami Kenji Hatsugen shūsei 6* (中上健次発言集成 6), Tokyo: Daisanbunmeisha, 1990, 338–340.

<sup>2</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistic*, 94a.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 69a.

any individual. Thus, for Nakagami, the Japanese language is seen as an invented social apparatus, which is predisposed to discriminate against social minorities such as *burakumin*.

Compared with this deceptive nature of *kotoba*, Nakagami emphasizes the body that could become an undeniable object complete in itself as an individual of substance.<sup>4</sup> Nakagami asserts that writers sometimes need to return to the world of the object in order to unlearn the superficial plausibility of language.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the process of Nakagami Kenji's autonomous selfhood through his act of writing lies in close relation with the conflict between the language—a collective notion—and the carnal body or *mono* (the thing or object it represents)—the manifestation of the individual.

The writers whom this dissertation talks about on this matter are Sakaguchi Ango, Miyazawa Kenji, Nakahara Chūya, Betsuyaku Minoru, Hijikata Tatsumi, Terayama Shūji, Kara Jūrō, Tsushima Yūko, Takamura Kaoru, Tawada Yōko and Yoshimoto Banana. In my readings of their works and essays, they seem to possess this kind of autonomous selfhood, that is, the continuous self-determination through writing according to the situation at the time, and have much in common with Nakagami in their attitudes that show either a strong distrust of language or the admiration of the body. For them, language is perceived as a social product, which takes on a collective nature, and which is seen as a certain average that cannot meet all the requirements of individual circumstances. However, at the same time, these writers, knowing that language is an incomplete product which is inadequate in depicting their individual circumstances, accept the collective nature of language as inevitable, and they do not give up their attempt to make new values by using language within the limit of the

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<sup>4</sup> Nakagami, 'Sakka to nikutai' (作家と肉体), in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 199–204.

<sup>5</sup> Nakagami, 'Shohatsu no mono' (初発の者), in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 193–195.

generalized ideas that stem from the language itself. Facing this paradoxical dilemma, these writers seize on their body as a starting point for discovering their own language to identify themselves as a social minority such as *burakumin*, woman, the first kabuki performer known as riverbed beggar (*kawaramono*)<sup>6</sup> and so forth. Chapter V and VI suggest that these writers' endless attempts to seek their identities can be regarded as their autonomous freedom to choose their actions through the conflict between the language as a collective notion and the body as the manifestation of an individual act.

In this chapter, compared with Nakagami Kenji's sceptical attitude towards *kotoba*, I would like to examine the manner in which the scepticism towards *kotoba* is expressed in the works of modern Japanese writers such as Miyazawa and Chūya, the theatrical artists in the 1960s such as Betsuyakyu, Kara, and Terayama. Then, their recognition of the body as the foundation of their thoughts is examined in the following chapter.

### **Nakagami Kenji's sceptical attitudes towards *kotoba***

The points made in Chapter IV apply in principle to Nakagami Kenji's scepticism towards *kotoba*, that is, the Japanese language as a modern invention resulting from the *genbun icchi* system of the Meiji period. As seen earlier, the distrust of *kotoba* can be observed in the literature of Nakagami Kenji from the early stage of his career. Nakagami recognizes *kotoba* as a means that reflects the fixed ideas or long-established traditions from the past and that generates the archetype of *monogatari*. Thus, Nakagami, maintaining a cautious distance from the collective nature of modern language as we have discussed, attempted to renew the meaning of Japanese words that

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<sup>6</sup> The riverbed beggar (*kawaramono*) is a derogatory term used for performers who began kabuki at the riverbank of the Kamo river in Kyoto.



took on the new meanings of the Constitution after the War under the Occupied authorities' initiative. In his early twenties, Nakagami was witness to the tumultuous period of student protests, the high growth of the economy and the rapid diffusion of mass communication in the 1960s and early 1970s. At the height of the student movement, he also tentatively attended student demonstrations against the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty. It appears to be reasonable to assume that Nakagami who belongs to the *dankai*<sup>7</sup> generation of writers had common critical and historical insights into postwar democracy in Japan, which was formed by the U.S. occupation, and objected to the established modern system that was borrowed from the West. More fundamentally, Nakagami depicts how the process of Japanese modernization created an unbridgeable gap between the spoken words used in the *roji* (Nakagami's implicit term for *burakumin* ghetto, *hisabetsu buraku*) and the modern *écriture* invented by the nation-state in the name of *genbun icchi*. Having regarded *kotoba* as a modern invention resulting from the *genbun icchi* system of the Meiji period, Nakagami observes a flaw in the Japanese language itself; the language functions as an invisible power apparatus that engenders an invented *monogatari*. As we have seen in Chapter II, Nakagami highlights that each *monogatari* has an archetype of the narrative (*monogatari no teikei*) that gives a predetermined discourse to novels (*shōsetsu*). He depicts the archetype of the narrative as a set pattern that restricts the freedom of the novel. Nakagami attempts to not only escape from the snare of this *monogatari* but also delve into the problem of the canon formation of Japanese cultural or national identity in accordance with the historical process of Japan's modern nation-state. In order to accomplish this, he tries to find a new form of writing for contemporary novels.

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<sup>7</sup> The word *dankai* (団塊) refers to postwar baby-boom generation who were born between 1947 and 1949.

Nakagami's doubt about the widespread modern notions expressed by Japanese terms such as *minshu-shugi* (democracy), *jiyū* (freedom) or *heiwa kenpō* (a war-renouncing constitution) in postwar Japan is well illustrated in his early novella 'Nihongo ni tsuite' (On Japanese, 1968). The protagonist, 'Boku (I)', a nineteen-year-old university student, is asked to do a part-time job during the summer vacation. His official duty is to guide an African-American soldier who has stopped over in Japan before being dispatched to a forward base in Vietnam. However, the protagonist's employer, a group of left-wing student activists, asks him to lead the soldier astray; to put it more precisely, they ask 'boku' to invite the soldier to indulge in the pleasures of nightlife, alcohol and sex for five days. Their ultimate aim is to coerce the soldier into evading his military service duties. Since the soldier is unable to speak Japanese, communication between 'boku' and the soldier becomes strained. While 'boku' is interacting with the soldier, he begins to realize that his pretence of representing the Japanese youth who enjoy democratic freedom under the new Constitution that renounces war is completely deceptive. Consequently, he abandons his duty because Japanese words such as *minshu-shugi*, *jiyū* and *heiwa kenpō* appear spurious to him. That very day, 'boku' is informed about the soldier's attempted suicide on his last day in Japan. The police arrest 'boku', and a police officer informs him that the soldier is also a student majoring in social science. He is further informed that the soldier had been observing him (*boku*) in order to collect some material for an article that he was working on at home. 'Boku' is at a loss for words when he becomes aware that the actual aim of his employer, the left-wing group, was to observe not only the soldier but also 'boku' in order to study the behaviour of a typical Japanese youth who takes peace for granted. 'Boku' then questions the police officer who derides him.

「もし、あなただったら、日本語をまったく知らない外国人に出あった時、最初にどんな言葉を教えるのですか？」 [・・・] 僕は部屋の中で警察官の嘲笑が僕の言葉をのみこみ、僕の躰をまで溶解させてしまうのではないかという恐怖に、躰中をからみつかれてしまっているのを感じていた。僕はほとんど声にもならない言葉を、躰の奥でぶつぶつとくりかえしていた。「あなたがどの日本語から教えはじめるのか、僕はそれを知りたい。」<sup>8</sup>

‘If you were in my position, I would like to know the first word you would teach a foreigner who cannot speak any Japanese.’ [...]

I was seized with fear in the room, as if the police officer’s scornful laughter was going to swallow my words and melt my body. I reiterated a low murmur deep in my body, uttering a word in something that can hardly be called a voice. ‘I just want to know the first Japanese word you would teach.’

This excerpt illustrates the ambivalent attitude, namely, the identity crisis, faced by Japanese youth during the decade of the student protests of the 1960s. At the beginning of this novella, the protagonist had no doubts that the Japanese words, which were used to assure his identity and democratic freedom, were recognized as meaningful words. His identity was based on the solid democratic notions backed by the Japanese language he had always believed in. However, towards the end of this novella, he developed a strong doubt about the Japanese language when he came to realize that Japan’s democratic freedom in postwar Japan was fabricated and he started

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<sup>8</sup> Nakagami, ‘Nihongo ni tsuite’ (日本語について), in *NKZ* Vol. 1, 207.

to depict Japanese words such as *minshu-shugi*, *jiyū* and *heiwa kenpō* as merely names or empty words with no substance or meaning. Consequently, his self-identity, which was assured by such Japanese words, was devastated as in the excerpt. All he could do was to ask himself a question about the verity of the Japanese language. Is there any Japanese word of which he can grasp the exact meaning? Is there any Japanese word whose meaning he can confidently explain to foreigners? As seen above, in as early as 1968, Nakagami expressed this doubt in *nihongo* and depicted the notions of *minshu-shugi* and *jiyū* as ready-made spurious ideas. Moreover, no matter how strongly Nakagami denied the Japanese language as a deceptive system, for Nakagami, the Japanese language was his only means that enabled him to search for his self-identity. We can observe here again how Nakagami Kenji, whose language had been caught in a conflict between the individual and the collective, attempted endlessly to seek the self-legislation or autonomy in the late 1960s.

### **Ferdinand de Saussure's paradox between *langue* and *parole***

Nakagami Kenji's perceptions discussed above will lead us further into a consideration of Ferdinand de Saussure's paradox between *langue* and *parole* posed by a Japanese language teacher and a translator, Aihara Natsue. In 'On Japanese', we can observe Nakagami's disbelief in the Japanese language. Throughout this novella, Nakagami repeatedly questions which Japanese word should be taught first when we teach a foreigner who cannot speak any Japanese. Do we really seize the precise meaning of a word? If so, when and by whom was the determination of a word's meaning made? It is difficult to answer these questions as definitions of the meaning of any word

certainly vary historically and geographically. It might be interesting to examine the collective nature of language from a theoretical perspective of a Japanese language teacher. Aihara translated *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistics (1910–1911) From the Notebooks of Emile Constantin* into Japanese.<sup>9</sup> She interestingly points out Saussure's paradox from the viewpoint of a Japanese language teacher who is a native speaker of Japanese and teaches Japanese to foreign students as a second language. She directs her attention to the manner in which Saussure defines the language (*langue*) as follows, 'The language [*langue*], as far as I am concerned, is that social product whose existence allows the individual to use the language faculty.'<sup>10</sup>

Added to this, she goes on to point out the following remarks by Saussure:

The social act cannot reside elsewhere than in the individuals added together, but as for any <(other)> social fact, it cannot be considered outside the individual. The social fact will be a certain average which will not be established, which will undoubtedly not be complete, in any individual.<sup>11</sup>

Saussure's findings in this excerpt led her to question whether the Japanese language can truly be called a complete system, and led her to conclude that it 'will never turn out to be absolutely complete'.<sup>12</sup> As is well known, Saussure advocates that the link between the sign and the idea represented is found in 'absolute arbitrariness'. He

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<sup>9</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistics (1910–1911) From the Notebooks of Emile Constantin*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993. English translation by Roy Harris. This book contains French original text: *Troisième cours de linguistique générale (1910-1911) d'après les cahiers d'Emile Constantin*. Ferdinand de Sushūru Ippan gengo-gaku dai 3 kai kōgi: Konsutantan ni yoru kōgi kiroku (フェルディナン・ド・ソシュール 一般言語学第三回講義 コンスタンタンによる講義記録), translated by Aihara Natsue and Akitsu Rei, Kyoto: Editto Paruku, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistic*, 66a.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 69a.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 7a.

points out that ‘the link connecting a given acoustic image with a specific concept and conferring upon it its value as a sign is a radically arbitrary link.’<sup>13</sup> The Japanese language is also considered as ‘the product of a society’ and merely one of ‘languages (*les langues*)’, that is, ‘an infinite diversity of languages’ whose underlying principle is ‘absolute arbitrariness’. In other words, the Japanese language is just another example of the ‘social fact’ which is regarded as ‘a certain average which will not be established, which will undoubtedly not be complete, in any individual’. Saussure also describes the *langue* as ‘a machine which keeps going regardless of the damage inflicted on it’.<sup>14</sup> Aihara explains this matter from her practical experiences as a Japanese language teacher. She states: ‘I came to realize that although I dwelled on the fact that the Japanese language is a *langue*, that is, a social product which is not called on to be a complete system, I, a Japanese language teacher, have to treat the Japanese language as if it were a complete system that is represented by a complete grammar book when I teach Japanese as a practical matter in a classroom.’<sup>15</sup> She continues to explain that, in class, the Japanese language, though it is nothing but ‘a certain average’ for the individuals, tends to be regarded as the universal ideal in the name of the standard Japanese language backed by correct grammar. In other words, Japanese language teachers have to regard, more or less, the Japanese language as a complete system as though it existed *a priori*. Otherwise they cannot conduct class to teach Japanese as a practical matter in a classroom. Even if a Japanese language teacher perceives the Japanese language as one of *langues* which is an incomplete system, at that very moment of teaching Japanese as a second language in class, s/he has to treat Japanese as

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 76a.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 113a.

<sup>15</sup> Aihara Natsue, *Soshūro no paradokkusu* (ソシュールのパラドックス Saussure’s Paradox), Kyoto: Edit.Parque, 2005, 9–14.

a universal system regulated by laws of grammar which are written on paper as a static fact. Here, the point I wish to stress is made by the following remarks by Saussure:

There is nothing in the language [*la langue*] which has not entered <directly or indirectly> through speech [*la parole*], that is through the sum total of words [*des paroles*] perceived, and conversely no speech [*de parole*] is possible before the development of this product called the language [*la langue*], which supplies the individual with the elements for the composition of his speech [*sa parole*].

Developing and fixing this product is the work of the collective intelligence. Everything that is the language [*langue*] is implicitly collective. Whereas there is no collective speech [*de parole*]. <To say that a word [*un mot*] has come into the language [*la langue*] is to say that it has received collective approval.> Acts of speech [*Les actes de parole*] remain individual, apart from being momentary. [· · ·] This thing, although internal to each individual, is at the same time collective, lying beyond the will of the individual. [· · ·]

I conclude that, if it is true that the two objects, the language and speech [*langue et parole*], presuppose each other, cannot exist without each other, nevertheless they are so little alike in nature that each requires a separate theory. [· · ·]<sup>16</sup>

It will be clear from Saussure's remarks that what Japanese language teachers in class perceive is to a considerable extent true for Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitudes towards writing as well, that is, a paradoxical attitude between his practical attempt to establish his self-identity/autonomous selfhood and his theoretical approval to his inevitable involvement with the law/system of collective/others. While Nakagami was aware of the incompleteness of language because of its collective nature, he, as a

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<sup>16</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistic*, 91a–92a.

professional writer, had to show his self-determination or his free will to create new values through the Japanese language he mistrusts. Saussure's paradoxical view of *langue* and *parole* may also have much in common with two types of autonomy advanced by Maruyama Masao: 'personal autonomy', which is attained by the individual whose action carries 'the principle of self-regulation, or responsibility as the corollary of his/her action', and 'social autonomy', which refers to 'a pluralistic society in which multi-dimensional individuals preserve their mobility in society'.<sup>17</sup> It is important to bear in mind that Maruyama considers the notion of autonomy as 'a system founded on paradox' and there always exist 'difficulties involved in reconciling the individual and the collective'. Moreover, Saussure's paradoxical view of *langue* and *parole* can also be perceived as Kant's transcendental standpoint as something that is called a functionally autonomous alternation between the theoretical attitude and the practical attitude. To put it more concretely, when Japanese language teachers regard the Japanese language as an incomplete system, their attitude, bracketing the practical attitude, can be theoretical. To put it the other way round, when Japanese language teachers regard Japanese as a complete system backed by correct grammar, and actually teach Japanese in class, their attitude, bracketing the theoretical attitude, can be practical. Nakagami's sceptical attitude towards the Japanese language can be explained by this paradoxical nature in language between the *langue* that has received collective approval and the *parole* that is the act of speech made by the individual, which were posed as each other's presupposition by Saussure. On this account, Nakagami Kenji's act of writing should be re-considered as his strong will that continues to question what is the original meaning of one's words and keeps rejecting the standard meaning of modern

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<sup>17</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 102–104.



language, having a consciousness that every being is relative to the concrete situation in a paradox between the individual and the collective.

**Scepticism towards the modern language: Betsuyaku Minoru and the small theatre movement (*shōgekijō undō*) in the 1960s**

When Nakagami wrote his essay entitled ‘The Report from a Criminal, Nagayama Norio’ and his early novella, ‘On Japanese’, in 1968/1969, in my readings of Nakagami’s works, Nakagami attempts to actualize the notion of autonomy through his act of writing that can be regarded as the continuous self-determination under the tension between self and others. For Nakagami, the language can be seen as not only the reflection of the firm principles or the universal ideas but also a value generator that continues to create a new judgment in accordance with the concrete situation at the time. As I mentioned earlier, at this time Nakagami had become involved with the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s. For the present, it may be useful to look more closely at some of the more concrete features of the student activists, artists of the older generation such as Betsuyaku Minoru, Kara Jūrō and Terayama Shūji who belong to the so-called *yakeato sedai* (焼跡世代 the *yakeato* generation)<sup>18</sup> who express their doubts about a modern language, that is, the Japanese language itself. The artists who belong to the *yakeato* generation grew up in the burned-out ruins of Japan at a susceptible and impressionable age and experienced a dramatic transformation of both political and

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<sup>18</sup> Roman Rosenbaum, ‘True Survivors: The “*yakeato sedai*” in Contemporary Japanese Literature’. He describes the *yakeato sedai* (the *yakeato* generation) as the ‘generation coming of age amidst the burned-out ruins after the war’. This paper was presented to the 16th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia in Wollongong 26 June – 29 June 2006. See the following homepage: Asia Reconstructed: Proceedings of the 16th Biennial Conference of the ASAA, 2006, Wollongong, Australia. ISBN 978-0-9580837-3-7. <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/ASAA/biennial-conference/2006/proceedings.html>

ideological frameworks from militarism to postwar democracy. Their scepticism towards the Japanese language may have stemmed from their childhood experiences as witnesses to the drastic changes that took place in people's sense of values after the Japanese defeat in the War. For instance, Nishikawa Nagao indicates that Ishikawa Jun (1899–1987), who was older than the *yakeato* generation and had experienced the defeat when he was 46, felt a profound detestation for the Japanese spirit (*nihon seishin*) that was imposed by the patriotic militarists in wartime Japan. Nishikawa points out that *kotoba* (the Japanese language) was one of the most conventional and conservative elements which embodied the Japanese spirit. According to Nishikawa, the *yakeato sedai* writers had also fallen into a dilemma in which they had to create radical works that opposed to the wartime militaristic Japanese spirit by using the Japanese language, that is, the very means that embodied the Japanese spirit.<sup>19</sup>

Similar to the manner expressed by Nakagami Kenji in his early works, this kind of scepticism towards the modern language was especially conspicuous in the new field of Japanese theatre and drama, the so-called 'small theatre movement' or 'post-*shingeki* movement' that began in the 1960s. After the 1960 demonstration against the renewal of the U.S.–Japan Mutual Security Treaty was quelled, the sentiment of disillusionment with postwar Japanese democratic institutions and a sullen pessimism became pervasive in people's lives, and they lost their clear goals and universal ideology. In the process of developing into a high-consumption and information-oriented society, instead of adopting positive activism against the established order, they searched for a new means of expressing their views, feeling that their lives were filled with a sense of absurdity and meaninglessness. In this kind of atmosphere, many young *yakeato sedai*

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<sup>19</sup> Nishikawa, *Nihon no sengo shōsetsu—haikyo no hikari*, 60–61.

dramatists at the time sought to destroy the established modern Japanese drama—*shingeki* (新劇 literally, new theatre)—that emulated modern European drama.<sup>20</sup> Betsuyaku Minoru (b. 1937), one of the leading dramatists in contemporary Japan; Hijikata Tatsumi (1928–1986), the founder of *butō* dance; Terayama Shūji (1935–1983), the poet and playwright from the legendary theatrical company Tenjōsajiki; Kara Jūrō (b. 1940), the Akutagawa Prize winner, playwright and actor in a theatrical company called Karagumi, and others had shared similar grounds for denying that the Japanese language was the established modern system that was borrowed from the West in varying degrees.

Interestingly, some of the contemporary Japanese writers of the younger generation, the so-called ‘Baby Boomer generation’—including Nakagami Kenji (1946–1992) and Tsushima Yūko (b. 1947)—appeared to share the scepticism of these dramatists. As we have already observed, Nakagami Kenji stated that ‘Language is deceptive!’, and his distrust of the Japanese language was displayed in his early works such as ‘On Japanese’ that we have discussed before.<sup>21</sup> I would like to clarify how both the *yakeato* generation artists and Nakagami Kenji, who was born right after the war, developed their distrust of *kotoba* during the postwar years, how their scepticism towards *kotoba*, across two different generations, was intertwined, which dimension of Japanese language they expressed their distrusts in and whether there were any other modern artists/writers who express this notion of distrust of the modern language.

One of the *yakeato* generation artists, Betsuyaku Minoru, was greatly influenced by

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<sup>20</sup> See David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s*, 3–32. In addition, see Robert T. Rolf and John K. Gillespie (ed.), *Alternative Japanese Drama: Ten Plays*, 1–23.

<sup>21</sup> For example, see Nakagami, ‘Toki wa nagareru...’, in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 239–242.

Samuel Beckett and his plays *Waiting for Godot* (1953), and *Endgame* (1958). As a result, in his own plays Betsuyaku also searched for a new dramaturgy to describe the reality of postwar society in Japan. He was a prolific writer, and many of his works were highly acclaimed. Among the works that were critically acclaimed are *Zō* (The Elephant, 1962), *Macchi uri no shōjo* (The Little Match Girl, 1966), *Mazā • Mazā • Mazā* (Mother Mother Mother, 1979), and *Tarō no yane ni yuki furitsumu* (The Snow Falls on Tarō's Roof, 1982). Today, his plays are continuously staged by a range of theatrical groups. Betsuyaku is currently the leader of the Piccolo Theatre Company in Hyogo prefecture. Let us now clarify how Betsuyaku Minoru developed his distrust of *kotoba* during the postwar years, how his scepticism towards *kotoba* was intertwined with Nakagami Kenji's distrust of the Japanese language, which dimension of the Japanese language Betsuyaku expressed his distrust in and whether there were any other modern Japanese artists/writers who shared this notion of distrust of the modern language.

Let us begin by considering Betsuyaku's early background as a repatriate from Manchuria. I would like to focus on the foundation of Betsuyaku's distrust of the Japanese language. Betsuyaku was born in Manchuria in 1937. Since his father worked for the Information Bureau of the General Affairs Agency in Manchukuo, Betsuyaku and his family had to be relocated frequently after the War ended in 1945 till the time his family was repatriated from Xinjing in 1947. When he was in the second grade of elementary school, after his father's death in 1946, he boarded a repatriation ship with his mother and arrived in Kōchi on the island of Shikoku. Betsuyaku insists oddly that he does not know the Japanese language though he admits that he is undoubtedly Japanese. The reason why he made this remark is that he is unaware of

the various dialects in Japan.<sup>22</sup> He further explains that he can only find the intrinsic energy of language in dialects; he assumes that the Japanese language he acquired, that is, *hyōjungo* or standard Japanese, is something devoid of this intrinsic energy that brings a language into existence.<sup>23</sup> Since he lived in a Japanese settlement where everyone spoke in standard Japanese, Betsuyaku felt that his Japanese had become extremely flat, insipid or tasteless. After he arrived in Kōchi in 1947, he spent some time there and moved to Shizuoka on the main island, Honshū. Both these provinces had heavily accented dialects. In retrospect, he confesses that he could not become accustomed to the dialects of every place that he moved to in Japan. He recalls that upon leaving the continent, he had gradually developed a kind of a love-hate feeling for dialects as he moved from one place to another. He cites this as the reason he has never acquired any particular dialect, even though he was still in his early teens.<sup>24</sup> As a playwright, he believes that this is the fatal flaw that exerted a baneful influence on his works. For Betsuyaku, while the standard Japanese appears to be a hollow language, the dialects in Japan appear to be the living language, which takes on the essential meaning and intrinsic energy.

In addition, he points out that an increasing number of abstract words (*chūshō-go*) are becoming obsolete in modern Japanese society. He regards everyday conversational abstract words as mere signs/symbols but not words. Consider the word justice (*seigi*) as an example. According to Betsuyaku, this word is not really tangible because it cannot be seen as an object or matter. To grasp its meaning, we have to ceaselessly define it based on our everyday experiences. In other words, we have to constantly

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<sup>22</sup> Betsuyaku, *Kotoba e no senjutsu*, 32–34.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> See Senda, *Gekiteki runessansu*, 106–138.

update our definition of the word justice. However, due to a deluge of abstract words in modern society, people do not attempt to find their own meaning for these words; instead, they rely on the meanings that have already been defined by others, or rather, by the foremost authority on the subject. If people continue to use borrowed concepts without ascertaining by themselves the meanings of words, these words may gradually be transformed into obsolete language. Influenced by his early background as a returnee from the continent and knowing only standard Japanese, which lacked the intrinsic energy of dialect, Betsuyaku defines *kotoba* as follows:

*Kotoba* can be something that is created by each of us every day or something that changes every hour. Strictly speaking, the moment we speak a word, a decision is reached with regard to what the definition of the word is, and simultaneously the word becomes a hollow language. As a result, we have to continuously decide the meanings of words.<sup>25</sup>

As early as 1946, philosopher Tsurumi Shunsuke pointed out the issue of the ambiguity of the modern language.<sup>26</sup> He terms the excessive use of abstract words in a language as an amulet that protects us from harm or misfortune (*kotoba no omamori-teki shiyōhō*).<sup>27</sup> He also criticizes this kind of use of language as our unconscious, insidious habit of using a word without knowing its exact meaning in order to protect ourselves under the shelter of the influence of a person or institution in power. In protecting our social or political status, we tend to make statements using

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<sup>25</sup> Betsuyaku, *Kotoba e no senjutsu*, 32–34.

<sup>26</sup> Tsurumi, *Tsurumi Shunsuke shū 3: Kigō-ron shū*, 389–408.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

terms that are authorized by established institutions or individuals. Some examples of this include *kokutai* (the national polity of Japan), *nihon-teki* (Japanized or typical Japanese), and *kōdō* (the imperial way) all of which originated in the pre-war period, but also *minshu-shugi* (democracy), *jiyū* (freedom/liberty), *seigi* (justice) which pertain to the present. Tsurumi argues that if we are able to develop the habit of understanding the meaning of each word more concretely in our everyday lives, we could not be so easily incited by demagogues. Thus far, the point made by Tsurumi may apply in principle to what Betsuyaku terms as ‘hollow language’, in other words, one that is not constantly updated in meaning, as mentioned above. Furthermore, the sense of discomfort that Nakagami found in the gap between Kawabata Yasunari’s ‘beautiful Japan’ and his Japanese used in the *roji* may be explained on similar lines.

Betsuyaku Minoru also analyses the recent juvenile suicides which were caused by bullying at school, *ijime*.<sup>28</sup> He illustrates the tendency that it is very difficult to identify the independent activists (i.e. bullies) in recent cases. In other words, although no particular person or group conduct any direct action, the systematic merciless bullying continues indubitably under the guise of playing a prank or a game. Lacking any sense of responsibility, no one in the system develops any sort of guilt feeling towards bullying. Betsuyaku calls this peculiar systematic mechanism ‘anonymous malice’ (無記名性の悪意).<sup>29</sup> He also points out that there is no ‘*ko*’ (個 the individual/modern subjectivity) who is determined by the modern system/law or the

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<sup>28</sup> Betsuyaku, for example, examines a 13-year-old boy’s suicide caused by bullying at Fujimi Junior Highschool in Morioka prefecture in 1986. See, Betsuyaku Minoru, *Beketto to ijime* (ベケットといじめ), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2005, 38–87. The first edition was published by Iwanami shoten in 1987.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 40–87.

cause-and-effect relationship but ‘*ko*’ (孤 a solitary nucleus/isolated *topos*) who is free from the ‘community’s codes’ at the scene of recent *ijime* cases caused by ‘anonymous malice’. Betsuyaku applies the same logic to the contemporary drama, and points out that such a nonexistent individual subject or rather a causal correlation itself cannot be a protagonist in any established modern drama. Instead, an interrelation, or rather, causality within a closed system, in a sense, walks by itself and acts like a protagonist in contemporary drama. It is all a secluded ‘*ko*’ (孤) can do to recognize its position or role in the closed system. Thus, Betsuyaku attempts to clarify the manner in which the mechanism of this ‘anonymous malice’ intersects with the contemporary dramaturgy proposed by Samuel Beckett. Betsuyaku points out that, in modern drama, we could draw a clear boundary between the mastermind and the sympathizer; conversely, in contemporary drama, ‘anonymous malice’ has served to blur the line that used to be drawn sharply between the mastermind and the sympathizer. Thus, in the *topos* of contemporary drama that is ruled by ‘anonymous malice’, Betsuyaku recognizes the literary *topos* (*ba* 場) where the conflicts between the individual (self) and the collective (others) are intricately-intertwined with each other and coexist preserving its individual nature. Examples of Betsuyaku’s notion of anonymous malice abound in his dramas. For example, Betsuyaku’s viewpoint of the mechanism of anonymous malice is expressed best in *Tarō no yane ni yuki furitsumu* which is based on the prison diary of Isobe Asa’ichi (1905–1937) who was one of the alleged masterminds of The February 26 Incident in 1936.<sup>30</sup> In this scene, a man is questioned by a woman as to why he works for Kita Ikki (1883–1937) who was the suspected intellectual mastermind of the incident.

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<sup>30</sup> The February 26 Incident (*2. 26 jiken*) was an attempted coup d’État in 1936, which was mounted by the radical officers of the Imperial Japanese Army.



男2 私だってそうです。私にだってわからないんです。[···] それともあなたがた、私が何か知っているとも思っているんですか。とんでもない。今も言いましたように、私は一番の下っぱの使い走りですよ。物の数にも入らないくらいの人間です。私にこれをさせたのは、私の上司です。でも、その上司が何かを知っているだなんて思わないで下さい。そうじゃないからです。その上司にそうさせたのは、そのまた上司だからです。そして、その上司にもまた、上司がいるんです。ともかく、私は、その三番目の上司の、顔すら見たことがないんですからね。しかも·····、ですよ。その顔すらも見たことのないような上司が、またその上にいるんです。私がどれほどの下っぱかということなんか、あなたがたの思いも及ばないほどですよ·····。[···] 私は時々考えますよ。もしかしたら、私の上司の、そのまた上司の、更にその先の、無限の彼方には、ただ風だけが吹いているんじゃないかってね·····。そうです。風ですよ。風が、私たちにそうさせているんです·····。<sup>31</sup>

Man 2 Me neither. I don't understand, neither. [···] No way! Do you think I know something about this? No, I'm not kidding. As I said just before, I'm just one the lowest messenger boys on the totem pole. I must be counted for nothing. It was my boss that made me do this. Oh, wait! But don't you ever think that my boss knows something. That's not true, either. It was his boss that made him do this. And his boss has his immediate superior, too. Anyhow, I have never seen the face of the boss who is three ranks higher than me. Moreover, there is another boss who is senior to him in rank, too. You just can't imagine how low rank I am. [···] I sometimes imagine that beyond this infinite rank of our higher-ups, there is only a wind blowing.

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<sup>31</sup> Betsuyaku, *Tarō no yane ni yuki furitsumu*, 235–236.

Yes! There must be a wind. I believe this very wind makes us do this...

There is a suggestion here in my reading of Betsuyaku that Betsuyaku's notion of anonymous malice shows a resemblance to the *kokutai* ideology, which could infiltrate into any spiritual or interior sphere of the individual. On this matter, Maruyama Masao, exemplifying the affairs of the ill-treatment of Allied prisoners during the war, revealed the system in which morality is subtly blended with the power of the nation. Rikki Kersten summarizes the system of this phenomenon as follows:

The cohabitation of morality with the state was in turn justified by what Maruyama called 'proximity to the ultimate value', personified by the Emperor. This idea was a vital factor as far as war responsibility was concerned. The importance lay, in Maruyama's view, in the vertical nature of power relationships built into the concept of proximity. The position of an individual or group was a relative position, one of comparative proximity to the Emperor, and therefore, a position whose power was defined relatively. Power was not inherent in any position, instead it was transferred downwards from positions of greater proximity. Therefore, those in a position of leadership felt superior due to their evident proximity; however, power did not emanate from their nominal status, neither were decisions justified by their status as leaders. Maruyama described this as a sort of 'unconscious despotism', which led to the complete absence of any feeling of responsibility for the conduct of the war. The country merely slithered into war.<sup>32</sup>

As we can see from the above quotation, in a society where everything is decided by this yardstick—proximity to the Emperor (*tennō e no kyori*)—a dictator could not wield

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<sup>32</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 31–32.

arbitrary power, because every single individual or group restrains and checks each other. In this case, is the Emperor the only entity who has subjective freedom? The answer is 'no'. Kersten explains that 'In this theory even the Emperor carried such a burden, in the form of the wishes of his ancestors which had to be "transformed" down the line. This completes an appalling picture of utter irresponsibility, where the dynamics were invisible psychological pressures, and men moved in destructive ways wielding anonymous power.'<sup>33</sup>

The similar logic may be said, no doubt, of Nakagami Kenji's paradoxical and sceptical attitudes towards his act of writing by using *kotoba*, which has a conflicting nature between the individual and the collective. It is not to be denied that, in the *topos* of contemporary drama where Betsuyaku or Nakagami dwelt, without the definite mastermind—the autonomous self who continuously decides the meanings of words and produces new values, one's word (*kotoba*) could easily lose its exact meaning and intrinsic energy.

On this matter, the moral philosopher, Takeuchi Sei'ichi takes notice of two Japanese words: *onozukara* and *mizukara* which share the same kanji, 自, that means 'self' (with different readings and their declensional *kana* ending : *onozu-kara* and *mizuka-ra*). *Mizukara* means 'to act of one's own accord, that is, free will'. In contrast, *onozukara* means 'something happens by itself or naturally'. Takeuchi argues that, in Japan, we may think that something is actualized because not only do we try to put it into practice by our intention or free will but also all of our acts are determined by the various causalities spontaneously. Takeuchi asserts that the ambiguous attitude of Japanese people may stem from this alternative attitude between *onozukara* and *mizukara*, which

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 32.

exists in our language itself.<sup>34</sup> Viewed in this light, Nakagami Kenji's act of writing can be considered as an autonomous action that is perpetually called on to bring out the self-determination and to create new values with a historically changing environment which is found in the conflict between *onozukara* and *mizukara*. For this reason, Nakagami finds this act of writing in the eternal conflict between the establishment of his autonomous selfhood and his acceptance of external causalities that inevitably restrict his autonomous freedom as the law/system of the collective. As he is aware that any binary frame will never be dialectically reconciled, Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing can be explained by Kant's transcendental standpoint that is to keep both the theoretical attitude (*onozukara*) and the practical attitude (*mizukara*) at the same time; and he seems to know how to bracket and unbracket one of the attitudes according to the situation at the time. This is because the individual (*mizukara*) and the collective (*onozukara*) are premised on each other and cannot exist without each other in the same way as *langue* and *parole*. In this way, we may explain that Nakagami regards his act of writing as aspiring to the ceaseless hell as we have seen in Chapter I.

### **The *écriture* of the Emperor (*tennō no kakikotoba*) as an invented modern *écriture***

As we have seen in the early part of this chapter, in the process of writing his novels, Nakagami showed a strong mistrust of the collective term, such as *minshu-shugi* (democracy), *jiyū* (freedom) or *heiwa kenpō* (a war-renouncing constitution). Thus, from this viewpoint one may say that Nakagami confronted the estrangement between

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<sup>34</sup> Takeuchi Sei'ichi, 'Onozukara' to 'Mizukara': *Nihon shisō no kisō* (「おのずから」と「みずから」 日本思想の基層), Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2004, i-vi.

our words—*kotoba* (the language sign)—and what they represented—*mono* (the things/objects).

Saussure points out that ‘the language, considered at any moment, however far back in time, is always an inheritance from the preceding moment.’ He goes on to explain:

The postulated act by which, at a given moment, names were assigned to things, the act by which a contrast was completed between ideas and signs, between the signifying and signified elements, this act is purely imaginary. It is an idea inspired by the feeling we have of the arbitrariness of the sign, but belongs to no recognizable reality. Never has any society known its language other than as a product more or less perfected by preceding generations and to be taken just as it is. In other words, we recognize a historical fact at the origin of every language state.<sup>35</sup>

In a similar manner, Nakagami Kenji points out that our act of naming *mono* (things/objects)<sup>36</sup> is unconsciously fettered by the logic of the collective such as the law/system of the modern nation-state or the rule of the Emperor. After publishing *Tales of Kishū: Land of Trees, Land of Roots*—which is his reportage revealing the realities of discrimination against the *burakumin* in Kishū—in 1978, Nakagami began to address a series of seminars titled *Buraku seinen bunka-kai* (The Cultural Society for Outcast Youth) in Shingū City. In these seminars, he discussed the gaps between *kotoba* and *mono*.<sup>37</sup> During his first lecture in February, 1978, Nakagami stated that when he visited Grand Shrine of Ise, which may be regarded as one of the most sacred *shintō* shrines in Japan, he was utterly astonished by its well-stocked library which has

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<sup>35</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistic*, 94a.

<sup>36</sup> Nakagami uses the word *mono* as an all inclusive term that includes not only tangible objects but also phenomenal facts, everything in the universe that is bound by the law of nature—the cause and effect relationship.

<sup>37</sup> Nakagami, ‘Mono to kotoba’ in Karatani Kōjin and Watanabe Naomi (eds), *Nakagami Kenji to Kumano*, 18–35.

more than two hundred thousand books regarding *shintō* and the Emperor of Japan.<sup>38</sup> Looking at a vast number of books in the Shrine of Ise, Nakagami confessed that he could not help asking himself the question of whether the syntax of *nihongo* might be more or less subjugated by the rule of ‘the *tennōsei* ideology’ (the Emperor system) from ancient Japan. As Saussure stated, if we assume that language can be defined as a social product, that is, ‘a product more or less perfected by preceding generations’,<sup>39</sup> the Japanese language can also be regarded as a social product that was flavoured by the *tennōsei* ideology in the history of Japan to a greater or lesser extent. In Nakagami’s terms, this standardized language was referred to as ‘the *écriture* of the Emperor’ (*tennō no kakikotoba*), an invented modern *écriture*. While travelling around Kishū in several *burakumin* ghettos for the purpose of collecting material for *Tales of Kishū: Land of Trees, Land of Roots*, Nakagami witnessed the harsh reality of some *burakumin* ghettos. It became clear to him that it was almost impossible to illustrate their severe realities of individuals living in a *roji* by using the existing standard Japanese that was coloured and toned by the collective intelligence such as, in Nakagami’s phrase, the law/system of modern nation-state or the *écriture* of the Emperor. Nakagami saw some grass on the ground in a *burakumin* ghetto and the idea of ‘what is’ suddenly struck him. He could not resist questioning what constitutes *kusa* (grass). Nakagami concluded that the substance of *kusa* may not be *kusa* itself (as an object) but merely our act of naming an object (a very common green plant with long, thin, spiky leaves<sup>40</sup>) ‘*kusa*’ (that is, its vocalized sound, [kɔsa]).

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure’s Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistic*, 94a.

<sup>40</sup> Sinclair (ed.), *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*, 634.

I previously believed that *kusa* (grass) is *kusa* [as an object]. But now I realized that the substance of *kusa* is not a being or an object but merely a term, that is, a *kotoba* (word) that is simply uttered as *kusa*.<sup>41</sup>

Further, in Nakagami's opinion, when we name any object/event, our act of naming *mono* is unconsciously bound, in some inexplicable way, by the law/system of the collective. Nakagami explains that when we name something, or more precisely, when we define a word to identify something, we are unconsciously being shackled by a conventional idea, namely the syntax of *nihongo*, which bears more or less the logic of the modern nation-state after the Meiji period or the rule of the Emperor from ancient Japan.

Nakagami tried to find a way out of this impasse of current standard Japanese and stated that if we attempt to escape from these bonds created by the syntax of *nihongo*, we have to introduce a language with a different dimension.<sup>42</sup> As a possible means to break the shackles of the *écriture* of the Emperor, Nakagami considered the state of exact correspondence between the name/term as the linguistic sign (*kotoba*) and the thing or object it represents (*mono*). At this time, he encountered many aged, illiterate women in the *burakumin* ghettos and listened to their conversations. In the narrative style (*katari-kuchi*) of their conversations, he observed the state of perfect conformity between *kotoba* and *mono*. He focused his attention on their narrative, such as *ine*, *tsurai nee* (イネ、辛いねえ Sister, this is such a hardship, isn't it?) as examples in which a word perfectly coincides with the matter it represents. Nakagami felt that the

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<sup>41</sup> 「草は草である。そう思い、草の本質は、物ではなく、草と名づけられた言葉ではないかと思った。」 Nakagami, *Kishū: Ki no kuni, ne no kuni monogatari*, in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 609.

<sup>42</sup> Nakagami describes this as *ibō no kotoba* (異貌の言葉 the language with a different face) in Nakagami, *Kishū: Ki no kuni ne no kuni monogatari*, in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 605–612.

discourse of their artless, or in a way, earthy narrative may not have been tinged by the syntax of standard Japanese. Nakagami explains that the Japanese word *samui* (cold), for example, refers not only to ‘something that has a lower temperature or a lower air temperature’ but is also a term that is used to exchange greetings. However, when he travelled in America as a non-native speaker of English, if he said it is ‘cold’ in English, it implied nothing but ‘coldness’ because he was not able to express his feelings in the various ways of English native speakers. According to Nakagami, the same observation applied to the veracity of the unpretentious narratives of the old women in Kishū; he believed that this naiveté in their narrative style could enable us to revive standard Japanese that he considered as a hollow language in contemporary Japan. Nakagami assumes that the discourse of the old women’s narratives may break the impasse of Japan’s standard language resulting from a centripetal force made by the rule of the collective such as the *genbun-icchi* system of the Meiji period. Here, we can recognize from Nakagami’s attempt that he struggled to bring *kotoba* close to *mono*, or it would be more accurate to say that he tried very hard to see any entity (concrete entity or abstract entity) as its state that we have not named yet. He tried very hard to treat *kotoba* as *mono* that has not been contaminated by its assigned name because Nakagami considered any words in Japan as a social product that has more or less been tinged with the law/system of the collective such as the logic of the modern nation-state or the *écriture* of the Emperor. It is on such grounds that he believed that using the narratives of the old women living in the *roji*, he could counter the logic of Japan’s modern nation-state that have been regarded as one of Japan’s collective forces which may have engendered *sabetsu* (discrimination) against *burakumin*. However, on this matter, Nakagami recognized the difficulty of his attempt, describing this attempt as a glaring



contradiction simply because narrating (*katari*) or oral literature should not be written. He despairingly admitted that once it is written, it is no longer narrating.<sup>43</sup> Yet, he did not abandon *kotoba* and continued to look at every possible way, clinging tenaciously to *kotoba*, to break the spell of the law/system of the collective, which can be, in some cases, considered as an embodiment of the logic of the modern nation-state or the *écriture* of the Emperor.

This observation of the old women's narratives as a touchstone to destroy the modern *écriture* can be found in *Sennen no yuraku*. Nakagami met an illiterate, old woman named Tabata Ryū, the wife of a Buddhist priest Tabata Reijo, in Kasugachō town, that is, *roji*, a *burakumin* ghetto in Shingū City. He was deeply inspired by her narrative and the fact that she could recite the entire contents of the town's family register; in other words, she knew about all the births and deaths in her town and functioned like a walking encyclopaedia. One of the protagonists in Nakagami's important novels was modelled on this woman. In his major novels including the trilogy of Akiyuki and *Sennen no yuraku*, she became the omniscient and omnipotent focal character, Oryū no oba, a midwife in the *roji* who remembers the stories of the lives of all the people. In *Sennen no yuraku*, the main characters are the six young men of the Nakamoto family who died when they were young. One day, one of the main characters, Oriento no Yasu, brings a gramophone to encourage Oryū no oba to enjoy music. However, Oryū does not comprehend the lyrics from a piece of music that she has listened to and says:

「なんなよ、他の国の言葉でうたわれてもわからんよ。」とオリユウ  
ノオバが言うと、オリエントの康は悲しげな顔をして「日本語じゃ」

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<sup>43</sup> 「あるいは書くこと、書かれる事を拒む語りの言葉か。書かれてある語りとはムジユンもはなはだしいが・・・」 Nakagami, *Kishū: Ki no kuni ne no kuni monogatari*, in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 609–610.

と言う。オリュウノオバは新時代が来たと思いきらされた気がしたのだった。日本人が日本語でうたっているのを同じ日本語をしゃべっている自分がさっぱり聴きとれず、鳥の鳴き声のようにただ音だけが耳に響く。<sup>44</sup>

‘What is this? I cannot understand anything if a song has foreign words’.  
‘It is a Japanese song’, replied Oryū no Yasu, with a disappointed expression.

Oryū no oba realized that a new era had arrived. She was made acutely aware of the fact that she, a Japanese-speaking person, could no longer understand a song sung in Japanese by a Japanese singer. Instead, the mere warble-like sounds resounded in her ears.

Following this scene, Oryū recalls the day when the ordinance of the outcast liberation (*Eta kaihō rei*) was promulgated at the beginning of the Meiji period, which ironically generated a harsher counter-discrimination against the *burakumin*. She remembers the episode in which no one in the *roji* was aware of the precise meaning of a newly invented word *banzai*; they would dispiritedly repeat *banpai* instead of *banzai* since they had not memorized the word correctly. From this extract, it is evident that Nakagami depicts how the process of Japanese modernization created an unbridgeable gap between the spoken words used in the *roji* and standard Japanese, which Nakagami considered as the modern *écriture* invented by the nation-state in the name of *genbun-icchi*.

In addition, Nakagami’s central characters speak *Shingū-ben* (a Kishū dialect). This

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<sup>44</sup> Nakagami, *Sennen no yuraku* in *NKZ* Vol. 5, 103.

illustrates a clear distinction between Shingū-*ben* as the living language and standard Japanese as a hollow language. An example of this is found in *Sanka* (讃歌 Paean, 1990), which was written towards the end of his polyphonic series of novels called the *Kumano* saga. In his previous novel *Nichirin no tsubasa* (The Wings of the Sun, 1984), Tsuyoshi and Tanaka, the protagonists, drive their large refrigerated truck from Ise to Tokyo, carrying in it seven old women who were evicted from their *roji*, which was destroyed to make way for the re-development of the area during the earliest period of Japan's bubble economy. Having lost their land, the outcasts' community, *roji*, which was depicted as a mythical utopia where there was no boundary between the sacred and the impure in *Sennen no yuraku*, the two young men, Tsuyoshi and Tanaka, and seven old women set out on a wandering journey in order to seek safe refuge. When they arrive at the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, the seven old women vanish in the city. The narrative of searching for another *roji* ends suddenly in the course of their journey, and it seems to last forever. In *Sanka*, the lengthy sequel to *Nichirin no tsubasa*, after the disappearance of the old women in Tokyo, Tsuyoshi and Tanaka having lost the place to which they could return, become high-class male prostitutes. Tsuyoshi transforms himself into a 'cyborg of sex' (*sei no saibōgu*) who speaks the standard language; he gives himself an androgynous nickname—'Yves'. However, he is unable to immerse his heart and soul into this superficial way of life in the massive, flourishing, consumer culture of Tokyo. His mental framework as a cyborg becomes extremely confused, and interestingly, this confusion is manifested by his return to the Shingū dialect that had been pushed aside in his subconscious domain. One afternoon, when Yves is about to leave for the gymnasium that he has been visiting regularly, he finds himself unable to fit into his role as the cyborg of sex.

入口で預けてあった会員証を受け取ろうとすると、インストラクターが様子の違ったイーブに気づいて怪訝な顔をし、

「今日はちょっと違うじゃない」と声をかけた。

「用事を思い出したものだから」イーブは答え、ふっと自分の言葉がサイボーグの合成語だったような気がし、「これから仕事キャンセルしに行くんじゃないよ」と方言を使ってみる。

「仕事、仕事でつまらん。ちょっとは遊びをもろてもええじゃろ、と思て」<sup>45</sup>

When Yves is about to receive his membership card that he has left behind at the reception, an instructor notices a different, indescribable expression on his face.

‘You look a little different today, you know?’ he says hesitatingly to Yves.

‘That is because I have just remembered the business I have got to do...’, replies Yves, suddenly feeling that his words sounded typical of a cyborg.

‘I am going to cancel my appointment now’, he replies in an attempt to use his hometown dialect.

‘Work, work, work...it has bored me stiff. Why can I not have a little fun? What do you reckon?’

The above excerpt adequately reflects Nakagami’s stance on dialects in his writing. Here, he clearly portrays the Shingū dialect as the language used by real people, those made of flesh and blood, and sets this language against the standard language that is an artificially-synthesized (the language of the cyborg).<sup>46</sup> It is very interesting to recall

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<sup>45</sup> Nakagami Kenji, *Sanka*, in *NKZ* Vol. 7, 384.

<sup>46</sup> Nakagami Kenji, ‘Kasuga to “Kojiki”’ in Karatani and Watanabe (eds), *Nakagami Kenji to Kumano*, 27–35.

that Betsuyaku Minoru also strongly asserts that the intrinsic energy of words can only be found in dialects, and he deplors the fact that he could never acquire any specific dialect as he was born on the continent and constantly shifted from one place to another.

Nakagami incessantly fixes his critical eyes on *kotoba* itself, pondering over what collective terms such as *jiyū*, *burakumin* or *minshu-shugi* essentially mean in everyday life according to the concrete situations of postwar Japan. Viewed in this light, in the same way as Betsuyaku Minoru who sees words in our language as something that should constantly be updated in meaning, Nakagami never abides by the same state of being *burakumin* but he is reborn as a *burakumin* and reconsiders everyday what this word means to him with regard to the changing social conditions of contemporary Japan. On the same account that Saussure recognizes *langue* (the language) and *parole* (the individual speech) which presuppose each other and cannot exist without each other, both Betsuyaku and Nakagami become aware that the individual is deemed to continue to bring out the self-determination and to make new values which are relative to a concrete situation poised on the brink between the individual (*parole*) and the collective (*langue*).

### **The *Anpo* protesters and their scepticism toward the Japanese language**

In ‘The Report from a Criminal, Nagayama Norio’ and ‘On Japanese’ which were written in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Nakagami harboured his distrust of the Japanese language. As we have discussed, *kotoba* appeared to be a collective notion that generalized the reality of the individual living in his outcast neighbourhood where

he was born and raised. Then, what made Nakagami perceive *kotoba* as something deceptive during this period? As I mentioned earlier, Nakagami had been involved with the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Can we correlate his involvement with the student activism to his distrust of the Japanese language? Similar to Nakagami, when we re-evaluate the works of Betsuyaku Minoru in the context of the *yakeato* generation playwrights, another important aspect to be considered is the involvement of this generation in the political activities of the 1960s and 1970s, known as the 1960 *Anpo* protests and the 1970 *Anpo* protests, both of which opposed to the U.S.–Japan Joint Security Treaty. Betsuyaku studied at Waseda University in 1958 but left in 1960 in order to commit himself completely to both theatre and political activities. The question that arises here is whether his deep involvement in the student movements of the 1960s had some relevance to the issue that made him distrust the Japanese language. For the present, it might be useful to look more closely at the paradoxical self-identification of student activists in the 1960s.

One of Betsuyaku's contemporaries—Yamazaki Masakazu (b. 1934)—another *yakeato* generation literary critic and playwright, examined the rapid changes in public morals during the political upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>47</sup> He portrays the sentiments of the young protesters, in his book entitled *Onrii iesutadei '60s* (Only Yesterday '60s, 1977); he analyses the agitation of student activists at that time and directs his attention to the nature of their agitations. He points out the fact that young agitators accentuated each particle or the end of each phrase in their written appeals (*gekibun*) and pronounced the accented syllable for slightly longer than usual, as if they

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<sup>47</sup> Yamazaki Masakazu, *Onrii iesutadei '60s* (おんりい・いえすたでい '60s), Tokyo: Bunshun bunko, 1985. The original book was published in 1977.

were long vowel. For example the sentence ‘Wareware *waa*, teikoku-shugi *noo*, dan’atsu *oo*, danko to shitee, funsai shii...’.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, Yamazaki points out that the style they used in their appeals was full of two character Chinese compounds that were extremely abstruse as if they were some sort of conjuration. He explains that their written appeals did not imply anything but merely expressed a kind of momentary ambience, feeling or mood that developed from the situation. Upon hearing their agitation, Yamazaki describes these student agitators as ‘troops of young people who agonize over inconclusive debates and stumble over their words, searching for a firm conclusion pertinent to their time’.<sup>49</sup>

With regard to this matter, Sakurai Tetsuo (b. 1949), a social theorist, explores the phenomenon of the loss of *kotoba* in contemporary Japan. He explains that the ambivalent feelings of Japanese youths at the time originated in ideological conflict, a strong identification with Japan’s traditional maternal society, and their search for the firm establishment of democratic subjectivity (*shutaisei*) in modern Japan. Sakurai analyses the debate between Mishima Yukio and the ‘All-campus Joint Struggle Committee of Tokyo University’ (Tōdai Zenkyōtō) students in 1969 and states:

What we seemingly observe here can be regarded as the ideological conflict between Mishima who is seized with an impulse to integrate with

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<sup>48</sup> 「われわれワァ、帝国主義ノォ、弾圧ウォ、断固としテェ、粉碎シィ」 Yamazaki, *Onrii iesutadei '60s*, 156.

<sup>49</sup> I translated the summary of the following original texts: 「あの絶叫は、口ごもりながら結論を模索して、しかし、いつまでたっても得られない結論の前に、彼ら自身が身悶えている姿であったといえるかもしれません。[・・・] 口ごもる青年たちの、巨大で、激しい身悶えの結集であったと見ることができそうです。」 in Yamazaki, *Onrii iesutadei '60s*, 226. Further, Yamazaki explained that unlike Mishima Yukio (1925–1970) who strongly expressed his wrath against the falsehood [*uso*] of the social conditions of the day, the masses of ordinary people during the 1960s, knowing full well that a falsehood was nothing but a falsehood, participated in society as though they were enjoying playing out the part of their lives on a stage.

others and the Zenkyōtō students who reject any concept of ‘dependence’ in postwar Japan. However, what has to be noticed is the fact that on the one hand the Zenkyōtō activists deny any kind of formalism/legalism and state that every being can be dismantled, diffused into a cause-and-effect relationship, and everything is nothing but insubstantial vision. On the other hand they are seized with a powerful desire to identify themselves with others as the underlying motivation behind their behaviour.<sup>50</sup>

He explains that the youths, confronted with this dilemma, were inflamed by the ambiguity of unfinished Japanese modernity; this made it difficult for them to set up their individual selves and be conscious of the existence of others acting on their behalf. He further states that following their defeat in the student protests of the 1960s, their distrust in *kotoba* culminated in the 1980s when mass culture was flourishing.<sup>51</sup> He refers to these students as the ‘youth who lost their words’ (*kotoba o ushinatta wakamonotachi*).

From both Yamazaki and Sakurai’s illustrations of the young protesters of the 1960s, it would not be an overstatement to say that Betsuyaku’s scepticism towards the Japanese language may have stemmed from his involvement in the 1960 *Anpo* protests as an active member of a left-wing union. Many other dramatists such as Suzuki Tadashi (b. 1939), Ninagawa Yukio (b.1935), Shimizu Kunio (b. 1936) were also involved in the student movement of the 1960s. In future, I would like to further analyse the experiences of the *yakeato* generation and their involvement with the

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<sup>50</sup> Sakurai Tetsuo, *Kotoba o ushinatta wakamonotachi* (ことばを失った若者たち The Youth Who Lost Their Words), Tokyo: Kōdansha gendai shinsho, 1985, 112–115.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 79–125.



student movements of the 1960s in order to ascertain whether their experiences had a significant impact on their distrust of the Japanese language. When examining contemporary Japanese literature, an analysis of the scepticism towards the Japanese language among the above-mentioned *yakeato* generation dramatists as well as Betsuyaku may shed new light on the literary venture of contemporary Japanese writers today.

### **Miyazawa Kenji's Ashura who lost the true words**

In Chapter III, we have observed the paradox that is found in the literature of Miyazawa Kenji. Interestingly, Miyazawa acutely expresses his distrust of language (*kotoba*) in his poems. One can cite many examples that seem to support this. His scepticism towards *kotoba* is well illustrated in one of his best known poems, 'Haru to shura' (春と修羅 Spring and Ashura). Sarah M. Strong and Karen Colligan translated 'Spring and Ashura' as follows:

Spring and Ashura  
(mental sketch modified)

Out of the steel gray of consciousness  
akebi tendrils entwine the clouds  
tangle of wild rose and humus marsh  
over everything everywhere, flattery's twisted pattern  
(when, more dense than woodwind music at noon,  
amber fragments pour down)  
The bitterness and blueness of anger  
At the bottom of April's shining atmospheric strata  
spitting gnashing, pacing

I am an Ashura

(the landscape quaking in my tears)

Shattered clouds as far as the eye can see

Holy crystal winds traverse

the radiant sea of heaven

ZYPRESSEN, a row of spring,

blackly inhale ether

Through their somber row of trunks

shines the snowy ridge of the very

Mountains of Heaven

(shimmer of heat haze, white polarized light)

but the true words are lost

Clouds tear apart, flying across the sky

Ah, through the depth of glittering April

gnashing, burning, pacing

I am an Ashura

(scudding, quartzite clouds

where is it singing, that spring bird?)

As the solar disk dims blue

Ashura sounds echo through a grove

From heaven's sunken, spinning bowl

clusters of black trees extend,

their branches sadly proliferating

a scene with everything double

a crow starts up, flashing

from the crest of a dazed woods

(air strata ever more clear the time when the cypress rise to heaven in a hush)

something is coming through the yellow-gold of the meadow

something clearly of human form

that farmer in a straw coat looking at me

can he really see me?

At the bottom of dazzling sea of atmosphere

(sadness deepens, blue into blue)

ZYPRESSEN quietly sway

a bird once more cuts the clear sky

(the true words are not here,

the Ashura's tears fall on the ground)

As I breathe the air anew  
my lungs contract, faintly white  
(may this body be scattered among fine particles of sky)  
the tops of the ginkgoes flare again  
ZYPRESSEN turn darker still  
sparks of clouds pour down <sup>52</sup>

We should recall that, in 'Introduction' of his poetry book, *Haru to shura*, 'watakushi (I/self)' is expressed as the phenomenon of 'the single illumination of karma's alternating current lamp' (因果交流電燈のひとつの青い照明); and thus the poems written by *watakushi*, that is, the alternating phenomenon as such, are depicted as nothing but a 'mental sketch' (心象スケッチ) which seems to be common only in a certain degree to all of us. For Miyazawa, what was being written is perceived as nothing more than what we have become conscious of 'at the root of the karmic covenant of space-time'. This is very interesting in that it shows Miyazawa's nihilistic self-awareness that every being as well as *watakushi* is determined by the principle of causality in the final analysis. He, therefore, sees *kotoba* written by such an individual (*watakushi*) like 'a composite body of each and every transparent spectre' (あらゆる透明な幽霊の複合体) as a mere manifestation of the collective notion, which we can share only to some extent. As Kant indicated that 'when we think we do something by our free will, we do so only because of our unawareness of its being determined by external causes', we may say that Miyazawa cool-headedly faces up to the reality of the crucial gap between *langue* and *parole* which Saussure advocated. This nihilistic

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<sup>52</sup> 'Haru to shura' is translated by Sarah M. Strong and Karen Colligan as 'Spring and Ashura' in *Masterworks of Miyazawa Kenji—Poems and Fairy Tales*, Tokyo: Sanmark shuppan, 2002, 12–14.

perspective of his self-image and the scepticism towards *kotoba* uttered by such a being as *watakushi* (the phenomenon of ‘the single illumination of karma’s alternating current lump’) unfolds in the phrases of ‘Haru to shura’. His selfhood (*watakushi*) is depicted as an Ashura, the lowest deity who is derived from the malevolent spirit/deity of Hinduism. The Ashura embodies human nature in acts such as fighting, battle, fury, force or violence in Buddhism cosmology. In ‘Haru to shura’, when *watakushi* had lost his ‘true words’ (まことのことば); the world of his ‘mental sketch’ was surrounded by clouds entwined by ‘akebi tendrils’, ‘tangle of wild rose’ and ‘humus marsh’. And, at that very moment when the true words were lost, he turns into an Ashura. The Ashura who lost his true words has nothing else to do but ‘spitting’, ‘gnashing’ and ‘pacing’ ‘at the bottom of April’s shining atmospheric strata’.<sup>53</sup> In the world without ‘the true words’, his ‘sadness deepens, blue into blue’ (かなしみは青々ふかく) and he realises again that the true words are not found anywhere. The scenes that surround him appear to him ‘double’ in this world.<sup>54</sup> In the end, all he could do is to shed his bitter tears on the ground.<sup>55</sup> Here, we notice that there is a striking contrast between the world where the true words are lost and the actual world ‘at the bottom of April’s shining atmospheric strata’. For instance, the steel gray of his consciousness contrasts markedly with ‘April’s shining atmospheric strata’ in ‘glittering’ spring. The ‘flattery’s twisted pattern’ out of Ashura’s consciousness contrasts starkly with a ‘ZYPRESSEN’ (cypress) tree which stands as if it were ‘a row of spring’, whose treetop

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<sup>53</sup> *Shigatsu no kisō no hikari no soko o/Tsubakishi hagishiri yukiki suru/Ore wa hitori no shura nanoda* (四月の基層の光の底を 唾しはぎしりゆききする おれはひとりの修羅なのだ) Miyazawa, ‘Haru to shura’, in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 1*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1985, 29.

<sup>54</sup> *Subete nijū no fūkei o* (すべて二重の風景を) Miyazawa, ‘Haru to shura’, in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 1*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1985, 31.

<sup>55</sup> *Makoto no kotoba wa kokoninaku/Shura no namida wa tsuchi ni furu* (まことのことばはここになく/修羅のなみだはつちにふる) Miyazawa, ‘Haru to shura’, in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 1*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1985, 31.

is where ‘holy crystal winds traverse’.<sup>56</sup> The tree ‘ZYPRESSEN’ is conical in shape, and its scientific name, ‘sempervirens’ refers to ‘live forever’. On the other hand, ‘ZYPRESSEN’ in Greek mythology is related to Pluto’s underworld and death. As we can see, ‘ZYPRESSEN’ connotes a paradoxical view between life and death, which may be considered as a boundary line between life and death. Thus, the poignant sorrow of Miyazawa who dwells in the world where the true words are lost is condensed ironically into this poem. However, after realizing *watakushi* (selfhood) as an Ashura who lost the real words and thus became a mere manifestation of the collective notion that is expressed as an alternating phenomenon called the mental sketch ‘which seems to be common only in a certain degree to all of us’; Miyazawa still continues to search for ‘real happiness (*hontō no saiwai*)’ as if he was Giovanni who could not identify what is real happiness either. In reality, he accepts the fact that everything is determined by external causalities as the mental sketch and that the individual (*watakushi*) cannot help turning into a phantom entity like ‘a composite body of each and every transparent spectre’. But, he never stops getting ‘to the bottom of everything and find out what will make people happy’ through his act of writing in his literary universe.

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<sup>56</sup> *Tengoku moyō* (天国模様) and ZYPRESSEN, *haru no ichiretsu* (ZYPRESSEN 春のいちれつ); *seihari no kaze ga ikikai* (聖玻璃の風が行き交ひ) Miyazawa, ‘Haru to shura’, in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 1*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1985, 29–30. For more detailed arguments for this matter, see Mita Munesuke, *Miyazawa Kenji: Sonzai no matsuri no naka e* (宮沢賢治 存在の祭りの中へ), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001, 100–127.

**Nakahara Chūya: The world of objects that have not been named yet (*Meiji izen no sekai*)**

それにしても私は憎む、  
対外意識にだけ生きる人々を。  
—パラドクサルな人生よ。

But still, I hate people who only keep up appearances—  
Paradoxical human life <sup>57</sup>

Nakahara Chūya, ‘Shuragai banka’ (1930)

Nakahara Chūya inherited the predisposition to harbour a strong distrust of the modern language from Miyazawa Kenji. *Geijutsu-ron oboegaki* (芸術論覚え書 Notes on Art)<sup>58</sup> is one of the most crucial essays/notes on poetics written by Chūya. It is assumed that this poetics was written when Chūya contributed three articles on the complete works of Miyazawa to literary journals around 1935. It is also presumed that at that time Chūya wrote *Miyazawa Kenji no sekai* (宮沢賢治の世界 The World of Miyazawa Kenji), an article that was not published during his lifetime. It is very interesting that, in *Miyazawa Kenji no sekai*, he extracted the several passages from the first part of *Geijutsu-ron oboegaki*, stating: ‘If Miyazawa Kenji had written an essay on art, he might remark the following.’<sup>59</sup> It opens with the following remark:

- It is good if we could feel the hand that is the mere object before we

<sup>57</sup> Nakahara Chūya, ‘An Elegy for the Town of Shura’ (*Shuragai banka* 修羅街輓歌), in Ōoka Shōhei et al. (eds), *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 1 kan*, 105.

<sup>58</sup> This was one of Chūya’s essays/notes on poetics unpublished during his lifetime. Nakahara Chūya, ‘Geijutsu-ron oboegaki’ (芸術論覚え書), in Ōoka Shōhei et al. (eds), *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 4 kan* (中原中也全集第4巻), Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 139–153.

<sup>59</sup> Nakahara Chūya, ‘Miyazawa Kenji no sekai’ (宮沢賢治の世界), in Ōoka Shōhei et al. (eds), *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 4 kan* (中原中也全集第4巻), Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 154–155.

recognize it as a hand or before we utter the term (*meiji* 名辞), ‘hand’, when we make a statement such as ‘This is a hand.’<sup>60</sup>

- If a term comes to the mind of an artist quickly, it should be said that it is unfortunate for him/her. The more it comes to our mind quickly, the more our consciousness attaches itself to the secondary consciousness which deals with the concept such as ‘One has to make money’.<sup>61</sup>
- Fixed ideas (*koteikannen* 固定観念) ruin artists. The reason why not everyone becomes an artist is that far too many people are trapped by stereotypical views. No one can avoid embracing fixed ideas entirely. While artists embrace fixed ideas under certain conditions, most of us unconditionally have some fixed ideas.<sup>62</sup>

It will be clear from these excerpts that Chūya had strong doubts about the ambiguous nature of a linguistic sign. As Saussure indicated, most of us would accept that ‘the link connecting a given acoustic image with a specific concept and conferring upon it its value as a sign is radically arbitrary.’<sup>63</sup> Saussure stresses that we must not dissociate what is associated in the linguistic sign (i.e. the material side and the mental side, that is, sounds and concepts). He summarizes as follows: ‘The concept becomes a quality of

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<sup>60</sup> 『これは手だ』と『手』という名辞を口にする前に感じてゐる手、その手が感じてゐられよばよい。」 Ibid., 154.

<sup>61</sup> 「名辞が早く脳裡に浮かぶといふことは、尠くも芸術家にとっては不幸だ。名辞が早く浮かぶといふことは、『かせがねばならぬ』といふ、二次的意識に属する。」 Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> 「芸術を衰褪させるものは、固定観念である。誰もが芸術家にならなかつたといふわけは、云ってみれば誰もが固定観念を余りに抱いたといふことである。誰しも全然固定観念を抱かないわけには行かぬ。芸術家にあつては固定観念が謂はば条件反射的に抱かれてゐるのに反して、芸術家以外では無条件反射的に抱かれてゐると云ふことが出来る。」 Ibid., 155.

<sup>63</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistic*, 76a.

the <acoustic> substance, as sonority becomes a quality of the conceptual substance.’<sup>64</sup> Saussure goes on to explain that while ‘they [concept and acoustic image] will both be inside the subject, both be mental, both centred on the same mental spot by their association’; ‘there is indeed an object which is outside the subject’.<sup>65</sup> Here, we should recall Saussure’s remarks: ‘Never has any society known its language other than as a product more or less perfected by preceding generations and to be taken just as it is. In other words, we recognize a historical fact at the origin of every language state.’ He acutely concludes that ‘the language, considered at any moment, however far back in time, is always an inheritance from the preceding moment.’<sup>66</sup> In the same way, Chūya advocates that the artists must feel an object that is outside us before we utter its name, which entails both an acoustic image and a certain degree of concept, that is, its fixed idea—‘an inheritance from the preceding moment’.

His views have much in common with those of Nakagami Kenji when he remarks what constitutes grass, that is, the substance of grass, may not be grass itself as an object but merely our act of naming an object ‘*kusa*’ (that is, its vocalized sound, [kɔ̃sa]) in Japanese, and our act of naming objects is unconsciously bound, in some inexplicable way, by collective notions such as the logic of the modern nation-state or the rule of the Emperor, as it were, the fixed ideas. As mentioned above, Nakagami strives to make *kotoba* correspond to *mono* that is uncontaminated by its assigned name which has been tinged with the law/system of the collective. Chūya also recognizes *kotoba* as ‘a product more or less perfected by preceding generations and to be taken just as it is’.<sup>67</sup> It is precisely on such grounds that he lays a special emphasis on the entity before we

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 79a.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 74a–81a.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 94a.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 69a.



assign a name to it. Let us consider another quotation from *Miyazawa Kenji no sekai*.

- For artists, the world that should be the place where no modifications are perceived no matter how good or bad they are. For an artist, a hand is nothing more than a tangible object called hand, a face can be an object called face. The imaginary world of the artist is restricted by the only formula for assigning a name to an object: A=A. Thus, for an artist, the phenomenon that is exclusively regarded as interesting fuels his/her motivation to work.<sup>68</sup>

In this excerpt, too, it is clear that Chūya tries to see any being as a mere object before it is named. As Nakagami Kenji found the state of perfect unification between *kotoba* and *mono* in the narrative style of old women in Kishū, when Chūya says it is ‘interesting’, it implies nothing but ‘interesting’ which is not defined by any term that was bound by the preceding fixed ideas.

Similarly to Miyazawa Kenji, first, Chūya also bitterly accepts the real world of ‘the clever merchant’ by saying that ‘That’s life! Innocent bliss! Take things as they come! Everything and anything is good!’<sup>69</sup> But, after realizing this, he emphasizes that we must continue to perceive the object itself, using the language but at the same time questioning it, in order to break down stereotypes, that is to say, any fixed

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<sup>68</sup> 「芸術家にとって世界は、即ち彼の世界意識は、善いものでも悪いものでも、其の他如何なるモディフィケーションを冠せられるべきものではない。彼にとって「手」とは「手」であり、「顔」とは「顔」であり、即ち名辞するとしてA=Aであるだけの世界の内部に、彼の想像力は活動してゐるのである。従つて彼にあつては、『面白いから面白い』ことだけが、その仕事のモチーフとなる。」 Nakahara Chūya, ‘Miyazawa Kenji no sekai’, in Ōoka Shōhei et al. (eds), *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 4 kan*, 155.

<sup>69</sup> Nakahara Chūya, ‘Inochi no koe’, in *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 1 kan*, 135–139.

conceptualised idea which is inexorably associated with its naming as *kotoba*. It is indeed paradoxical that he, as a poet, had to continue to write his poems in the world of objects that have not been named. One of his unpublished poems, ‘It’s such a hardship!’ (‘Tsurai kotta, turaikotta!’ 辛いこつた辛いこつた!),<sup>70</sup> illustrates well his torn sentiment.

It’s Such A Hardship!

It’s such a hardship!

I was set up as a legendary poet.

In the world of people who taunt the language,

I was set up as a legendary poet.

(I was deprived of a piece of bread but was given a bunch of flower.)

Oh! In this world, sick people, caught the disease occurring in children,  
are swaggering around!

They are messed up in the head with the hollow words,

Their heart is filled with complete nonsense.

As artificial flowers bloom on their ambition,

People who got lost desperately cling to the artificial flowers.

By the way, the real flowers are not as talkative as artificial flowers.

Ah, it absolutely ludicrous that the creators of those artificial flowers are

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<sup>70</sup> Nakahara Chūya, ‘Tsurai kotta, turaikotta!’, in *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 2 kan*, 325–326.

making a lot of money.  
As I perceive now that we cannot see this as a ludicrous thing,  
To me, what the artificial flowers say sounds impertinent.  
The real flowers cannot tell a lie  
No matter how terribly they get tongue-tied.

In the first stanza, he describes our present world as the world of people who taunt the language (*genko ganrō sha* 言語玩弄者). He deplores the fact that he was set up as a legendary poet (*densetsu teki sonzai* 伝説的存在) by these people who downplay the language. In the second stanza, he points out that those people cannot make anything but artificial flowers (*zōka* 造花), which bloom on their desires. For this reason, people who have lost their way are glad of these fake flowers. Chūya ridicules the people who do not care about the language as clever merchants. However, he cannot talk as smartly as they do. Then, he uses real flowers as a metaphor for a poet who has become tongue-tied. In the final stanza, he concludes this short poem with the remark that, even though the real flowers slur their words, the real flowers cannot lie as much as the artificial flowers.<sup>71</sup>

Having observed the works of Nakagami, Betsuyaku, Miyazawa and Chūya from their perception of disbelieving *kotoba*, I would like to convey the conclusion that these literati perceived the language as the collective notion that was inevitably tinged with fixed ideas from the past. They theoretically accept this generalization that originated from the collective aspect of language as the external causalities that restrict their

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

personal autonomy to choose their actions. Nakagami or Betsuyaku found this universal generalization in the Japanese standard language, which was redefined by the Western democracies in postwar Japan. For Miyazawa, this was perceived as a mere ‘mental sketch’ which seems to be common only in a certain degree to all of us ‘at the root of the karmic covenant of space-time’.<sup>72</sup> Chūya also accepted various causalities that were derived from ‘the world of the shrewd merchants’.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, they did not accept their circumstances from the one-dimensional point of view, and found two aspects to a matter at the same time. Nakagami and Betsuyaku thought about their own actions from the viewpoint of people being left out of society. Miyazawa described himself as Ashura who was groping for his true words at the verge of an abyss. Similarly, Chūya depicted himself as a poet who had become tongue-tied in the world of people who taunt the language. In my understanding of their attempts, these writers seemed to possess their freedom which ‘is synonymous to being *causa sui*, self-motivated, subjective, and autonomous.’<sup>74</sup> As they deeply reflected on their actions from the perspective of both sides of a matter and recognized their own evil/immoral side, their freedom appeared as their continuous self-determination to choose their actions which ties in with their moral responsibility. In order to find their true identities and set new values upon them, they never stopped searching for their own ‘true words’ within the limits of the universal generalization of language. Viewed in this light, their endless attempt to seek their true words through their act of writing can be regarded as a reflection of their autonomy to choose their actions according to the situation at any given time. Their attempts, however, fell into an ironical paradox as

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<sup>72</sup> ‘Introduction to “Spring and Ashura”’ is translated by Roger Pulvers in *Eigo de yomu Miyazawa Kenji shishū*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1997, 14–23.

<sup>73</sup> Nakahara Chūya, ‘Inochi no koe’, in *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 1 kan*, 137–138.

<sup>74</sup> Karatani, *Transcritique on Kant and Marx*, 115.

they had to cling to their incomplete but only means, that is, the very language they disbelieved. In the following chapter, let us enlarge our discussion into these writers' awareness of the individual body as a means to unlearn the fixed ideas that hide in our language as generalized notions.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BODY (*NIKUTAI*) IN MODERN JAPANESE LITERATURE

In the previous chapters, we have observed the manner in which modern Japanese literati express their distrust of the Japanese language in their works when they regard it as a collective notion that inhibits their autonomous freedom to choose their actions. When Nakagami, Betsuyaku, Miyazawa and Chūya attempted to seek their own identities by giving new values to them through their act of writing, the language was perceived as a collective product that not only generalized the individual circumstances but also restricted their autonomy construed as the continuous self-determination according to the situation at the time. They considered Japanese words as words that were tinged with collective notions that could not perceive the realities of people who were kept out of the process of Japanese modernity. In this chapter, I would like to examine the manner in which modern Japanese writers/artists as well as Nakagami Kenji perceive their individual body (*nikutai*) as the foundation of their thought in order to dismantle the fixed notions that were tinged with *kotoba*.

The perception of *kotoba* held by Nakagami generates conflicts between dependence on others and self-autonomy forever, and it became the prime force of his writing. Accordingly, Nakagami Kenji regards his act of writing as a never-ending task as if it were aspiring to the ceaseless hell. On this matter, Nakagami Kenji's ambivalent attitude towards writing can also be regarded as two attitudes: the strong scepticism towards modern language—a manifestation of a collective notion—and the esteem for the body—a reflection of an individual situation. In other words, Nakagami Kenji's search for his autonomous selfhood through his act of writing lies in close relation with

the conflict between *kotoba* and *nikutai*, to be precise, the carnal body as an object. I will argue that modern Japanese writers, especially, Sakaguchi Ango, Nakahara Chūya and the postwar existentialist writers have much in common with Nakagami Kenji in their attitudes that show a strong distrust of *kotoba* which is inextricably linked with the emphasis on the body. Then, I would like to attempt to extend this observation into the contemporary playwrights in the 1960s.

Saussure emphasized that ‘one must not dissociate what is associated in the linguistic sign [the concept and the acoustic image]’.<sup>1</sup> He summarized that ‘the concept becomes a quality of the <acoustic> substance, as sonority becomes a quality of the conceptual substance.’<sup>2</sup> He went on to say: ‘Only as long as the association remains are we dealing with a concrete linguistic object.’<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that Saussure compared the association between the two elements that comprise language with human beings who are also made up of two elements: body and soul.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, we need frequently to remind ourselves of his following remarks: ‘Never has any society known its language other than as a product more or less perfected by preceding generations and to be taken just as it is. In other words, we recognize a historical fact at the origin of every language state. [· · ·] [T]he language, considered at any moment, however far back in time, is always an inheritance from the preceding moment.’<sup>5</sup> The points made so far apply in principle to Nakagami Kenji’s and Nakahara Chūya’s perception of *kotoba* and *mono*. In Chapter V, we saw that Nakagami Kenji found the

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<sup>1</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), Saussure’s *Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistic*, 79a.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 80a.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 78a–79a.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 94a.

state of perfect unification between *kotoba* and *mono* in the narrative style of the old women in Kishū. He attempted to regard *kotoba* as *mono*, which is not tinged with the collective notion such as the *écriture* of the Emperor. Similarly, Nakahara Chūya advocated that the artists must feel an external object before we utter its name, which is inevitably coloured by some fixed ideas. In addition to this kind of scepticism towards *kotoba*, Nakagami, as a contemporary writer, talks about his obsession with his body in his first collection of essays, *Tori no yōni kemono no yōni* (鳥のように獣のよ  
うに Like a Bird or a Beast, 1976).<sup>6</sup> For the moment, let us look closely at Nakagami Kenji's perception of body.

### **Nakagami Kenji: Body as *mono* (an object)**

Hirano Ken (1907–1978) talked about the antinomy in I-novelists from the late Meiji to the early Shōwa era.<sup>7</sup> He explained that when their works were advanced, the artists' lives were destroyed; on the other hand, when they conformed rationally to society and settled down, they were unable to write anything. According to Hirano, for example, Shimazaki Tōson wrote *Shinsei* (New Life, 1918–1919) that deals with his own autobiographical love affair: an extra-marital relation with his niece. On the other hand, Shiga Naoya lost his creative urge when he found balance in his life. Itō Sei (1905–1969) developed this analysis further and concluded that while struggling with the process of Western modernization, Japanese writers tried to secure their standpoint on the perception of either '*mu*' (the impermanence of all things) or '*zen*' (all) in life,

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<sup>6</sup> Nakagami, 'Sakka to nikutai' (作家と肉体), in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 200.

<sup>7</sup> Hirano Ken, 'Shishōsetsu no niritu haihan', in *Hirano Ken zenshū* Vol. 2, Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 143–163. The original text first appeared in Hirano Ken, *Geijutsu to Jisseikatsu*, Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1958.



mainly focusing on the former — transient and empty.<sup>8</sup> As a result, it produced the binary frame such as ‘*shi*’ (death) or ‘*kakumei*’ (revolution), that is, either social escapism towards self-destruction and its culmination, suicide; or desperate resistance to the oppressive state as a revolutionist.<sup>9</sup> The former type is well known as, in Itō Sei’s term, *hametsu gata* writers who were typified by Kasai Zenzō (1887–1928), Kamura Isota (1887–1933) or Dazai Osamu (1909–1948) and the like.<sup>10</sup>

Taken in this light, it seems to me that Nakagami Kenji tried to shake himself free from such polarization, which modern writers fell into in the past. Nakagami wrote about the relation between work and writing as a profession in *Tori no yōni kemono no yōni*.<sup>11</sup> Admitting his distrust of *kotoba* as we have discussed, he worked at Haneda International Airport as a labourer (a cargo-handler) in the early 1970s. During this period, although he also struggled with his dilemma between ‘*geijutsu*’ (art) and ‘*jisseikatsu*’ (real life) which Hirano posed as above, Nakagami had actively confronted ambivalence between being a labourer using his body as an undeniable fact and being a novelist who wrote novels using *kotoba* as a fictional device. He called his experience at Haneda ‘half suicide’ as if it were the suicide of his sensitivity. He regarded his physical work as an attempt to become a blockhead, and said that he dared himself to commit half suicide to become a blockhead in order to unlearn the collective notion which is derived from *kotoba* and discover the true introspective nature of ‘self’. Nakagami dared to stir up the community of his literary contemporaries and regarded them as fragile armchair theorists who lack the experience of being this kind of

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<sup>8</sup> Itō Sei, *Kindai nihonjin no hassō no shokeishiki*, 39–71. The original text first appeared in Itō Sei, *Shōsetsu no ninshiki*, Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1955.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 34–36.

<sup>10</sup> Itō Sei, ‘Kindai nihon sakka no seikatsu’, in *Kindai nihonjin no hassō no shokeishiki*, 98.

<sup>11</sup> Nakagami, ‘Shohatsu no mono’, 193–195.

blockhead. Persisting in his radicalism, he kept casting a coldly critical eye upon himself, addressing the fundamental reason for being a novelist, and had no other recourse but to keep writing as a professional writer.

He remembers the times when he led a wild life indulging in modern jazz and drugs, he endured heavy labour at the airport, and he was soaked in drinks. He describes these deeds as playing intentionally a double game between body-contempt and body-admiration,<sup>12</sup> or rather he admits that it might be self-destruction. This self-destruction, however, is different from the one that *hametsu gata* writers fell into as a result of negative social escapism. While he chose a last resort, that is, the act of writing, Nakagami positively decided to destroy himself, in other words, to commit a ‘half suicide’. Nakagami explains that even after he chose to become a serious writer, the sense of imbalance never went away. The reason for this is that, according to Nakagami, his body is too overabundant to control or to keep in balance.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, Nakagami’s experience as a cargo handler significantly contributed towards generating an important insight into recognizing his body that is an object as an undeniable reality. Nakagami named this an ideology of object. An illustration from ‘Sakka to nikutai’ (作家と肉体 Novelist and Body) in *Tori no yōni kemono no yōni* may be informative.

An object, for example, can be cargo or machinery for loading cargo at the airport. The object is the law of nature. The object says words.

The object exists here undoubtedly. How can I tell you that this fact is a

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<sup>12</sup> Nakagami, ‘Sakka to nikutai’, in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 200.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

sheer ideology, which cannot be made light of. [...] <sup>14</sup>

At Haneda Airport, there is sheer naked nature. [...] and it's very violent.

[...] It always reminds you of the existence of your very body. [...]

The real physical labour with sweat pouring off us is somehow different from the one we think of in our time. It should be a state in which we are able to free ourselves from what is called 'work' because we do not need to call it 'work' anymore. It should be equal to a flawless state of how human beings exist in the world with supreme bliss.

[...]

This is what is called the right thing.

I like physical work. I like construction labour. Physical labour may be one that is closest to the archetype of labour. As the sun is rising, we start working. As the sun is going down, we stop working. Why don't I live like that? Why have I started to write a novel? [...] Body exists. An object exists. Every experience should be perceived not by our conscience, mentality or knowledge but by flesh and blood.

The object, the cargo, exists here in front of me. I touch it, lift it up and move it. What we call the archetype of labour may be described as a rapport or communication between people and objects. That should be physical ecstasy. We exist in front of the object, and we realize that we ourselves exist as an object likewise. <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 「物、ここでは、たとえば一個の貨物であり、空港内であつかう貨物搭載用の機材であったりする。そして、自然である。物は、言葉を語り、一個の貨物がそこに確かに在ることが、けっしてあなどれない思想そのものだという実感を、どう伝えたらよいか。」 *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>15</sup> 「羽田では、自然がむきだした、ということである。… 言ってみれば、肉体が絶えずついてまわるのである。… 汗水たらす労働とは、今の、われわれの時代の労働という

From this excerpt, we can say with fair certainty that Nakagami recognized his body as an undeniable object, and this perception of object became one of the foundations of his literature. Eve Zimmerman also made several important points on this matter. Nakagami's perception of body is well illustrated in *Karekinada*. Let us consider the following translation by Zimmerman:

The sun penetrated Akiyuki as if he were a tree in the landscape. The wind caressed him as it did the blades of grass. While working Akiyuki understood that he became an object that couldn't think about or know itself, couldn't see or reply, couldn't listen to music ... Akiyuki was no longer Akiyuki but rather the love that he felt towards the sky, the sun in the sky, the mountains warmed by the sun, the houses, the illuminated leaves, the earth, stones, each detail of the landscape around him. He was each and everything. To Akiyuki working as a laborer, the sun-soaked landscape was like music. Even the sounds of the cicadas which until just a moment ago had sounded like the Buddhist chants *namu-amida-butsu* or *namu-myō-hō-rengē-kyō* had now become the breath of the mountain. Akiyuki was breath ...<sup>16</sup>

Zimmerman describes the consecutive construction works of the protagonist, Akiyuki, as a labourer in *Karekinada* as follows: 'Nakagami breaks through Akiyuki's tortured deliberations about himself (in which he attempts to read himself through the tangled,

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言葉とは別のものかもしれない。労働者がいつの日か解き放たれて名づけることもいらなくなつた状態、ただ、人間としか言いようのない十全な存在の至福の労働である。・・・まっとうとはそのことである。肉体労働が好きである。土方が好きである。それが労働の原型にもっとも近いと思うのである。日と共に働き、日と共に働き止める。何故、それに自足できず、小説など書いてしまったのだろう。肉体が在る。物が在る。物の体験、経験とは、知識や心理や意識でするのではなく、まず生身の肉体がするはずである。物、貨物がここにある。この貨物に触れ、持ちあげ、動かす。労働の原型にあるのは物との交感であり、物質的恍惚とでも言うやつである。そして、物を前にして、自分もまた、物として、物質としてまず在ることに気づく。」 Ibid., 203.

<sup>16</sup> Zimmerman, 'In the Trap of Words', 144.

metaphoric relations of the family) and suspends him in a realm of pure sensation.’<sup>17</sup> Nakagami ‘continues to test the boundaries of the self by placing Akiyuki in the figurative, mystic landscape’, that is, the place that is ruled by the ideology of *mono*. The world of *mono* may be equated with the world where Nakahara Chūya does not give any name to any object, that is to say, the world of objects that have not been named. It seems to me that Nakagami produced a series of works known as Kumano saga, coming and going ceaselessly between the two worlds: the tangible world of *mono*—the undeniable reality in front of us—and the fictional world of *kotoba*—‘the mental imprint of the sound’,<sup>18</sup> that is to say, an arbitrary association made by the mind between an acoustic image and a concept in the individual subject. When Nakagami portrayed the sheer reality of his outcast environments through his act of writing, he had to return to the world of *mono* in order to unlearn the fixed ideas that were tinged by the universally generalized words in the Japanese language as we have observed in the previous chapter.

When he wrote an essay, ‘Shohatsu no mono’ (A Novice at Writing Novels), in 1974, Nakagami quit his labouring job at Haneda Airport and began to commit himself more fully to his writing career; he was 28. Nakagami likened himself to Sakaguchi Ango who aroused the morale of the people at the time, urging them to keep falling into decadence which is equated to the continual rejection of ‘true principle’ made by others as ‘an already fixed and stationary existence’. Nakagami wrote:

In the same way as Ango who inspired people to keep falling into  
decadence immediately after defeat in the War, I talk to not other people

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Eisuke Komatsu (ed.), *Saussure's Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistic*, 74a–75a.

but myself, 'Go back to the world of *mono*, and live through your life now while you are taking umbrage at any meaning in your life and are still clinging to the language in which you are barely able to believe.'<sup>19</sup>

### **The Body explored by Sakaguchi Ango and the postwar existentialist writers**

In Chapter III, we have seen the similarity between Sartre's intersubjectivity, which was demonstrated by the postwar existentialist writers, and the continuous search for autonomy, which was expressed in the works of Nakagami Kenji. Both Sartre's notion of configurations posed by the postwar existentialists and the endless search for autonomy found in the works of Nakagami Kenji function as a fundamental concept which is perpetually being conceived now in this time and space. As it is clear from the excerpt quoted in the previous section, when Nakagami was around 28 years old, he was aware of the worldview of Sakaguchi Ango who shared his thoughts with the postwar Japanese writers and Sartre who were considered as the writers of carnal literature. Sakaguchi Ango who belongs to the school of the postwar existentialist writers has also much in common with the 1960s theatrical artists due to his strong distrust of language, which is inextricably linked with the emphasis on the body. Sakaguchi Ango had challenged the morale of the people immediately after defeat in the War by urging them to keep falling into decadence. Both the postwar existentialists and the dramatists in the 1960s confront the conflict between one's self-determination and one's leaning towards the collective. Their acts are recognizable as something that

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<sup>19</sup> 「安吾が敗戦直後、随ちよ、随ちよ、と人を鼓舞したように、ぼくは、人にむかってではなくこの自分自身にむかって、いま、生きよ、物の世界にもどれと言ってみる。『人生の意味』に不快を感じながら、最後の一ミリほどで言葉を信じて、である。」 Nakagami, 'Shohatsu no mono', in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 195.

is perpetually being negotiated with the historically changing environment. Victor Koschmann quotes from the article written by Tsurumi and Kuno, and summarizes the sentiment of postwar writers as follows:

As Tsurumi Shunsuke has observed, the postwar generation ‘witnessed the values they had believed in fade to the point of transparency.’ They became convinced of the ‘meaninglessness of all values,’ and concluded that ‘only when the self hurls forth passion will the world respond with meaning.’ This loss of faith in values, philosophies, and ideologies often correlated with new concern about defining and differentiating humanity from other forms of life. For many writers, it was only in the lowest common denominator of human existence that some glimmer of hope for the future could be perceived, and this often meant emphasizing the flesh rather than the spirit.<sup>20</sup>

Koschmann examines the work of Tamura Taijirō (1911–1983) whose works are well known as products of *nikutai bungaku* (carnal literature) at the time, and argues from textual evidence, namely, Tamura’s fiction entitled *Nikutai no mon* (*Gateway to the Flesh*).<sup>21</sup> In his book entitled *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, Douglas N. Slaymaker scrutinizes the manner in which the postwar writers such as Sakaguchi Ango, Noma Hiroshi as well as Tamura redefined the conceptions of the body; and regard the body as a means to contravene ‘the boundaries of state and religious authority’.<sup>22</sup> He attempts to clarify the manner in which Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophy of existence becomes equated with the physicality of postwar Japan as expressed by the postwar existentialist writers (*sengo-ha*). Slaymaker points out that ‘the body became an obsessive object of focus in the years following Japan’s defeat for a complex of

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<sup>20</sup> Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 57.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 57–60.

<sup>22</sup> Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004, 1.

reasons.’ The following are three major reasons:

1. [The obsession with the body] resulted from ‘the sheer physicality of everyday life — the demands of bodily needs — which, for urban populations in particular, was given over to securing food and finding shelter’.
2. ‘[T]he body offered antidotes to the bankruptcy of the traditional and military values which characterized the previous fifteen years of war.’ ‘[Many Japanese people’s] celebration of the carnal body (*nikutai* 肉体 “physical/carnal body”) suggests a punning contrast to the national polity (*kokutai* 国体 “national body”), the focus of their desecration.’
3. ‘[T]his obsession with the body was also, in part, a response to the wartime censorship that made it extremely difficult to write of the erotic, of the political, and of wartime deprivations.’<sup>23</sup>

Slymaker concludes as follows: ‘The confluence of these circumstances — wartime and postwar privations, the reaction to an individual-denying social order, and the constrictions of censorship — fostered the ubiquitous concern for the body in postwar Japan generally, and in postwar writing particularly.’<sup>24</sup> He quoted from Tamura’s article, ‘*Nikutai ga ningen de aru*’ (The human body is the human being), appeared in *Gunzō* (May 1947), and considered his assertion about ‘the place of the body’ to be crucial. This is how Tamura explains the issue:

“Thought” is, at this time threatening to push us down; it does nothing else. “Thought” has, for a long time, been draped with the authoritarian robes of a despotic government, but now the body is rising up in opposition. The distrust of “thought” is complete. We now believe in nothing but our own bodies. Only the body is real. The body’s weariness, the body’s fatigue—only these are real. It is because of all these things that we

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 1–2.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 2.



realize, for the first time, that we are alive.<sup>25</sup>

Commenting on this excerpt, Slaymaker explains that Tamura Taijirō rejected ‘the ideology of militarist state’ and he attempted to topple the militarist control by using the individual body as a means of revolution.<sup>26</sup>

Slaymaker also investigated the notion of physicality expressed by Sakaguchi Ango. He points out that ‘Ango admonishes unrepentant prioritising of the physical as a countermeasure to militarist control and as a means to achieve his ideal society.’<sup>27</sup> He goes on to explain: ‘In 1946 [Ango] paired the recently available translations of Jean-Paul Sartre with Tamura’s writings and suggested that together they constituted a “literature of flesh,” because they share a representational strategy of the individual that appeared independently of one another, in different countries.’<sup>28</sup> He continues: ‘Sakaguchi Ango, when he praised Sartre’s short story “Intimité” (translated as “Mizuirazu” in the October 1946 issue of *Sekai bungaku*) for the manner in which it was “thinking through the physical,” marked the point at which the two streams converged.’<sup>29</sup> Slaymaker examines Ango’s short essay, ‘Nikutai jitai ga shikō suru’ (The Body in Itself Thinks),<sup>30</sup> and arrives at the following conclusion:

In Ango’s important short essay entitled “Nikutai ga shikō suru,” he

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>26</sup> For further details of ‘the literature of flesh (*nikutai bungaku*) proposed by Tamura, see Douglas N. Slaymaker, ‘Tamura Taijirō’, in *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004, 43–70. See also Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 57–60.

<sup>27</sup> Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. He examines ‘Darakuron’ (On decadence) and ‘Hakuchi’ (The Idiot), and shows in full detail how Ango read the early works of Sartre and established the genre of *nikutai bungaku* together with Tamura Taijirō. For detailed discussions, see Douglas N. Slaymaker, ‘Sakaguchi Ango’, in *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004, 99–130.

<sup>29</sup> Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Sakaguchi Ango, ‘Nikutai jitai ga shikō suru’, in *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū 14*, 576–578.

praises Sartre's "Intimité" for its focus on the carnal body and for doing away with the cerebral. The thrust of his argument is succinctly reproduced in his title: "The Body Thinks." Ango wrote of Sartre's short story as though it were *nikutai bungaku*, cut from the same cloth as the fiction of Tamura (and his own). His characterization of Sartre as a writer of the body was to set the tone for subsequent readings, by others, of Sartre's fiction in Japan. This reading established Sartre as a writer of carnal erotic fiction. Ango suggested that Sartre's characters [appeared in 'Intimité'] think only through their bodies, that they are only *nikutai*, displaying no abstract spirit at all, and he praises "Intimité" for accomplishing what other postwar writers had unsuccessfully attempted. With Ango's compelling essay, writers in Japan felt they had found in Sartre a comrade engaged in a common project.<sup>31</sup>

Slaymaker stresses the point that 'Sartre's fiction was extremely important to postwar Japanese fiction because it was read as displaying concern for the body and its carnality, and for its impatience with abstractions.'<sup>32</sup> The point he emphasizes is the carnal body 'that thinks, that tells the story' 'by highlighting the personal and concrete against the abstractions of the wartime *seishin* (spirit)'.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Slaymaker revealed the manner in which Sartre's philosophy is equated with the postwar existentialist writers including Sakaguchi Ango.

Since Slaymaker, has already shown in detail how '[t]he physical body in Ango focuses the elemental and provides the means for liberation' or how 'it maintains the means for *daraku* [(decadence)]', I do not elaborate on Ango's emphasis on the physical body here.<sup>34</sup> Slaymaker explains that '[t]he irony of [Ango's] imagery is that the liberation and community of humanity by *daraku* leads to a place of solitude and

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<sup>31</sup> Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> For details see Slaymaker, 'When Sartre Was an Erotic Writer: Body, Nation and Existentialism in Japan after the Asia-Pacific War', *Japan Forum* (14:1 2002): 77–101.

<sup>34</sup> For further details of this matter, see Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 99–130.

dissolution of that individual, physical body.’<sup>35</sup> Here, let us look briefly at the opening paragraph of *Hakuchi*, one of Ango’s major works, which was first published in 1946.

Various species lived in the house: human beings, a pig, a dog, a hen, a duck. But actually there was hardly any difference in their style of lodging or in the food they ate. It was a crooked building like a storehouse. The owner and his wife lived on the ground floor, while a mother and her daughter rented the attic. The daughter was pregnant, but no one knew who was responsible.

The room that Izawa rented was in a hut detached from the main house. It had formerly been occupied by the family’s consumptive son, who had died. Even if it had been assigned to a consumptive pig, the hut could hardly have been considered extravagant. Nevertheless, it had drawers, shelves, and a lavatory.<sup>36</sup>

From the above excerpt, in the same manner as Ango’s essay, ‘FARCE ni tsuite’ (On Farce, 1932) which we have observed in Chapter III, we can see Ango’s sheer perspective which accepts the bare fact of human beings as it is. Ango depicts an idiot, a prostitute, a madman, a disabled person or any suppressed person as they really are. The reader finds no empty rhetoric or exaggeration but merely the existential description of a harsh reality in Ango’s fictional universe. Moreover, we may even find some sort of spice of humour in them. Ango equates human beings with animals and accepts them alike for what they are. There exists a sheer reality of all flesh, all animate beings. A feeling of emptiness or decadence immediately after defeat in the War is symbolized through Ango’s solitary body in a devastated land. In *Hakuchi*, the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>36</sup> Sakaguchi Ango, *Hakuchi* (白痴), translated by George Saitō as *The Idiot*, in Ivan Morris (ed.), *Modern Japanese Stories—An Anthology*. Boston, Rutland, Vermont, Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1962, 384–415. Sakaguchi Ango, *Hakuchi*, in *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū 4*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1990, 7–40.

protagonist, Izawa spent a night with the idiot woman who was a runaway wife from the neighbouring house. Izawa talked to her and felt as follows:

“I do not dislike you,” Izawa began solemnly. “There are other ways, you know, of expressing love than by simple physical contact. The ultimate abode for us human beings is our birthplace, and in a strange way you seem to be living permanently in such a birthplace.” Of course there was no possibility of her understanding what he said. **But what, after all, were words? What real value did they have? And where did reality reside?** There was no evidence that it could be found even in human love. Where, if anywhere, could there be anything so real that it warranted a man’s devoting his entire passion to it? Everything was merely a false shadow.<sup>37</sup> [Emphasis mine]

In this excerpt, we can see the reality of the idiot woman who cannot express her thoughts by means of words. One may say that this indicates Ango’s distrust of language. Nishikawa Nagao also points out that the distrust of language is one of the major characteristics that are shared by the postwar existentialist writers.<sup>38</sup> Ango portrays Izawa’s sentiments under the extreme circumstances of the ruins of the war as follows:

War produces a strangely wholesome kind of amnesia. Its fantastic destructive power caused a century of change to take place in a single day, made last week’s events seem as if they had happened several years before and submerged the events of the previous year at the very bottom of one’s memory. [· · ·] **The feeble-minded woman too had become one of the multifarious fragments belonging to this wholesome amnesia.** Her face lay among the various other fragments: among the sticks and splinters on the site of the evacuated “people’s bar” in front of the railway station

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 396.

<sup>38</sup> Nishikawa Nagao, *Nihon no sengo shōsetsu: Haikyo no hikari*, 96.

where, until a couple of days before, people had been waiting in queues, among the holes in the nearby building that had been wrecked by a bomb, among the fire-ravaged ruins of the city.<sup>39</sup> [Emphasis mine]

The world of the feeble-minded woman, which can be called a world without words, symbolizes ‘the fire-ravaged ruins of the city’ that suffered ‘a strangely wholesome kind of amnesia’. In the world where everything is placed on a plane and is treated as nothing but a mere object, the only thing that stands out in Izawa’s mind at the time is the face and body of the feeble-minded woman. And this makes Izawa recognize the idiot woman’s existence as the absolute solitude which is ‘devoid of any thought’. Izawa’s mind is preoccupied with nothing but this very body of the idiot woman, that is to say, the realization of absolute solitude.

**There were no words, no screams, no groans; nor was there any expression.** She was not even aware of Izawa’s existence. If she were human, she would be incapable of such solitude. It was impossible that a man and a woman could be together in a closet with one of them entirely forgetting about the other. People talk of absolute solitude, but absolute solitude can exist only by one’s being aware of the existence of others. Absolute solitude could never be such a blind and unconscious thing as what Izawa was now witnessing. **This woman’s solitude was like a caterpillar’s—the ultimate in wretchedness. How unbearable it was—this anguish entirely devoid of any thought!**<sup>40</sup> [Emphasis mine]

Here in the ruins of the War, Izawa feels something that is beyond words when he perceives the feeble-minded woman as ‘[a] coma of the mind combined with a vitality

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<sup>39</sup> Sakaguchi Ango, *Hakuchi* (白痴), translated by George Saitō as *The Idiot*, in Ivan Morris (ed.), *Modern Japanese Stories—An Anthology*, 399–400.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

of the flesh<sup>41</sup> and realizes the absolute solitude of her existence. The above excerpt reminds me of the solitude of Miyazawa Kenji's Ashura which we have observed in Chapter III. When the poet had lost his 'true words', he turns into an Ashura who has nothing else to do but 'spitting', 'gnashing' and 'pacing' 'at the bottom of April's shining atmospheric strata'.<sup>42</sup> This sentiment of the absolute solitude may also be identified with Giovanni, the protagonist of *Ginga tetsudō no yoru* (Night on the Milky Way Train), who keeps searching for 'real happiness' and could not help feeling 'indescribably lonely' in the course of his 'Four-Dimensional-Milky-Way-Dream Train' journey. Similarly, enduring his absolute solitude, Nakahara Chūya lays special emphasis on his body, that is, the entity before we assign a name to it. In the first stanza of 'The Voice of the Living' ('Inochi no koe'), though the poet is endlessly searching for something essential for him, he has never been able to figure what he is looking for. At the end of the day, what is beating a path to his door is always his loneliness.<sup>43</sup> In the last line of this poem, after accepting his solitary circumstances that are determined by various causalities as typified by the world of the shrewd merchants, that he could not find his free will, he still insists on living according to his individual passionate spirit and attempts to destroy the world that is determined by external causes by using his own body. Let us see the last two line of 'Inochi no koe' again.

ゆふがた、空の下で、身一点に感じられれば、万事に於て文句はな

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 401.

<sup>42</sup> Miyazawa, 'Haru to shura', in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū 1*, Tokyo: Chikuma bunko, 1985, 29.

<sup>43</sup> 「僕に押寄せてゐるものは、何時でもそれは寂寞だ。」 Nakahara Chūya, 'Inochi no koe' (いのちの声), in Ōoka Shōhei et al. (eds), *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 1 kan* (中原中也全集第1巻), Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 135.

いのだ。<sup>44</sup>

If only I can perceive nothing but my single carnal body under the evening sky,

No more words are needed.

As if Miyazawa's Ashura who lost his true words paces around the ground or Chūya's solitary self, in *Hakuchi*, after the great air raid of March tenth in Tokyo, Izawa wanders aimlessly in the middle of the ruins.

The bombing ended. Izawa raised the crouching woman in his arms. [···] He was falling through space with a corpse in his arms. Nothing existed but the dark, dark, endless fall. Immediately after the bombing Izawa took a walk past the houses that has just been mowed down. In the ruins he saw a woman's leg that had been torn from her body, a woman's trunk with the intestines protruding, and a woman's severed head. Among the ruins of the great air raid of March tenth, Izawa had also wandered aimlessly through the still rising smoke. On all sides people lay dead like so many roast fowl. They lay dead in great clusters. Yes, they were exactly like roast fowl. They were neither gruesome nor dirty. Some of the corpses lay next to the bodies of dogs and were burned in exactly the same manner, as if to emphasize how utterly useless their deaths were. Yet these bodies lacked even the pathos implied in the expression "a dog's death." It was a case, not of people having died like dogs, but of dogs lying there in the ruins next to other objects, as though they were all pieces of roast fowl neatly arranged on a platter. Those four-legged things were not really dogs; still less were those two-legged objects human beings.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> 「ゆふがた、空の下で、身一点に感じられれば、万事に於て文句はないのだ。」 Nakahara Chūya, 'Inochi no koe', in *Nakahara Chūya zenshū dai 1 kan*, 139.

<sup>45</sup> Sakaguchi Ango, *Hakuchi* (白痴), translated by George Saitō as *The Idiot*, in Ivan Morris (ed.), *Modern Japanese Stories—An Anthology*, 403–404.

After this scene, Izawa and the feeble-minded woman were bombed on the day of the second great air raid, and managed to survive the massive fire. However, this narrow escape filled Izawa with ‘a sense of vacancy — a vacancy that came from a vast, ineffable wariness, from a boundless feeling of nothingness’. He could not help feeling that everything was ‘strangely insignificant and absurd’.<sup>46</sup> Izawa wanted to run away from the woman, but he was unable to escape. Nishikawa Nagao points out that the reason why Izawa could not abandon the woman was that the bare existence of this woman without words had become equated with his entire life at the time. As Slaymaker pointed out the existential aspect of Ango’s work before, Nishikawa also indicates that the theme of this short story is thought to be similar to the themes of Sartre in postwar France. Nishikawa explains that the postwar existentialists began with the realization that the world is absurd, and yet they resorted to the absurdity that they felt as an expression of their solidarity.<sup>47</sup> In the closing paragraph of *Hakuchi*, although Izawa was devoid of any hope for the future and could not do anything but to leave himself to the mercy of the ‘impartial judgment’ of ‘the gigantic love extended by the destructiveness of war’, he could still manage to show his own self-determination and self-responsibility: ‘Izawa decided that at daybreak he would wake the woman and without even a glance in the direction of the devastated area, they would set out for the most distant possible railway station in search of a roost.’<sup>48</sup>

Nishikawa adds that the works of Sakaguchi Ango were zealously read by the youth towards the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s. He suggests that the young people who

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>47</sup> Nishikawa Nagao, *Nihon no sengo shōsetsu—Haikyo no hikari*, 99.

<sup>48</sup> sakaguchi Ango, *Hakuchi* (白痴), translated by George Saitō as *The Idiot*, in Ivan Morris (ed.), *Modern Japanese Stories—An Anthology*, 415.



had experienced the brutal suppression of the student movements at the time have a great deal of empathy not only for Ango's radicalism and his rebellion against power but also his hopeless, absolute solitude.

Nakagami Kenji had also been involved with the student activism in his early twenties. Since Nakagami wrote two essays on Ango, namely, 'Sakaguchi Ango: Sora kakeru ahōdori' (Sakaguchi Ango: Albatross in Flight) written in 1976 and 'Sakaguchi Ango—Minami kara no hikari' (Sakaguchi Ango: The Light from the South) written in 1985, it is not too far from the truth to say that Nakagami Kenji was one of those campus activists who were ardent readers of Sakaguchi Ango in the late 60s and in the 70s. Let me also stress again that Nakagami Kenji found the state of perfect unification between *kotoba* and the body as *mono* in the narrative style of the old women in *Kishū*, and strove to regard *kotoba* as the body as closely as possible. It seems reasonable to conclude that, regarding Sakaguchi Ango's emphasis on the body, the points made by Slaymaker may also apply in principle to Nakagami Kenji.

### **Body explored by the contemporary playwrights in the 1960s and the 1970s**

On these grounds, I would like to suggest that the playwright, Betsuyaku Minoru appeared to share his view with the postwar existentialist writers as typified by Sakaguchi Ango. We should recall Betsuyaku's distrust of *kotoba* discussed in Chapter V. Betsuyaku's work emphasizes that an increasing number of abstract words were easily transformed into hollow language in modern society. In his book of critical essays, *Kotoba e no senjutsu* (The tactics towards language, 1972), Betsuyaku urges us to shift away from the literariness towards the dramatic representation or

theatricality. He criticizes the function of language found in literature as being hollow because it focuses attention on the question of how a discourse carries a logical meaning and reaches a conclusion on the basis of certain conventional rules. Compared with this, Betsuyaku asserts that the language function that is found in drama emphasizes the fact that an actor acts out an idea, which has not been given any fixed meaning yet.<sup>49</sup>

The theatre critic, Ōzasa Yoshio examines Betsuyaku's first play, *A and B and a Girl* (*A to B to hitori no onna*), which was written in 1961 during the tumultuous years of student activism.<sup>50</sup> Ōzasa points out that Betsuyaku's texts contain many words that are linked with the human body. He describes Betsuyaku's language as something carnal or material. Ōzasa explains that what the audience sees directly in the theatre is not an abstract theme but a concrete body of actors who become interrelated with a situation on the stage at the time. Let us look briefly at another example of Betsuyaku's texts written in the 1960s, one of his major plays, *Elephant*, which was first staged in 1962 and published in 1969. *Elephant* is a play about the issue of survivors of the atomic bombings known as *hibakusha*. The word elephant expresses the keloid scar of a *hibakusha* as a metaphor.

**Man:**

But listen, Uncle. You used to strip down and show off your keloid in the streets, didn't you? I remember those days. Your back, it shone.

**Invalid:**

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<sup>49</sup> Betsuyaku, *Kotoba e no senjutsu*, 91–102. I translated the summary of the following Betsuyaku's original text. 「演劇的な言語機能の、文学的な言語機能との相違は、往々にして、前者がそれを云う事実自体の重要性を問題にするのに対して、後者は云われた事の内容が完結して意味を持ち、その意味の重要性を問題にする、と云う点にある。」 For detailed arguments for Betsuyaku's interpretation of language and body, see Nishidō Kōjin et al., *Enshutsuka no shigoto—60 nendai, angura, engeki kakumei* (演出家の仕事—六〇年台・アンガラ・演劇革命), Tokyo: Renga shobō shinsha, 2006, 29–64.

<sup>50</sup> Ōzasa Yoshio, *Dōjidai engeki to gekisakka tachi*, 160–187.

[...] Yes, I didn't really mind that work first. The sightseers would come by, and I'd tell them about Hiroshima and what it had been like. I'd tell them a bit of a joke that would really get 'em where it hurts. And I'd think up new poses for their cameras. I'd take off my shirt, and then, all at once, a gasp of shock and surprise would rise from the crowd. That wasn't bad.<sup>51</sup>

Similar examples are abundant in Betsuyaku's early plays written in the 1960s as well as in *Elephant*. We can see, hinted in this extract from *Elephant*, how Betsuyaku's text in the 1960s was filled with the words tied to carnality. Moreover, Ōzasa explains that the carnality of the texts found in Betsuyaku's early plays may be an indispensable prerequisite for contemporary dramatists in the 1960s.<sup>52</sup> A theatre critic, Kan Takayuki (b. 1936) also points out that Betsuyaku's early plays such as *Elephant* (1962) or *The Little Match Girl* (1966) were at the vanguard of the rise of the small theatre movement in the late 1960s and in the 1970s.<sup>53</sup> For the flag-bearers of the small theatre movement, the body had developed into their central obsession in contrast to the written manuscripts that carried a logical meaning and the universally generalized words in the Japanese language.

Let us examine further the theatrical artists in the late 1960s and 1970s who illustrate

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<sup>51</sup> Betsuyaku Minoru, *Zō*, translated by David Goodman as *Elephant*, in *Concerned Theatre Japan*, (Volume 1 Number 3, Autumn 1970): 80. Betsuyaku Minoru, *Zō*, in Betsuyaku Minoru, *Macchi-uri no shōjo: Betsuyaku Minoru gikyoku-shū*, Tokyo: San'ichi shobō, 1969, 199–256. 「男：でもね、おじさん。叔父さんは街頭で裸になって背中ケロイドをみせてましたね。僕はあの時の事を覚えていますよ。叔父さんの背中には、ギラギラ光っていた。」 「病人：[...] そうさ、あれも最初は嫌な仕事じゃなかったな。俺は見物人にヒロシマの、あの時の様子を話してやったり、一寸気の利いた冗談を云って、笑わせたり、カメラのために新しいポーズを考えたりしたもんだ。俺がシャツを脱いで見物に背中を向けると、一斉にホホッと云うようなため息が聞こえる。それは悪くなかったよ。」

<sup>52</sup> Ōzasa Yoshio, *Dōjidai engeki to gekisakka tachi*, 163–164.

<sup>53</sup> Kan Takayuki, *Zōho sengo engeki: Shingeki wa norikoerareta*, 172–183.

the points that we have been considering.

In Chapter V, compared with the manner in which Nakagami Kenji expressed his scepticism towards the Japanese language in his early works, we have observed the distrust of the modern language which was conspicuous in the so-called ‘small theatre movement’ or ‘post-*shingeki* movement’ in the 1960s and the 1970s. As Nishikawa Nagao suggests,<sup>54</sup> after the 1960 student demonstration against the renewal of the U.S.–Japan Mutual Security Treaty, the sentiment of disillusionment with postwar Japanese democratic institutions became omnipresent in students’ lives, and the purpose of their life became obscure, losing the unshakable value or universal ideology. Under these circumstances, the contemporary playwrights in the 1960s searched for a new means of expressing their views. Their attitudes were often typified by absurd drama, which corresponded with the apathy, a sense of loss, and the frustration of the generation. Accordingly, many of the young theatrical dramatists who were the promulgators of the small theatre movement at the time had very similar reasons for denying the Japanese language. They regarded the Japanese language as a kind of fabrication or hoax, advocating that it was one of the invented modern systems that were borrowed from the West in varying degrees. Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, by denying *kotoba* that they could not trust, where did those young theatrical dramatists seek the basis for their theatrical acts? The answer was inevitably their body in themselves.

Slaymaker asserts that ‘an individual and erotic body that has long been a central component of the intellectual and literary tradition of Japan’,<sup>55</sup> or to put this assertion more concretely, ‘[t]he *nikutai bungaku* of the 1940s, which included Sartre’s fiction,

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<sup>54</sup> Nishikawa, *Nihon no sengo shōsetsu: Haikyo no hikari*, 279–295.

<sup>55</sup> Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 7.

quickly developed in the 1950s, and developed in the 1960s, into a more sophisticated philosophical conceptualization.’<sup>56</sup> Slaymaker explains that ‘[postwar Japanese writers’] reading of the body corresponds to Sartre’s in which, stated rudely and summarily, consciousness proceeds from an awareness of the body as thing, as physical object.’ These observations of the postwar writers’ awareness of the body were also evident in the Japanese contemporary theatrical artists during the age of the student movements. This section suggests that their appreciation of the body can be regarded as a countermeasure against the established convention of modern drama/literature at that time, which was adopted by many Japanese contemporary theatrical artists such as Hijikata Tatsumi, Kara Jūrō and Terayama Shūji, in the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s. Other examples of this are Suzuki Tadashi (鈴木忠志 b. 1939) who applies the perception of the body from the *noh* play to his method; Yamazaki Tetsu (山崎哲 b. 1947) who is well known for his series of plays based on actual criminal reports; Noda Hideki (野田秀樹 b. 1955) who is one of the leading playwrights and theatre directors in the Japanese contemporary drama world; and many others. Hyōdō Hiromi indicated that when the ideology of modern art including the avant-garde art developed a high degree of subversity in the 1960s and reached a point of saturation, the body had emerged as a central obsession with these flag-bearers of the small theatre movement.<sup>57</sup> He points out that although ideas and principles vary among artists, they share opposition to the established modern Japanese drama, known as *shingeki*, which they consider as imitations of the West. Let us now examine how Kara Jūrō, Hijikata Tatsumi and Terayama Shūji perceive the body as physical object.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>57</sup> Hyōdō Hiromi, *Enjirareta kindai <kokumin> noshintai to pafōmansu* (演じられた近代 <国民>の身体とパフォーマンス), 275.

## Kara Jūrō: The ‘theory of the privileged body’

Kara Jūrō created a legendary theatre company known as Jōkyō Gekijō (The Situation Theatre) in 1967 and began scandalous, guerrilla-like performances at the mobile tent theatre called Red Tent. He was also influenced by Sartre’s existentialism and provocatively espoused the so-called ‘theory of the privileged body’ (*tokkenteki nikutairon*). There, Kara boldly asserted that great play manuscripts are no longer necessary for contemporary drama, but it is the dramatic body of actors on stage that is important.<sup>58</sup>

The great play manuscripts are no longer necessary. The playwright’s great spirit, which is found in the manuscripts, does not move the actors. The dramatic spirit of actors inspires the manuscripts.<sup>59</sup>

For theatre and drama, first of all, there should not be a manuscript nor a plan of stage directions but a set of actors’ bodies that look very striking.<sup>60</sup>

In his plays, the dialogue described as ‘irrational’ shakes itself free from the shackles of the cause-and-effect explanation in modern drama. As a countermeasure against rationalism and the coherent narratives of modern drama, Kara emancipates the actor’s

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<sup>58</sup> Kara, *Koshimaki Osen, Tokkenteki nikutairon*, 3–18.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 38. 「もはや偉大な戯曲が必要なのではない。戯曲の中にある作家の劇的な精神が役者を動かすのではない。劇的な役者の精神が戯曲を呼び起こすのだ。」

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 49. 「まず戯曲があるのではなく、演出プランがあるのでもなく、バリッとそろった役者体があるべきなのです。」 For further details of Kara Jūrō’s dramaturgy, see Nishidō Kōjin et al., *Enshutsuka no shigoto—60 nendai, angura, engeki kakumei*, 29–64. Yamazaki Tetsu, *Shitsugo no genzaikai* (失語の現在形), Tokyo: Shinyagyōshosha, 1984, 11–23.

body from the restraint of play manuscripts and revives the actor's grotesque being and dark emotions that stem from *noh* and *kabuki*. John K. Gillespie translated one of Kara's early major works, *Shōjo kamen* (The Virgin's Mask 1969), and shows in detail how Kara is opposed to realism, which is typified by the so-called Stanislavski System.<sup>61</sup> Reading and translating *Shōjo kamen*, Gillespie comments on Kara's emphasis on the actors' body by saying that 'Kara recalls the very origin of *kabuki* and the riverbed beggars (*kawaramono*) who were dissipating their bodies for the highest bidder but were looking, perhaps in vain, for a stage body through which they could express themselves.'<sup>62</sup> Gillespie gives a synopsis of *Shōjo kamen* as follows:

[In this play,] The action occurs in a subterranean coffeehouse called "The body," which is owed by Kasugano Yachiyo, a former heartthrob of the Takarazuka all-female musical review. Kasugano has fallen on hard times, having dissipated her body and her talent over many years in the theatre. There remains no body for her to possess. She is nothing more than a "pitiful ghost gradually fading away." Other relationships in the play parallel that between Kasugano and her body. There are a Ventriloquist and a Dummy, for example, whose interaction reflects the separation of actor and body. And the young virgin, Kai, eager for a life on stage, is pressed into the role of Catherine opposite Kasugano's Heathcliff in an imaginary staging of *Wuthering Heights*, two lost souls begging for the bodies that will allow them to consummate their love.<sup>63</sup>

At this juncture, a few lines from the opening scene of *Shōjo kamen* will illustrate this point:

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<sup>61</sup> The Stanislavski System is one of the most influential approaches to acting which was developed as a grammar of acting by Russian actor and theatre director, Constantin Stanislavski (1863–1938).

<sup>62</sup> Robert T. Rolf and John K. Gillespie (eds), *Alternative Japanese Drama: Ten Plays*, 255.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

OLD WOMAN: It's what ghosts always want.

亡霊が、いつも欲しがるもの、それは—

KAI: Which is? …

それは—？

OLD WOMAN: A body. (*Sings.*)

肉体。

As time goes by the virgin becomes an old woman,  
if time still goes by I wonder if the old woman becomes a virgin.

I had children in the past,  
only one of them, the smooth talker,  
came back alone from the mountain—

Zarathustra rubbing his big grimy feet on my thighs,  
this is a superman [*Übermensch*], rub, rub, rub.

Listen, mother, the body is big reason.

If so, Son, is reason a big body?

Then his big feet suddenly stopped…

(*Spoken, aside.*) “Logic cannot make a U-turn so easily,”

The creep of a superman with that mouth said,  
in an instant putting his chin in his hand like a dwarf.

Alchemy to Saint-Germain.

The art of forming the eye to Merleau-Ponty.

To who[m] the art of forming the body?

As time goes by the virgin becomes an old woman,

if still time goes by

who knows the U-turn secret

of an old woman becoming a virgin?

時はゆくゆく乙女は婆アに、それでも時がゆくならば

婆アは乙女になるかしら

むかし、あたしにガキがいた、かずある中で只一人、口八丁の  
知恵主は山から帰ったツアラツストラ、垢で汚れた大足をあた  
しの股にすりつけて

これが超人、グリグリグリ

母さん、聞いてよ、肉体は大きな理性でございます。ならば息  
子よ、理性とは大きな肉体のことなのけ？ すると大足ピクリ



ととめて、  
「論理はそう簡単にUターンすることはできません。」  
ニャロメ、言ったその口で、みるみるうちに超人は、小人のよ  
うに、頬杖ついた。  
錬金術、サン・ジェルマンに。錬眼術はメロ・ポンに。錬肉術  
は誰にしよう。  
時はゆくゆく  
乙女は婆ァに、  
それでも時がゆくならば、  
婆ァが乙女になるような、Uターン秘術を誰が知ろう。

OLD WOMAN AND KAI: (*Together:*) More than anything, the body!<sup>64</sup>  
何よりも、肉体を！

Let us consider the following quotation from Scene III.

KASUGANO: Ah, the wind that rages in Yorkshire's wilderness—a  
stormy heath for fifty-five years—wrested everything away from  
me.

ああ、ヨークシャの荒野を吹きすさぶ風は、五十五年の嵐ヶ  
丘は、俺から何もかも奪い去ってしまった。

KAI: What?!

何をよ!?

KASUGANO: My body. Don't you see? We are ghosts of love and at  
the same time beggars for bodies.

肉体を。ね、わかるかい、お前、俺たちは愛の乞食で  
あるとともに肉体の乞食なんだ。

KAI: You've finally said it, haven't you, Heathcliff. I was waiting for  
you to say it. But what is the body?

とうとう言ったわね、ヒースクリッフ。あたしはあんたが  
いつ、それを言うか待っていたのよ。でも、肉体って何よ！

KASUGANO: Look at that over there. (*She points beyond the audience.*)

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., translation adapted by John K. Gillespie from an original translation by Paul H. Krieger, 259–260. Japanese texts are taken from Kara Jūrō, *Shōjo Kamen/Kara-ban Kaze no Matasaburō*, Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1997.

あれをごらん。

(Suddenly, there is a loud noise above the stage, and at the same time applause for the virgins wells up like a tidal wave.)

KASUGANO: My body has been completely taken over by all those girls.  
あたしの肉体は、皆、あの子たちに奪われてしまったんだ。

KAI: Who are you talking about? Where are they?  
どこに誰がいるって言うの？

KASUGANO: Virgins whose names I don't even know. That's why when you are not there I always acted on stage merely as a single ghost, rapidly growing old. But, you know, I'm glad. Having you as a friend, my sadness has decreased a little. But don't forget that you and I, as always, are still beggars for bodies.

あの名も知らぬ処女たち。だから、あたしはいつも舞台でお前のいない間、たった一人の愛の幽霊として振まってきた、いつだってあたしの肉体をあたしが所有したことなんてありやしない。あたしはどんどんふけてゆく、かわいそうな幽霊だった。でもお前、うれしいよ。お前という同僚に会えていくらかさみしきはへったんだもの、でもあたしもお前も相変わらず同じ肉体の乞食だってこと、忘れちゃだめよ。

KAI: I don't like that ... eternally being a beggar for a body.  
あたし、嫌よ、永遠に肉体の乞食なんて。

KASUGANO: Then how will you get it back?<sup>65</sup>  
じゃ、どうやってとり戻すんだ。

What this excerpt makes clear at once is the absurdity of Kara's text and his strong obsession with the body. A prominent dramatic critic, Senda Akihiko indicates that

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., translation adapted by John K. Gillespie from an original translation by Paul H. Krieger, 278-279.

Kara uses the word, the privileged body, as a poetic image and as agitation against conventional theatre and drama at the time.<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, he stresses that he found dual characteristics in the privileged body posed by Kara. He points out that, in Kara's conceptualisation of privileged body there exists a contradiction between the inner self, which suffered from some kind of angst or pain, and the performer as a decadent outlaw. Interestingly, in the theory of the privileged body, the former angst or pain of the performer is exemplified by the poet, Nakahara Chūya. When Kara describes the figure of the poet, Chūya, though Chūya did not have any illness, Kara still portrayed the poet as an invalid who possesses the privileged body. Kara explains that the privileged body is a combination of pain, the gaze of others and a grudge. Kara remarks:

Whenever I think of this ailing man [Nakahara Chūya], I get this feeling:  
The pain is the flesh. Therefore, I did not gaze at his poems but at the manner in which he makes verses. [···] Pain makes us aware of the existence of our body. Shame serves to perpetuate the pain in our flesh. However, our consciousness of pain is not spontaneously bred from our internal world. The stares of others separate them. [···] The pain of the body that is stared at by others turns us into a stone. To put it more simply, it seems to me that the body was changed into an object like a stone by the sense of being stared at.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Senda Akihito, *Kara Jūrō no gekisekai* (唐十郎の劇世界 Theatrical World of Juro Kara), Tokyo: Yubun shoin, 2007, 261.

<sup>67</sup> 「この病者を思う度に、私はこう考える—痛みとは肉体のことだ。だから、私は彼の詩より、詩をうたう物腰を凝視しているのかもしれない。··· 痛みは、肉体を気づかせ、恥は、肉体の痛みを持続させる。しかし、痛みの意識は、自らの内に自然に発生するものではな

Similarly, through his experience as a cargo handler at Haneda International Airport, Nakagami Kenji viewed his body as an undeniable entity that has not been named yet, or more precisely, that has not been tinged by the law/system of the collective. One of the prime forces of his writing was his perception of his own body as *mono*, to use Kara's term, the body as if it had transformed into a stone because of being stared at by others. Nakagami recognizes his physical work as an attempt to become a blockhead, which is described as his half suicide. It follows from what has been said that Kara's emphasis on the physical presence of the performer's body on stage may coincide with Sakaguchi Ango's or Nakagami Kenji's recognition of body itself as the subject that thinks and speaks. When Kara and Nakagami met in 1982, they discussed the revival of an existential body that exists as if it were ostracized on stage and which is not comprehensible to those who use the modern language and think cerebrally.<sup>68</sup>

Kara: The reason why I pioneered advocating the theory of the privileged body is that, at that time, I had a view that ideology decays more easily compared with the body on the stage. [...] For example, the old man who is crouching or crawling on the kitchen floor, etc. [...] How we revive the concrete body which cannot be comprehended by, or more precisely, which is dropped from the

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く、そこには必ず他者の視線が介在する。・・・視られた肉体の痛みは、自らを石にさせるのだ。つまり、肉体が、石のような物になるように思えて了う。」Kara, *Koshimaki Osen, Tokkenteki nikutairon*, 3, 14. See also Senda, *Kara Jūrō no gekisekai*, 260–261.

<sup>68</sup> Kara and Nakagami, 'Genshō toshitenō shintai: Nayamu nikutai—Nayamanai nikutai' (現象としての身体 悩む肉体—悩まない肉体), *Gendaishi techō* (April 1982): 56–70.

language or imagination of modern drama?<sup>69</sup>

Interestingly, Kara and Nakagami comment on people's sentiment about *yami'ichi* (black market) in the ruins (*yakeato*) immediately after the War, and they relate it to their recognition of the body as an undeniable reality.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Kara also explains the matter with an example from Ango's *Hakuchi*. He focuses attention on Ango's treatment of the sun in *Hakuchi*. Kara goes on to explain the fact that Ango treats the sun that beats down on the pig the same as the sun that beats down on human beings in *Hakuchi*.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Kara and Nakagami conclude that the body should not be encompassed by the logic of civil society. It may be worth pointing out that though Kara and Nakagami agree on their perspective of body as physical object, their modes of expression are certainly different. While Kara uses his own body as his means for expressing his scepticism towards *kotoba* when he acts on stage, Nakagami certainly cannot use his body physically as a means for writing. Nakagami's body is a means to make him become aware of any collective notion that is brought about by the generalized words and to make him unlearn the fixed ideas that appear as if they exist *a priori*. Here, we can observe Nakagami's grave dilemma that he still has to cling to *kotoba* to express his sceptical attitude towards *kotoba*. To date, Kara has been actively staging his plays at the well-known Red Tent Theatre.

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<sup>69</sup> 「最初ぼくが特権的肉体なんてことをいいたしたのは、観念というのは腐るのが早いけれども肉体というのはもう少しいいところがあるんじゃないかという見方から考え出したことであるわけだね。つまり、台所ではいつくばっている老人とか、うずくまっているとか・・・演劇における言葉やイメージでは包含しえない、逆につまはじきされてしまったような即物的な肉体の状態ね—、そういうものはどうやって復活するのかっていうことなんだよね。」 Ibid., 61.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 67.

## Body perceived by Hijikata Tatsumi and Terayama Shūji

There is one further ‘great charismatic figure of the time’ that we must not ignore. That is the now-legendary dancer, Hijikata Tatsumi who created a new performing art known as *ankoku butō* (lit. black or dark dance, and commonly known as just *butō*). His style and concept greatly influenced contemporary dramatists and actors at the time. Takahashi Yasunari describes Hijikata and his performance as follows:

[Hijikata] himself considered [*butō* as] a kind of “ur-*kabuki*,” a return to the roots of the indigenous sense of corporeality. His haggard body, apparently at the nadir of ignoble impotence, moving with an extreme slowness reminiscent of *noh*, was the visible epitome of everything that was opposed to the comfortable intelligibility of modern culture. His art was at once a critique of modernity and a manifesto of a new aesthetics rooted in the ‘darkness’ within the Japanese body and psyche.<sup>72</sup>

Miryam Sas explores Japanese surrealism and closely scrutinizes the works of Takiguchi Shūzō, Nishiwaki Junzaburō, and *butō* dancers such as Ōno Kazuo as well as Hijikata in her book, *Fault Lines: Cultural Memory and Japanese Surrealism*. This is her comment on Hijikata:

Hijikata imagines the body here as alternately container and contained, as wicker trunk that becomes a saw that cuts river and then expands to become like the sky, metamorphosing into a plate, which one could break: “a human-body plate,” continually expanding. This series of images suggests Hijikata’s continual transformation of the body and its figures (and metaphors). The body becomes, exchanges itself for, and engaged with objects in a continual process of expansion, rupture, and

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<sup>72</sup> Robert T. Rolf and John K. Gillespie (eds), *Alternative Japanese Drama: Ten plays*, 6.

reconstitution.<sup>73</sup>

Hijikata's perception of body indicated as above had a profound influence on many postwar playwrights, performers, artists and writers in the 1960s and the 1970s.

Another giant of modern Japanese theatre and poetry at the time, Terayama Shūji may be considered as one of those advocates of Hijikata's art form. He is well known as poet, film director, as well as the playwright and director of the legendary theatrical company called Tenjōsajiki. Terayama, referring to the performances of Hijikata, develops his poetics that he names 'action-poem'. He explains that both Hijikata's *butō* dance and action-poem are grounded in each single moment of life that will never happen again. He goes on to explain that the latter makes the emotion across time fix in a certain space, and thus the written poem should not be a poem anymore.<sup>74</sup> Terayama's perspective on action-poem becomes synonymous with Betsuyaku Minoru's definition of *kotoba* which 'can be something that is created by each of us every day or something that changes every hour' as we have seen before.<sup>75</sup> We may recall again Betsuyaku's remarks on language: 'Strictly speaking, the moment we speak a word, a decision is reached with regard to what the definition of the word is, and simultaneously the word becomes a hollow language. As a result, we have to continuously decide the meanings of words.'<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Terayama asserts that we do not need to put any poem into print but, instead, go outside and spout poetry on the spot, describing any object or event as it is. He states that he does not believe in the *genbun-icchi* system of

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<sup>73</sup> Miryam Sas, *Fault Lines: Cultural Memory and Japanese Surrealism*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999, 173.

<sup>74</sup> Terayama Shūji, 'Kōi to sono hokori=Chimata no gendaishi to Action-poem no mondai' (行為とその誇り=巷の現代詩と Action-poem の問題), in *Shiteki jijoden: Kōi toshite no shigaku* (詩的自叙伝 行為としての詩学), Tokyo: Shichōsha, 2006, 22–43.

<sup>75</sup> Betsuyaku Minoru, *Kotoba e no senjutsu*, 32–34.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

the Meiji period, sharing his view with Nakagami Kenji. He explains that it is simply because the written language can be read over and over again compared with the spoken language which will never recur in a strict sense. Terayama provocatively states, ‘For me, the static poem is mash for pigs.’<sup>77</sup>

In Chapter I, we have observed how Nakagami Kenji struggled to establish his personal autonomy, facing up to the conflict between two attitudes, namely, establishing his self-identity and integrating himself with the collective, which coexist complementarily. Similarly, Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei points out ‘several paradoxical images combine desire with revulsion’ which ‘reflects yearnings and fears shared by many of [Terayama’s] countrymen’.<sup>78</sup> This is how she illustrates the matter:

- *Woman*: seen simultaneously as demon whores and as sacrificing mothers
- *Traditional social outcasts*: seen simultaneously as tainted sideshow freaks and as martyred saints
- *Japan’s past*: seen simultaneously as a corrupt, superstitious, militaristic society and as a lost, idyllic paradise
- *American culture*: seen simultaneously as grotesque bully and as cultural icon<sup>79</sup>

Sorgenfrei goes on to say that:

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>78</sup> Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, *Unspeakable Acts: The Avant-garde Theatre of Terayama Shūji and Postwar Japan*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005, 3–4.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 4.



Each intertwined pair suggests an overriding theme that encompasses them all: the quest for identity, both personal and national. Interwoven in this quest is a deep ambivalence about the very substance of both the personal and the national character, an image of the self and of Japan as, simultaneously, the innocent, childlike victim of some outside power and the inhuman victimizer of the powerless.<sup>80</sup>

In Sorgenfrei's observation of Terayama's works, we may be astonished by the close resemblance between Terayama's ambivalent images and Nakagami's two conflicting attitudes, first to establish a firm self-identity, and secondly to identify himself with the collective, which functionalize as a precondition for each other. Moreover, Terayama's ambivalent images between the personal and the national accord to Slaymaker's observation that 'the body offered antidotes to the bankruptcy of the traditional and military values which characterized the previous fifteen years of war' as we have seen before.<sup>81</sup> In the same way as Slaymaker indicates that '[Many Japanese people's] celebration of the carnal body suggests a punning contrast to the national polity, the focus of their desecration',<sup>82</sup> Terayama noted the relationship between body and language as follows:

While the body can be identified by each individual, the language tends to be identified by each nation-state. Therefore, the language used by the theatrical people of the established modern drama should be called 'national language' rather than language in general. The national language is fated to be a unit that carries a meaning only within the bounds

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 1–2.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

of the category governed by the nation-state. The Japanese language that we use in the play comes into existence only within “the administrative district” that is called Japan. However, in reality, when we express ourselves in the play, the administrative district called “Japan” has often no utility. The situation or *topos (ba)* where the play is generated and dies out can be formed in any place where human beings exist. The play can be generated at any place except uninhabited islands. It does not matter if the place is situated in Western civilized countries or undeveloped regions. In a nutshell, it is impossible to suppose Japan’s carnal body which corresponds to the national language called *nihongo* (the Japanese language) simply because every encounter between individual bodies precedes the politicized.<sup>83</sup>

With regard to the admiration of the body, there is further evidence to show how Nakagami’s notion of the body has some similarities with the postwar existentialist writers typified by Sakaguchi Ango who are strongly influenced by Sartre’s notion of existentialism and the *yakeato* generation dramatists like Betsuyaku, Hjikata, Terayama and Kara. Many other interesting examples relating to both scepticism towards the

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<sup>83</sup> 「からだはあくまでも個を単位にできるが、言語は集団＝国家が単位になることが多かったのです。つまり、従来の演劇が使ってきた言語というのは、言語というより国語だったんですね。そして国語というのは一単位であって、その国が管理する政治化のカテゴリーでしか意味を持ち得ないという宿命を持っていた。しかし、実際にぼくらが演劇で自己表出するときには、「日本」という行政単位が何の役にもたたないことがしばしばある。演劇が生成し、消滅してゆくシチュエーション（「場」）は人間がいるところではすべて成立することが可能であるはずで、それは無人島以外の場所ならば、未開社会であろうと、西欧の文明社会であろうとどういう場所でも構わない。要するに日本語に対比できる日本肉体なんてものは存在しなかったのです。それは、あらゆる肉体の出会いが政治化に先行するという考え方ですよ。」 Terayama Shūji, ‘Nikutai gengo no shisei—Chika intabyū yori’ (肉体言語の私性—地下演劇インタビューより), in *Terayama Shūji engeki ronshū* (寺山修司演劇論集), Tokyo: Kokubunsha, 1983, 201.

modern language and the emphasis on the body are abundant in postwar Japanese theatre, drama and literature. One of the interesting examples can be seen in the works of Noda Hideki (b. 1955) who is regarded as one of the standard-bearers of the small theatre boom (*shōgekijō* boom) of the 1980s. Like Kara and Betsuyaku who clearly objected to *kotoba*, Noda also showed his distrust of the Japanese language in the 1980s. He says:

When I began to put a play on the stage, the first thing I did was not to believe in *kotoba*. In those days, there was the tendency in which everyone saw words and body through a dichotomous frame, and separated them. But, now I am, in a way, crawling up towards *kotoba* on my knees of my own accord. However, this is not to say that my distrust of *kotoba* has been removed. [...] at that time, words were my toy to fiddle with.<sup>84</sup>

There is no space for an extended discussion on this matter here, but his play manuscripts are filled with wordplays and puns, and the meaning of words backed by the logic of modern drama has completely collapsed in Noda's theatrical world in the 1980s. In future, I would like to further explore these phenomena found in the field of Japanese theatre and drama in order to reconsider Japanese modern/contemporary literature from the perspective of the body.

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<sup>84</sup> 「舞台を作りはじめたころ、ぼくが真っ先にやったことは、ことばへの不信でした。演劇の世界で肉体とことばを二元論的に対立させる考え方が強かった時代でもありました。でも、いまは、ぼくの方からことばににじりよっているところです。といっても、ことばへの不信が消えたわけではありませんが。・・・はじめ、ぼくにとってことばは遊び道具でした。」 An article from *Asahi shinbun* (the evening edition) (16 August 1991), in Kazama Ken, *Shōgekijō no fūkei*, Tokyo: Chūkō shinsho, 1992, 108.

It should be concluded, from what has been observed above, that Nakagami, Ango, Chūya and theatrical artists in the 1960s disbelieved in *kotoba* as they considered it as the manifestation of the generalized notions that were forged by the collective such as the modern nation-state, firms, social groups or households and the like. Instead of thinking through the polluted *kotoba*, they attempted to ‘think through their bodies’, trying to display ‘no abstract spirit at all’.<sup>85</sup> They regarded their body as the concrete foundation of their thoughts, and attempted to look closely at the realities of minority groups in modern Japan through the lens of an individual body. Being aware of any conventional idea that is brought about by the language, they constantly needed to search for their autonomous freedom—their continuous self-determination to choose their actions—in order to set new values upon the self-identification of an individual in various social groups such as *burakumin*, *hibakusha*, survivors from the ruins of the War, the contemporary actors who sought to resurrect the riverbank beggars who were the first kabuki actors in the seventeenth century, and so forth. I would like to suggest that their never-ending attempt to create new value judgments by thinking through the body can be regarded as another manifestation of their autonomy.

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<sup>85</sup> Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 25.

## CHAPTER VII

### AUTONOMY OF WOMEN WRITERS IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE LITERATURE

With regard to the issues of autonomy, the distrust of the Japanese language and the emphasis on the body, I would like to extend our previous discussion to the works of contemporary Japanese women writers, especially Tsushima Yūko, Takamura Kaoru, Tawada Yōko and Yoshimoto Banana. Before beginning a close examination of the works of these women writers, let us briefly examine the main points that have been raised in the previous chapters. As observed, in Nakagami Kenji's works, the act of writing is extended to encompass Maruyama Masao's two types of autonomy or Kant's notion of autonomous freedom and responsibility. This is essentially the case when two of his contradictory attitudes—his individual differentiation and his identification with the external causalities—functionalise each other. In Nakagami's writings, we can view both his individual act as an endless practice and his act of assimilation into the law/system of the collective as being intricately intertwined with each other. The two exist as each other's preconditions. For this reason, his act of writing will never seem to end. In this sense, his act of writing is considered to alternate between the autonomy of the individual and that of the collective and must always be regarded as conditional since it arises 'in relation to lived, historical situations, [and] it implies tireless engagement with a historically changing environment'.<sup>1</sup> Nakagami's ambivalent perception of writing is manifest in his strong scepticism towards *kotoba* which inevitably carries the collective notions and conversely, in his leaning to the body

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<sup>1</sup> Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 183.

as an undeniable object which can be the manifestation of an individual. Thus, Nakagami Kenji's assertion of autonomous selfhood through his act of writing is closely associated with the conflict between *kotoba* and the body. Moreover, in Chapters III and V, I have argued that Miyazawa Kenji, Nakahara Chūya, the postwar writers such as Sakaguchi Ango, and theatrical artists of the 1960s have very similar attitudes as does Nakagami Kenji—the strong distrust of language, which is inextricably linked with the emphasis on the body.

While examining other writers of contemporary Japanese literature from the perspective of this endless search for autonomy that manifests itself in the distrust of language (the collective notions) and the emphasis on the body (the individual differences), I find that certain women writers have come to the fore. Four women writers, specifically, Tsushima Yūko, Takamura Kaoru, Tawada Yōko and Yoshimoto Banana, are particularly conspicuous in terms of their focus towards the realization of the autonomous individual, tirelessly engaged in making new values depending on a historically changing environment. These writers became aware that language could turn into the collective notions that had generalized the issue of women as one of the social minorities, and they attempted to rethink women's identities in contemporary Japan through their individual bodies. Like Nakagami, they struggle to achieve autonomous freedom in the form of a mutually exclusive dichotomy between the individual and the collective—autonomy and dependence or language and body, which function as each other's preconditions. This chapter aims to explore the works of these women writers and compare Nakagami's ceaseless autonomous attitudes towards writing with the thoughts expressed in the works of these contemporary women writers.

Is it possible to recognize these women as contemporary writers who have inherited the notion of the autonomous individual who actualizes continuous self-determination in accordance with historically changing situations? As for the social advancement of women, Japan still lags behind other industrialized nations. For this reason, women writers may be far more responsive, subjective and realistic about establishing their autonomous self than male writers in postwar Japan.<sup>2</sup> On this matter, Miyoshi Masao discusses ‘the prospects for women’ in the 1960s and 1970s as follows:

There are signs, however, that Japanese women are becoming more sensitized to the predicaments of industrial wealth that simultaneously doom its supposed beneficiaries to a routinized, dehydrated, or even de-eroticized life, with few dreams, little grace, and no criticism. Once fully activated, this sensitivity is bound to lead Japanese women to a room of their own in which to reflect on their relationships with men, parents, children, and family, both personal and national. As of now, this possibility—not yet an actuality—of autonomy and freedom has not been fully explored, nor has it been fully assessed in a deliberation of social objectives. In view of nearly total male absorption in the production and consumption cycle, however, it seems a fair enough expectation that Japan’s egress from the cycle is incumbent upon its women.<sup>3</sup>

It is my hope that an exploration of the works of these four contemporary Japanese women writers will activate the possibility of autonomy and freedom posed above by Miyoshi, and end the production and consumption cycle that desiccates our spirits. In view of the above, Miyoshi Masao unfavorably regards Ōba Minako (1930–2007) and Yamamoto Michiko (b. 1936) as writers whose perspectives are ‘unquestioningly

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<sup>2</sup> I should look more carefully into gender perspectives to discuss women writers’ views in my future study.

<sup>3</sup> Masao Miyoshi, *Off Center: Power and Culture Relations between Japan and the United States*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1994, 211.

“Japanese,” a clichéd vantage-point assumed monolithically and monologically’.<sup>4</sup> These writers were also criticized by Miyoshi for being ‘self-defensive and self-enclosed in tone and observation’.<sup>5</sup> Compared to these women writers, Miyoshi recognizes writers such as Kōno Taeko (b. 1926), Ariyoshi Sawako (1931–1984), Tomioka Taeko (b. 1935) and Tsushima Yūko as ‘the practitioners who are critically alert and historically intelligent’.<sup>6</sup> In particular, Miyoshi places much value on Tsushima by stating that she is ‘the best of her generation’.<sup>7</sup> How did Tsushima practically attempt to activate the possibility of autonomy and freedom? As a contemporary writer attempting to add new values to Japanese literature, what was her standpoint and how did she attempt to apply it? I would like to begin by examining the manner in which the scepticism towards *kotoba* and the affirmative recognition of the body is expressed in the literary works of Tsushima Yūko.

### **Tsushima Yūko**

Born in 1947, Tsushima Yūko was a contemporary of Nakagami Kenji, who was born one year earlier. Tsushima is also the daughter of Dazai Osamu (1909–1948), one of the most prominent novelists in the history of modern Japanese literature. While studying at Shirayuri Women’s University, she became a member of a traditional literary coterie magazine called *Bungei-shuto* in 1966 and began her writing career by contributing her early works to this magazine. When she was 19, she met Nakagami Kenji, who also contributed to *Bungei-shuto*, and since then till Nakagami’s death in

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



1992, the two became rival novelists, and are considered among the foremost of contemporary writers belonging to the postwar baby-boom generation. In 1969, Tsushima enrolled in the graduate school at Meiji University but withdrew from it because classes were cancelled due to the prolonged campus disputes at the time. Tsushima published her first anthology of short stories, *Shaniku-sai* (Carnival), in 1971. To date, she is a prolific and successful writer and has been awarded many literary prizes, including the 1st Noma Prize for New Writers for *Hikari no ryōbun* (Territory of Light) in 1979, the 34th Tanizaki Prize and the 51st Noma Prize for her novel *Hi no yama - yamazaruki* (Mountain of Fire: Account of a Wild Monkey) in 1998, the 15th Murasaki Shikibu Prize for *Nara repōto* (Report on Nara) in 2006. Several of her short stories between 1973 and 1984 have been translated into English and were published as an anthology titled *The Shooting Gallery & Other Stories*<sup>8</sup> in 1988.

As a contemporary of Nakagami Kenji, Tsushima Yūko displays an affinity with his work. With deep feeling, she addresses Nakagami as *ani* ('elder brother' in the Wakayama dialect). In her collected essays on Nakagami, *Ani no yume, watashi no inochi* (アニの夢 私のイノチ My Brother's Dream and My Life, 1999), she gives vent to the complex sentiments she experienced on Nakagami's death in 1992 and recalls the days when they exchanged ideas and opinions about contemporary literature or when they sometimes criticized each other's works, in harsh and bitter words.<sup>9</sup> She also states that their literary works mirrored many of the same themes and concerns. The following are a few random examples: modernity in Japan, the Japanese language, minority languages, oral literature (oral narration), post-colonialism, self-identity and

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<sup>8</sup> Tsushima Yūko, *The Shooting Gallery and Other Stories*, translated by Geraldine Harcourt, New York: New Directions Books, 1988.

<sup>9</sup> Tsushima Yūko, 'Ani Nakagami Kenji no yume' (アニ中上健次の夢), in Tsushima Yūko, *Ani no yume, watashi no inochi*, Tokyo: Kōdansha, 29–57.

the influence of Lévi-Strauss, Yanagida Kunio, Orikuchi Shinobu, Minakata Kumagusu, William Faulkner, James Joyce, García Márquez, Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini, free jazz, Kara Jūrō, Terayama Shūji, myth, epic poetry, etc.<sup>10</sup>

There are yet other similarities between Tsushima and Nakagami that should not be ignored: their fictional territories and motifs. Miyoshi Masao also points out that ‘Tsushima’s fictional territory seems nearly always circumscribed by the life she has lived’.<sup>11</sup> This can best be summarized by Miyoshi’s statement:

The events of life—while still in her infancy, her writer-father’s double suicide with his mistress; her lonely childhood with her widowed mother, an old sister, and a retarded older brother; her deep love for this language-less brother and his sudden death while they are both still small; her troubled adolescence; her pregnancy and marriage, and divorce soon thereafter; her young motherhood with two children; her difficulties with grown-ups; her children’s growth and her need for her own space; her guilt and her struggle with it; her children’s distancing themselves from her; her son’s death in an accident—such a series of losses and bereavements as well as growths and maturations constitutes the stuff of her imaginary space.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, as we have seen in Chapter II, Nakagami also drew the subject matter or fragments for his novels from his own complicated life: growing up in the outcast (*burakumin*) community in Shingū as an illegitimate child; the four half-siblings from his mother’s first marriage; his mother’s remarriage when Nakagami was seven years old to a building constructor who had a son; his stepbrother’s suicide by hanging when

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 42–47. See also Tsushima Yūko, ‘Nakagami Kenji to mirāju sentōki to’ (中上健次とミラージュ戦闘機と), in Tsushima Yūko, *Ani no yume, watashi no inochi*, 72–75.

<sup>11</sup> Miyoshi, *Off Center*, 214.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Nakagami was thirteen and so forth.<sup>13</sup>

Like Nakagami Kenji, Tsushima feels a sense of discomfort towards *nihongo*. In *Ani no yume, watashi no inochi*, Tsushima reveals that this discomfort stems from childhood memories of her mentally challenged, ‘language-less brother’<sup>14</sup> and her one year stay in France from September 1991 to September 1992.<sup>15</sup> She explains that an encounter with a language that was completely different from her mother tongue made her rethink the meaning of words in her daily conversation. While struggling awkwardly with the French language during her stay in France, she confesses that she kept recalling the days she spent with her mentally challenged brother. Tsushima describes these associations with foreigners who speak totally different languages and with her brother as experiences that are terribly humorous but also frustrating and unsettling.<sup>16</sup> However, she adds that although these experiences destroyed her conventional attitude towards *kotoba*, they unexpectedly led her to adopt a fresh attitude towards language. This is what Tsushima has to say on the subject:

For my elder brother, *kotoba* is a living organism that he has put a lot of love into creating one word at a time, and it is something precious, something that shines brightly and that he shares with someone he loves. Innocuous greetings, artificial compliments and jokes are not comprehensible to my brother. Only genuine words that have a life of their own like human beings are allowed a place in my brother’s world.

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<sup>13</sup> Nagashima, ‘Kenji Shōden’, in Karatani et al. (eds), *Gunzō Nihon no Sakka*, 288–298.

<sup>14</sup> Miyoshi, *Off Center*, 214.

<sup>15</sup> Tsushima Yūko, ‘Junsui na kaiwa’ (純粹な会話), in Tsushima Yūko, *Ani no yume, watashi no inochi*, 118–121.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

And thus, when I struggle with words in a foreign country, the meaning of the words does not become obscure; rather, it comes to the fore more clearly and shines beautifully like my brother's words. It is true that I could not in fact engage in idle talk in French; idle talk was culled from my verbal exchanges during my stay in France, and only genuine words remained for me. I felt that I had found my way back to the world into which my brother had once brought me.

Needless to say, it is very difficult for us to organize our social lives only around genuine conversations. For smooth communication with others, we usually use fancy words, hide our emotions or keep secrets. On the other hand, we often lose the true meaning of someone else's words. If we live lives based on genuine conversations, what kind of words do we really exchange? What kind of meaning do we find in our lives? I now feel the urge to write about such a world of genuine words in my work.<sup>17</sup>

As Miyazawa Kenji continued to search for his 'real happiness' and his 'true words' in

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<sup>17</sup> 「兄にとって言葉とは、ひとつひとつ、愛情を込めた美しい生き物であり、愛する人たちと与え合う貴重な、光るものだった。兄には、無意味な挨拶、お世辞や冗談は通じなかった。人間として純粋な会話しか、兄には存在しなかった。

そして外国で言葉が不自由な私にとっても、言葉の意味が曖昧になったのではなく、逆に言葉のひとつひとつが明確に浮かび上がり、大事な、美しい光るものになっていった。むだな言葉のやりとりは、もちろんそれが私にはできなかったことではあるけれども、私の体から消え失せ、純粋な会話だけが私に残された。私はようやく、兄がかつて教えてくれた言葉の世界に近づいていた。

言うまでもなく純粋な会話だけで、私たちはふつう、その社会で生きていくことはむずかしい。言葉をいろいろに飾ったり、隠したり、約束事に閉じ込めたりして、なんとか無事に生き抜こうとする。けれどもその一方で、肝心の意味を見失ってしまうことも多い。純粋な会話をもし、私たちが日々の生活のなかで交し合うのならば、なにを私たちは伝え合うことになるのか。どんな意味を、自分たちの生に見いだすのか。私はそんな言葉の世界を小説に書き表したくなった。」 Ibid., 120-121.

his works, Tsushima appears to be searching ceaselessly for ‘genuine conversations’ with her mentally challenged, ‘language-less brother’ who passed away when she was thirteen. She wrote about her distrust of language, derived from her experiences with her brother, in many of her novels and essays, for example, in the anthology of short stories *Watashi* (I, 1999), the long novel *Kagayaku mizu no jidai* (The Age of Shining Water, 1994) and many other works.

Moreover, the above excerpt is very interesting because it reveals an affinity with Nakagami Kenji’s observation on the veracity of the unpretentious narratives of the aged, illiterate women in the *burakumin* ghettos in Kishū, which he considered as the possible means for breaking the impasse of the Japanese language, developed from the collective notion which was flavoured by the *genbun-icchi* system during the Meiji period. It is necessary to note that Nakagami observed a state of perfect correspondence between *kotoba* and *mono* in the narrative style of their conversations. However, Nakagami himself admitted that such an attempt was somewhat contradictory because narrative or oral literature should not be written on paper. He remarked that once an oral narrative is written down, it ceases to be an oral narrative.<sup>18</sup> In *Ani no yume, watashi no inochi*, Tsushima pointed out Nakagami’s contradictions, which frequently appeared in his works, and the fact that Nakagami himself was aware of this.<sup>19</sup> While offering a positive interpretation of these contradictions that may become a provocative attribute of Nakagami’s works, Tsushima admitted that this kind of paradox, which overturns modern rationality, may conversely bind his literary world.

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<sup>18</sup> 「あるいは書くこと、書かれる事を拒む語りの言葉か。書かれてある語りとはムジュンもはなはだしいが・・・」 Nakagami Kenji, *Kishū: Ki no kuni, ne no kuni monogatari*, in *NKZ Vol. 14*, 609–610.

<sup>19</sup> Tsushima Yūko, ‘Ani Nakagami Kenji no yume’, 29–57. See also, Tsushima Yūko, ‘Haha no katari o hakai suru toki’ (母の語りを破壊する時), in Tsushima Yūko, *Ani no yume, watashi no inochi*, 58–71.

Here, it appears that both Nakagami and Tsushima encountered the possibility—and impossibility—of autonomy and freedom through their own involvement with language. For all the contradictions between speech and written language, Tsushima and Nakagami did not abandon *kotoba* as a means of expressing their literary universe. They clung to it yet continued to explore every possible means of breaking conventional attitudes towards the writing of novels.

As a leading contemporary writer, Tsushima properly appreciates the difficulties of the Japanese language as one of the modern languages. She describes the sentences she penned in her novels as follows:

To tell the truth, I am not at all confident of the sentences in my novels. I do not have a clear criterion for the sentences I like. The more I write what I want to write in Japanese, the more my Japanese disintegrates into smaller pieces. It confuses me a lot. What I wish to express will not complement the (Japanese) language I use. The two sides are so obstinate that I cannot help getting flurried or worried, caught between them. But, for me, writing novels may refer to my process of being torn between the things I wish to write and the language I use.

[...]

For me, writing novels refers to the process of dismantling the meaning of the words that raised me up, and for that reason, had locked me into the already fixed, internalized domain of myself.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 「自分の小説の文章に、実を言うと、私はさっぱり自信がない。こんな文章が好きだという、はっきりした規準もない。自分で日本語の文章を書けば書くほど、日本語がばらばらになり、わけが分からなくなってくる。私の書きたいことと私の使おうとする日本語が

This excerpt suggests that Tsushima was struggling with the paradox between establishing her autonomous self and her emotional dependence on *kotoba* that is regarded as a collective notion, similar to Nakagami's struggle in the process of writing his novels. In her essay, *Kairaku no hondana—Kotoba kara jiyū ni naru tame no dokusho annai* (The Bookshelf for Pleasure—A Reading Guide to Freeing Oneself from Language, 2003), Tsushima discusses the condition of human beings who are caught between two worlds—between the thing in itself and the thing that is assigned a name with a word. She describes her childhood in the form of a riddle, for example, before she got involved with schools and parents, she was a nobody in a world of things that have no names. In contrast, she proceeds to explain her wonderment at suddenly becoming somebody who was named 'onna' (woman) after she came into contact with others in society.<sup>21</sup> She quotes a prose work by John Donne:

No man is an island, entire of itself;  
every man is a piece of the continent,  
a part of the main.  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less,  
as well as if a promontory were,  
as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were.

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なかよく手を取り合ってくれない。それぞれがひどく気むずかしく、その間に立って、私はいつもおろおろ心配させられる。その心配の過程が、言ってみれば、私にとって小説を書くということでもある。・・・自分を育んでくれた言葉から距離を作り、自分の発想がそこに閉じ込められないようにするのは、その言葉の経験が内面化されていればいるほど、ひどくむずかしくなる。ほとんど、不可能なことでもあるだろう。けれどもそのための過程が『小説を書く』という行為なのに違いない。」 Tsushima Yūko, 'Nihongo to watashi no aida ni' (日本語と私の間に), in Tsushima Yūko, *Ani no yume, watashi no inochi*, 122 and 125.

<sup>21</sup> Tsushima Yūko, *Kairaku no hondana—Kotoba kara jiyū ni naru tame no dokusho annai* (快樂の本棚—言葉から自由になるための読書案内), Tokyo: Chūkō shinsho, 2003, 4–22.

Any man's death diminishes me  
because I am involved in mankind;  
and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;  
it tolls for thee. . .

from Devotions<sup>22</sup> by John Donne, 1623

Tsushima confesses that when she read this prose work as a university student, she came to realize that she could not live her life alone, and that she should not think that she did not relate to anyone in society. On the last page of the Introduction to *Kairaku no hondana*, Tsushima firmly resolves to destroy the prison of her own conventional thoughts, which was created by the language she spoke, and thus grasp the essence of things while writing novels. She recognized the profound paradox in the works of Nakagami Kenji, and admits that she, too, encountered the same paradox: her act of destroying *kotoba* must be performed through her literary works, which are also constructed by *kotoba*.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, it is very interesting to note that Tsushima also comments on the issue of the standard language and dialect. She elaborates her view on dialects as follows:

As a matter of fact, I do not speak any dialect because I was born and grew up in Tokyo. When I was a pupil, I even mocked the provincial accent of my teacher. It was at the time when I started to deplore the fact that I could only speak standard Japanese, that I desired to become a

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<sup>22</sup> John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, edited by Anthony Raspa, Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975, 87.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.



professional writer. I felt that I did not know any “true words”.<sup>24</sup>

It is necessary to reiterate the fact that Nakagami Kenji also clearly portrayed the Shingū dialect as the language used by real people and set the Shingū dialect against the standard language that he regarded as artificially synthesized in his work.<sup>25</sup> In this respect, Tsushima and Nakagami had shared perceptions about dialects. It is very interesting to recall that Betsuyaku Minoru also strongly asserts that the intrinsic energy of words can only be found in dialects. Like Tsushima, Betsuyaku also rues the fact that he could never grasp any specific dialect as he was born on the continent and constantly shifted from one place to another before and after Japan’s defeat in the War. Tsushima explains that she felt the need to create literature when she began to consider the question of where she could really find her ‘true words’ or why she felt that her Japanese had been so awkward and artificial that it impeded her efforts to write novels.

Tsushima points out that this kind of discomfort with one’s mother tongue often leads us to concerns about unknown people living on the periphery of society.<sup>26</sup> As a matter of practice, she has been actively involved with the Ainu people and has been studying *Ainu jojishi Yukara* (アイヌ叙事詩ユーカラ the Ainu epic Yukara) for the last two decades. Moreover, she has been promoting the cross-fertilization of ideas among writers in diverse remote regions of the world, especially in Asian countries.<sup>27</sup> These have evolved into important aspects in her recent works.

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<sup>24</sup> Tsushima, ‘Uzumaku bungaku o mezashite’ (渦巻く文学を目指して), in Tsushima Yūko, *Ani no yume, watashi no inochi*, 127–128.

<sup>25</sup> Nakagami Kenji, ‘Kasuga to “Kojiki”’, in Karatani and Watanabe (eds), *Nakagami Kenji to Kumano*, 27–35.

<sup>26</sup> Tsushima, ‘Uzumaku bungaku o mezashite’, 130.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Tsushima Yūko and Shin Kyeong-Suk (申京淑), *Yama no aru ie, Ido no aru ie—Tokyo Souru ōfuku shokan* (山のある家井戸のある家—東京ソウル往復書簡), Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2007.

Let us further examine the novels that illustrate her discomfort with *kotoba*—the motif under consideration. In her short story ‘The Silent Traders’ (Danmari ichi 黙市, 1984),<sup>28</sup> Tsushima depicts the manner in which a divorced woman (designated as *watashi* ‘I’) with two little children, loses the language with which she can express herself and remains silent when she faces her ex-husband and her children. In this short story, Tsushima never allows the narrator, ‘I’ (*watashi*), to indulge in idle talk or thoughtless chatter with her husband.

On the day, he was an hour late for our appointment. The long wait in a coffee shop had made the children tired and cross, but when they saw the man a shy silence came over them. ‘Thank you for coming,’ I said to the man with a smile. I couldn’t think what to say next. He asked ‘Where to?’ and stood to leave at once. He walked alone, while the children and I looked as though it was all the same to us whether he was there or not. On the train I still hadn’t come up with anything to say.

[...] ]

I was becoming desperate for something to say. And weren’t there one or two things he’d like to ask me? Such as how the children had been lately. But to bring that up, unasked, might imply that I wanted him to watch with me as they grew. I’d only been able to ask for this meeting because I’d finally stopped feeling that way. Now it seemed we couldn’t even exchange such polite remarks as ‘They’ve grown’ or ‘I’m glad they’re well’ without arousing needless suspicious. It wasn’t supposed to be like this, I thought in confusion, unable to say a word about the children. He was indeed their father, but not a father who watched over them. [...]

If we couldn’t discuss the children, there was literally nothing left to

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<sup>28</sup> Tsushima, ‘Danmari ichi’, in Tsushima Yūko, *Danmari ichi*, Tokyo: Shinchōsha bunko, 1990, 155–171. The first edition was published by Shinchōsha in 1984. ‘Danmari ichi’ was translated by Geraldine Harcourt as ‘The Silent Traders’ in Tsushima Yūko, *The Shooting Gallery and Other Stories*, New York: New Directions Books, 1988, 35–44.

say.<sup>29</sup>

As is evident from these excerpts, Tsushima has relentlessly repeated her depictions of ‘I’ (*watashi*) being lost for words as she tries to avoid artificial conversations and superficial relationships. The more she attempts to be honest, the more she loses her language. Tsushima’s endless quest for genuine words, for living as a genuine human being, is vividly portrayed in this short story. ‘I’ (*watashi*) seems to be of the opinion that it is better to remain silent than to say something superficial.

[...] Silence is essential. As long as we maintain silence, and thus avoid trespassing, we leave open the possibility of resuming negotiations at any time.

I believe the system of bartering used by the mountain men and the villagers was called ‘silent trade’. I am coming to understand that there was nothing extraordinary in striking such a silent bargain for survival.<sup>30</sup>

In her long novel *Kagayaku mizu no jidai*, the protagonist, Misako who is divorced has lost her young son. Traumatized Misako goes to stay in Paris. Her grief and her process of regaining her self-identity are narrated through the conversations between Misako and her cousin Asako. Asako is a second-generation Japanese-American who happens to be staying in Paris, and she can hardly speak Japanese. Consequently, their conversations become a mixture of English, French and Japanese. For this reason, the values by which Misako lives are restructured not by the Japanese language, her mother tongue, but by a mixture of rudimentary languages. An excerpt from the opening paragraph may be informative:

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., translated by Geraldine Harcourt, 42–43.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 43–44.

夢を見たからだと思う。それが理由だと思う。[···] アサコに、なぜあなたはわたしの父に会わなければならないの、と聞かれたとき、私は迷ったすえに、結局、こう答えた。アサコの質問が彼女の母国語だったので、それにあわせたへたな英語で。ふたりで話すときは、たいてい、その言葉を使っていた。私の母国語を使って話をするのは、彼女にはほとんど不可能なことだった。そして、ふたりにとって、外国語であるフランス語を使うのは、たがいにどことなく不自然な感じがしたし、だいいち、それは英語を使うよりさらに、私を疲れさせることだった。けれども、もし私自身の母国語をあのととき使えていたら、私はまったくべつの答え方をしていたのかもしれない。<sup>31</sup>

When Asako asked me the reason why I have to meet her father, after a lot of hesitation, I finally answered like this: ‘Because I saw your father in my dreams.’ Since she questioned me in her mother tongue, I had to answer her in my awkward English. When we speak, we usually use that language. It is almost impossible for Asako to have a conversation in my mother tongue. As for French, we felt somehow very awkward to converse in it because French was not the first language for both of us. And anyhow, French conversation makes me more tired than using English in the first place. However, if I could have used my first language, I might have answered her question differently.

In this excerpt, the protagonist Misako shows that she may have fudged the issue by giving Asako an ambiguous answer had she used Japanese. With Asako in Paris, Misako has to narrate her course of events not in Japanese but in a new rudimentary

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<sup>31</sup> Tsushima, *Kagayaku mizu no jidai*, 7.

language. Through the conversations with Asako, Misako continues to search her self-identity and attempts to envision some new angle on her conventional viewpoint that was nurtured by the Japanese language.

In *Yama o hashiru onna* (Woman Running in the Mountains, 1980), the protagonist, Takiko gives birth to an illegitimate baby.<sup>32</sup> Takiko's baby is rejected by society and lives a life in which '[n]o one who means anything ever enters'. In the first half of this novel, her life is portrayed as though it were that of 'a barely maternal animal'. However, Takiko 'refuses to succumb' to this routine, insipid existence. On this point, Miyoshi Masao highlights Takiko's process of developing emotional autonomy through her exchanges with Kambayashi, her new colleague and the father of a child with Down's syndrome. Miyoshi describes the process of her conversion as follows:

She has never met a man who is at ease with being a father. And through knowing this man's presence, "her acts of giving birth to Akira [her illegitimate child] and nurturing him have been given an expression."<sup>33</sup> To love a linguistically handicapped child is to learn a wholly new language—or to learn what language truly is. What has been hitherto unnamed is now named, and with it a new realm of language and meaning is initiated. She is no longer just working at a plant nursery. Her workplace turns into mountains where animals leap, dreams run free, and people care for each other. One of the most pastoral of Tsushima's tales, *Yama wo hashiru onna* is a commedia that grants hope.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For detailed arguments on this point, see also Miyoshi, *Off Center*, 213.

<sup>33</sup> 「自分が晶を産み、育てていることに、はじめて神林の存在によって、言葉を与えられた気がした。」 Tsushima Yūko, *Yama o hashiru onna* (山を走る女), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2006, 276. The first edition was published by Kōdansha in 1980.

<sup>34</sup> Miyoshi, *Off Center*, 213.

From Miyoshi's observations of Takiko's conversion in *Yama o hashiru onna*, it will be clear that Tsushima attempts to depict the manner in which a woman faced with the harsh reality of her existence establishes her self-identity through the process of regaining a language of her own along with Takiko's transformation into an autonomous individual who possesses the right of self-determination and assumes responsibility for her words and actions.

Tsushima emphasizes that our imaginative power has never changed and will never undergo a change with time—no matter how evolved our knowledge and experiences become. She states that literature is the field that enables us to recover the unchanged imagination of human beings and reconsider how it keeps pace with different times or social systems on the occasion.<sup>35</sup> She examines the problems of the Ainu people in her literary works in the same way that Nakagami deliberated the question of *burakumin*.

In 'Sōron: Seido to kinki' (総論 制度と禁忌 The General Statement: The Law/System and the Taboo),<sup>36</sup> Tsushima talks about the imaginative power that originates from the body of the individual. However, she points out that the individual imaginative power that is supposed to be determined by our free will has actually been bound by external causalities such as the entity called *kami* (god), by customs, laws/systems and the like. She asserts that literature may spring out of this kind of continuous antagonism between the law/system and personal imaginative power.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Tsushima Yūko, 'Sōron: Seido to kinki' (総論 制度と禁忌), in *Tēma de yomitoku nihon no bungaku: jō*, 12–13.

<sup>36</sup> This introductory chapter was written for an anthology entitled *Tēma de yomitoku nihon no bungaku—Gendai josei sakka no kokoromi* (テーマで読み解く日本の文学—現代日本女性作家の試み Japanese Literature by Thematic Subjects—Attempts Made by Women Writers of Contemporary Japan), Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Tsushima Yūko, 'Sōron: Seido to kinki', in *Tēma de yomitoku nihon no bungaku: jō*, 12–15.

She focuses on the people who are opposed to the law/system or the people who are driven out of the political and economic spheres of communities. For example, they include the Ainu people, travelling entertainers, a fallen/defeated samurai, *biwa* players, members of a cult and women. She is determined to continue studying the imaginative power of the people who have fallen out of the law/system of the collective and how literature has originated from their imaginations.

### **Takamura Kaoru**

Takamura Kaoru was born in Osaka in 1953. After graduating from the International Christian University in 1975, she joined a foreign-capital-affiliated trading company. In 1990, at the age of 37, Takamura made her literary debut with her best-selling novel *Ōgon o daite tobe* (Leap with Gold in Your Arms). She won the 3rd Japanese Mystery/Suspense Novel Prize for *Ōgon o daite tobe* in 1991 and the 109th Naoki Award for *Mākusu no yama* (Marks' Mountain), which boosted her popularity as the Japanese 'Queen of Crime' in 1993. Since then, she has continued to publish a series of best-selling crime/mystery fiction and has enjoyed immense popularity. Her style is noted for its extremely close observation of human relationships, which stems from her deep understanding of human psychology and the criminal mind, and its minutely detailed descriptions of the circumstances of characters. Hence, there is much controversy over whether her works should be categorized as *junbungaku* (so-called 'pure' literature), which is serious and artistic, or as popular literature, which is merely meant as entertainment.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For example, see Nozaki Rokusuke, *Takamura Kaoru no sekai* (高村薫の世界), Tokyo: Jōhō

However, by the time Takamura wrote *Haruko jōka* (The Ballad of Haruko) in 2002, she had stopped writing crime fiction, and her style of writing had also changed dramatically. In *Haruko jōka*, Takamura writes about the life of a woman, Fukuzawa Haruko, who lived through the Taisho and Showa eras. Haruko's stormy life before and after World War II is depicted through the hundred letters she wrote to her son, Akiyuki (彰之).<sup>39</sup> In 2005, Takamura published the sequel to *Haruko jōka*—*Shin Ria ō* (A New Story of King Lear). These comprised the first two novels of a trilogy, and Takamura has been working on the third sequel. *Shin Ria ō* presents the story of the Fukuzawa (an influential clan in the Aomori prefecture at the northern tip of the Japanese mainland). This is a saga involving four-day long conversations between Akiyuki (彰之), who becomes a priest seeking his autonomous self, and his father, Sakae (榮), a powerful local politician who lived in the age of the *55-nen taisei* (the so-called '1955 Party Structure') and witnessed its fundamental impasse in the 1980s.<sup>40</sup>

It is very interesting to study Takamura's attempt at writing a saga portraying the conflict between the priest Akiyuki as an individual who is seeking autonomy and the politician Sakae who lives as part of the political/social organizational setup. As literary critic Akiyama Shun (b. 1930) suggests, Takamura's works always treat the theme of the relationship between the individual and the social organization.<sup>41</sup> In a similar way as Ōe and Tsurumi indicated in Chapter III, Akiyama also explains that postwar writers like Noma Hiroshi and Ōoka Shōhei were the only practitioners in the history of modern Japanese literature who seriously attempted to portray relationships

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sentā shuppan kyoku, 2002, 30.

<sup>39</sup> Takamura Kaoru, *Haruko jōka: jō/ge* (晴子情歌 上/下), Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2002.

<sup>40</sup> Takamura Kaoru, *Shin Ria ō: jō/ge* (新リア王 上/下), Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Akiyama Shun, 'Kaisetsu', in Takamura Kaoru, *Mākusū no yama: ge* (マークスの山下), Tokyo: Kōdansha bunko, 2003, 353–354.



between the individual and the social organization, which can be regarded as a form of the collective. In this regard, Akiyama asserts that in her works, Takamura Kaoru also clearly addresses the question of how the individual relates to the collective notion which was formed by his/her social organization such as the world of politics in *Shin Ria* *ō*.<sup>42</sup> A similar attempt can be seen in Nakagami Kenji's *Akiyuki sanbusaku* (The Trilogy of Akiyuki): *Misaki*, *Karekinada* and *Chi no hate shijō no toki*. Both Nakagami's and Takamura's works have recurring themes that are dealt with in a multilayered and multifaceted fashion. In their sagas, if a motif, theme or character is depicted from a particular perspective in a novel, a different dimension of the same motif, theme or character reappears in a subsequent novel. In Chapter III, we have already seen how Akiyuki's incestuous relationship with his half-sister and conflict with the father or his elder half-brother were reiterated over and over and eventually shifted from the protagonist, Akiyuki, to other characters. It seems to me that Takamura may have been inspired by Nakagami's Akiyuki saga, and she appears to be writing her own Akiyuki saga. As we may have already noticed, the protagonists of both sagas have the same name, Akiyuki. However, the protagonist's name in Takamura's saga had different Chinese characters—namely, Akiyuki (彰之)—from Akiyuki (秋幸) in Nakagami's saga. In this regard, Takamura modestly stated that she did not expect her attempt to be in the same league as that of Nakagami. In fact, Takamura exalted Nakagami as a genius beyond compare in an interview conducted in December 2003.<sup>43</sup> However, she was determined to become a writer whose ambition was to portray a world that can be created using nothing but *kotoba* or some kind of unknown power that

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 354.

<sup>43</sup> Bessatsu Takarajima henshūbu (別冊宝島編集部) (ed.), *Takamura Kaoru no hon* (高村薫の本), Tokyo: Takarajima-sha, 2006, 263–264.

is derived from *kotoba*.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, Takamura Kaoru has been directing her attention towards the reconsideration of the meaning of words in the same way as Betsuyaku Minoru or Nakagami Kenji. Takamura has made a few important remarks on her conversion from crime fiction in several interviews and her lecture that I attended in 2005.<sup>45</sup> These can be summarized as follows:

1. After experiencing the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, Takamura felt that the sudden collapse of everyday life had devastated the system of values or meanings that she regarded as the foundation of her thoughts. Although she does not mean to disregard the literary genre of crime fiction or mystery, this shocking experience led her to give up writing crime fiction.
2. She deplores the recent enervation of *kotoba* because it seems to become a more symbolic, abstract linguistic sign in a highly networked information-based society. She asserts that the more today's tendency towards the weakening of language progresses, the more human beings will fall apart and decline.
3. She harbours deep reservations about the recent tendency towards expressing feelings hysterically by repeating simple words found in the dichotomy such as good/bad or comfortable/uncomfortable rather than thinking about the complex—and often ambiguous—circumstances that arouse our emotions.

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<sup>44</sup> 「中身はなんでもいいんですが、言葉でしかつくりえない世界、何物にも置き換えられない言葉だけがもっている力の世界—私も、それをつくりたいという野望をもつところまで来たんですよ。」 Ibid., 265.

<sup>45</sup> Takamura Kaoru, 'Otoroeru kotoba to tatakau' (衰える言葉と闘う), *Asahi shinbun*, the evening edition, 23 October 2004, p.10. I also refer to her comments from Takamura's Special Open Lecture entitled 'Shōsetsu no hyōgen to dōjidai—"Shin Ria ō" o moto ni' (小説の表現と同時代『新リア王』をもとに) at The Asahi Cultural Centre Osaka School (Asahi Karuchā Sentā Osaka kō 朝日カルチャーセンター大阪校) on 17 December 2005.

Writers must constantly tackle this dilemma by describing with words the ambiguous, unidentified environments that lie beyond words. This is a paradoxical challenge.

4. She believes that the ambiguous, complex beings called human beings cannot be portrayed through the words (or rather terms) of politics or religion alone. However, it may be possible to depict them through the words used in writing novels.
5. She needs to ceaselessly evaluate the meaning of words and accommodate many words and expressions while describing an event or phenomenon. This is a continual process of trial and error, which is like saying: 'That's not it! This isn't it!'
6. In order to depict a single event, hundreds of words must be accumulated. By doing so, we may find our way into the time and space that we have not depicted before.

Based on these remarks, we can conclude that Takamura Kaoru should be included among those women writers who carefully observe the ambiguity and unreasonable complexity of the existence of human beings and the formation of their identity through contact with their society or external surroundings. Such a writer then endeavours to express this incomprehensibility as our existence in the form of the 'self' through a series of novels.

Further, it is noteworthy that Takamura is known as a writer who frequently adapts or rewrites her own works. Whenever her hardcover books were republished as

*bunkobon*—the mass-market paperback (or pocket edition)—Takamura rewrote the greater part of her novels and sometimes even their titles. For example, the hardcover edition of *Riviera o ute* (Fire upon Riviera!) was published in 1992, and its pocket edition was published in 1997. Takamura made some modifications to the pocket edition. The biggest change occurs at the end of the story. In the 1992 hardcover edition, one of the protagonists, Tejima (a deputy inspector), narrates and sums up the happenings at the end of the novel. However, Takamura cut out this entire scene in the 1997 pocket edition. It seems to me that through this act, she attempted to allow us to draw our own conclusions about what happened in the novel. As Irisawa Yasuo points out upon examining all of the existing manuscripts of Miyazawa Kenji's *Ginga tetsudō no yoru* in Chapter III, let us again recall the fact that Miyazawa Kenji created his literary works in a manner that characteristically negates the concept of the 'final manuscript' or 'authorized edition'.<sup>46</sup> I believe that while seeking her own autonomous self in accordance with a changing historical environment, Takamura also shares Miyazawa's tendency to never stop elaborating upon the final manuscripts.

## **Tawada Yōko**

Tawada Yōko was born in Tokyo in 1960. After submitting her graduation thesis on the Russian poet Bella Akhatovna Akhmadulina (b. 1937) to Waseda University (School of Literature) in 1982, she started travelling alone to India and Europe. When she arrived in Hamburg, she found a job at a trading company that exported German books.

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<sup>46</sup> Irisawa, "'Ginga tetsudō no yoru" no honbun no hensen ni tsuite no taiwa' (「銀河鉄道の夜」の本文の変遷についての対話), in *Miyazawa Kenji—Purioshin kaigan kara no hōkoku* (宮沢賢治—プリオシン海岸からの報告), Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1991, 167–177.

Tawada worked there while studying German at a language school. In 1983, she began attending language and literature classes at the School of Literature in Hamburg University and began to translate her Japanese poems into German. In 1987, her first book of poetry, *Nur da wo du bist da ist nichts/ Anata no iru tokoro dake nani mo nai* (あなたのいるところだけなにもない The Place You Exist Is the Only Empty Place)—written in both German and Japanese—was published by German publisher *Konkursbuchverlag*. In 1990, she started work on her Master of Arts thesis at Hamburg University. While she was writing her thesis, she also began to write novels in Japanese and made her literary debut in Japan. In 1991, she was awarded the 34th Noma Prize for New Writers for *Kakato o nakushite* (Missing Heels). At around the same time, writing in both German and Japanese, Tawada created her style and produced a prodigious amount of quality work along with her Master's degree thesis in German literature. In 1993, she won the 108th Akutagawa Prize for her novel *Inumukoiri* (The Bridegroom Was a Dog). In 1996, she became the first Japanese to win the Adelbert von Chamisso Prize—a prize awarded by the Bavarian Art Academy to authors whose mother tongue is not German. Since then, Tawada has been a prolific and energetic writer both in German and Japanese and, since 2000, has also been writing her Ph.D. thesis at the University of Zurich.

From her personal background, it is evident that Tawada has been creating her works while travelling back and forth between two countries, and it is easy to imagine that Tawada views her native language, that is, the Japanese language, objectively. Tawada developed a sense of discomfort with regard to the meaning of the Japanese language upon perceiving the gaps between *nihongo* as her mother tongue and herself when she examined her self-identity. In her early essay, 'Subette, koronde, kakato ga toreta' (す

べって、ころんで、かかとがとれた Slipped, Fell and I Lost My Heels), written in 1992, Tawada explains her discomfort with the Japanese language during her early days in Hamburg, around 1982.

Half a year went by without my speaking any Japanese at all. It felt like the Japanese language had become detached from my life. Even the things I could touch with my hands, as well my moods—I just didn't find the right words for them in Japanese. It was probably natural that German, a foreign language to me, should not feel right, but becoming separated from one's mother tongue was frightening, like being in a fog and gradually not being able to read words anymore. Wordless, I came to feel things, think and make decisions. (There are probably people who would say this is impossible, but there's no other way to put it.)

[...] ]

In time, I came to 'translate' this life without words into German and Japanese. It was as if the Japanese I had used in the past had died and been reborn in another shape. Although such Japanese might well be thought strange, I could not write about the world I saw without it when I worked on *Missing Heels*, for which I received the Gunzo Prize for New Writers last year [1991].

*Missing Heels* postulates my contradictory feelings that there are no people without heels, and that even without heels, people are able to lead brilliant lives. I wanted to write a novel without heels. This is not literature which wanders freely, ignoring the traditions influencing one, however. Literature without heels is, I believe, literature which is unpredictable and looks like it is perpetually about to tumble precisely because it is standing on its toes. And people who look like they are about to tumble are far more interesting to me than those who have their feet firmly on the ground.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Tawada Yōko, 'Subette, koronde, kakato ga toreta', in Tawada Yōko, *Katakoto no uwagoto*, Tokyo: Seidosha, 2007, 10–13. 'Subette, koronde, kakato ga toreta' is translated by Alison Watts as 'Slipped, Fell and I Lost My Heels' on the Internet Homepage, Non Profit Internet Publisher, Web Press Happa No Kōfu, (<http://happano.org/index.html>). This excerpt was taken on 1 June 2007.

If we regard the people without heels as those who are seeking autonomous freedom and regard the people who need heels as those whose decisions are compelled by external causalities, then it can be said that Tawada's contradictory feelings may be synonymous with Nakagami Kenji's contradictory attitudes towards the Japanese language. Moreover, it must be noted that Tawada's notion of 'a novel without heels' is not defined as literature that neither wanders freely nor ignores the traditions. The toes of at least one foot of the '[l]iterature without heels' inevitably touch the ground—that is, the environment surrounding us—at all times. On re-evaluating Maruyama Masao's notion of freedom, Ōe Kenzaburō believes that freedom is synonymous with personal autonomy, that is, 'the ability of logical self-definition'<sup>48</sup> rather than freedom resulting from the elimination of man's environmental constraints. Tawada is aware of these constraints on our freedom in writing. Discerning the conflict between personal autonomy and the dependence on the collective, she attempts to write 'a novel without heels' that 'is perpetually about to tumble' in the same way that Nakagami continued to write novels aspiring to the ceaseless hell. Tawada goes on to explain her contradictory feelings about the act of writing:

Now and then I accidentally overhear the conversations of Japanese travellers at a train station, for example, and there are times when their manner of speaking sounds terribly artificial to me. I don't quite know how to adequately express this feeling, but it sounds just like an English class where students are practicing conversation with memorized dialogue. I wonder if everyone lives out their lives talking in such a manner. Perhaps the words 'natural' and 'unnatural', 'skillful' and 'awkward' are discriminatory terms. There are no grounds for saying one kind of Japanese is natural and beautiful, and anything else is no good. Isn't it

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<sup>48</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 103.

all right for Japanese to be spoken and written in a completely different style? Especially if it more nearly approaches the experience of the people using it in their lives, including foreigners living in Japan or Japanese living overseas. At any rate, I felt that it was impossible to write the things I wanted to in ordinary Japanese. You could say that it was as a result of this feeling that a novel without heels was born.<sup>49</sup>

Tawada's conclusion that 'it was impossible to write the things I wanted to in ordinary Japanese' might be considered to be equivalent to Tsushima Yūko's notion of languages that are spoken by people who are displaced to the periphery of the society. Tawada's realization is also equivalent to Nakagami Kenji's attempt to seek a new discourse of novels, which is found in the narrative style of the aged, illiterate women in the *burakumin* ghettos in Shingū, in which their words perfectly coincide with what they represent.

In her essay anthology *Exophonie—Bogo no soto e deru tabi* (Exophonie—The Journey to Get Outside Our Mother Tongue), published in 2003, Tawada proposes the notion of *exophonie*. *Exophonie* is a German word that indicates the state that we fall into a place where our mother tongue is not spoken widely. A prime example of this is immigrants who move to a country where a different language is spoken. Tawada regards the experience of *exophonie* as an effective means for contemporary writers to reconsider the possibility—and the impossibility—of written language or the novel as a genre.<sup>50</sup>

In her recent novel *Amerika—Hidō no tairiku* (America, the Continent of Outrage),

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<sup>49</sup> Tawada Yōko, 'Subette, koronde, kakato ga toreta', translated by Alison Watts as 'Slipped, Fell and I Lost My Heels' on the Internet Homepage, Non Profit Internet Publisher, Web Press Happa No Kōfu, (<http://happano.org/index.html>), in Tawada Yōko, *Katakoto no uwagoto*, Tokyo: Seidosha, 2007, 10–13.

<sup>50</sup> Tawada Yōko, 'Dakāru' (Dakar), in Tawada Yōko, *Exophonie—Bogo no soto e deru tabi* (エクソフォニー—母語の外へ出る旅), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2003, 3–13.



published in 2006, Tawada uses the second person pronoun, *anata*, as a focal character.

The story opens as follows.

あなたは飛行機の中でうとうと眠りながら、そんなはずはないのに機体を外側から見ている自分に驚いていた。鈍い銀色の機体に氷の粒が何億も貼り付いている。[···] 右斜め上から女性の声が聞こえて、あなたは目が覚める。目の前に、新書判くらいの大きさのカードが突きだされている。スチュワーデスがあなたを見て微笑みながら、そのカードを突き出している。<sup>51</sup>

When you are falling asleep on an airplane, you, knowing that it is impossible, are surprised to see yourself gazing at the aircraft from the outside. The dull-coloured silver airframe is covered with hundreds of millions of ice flakes. [...] You are woken up by a woman's voice coming diagonally from your forward right. A pocket-book-sized card is shoved in your face. A smiling flight attendant is presenting it to you.

Tawada never explains who 'you' refers to or why 'you' are travelling around the US in this novel. The novel does not end when expected. Also, the second person pronoun, *anata* has been employed for all the sentences in this novel. Thus, the end of the story is entrusted to the reader. Similarly, in the short story 'Umi ni otoshita namae' (The Name That I Dropped into the Ocean), Tawada portrays a woman who suffers a memory loss as an after-effect of an injury in an airplane accident. When the protagonist regains consciousness, all she finds is a bunch of receipts from various shops. She does not remember why she has the receipts, who she is, where she came

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<sup>51</sup> Tawada Yōko, *Amerika—Hidō no tairiku* (アメリカ—非道の大陸), Tokyo: Seidosha, 2006, 7.

from or what she has been doing. She simply fails to recollect anything about herself.<sup>52</sup> In an interview in the evening edition of *Asahi shinbun*, dated 12 December 2006, Tawada explains that to write about selfhood, which is rooted in shaky ground such as the state of *exophonie* or on the verge of an identity crisis, means to explore the possibility of a new style for her novel. Interestingly, Tawada also comments on the binary frame in a manner similar to Nakagami Kenji. She states, ‘I have always resented the bipolar world. I have always had a tendency to search for its third pole. This polarization constitutes a particular pattern between black and white or good and evil and the like. I believe that literature could be one of the means that can lead us out of these conventions’.<sup>53</sup> Like Nakagami Kenji and Tsushima Yūko, it seems to me that Tawada Yōko’s journey in search of her autonomous self in relation to others—that is, society or any other wider world beyond the bounds of the mother tongue or the nation-state—will continue perpetually.

### **Yoshimoto Banana**

Yoshimoto Banana (よしもとばなな b. 1964) is undoubtedly one of the most renowned contemporary writers both in and outside Japan. In the 1980s, Ōe Kenzaburō criticized Japanese writers, represented by Murakami Haruki and Yoshimoto Banana, for their passive attitudes and regarded them as writers creating subcultures that

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<sup>52</sup> Tawada Yōko, ‘Umi ni otoshita namae’, in Tawada Yōko, *Umi ni otoshita namae*, Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2006, 103–173.

<sup>53</sup> 「昔から二極というのが嫌いで、第三の極をつねに求めてるところがあったんです。二極って善・悪とか白・黒とかパターンができてしまう。そういう考え方を脱出するひとつの手段として文学があるんじゃないかと思います。」 ‘Amerika o “dai 3 no kyoku” ni hyōgen hirogeru’ (アメリカを「第三の極」に表現広げる), *Asahi shinbun-the evening edition*, 12 December 2006, p. 7.

were mere reflections of Tokyo's vast consumer culture. Yoshimoto Banana has been recognized as a writer at the forefront of the subculture movement or postmodern phenomenon in Japan in the 1980s.<sup>54</sup> However, after publishing a long novel, *Amurita*, in 1994, Yoshimoto Banana altered her writing style in the same way in which Takamura Kaoru stopped writing crime fiction. Murakami Fuminobu points out the following paradoxical aspect of her work: 'Yoshimoto Banana's work attempts to discover difference in totality or commonness in individuality by changing the form of desire'.<sup>55</sup> In the late 1990s, Banana portrayed many female protagonists who were seeking their autonomy—an autonomy that was inevitably and mutually interrelated to others and the external world. As Murakami indicates, Banana attempts to contrast the self against a wide variety of others in a collection of short stories *Karada wa zenbu shitteiru* (The Body Knows Everything, 2000). As indicated by the title, in these short stories, while Banana views the body as a microcosm that encompasses the entire world, she also attempts to portray the protagonist's process of achieving his/her autonomy through the individual body under human conditions that are bound by the external causality or the law of nature. In the short story 'Kuroi ageha' (A Black Swallowtail Butterfly), Banana depicts the mother of two teenage daughters who is on the verge of a divorce. The mother's actions and words while confronting the crisis of divorce are recounted by the younger daughter, who is a focal character. It is interesting to note though the crisis is provoked by the mother's extramarital affair with a young man, it is not the mother who leaves the home. Instead, it is the father who leaves; the father is

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<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Murakami Fuminobu, 'Yoshimoto Banana's Feminine Family', in Murakami Fuminobu, *Postmodern, Feminist and Postcolonial Currents in Contemporary Japanese Culture: A Reading of Murakami Haruki, Yoshimoto Banana, Yoshimoto Takaaki and Karatani Kōjin*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005, 58–94.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 58. I refer to Yoshimoto Banana as Banana, so that readers do not mistake her for her father, Yoshimoto Takaaki.

depicted as a *mazakon* (mama's boy), who often returns to his mother's home. On the morning of the day that the father leaves the house, the mother keeps her two daughters home from school and holds a barbecue party in their garden. At first, the two daughters are baffled by their mother's plan, but they soon start enjoying themselves. The mother asks her daughters to open the good wine, which their father stored in the cellar, and she starts drinking it.

私達は、それぞれのコップにワインをついでどんどん飲み、気分よくなっていた。[...] 肉も野菜も妙においしかった。つらさや寂しさを吹き払おうとする時、そんなふうになんかちょっとしたごほうびみたいに自由が生まれる。<sup>56</sup>

We started feeling better as we filled each other's glasses with wine and plied one another with drink [...] The meat and vegetables tasted unexpectedly good. When we are determined to drive away our growing pain and loneliness, a little freedom is afforded to us in this form, like a reward.

Thus, the women in the family ironically gain and savour their freedom under catastrophic circumstances. At this juncture, the mother remarks upon her ironical situation to her daughters:

つまんないことがある時は、気をつけてみれば、もう一方にはちゃんと、こういうわくわくすることが隠れているのよ。神様はちゃん

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<sup>56</sup> Yoshimoto Banana, 'Kuroi ageha' (黒いあげは), in Yoshimoto Banana, *Karada wa zenbu shitte iru* (体は全部知っている), Tokyo: Bunshun bunko, 2002, 60. The hardcover edition was published by Bungei shunjū in 2000.

と考えていてくださる。<sup>57</sup>

When we are uptight about stupid, trivial things, if we look meticulously, we can always find something that is exciting and has been in hiding. Remember that God treats every entity fairly. God sends us the cold only after providing clothes.

When considering the examples quoted above, we find that Banana accepts the reality of human beings, which is determined by various external causalities that do not allow us to realize our free will. However, at the same time, she exhorts us to strive for freedom under these conditions and attempts to destroy the patriarchal world that is also determined by external causalities. But, this does not imply that the mother rejects her husband completely. The mother tells her daughters that they will forgive the father if he does not flee to his mother's place. In fact, he sleeps on his friends' couches for a few weeks and returns to his wife and daughters in the end. We are able to discern many contrasting situations and polar oppositions in this novel. From the perspective of the younger daughter, the figure of her mother resembles that of an old doll, despite its present sturdiness. The mother's floral-print dress is contrasted with a streak of smoke ascending from a crematorium. As we have seen in Chapter III, similar to Nakagami, Ango, Chūya and Miyazawa, Banana appears to share the paradoxical perspective of the world surrounding her. Banana continues to produce works that convey the irony between the individual and the collective, and portray the manner in which individual practical action takes place in the complex world surrounding it. This enables her to keep formulating new judgments within a historically changing

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

environment and within *a priori* limits.

With regard to the issue of autonomy, there is further evidence to illustrate how Banana's notion of autonomy can be observed through the lens of the mutually exclusive dichotomy between the collective and the individual. Examples of this can be found in many of her recent works: *Deddoendo no omoide* (Memory of a Dead-end, 2003) and *Hitokage* (A Shadow of Man, 2006)—which is the revised version of *Tokage* (Lizard) written in 1993. In *Lizard* (Tokage), the protagonist, Tokage (her nickname), is suffering the consequences of a traumatic childhood: a lunatic stabbed her mother in front of her. In the introduction to *Hitokage*, Banana admits that Tokage's narration of her painful experiences was a one-sided way of looking at the situation.<sup>58</sup> Banana adds the following comment made by Tokage's mother:

あんなことをされたことは一生許せないし、死んでも赦されるべきではない、でも、・・・ほんとうに不幸なことだと思う、あんなふうになってしまったのはあの人だけの責任ではないのに・・・なんのことはない、家族は前より絆がかたくなかったし、前よりも幸せだから、何にも負けてはいないのよ、どんな悪意にも壊せないものはこの世にあるの。<sup>59</sup>

I cannot forgive the man for what he did to us. Even if he is sentenced to death for his crime, I will never forgive him...yet, on the other hand, I think what compelled the man to commit this crime was not entirely his fault. ... In fact, this incident strengthened and tightened the bond between our family members, for now we are happier than we were before. In this sense, we are not defeated by anything or anyone. I believe that

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<sup>58</sup> Yoshimoto Banana, *Hitokage* (ひとかげ), Tokyo: Gentōsha, 2006, 1–5.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 67–68.

there is something in this world that no power can destroy, no matter how evil the power is.

This excerpt clearly demonstrates Banana's multidimensional view about her understanding of the complex world. In the revised version of her novel, the protagonist does not remain a *tokage* (lizard) but evolves into something that is connected with *hitokage* (the shadow of a human being).

As discussed above, many interesting examples of the quest for autonomy, related to both the distrust of the modern language that is regarded as a collective notion and the emphasis on the body that is recognized as a basis of their individual identities, emerge from the literature of contemporary Japanese women writers. In future, I would like to further explore these phenomena in the field of contemporary Japanese literature, including Japanese theatre and drama, in order to shed light on Japanese modern/contemporary literature from a different perspective.

## CONCLUSION

In the last chapter, we saw that Tawada Yōko has developed her sense of discomfort about the meaning of the Japanese language in perceiving the gaps between *nihongo* (as her mother tongue) and herself when she examines her self-identity living in Germany. Similarly, when Nakagami Kenji delivered a lecture in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1990, he pointed out that the words and actions of his illiterate mother, siblings and his neighbourhood could not be depicted by the Japanese standard language. He felt that his people had not existed within the world that was perceived by the language that had developed with the process of establishing modern Japan.<sup>1</sup> Nakagami confessed with anger that he sensed the gaps between himself and ‘Beautiful Japan’ with which Kawabata Yasunari concurred in his Nobel Prize lecture. He had to ask himself a few fundamental questions repeatedly: ‘How am I related to Japan? Do I coincide with it? Do I still have a connection with it? Is what I write something to do with “Japan”? Am I Japanese?’<sup>2</sup>

For Nakagami Kenji, writing novels using *kotoba* means that it reacts against the conventional concepts or ideas backed by the law/system of the collective, for instance, the modern nation-state, social groups, households, which regulate the individual acts. However, at the same time, Nakagami became aware that *kotoba* itself possesses an element of turning into a social product which reflects the collective idea that restricts

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<sup>1</sup> Nakagami Kenji, ‘Watashi wa nihon-jin nano ka’, in Karatani Kōjin et al. (eds), *Nakagami Kenji hatsugen shūsei 6* (中上健次発言集成 6), Tokyo: Daisanbunmeisha, 1990, 338–340.

<sup>2</sup> 「あらためて問うしかないわけです。＜日本＞と＜私＞は、どうつながるのか。重なっているのか、切れているのか。私の書くのは＜日本＞なのか。私は＜日本人＞なのか。そう問うわけです。」 Ibid., 344–345.



one's personal autonomous freedom or one's self-determination that chooses his/her actions. Nakagami faced this paradoxical nature caused by *kotoba* throughout his life. In previous chapters, we have observed that Nakagami's *kotoba* in his writing means to operate as an eternal creator of new values, and writing something using *kotoba* is operated by the individual who is perpetually seeking autonomy, that is to say, constantly making his/her 'logical self-definition' which tirelessly engages 'with a historically changing environment'.<sup>3</sup> In addition to this, it is important to note that this self-determination is always formulated with one's ethical responsibility for it. However, on the other hand, *kotoba* can enlarge the possibility to give rise to one's totalitarian identification, or coercive assimilation into the collective. When Nakagami regards the Japanese language as a modern invention that creates a uniform and monolithic ideological system, it also creates the archetype of narrative. Thus, Nakagami's perception of *kotoba* generates an eternal conflict between autonomy and dependence, and it became the prime force of his writing.

Thus, for Nakagami, writing novels using *kotoba* contains the potential risk of creating a fantastic ideology, that is, an invented *monogatari* that he calls the law/system of the collective. He is fully aware that people, being incited by the one-dimensional *monogatari* or the archetype of narrative, inadvertently surrender their autonomy to external causalities. Nevertheless, no matter how much he disbelieved the concept of *kotoba*, he could not abandon this potentially dangerous means for writing, *kotoba*, and he constantly endeavoured to expand the frontiers of language. In this sense, Nakagami Kenji's act of writing can be regarded as an autonomous action that perpetually brings out the self-legislation and makes new judgments 'according to

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<sup>3</sup> Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 183.

standards that arise in relation to lived, historical situations'.<sup>4</sup> As Nakagami became aware that any binary frame will never be dialectically reconciled, his ambivalent attitude towards writing can be explained by Kant's transcendental standpoint that is to possess both the theoretical attitude—observing an event through a lens of the relation of cause and effect—and the practical attitude—rewriting an event according to the situation at the time—at the same time. It seems to me that this kind of bilateral character of Nakagami gives the flexibility and gravity to his literary universe. Nakagami always celebrates his freedom to choose his action, meeting the requirements of the times, however he will never find satisfaction in his decision at any given time. Accepting old traditions and conventions, he continues to revise them in compliance with demands from the environments surrounding him. For example, Nakagami did not reject the *monogatari* genre, or rather, he clung to it. And simultaneously he attempted to create a new discourse of *shōsetsu* by using the narrative style of the old women's story-telling in the *roji*. However, it was a paradoxical attempt since he had to use language in which he disbelieved, and for that reason, it was an endless strife. I feel that Nakagami's paradoxical attempt to create—and to destroy—the values through his act of writing within the limits of a given situation<sup>5</sup> is highly valuable as it deals with the issue of autonomy or one's self-determination to choose his/her actions that are closely linked with one's moral responsibility. Tsujimoto Yūichi also points out that Nakagami always had two impulses that go into opposite directions at the same time. He introduces Nakagami's comment on this matter in *Asahi shinbun* (4 January 1982) as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 182.

I am a radical reformer who is opposed to the form of *monogatari*, but at the same time I am a writer who conforms to the system. On the one hand I think I should be a creator of much more institutional *monogatari*, on the other hand I want to destroy it. Because I must admit what transcends the archetype of *monogatari* is inevitably *monogatari* itself, I should get going having two poles at the same time.<sup>6</sup>

For this reason, Nakagami's ambivalent perception about writing developed into the strong distrust of language as a collective notion and the awareness of the body as an undeniable object that reflects the individual differentiation. While Nakagami becomes aware that the language itself turns into a collective notion that generalizes one's individual differences, he attempts to reconsider the reality of his outcast environment through the individual body of people who dwell in the *roji* in order to unlearn the generalized notions of the Japanese outcast that were brought about by the Japanese language itself. Thus, the process of establishing his autonomous selfhood was developed from Nakagami's act of writing, which was described as the conflict between *kotoba* and the body. I agree with Nakagami and Tsushima in thinking that literature may evolve from a paradox, irony or ambivalence. In this respect, Nakagami was seeking autonomy eternally by writing novels, it was, as it were, his endless self-legislation. He certainly did not succeed in incorporating the concept of autonomy in all of his works. However, his perspective of autonomous freedom, for

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<sup>6</sup> 「ぼくは反物語の急進的な作家であると同時に、非常に制度的な作家です。もっと制度的な物語のつくり手になれと思う一方で、もっと破壊的になれと思う。物語の構造を超えるのも物語である以上、この両方をかかえてやっていきたい」 Tsujimoto Yūichi, 'Nakagami bungaku ni okeru Kumano (Kumano) no isō' (中上文学におけるクマノ (Kumano) の位相), in *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō bessatsu: Kumano sono shinkō to bungaku ·bijutsu ·shizen* (国文学解釈と鑑賞 別冊 その信仰と文学・美術・自然) (January 2007): 168.

which he constantly quests, may serve as a stepping-stone to reinterpret modern Japanese literature.

Nakagami's attempt is not confined to his works alone. In Chapters III, V and VI, we have seen that Sakaguchi Ango, Miyazawa Kenji, Nakahara Chūya have much in common with Nakagami in their attitudes that show either the strong distrust of language or the admiration of body. From Chapter VI to VII, I extended the same observations to the contemporary playwrights in the 1960s such as Betsuyaku Minoru, Kara Jūrō, or Terayama Shūji and contemporary women writers such as Tsushima Yūko, Takamura Kaoru, Tawada Yōko and Yoshimoto Banana in the process of forming their autonomous self or seeking their own autonomy.

### **To become *burakumin* to become free**

Neither the state, groups nor individuals could be attributed to a monolithic or homogenous pattern. Converging and diverging concurrently, they are all diverse from one another with a historically changing environment. The new concepts in contemporary (or, if anything, post-modern) Japan bring 'multifarious Japan' from the past to the place we are standing right now, and asks each of us the question of who we are and where we are standing. As Tsushima Yūko suggested, when we ask ourselves, 'Who am I?' or 'How do I establish my autonomous self?', a more detailed discussion of people who reside on the periphery of our society/community becomes crucial. What is our autonomy which is inevitably intertwined in some way or other with 'others': women, *burakumin*, ethnic minorities such as Ainu people, Korean residents in Japan (*zainichi korian* 在日コリアン), Hansen's disease patients, people with HIV,

sexual minorities such as gay and lesbian people and so forth?

The literature of Nakagami Kenji may become a touchstone or at least may give a hint that will guide us in answering the above question. Reading the various attempts made by the writers discussed above as well as Nakagami, we become aware that our self-differentiation or self-identification is complexly intertwined with the existence of others, the external causalities, which confine our individual freedom, the spell of *monogatari* backed by *kotoba* as one of the ‘modern myths’. It is important to bear in mind that the invented *monogatari* is not a mere pleasant construction but can turn into ‘a story that explodes in blood’ (*kitte chi no deru monogatari*)<sup>7</sup> as a sheer reality, differences, or others surrounding us.

Nakagami never stays long in a convergent state. For example, as we have seen in Chapter II, even though the maternal utopia such as the *roji*—the world of Oryū no oba in *Karekinada* and *Sennen no yuraku* was critically acclaimed by many literary critics, Nakagami immediately destroyed the *roji* in *Chi no hate shijō no toki*. Nakagami emphasizes that the binary frame will never be dialectically reconciled and it continues repeatedly. He explains that two eternally conflicting poles operate to generate fiction, the rule of the game or what he calls, the archetype of *monogatari*. He asserts that the dichotomy between the two heats up the narrative domain and entertains the readers. However, at the same time, this kind of dichotomy may prevail over our perspectives and confine us in a certain narrative domain. On this account, Nakagami sees a problem in the Japanese language itself, which functions as an invisible apparatus that formulates the canon formation of Japanese cultural and national identity in accordance with the historical process by which Japan’s modern nation-state developed.

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<sup>7</sup> Nakagami, *Kishū: Ki no kuni ne no kuni monogatari*, in *NKZ* Vol. 14, 576.

Nakagami attempts to escape from the snare of this kind of *monogatari*, or the archetype of narrative. The progression of chords that develop the tale functions as ‘canon’ readily leads us into perceiving our society as a uniform and monolithic entity. However, accepting any fact or entity that appears as our sheer reality in our society, Nakagami endeavours to establish the individual who endlessly searches for autonomous freedom, while observing his changing environments bound by external causalities. Confronting the Japanese language, that is, the law/system of established modern society, Nakagami twists it as if he were playing free jazz, attempting ‘to become endlessly free from all past chords’.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Nakagami cannot allow himself to connive at the gaps between *kotoba* and *mono* or his body as physical object. Confronting the fissure of *kotoba*, Nakagami is always concerned with the divergence of every entity and endeavoured to elucidate the protrusion from the fissure. Attempting to retrieve the living words, he sometimes goes back to the world of *mono* and renews the definition of each *kotoba* to free himself from the spell of *monogatari*.

Let us consider Nakagami’s comment on Ushimatsu in Shimazaki Tōson’s *Hakai* (The Broken Commandment, 1906).

[...] although the people who dwell outside the *buraku* claim that Ushimatsu [the protagonist of *Hakai*] is a *burakumin*, I strongly doubt whether he ever was one. It merely appears that the state of affairs within a closed system in modern Japan makes Ushimatsu seem like a *burakumin*.

However, to me, Ushimatsu had never ‘become’ a *burakumin*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Tansman, ‘History, Repetition, and Freedom in the Narratives of Nakagami Kenji’, *Journal of Japanese Studies* (24:2 1 998): 271.

<sup>9</sup> Nakagami, ‘*Kotoba to mono*’, in Karatani and Watanabe (eds), *Nakagami Kenji to Kumano*, 20–21.

In this excerpt, Nakagami views Ushimatsu as a person who had never ‘become’ a *burakumin*.<sup>10</sup> In *Hakai*, Ushimatsu is consistently ashamed of being a *burakumin*. After he revealed his origin to his pupils, he fled into Texas. Nakagami does not blame Ushimatsu for flying to America. However, he sharply questions how Ushimatsu is able to identify himself as a *burakumin* in America. Ushimatsu is certainly a victim in the context of modern logic or from the viewpoint of ‘community’s codes’. However, while Ushimatsu retreats inside the logic of the modern nation-state to conceal the substance of *burakumin* or *sabetsu* (discrimination), Nakagami seems to make great efforts to reveal it. Writing the trilogy of Akiyuki and other related stories, Nakagami incessantly fixes his critical eyes on *kotoba* itself, ponders over how we should define a word such as *burakumin* or freedom in the context of postwar Japan and attempts to give it a new meaning daily in the context of the day. Viewed in this light, he never abided by the state of being *burakumin* (*burakumin dearukoto*), but chose to become a *burakumin* (*burakumin ni narukoto*) perpetually. In other words, he chose to be reborn as a *burakumin* day after day and to continuously ponder its fundamental meaning. In the Akiyuki trilogy, as we have observed in Chapter II, Akiyuki progresses from an innocent child to an independent, responsible man who quests for his autonomy.

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) stated that ‘we should try to “become” gay — not just to reassert ourselves as gay.’<sup>11</sup> It would be interesting to compare Nakagami’s concept of ‘becoming *burakumin* perpetually’ with the following remark by Foucault, ‘Rather, we have to create a gay life. To *become*.’ Foucault goes on to say that ‘This process

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<sup>10</sup> On this matter, see also Suga Hidemi, ‘Sei no in’yu, sono kyozeitsu’, in *Gunzō nihon no sakka* 24, 88–102. See also Nakagami, ‘Kotoba to mono’, 18–35.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity’, in Sylvère Lotringer (ed.) (1989, 1996), *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1961–1984)*, New York: Semiotext(e), 382–390.

[of sexual liberation] was very good, both in terms of the situation and in terms of opinions, but the situation has not definitely stabilized. Still, I think we have to go a step further. I think that one of the factors of this stabilization will be the creation of new forms of life, relationships, friendships in society, art, culture and so on, through our sexual, ethical and political choices. Not only do we have to defend ourselves, not only affirm ourselves as an identity but as a creative force.’<sup>12</sup> Now, each individual may well return to a simple question again: What is freedom or autonomy? Maruyama’s remark in his essay “‘Dearu’ koto to ‘suru’ koto’ (To Be and To Do, 1959) may be a guiding principle in answering this question:

Freedom is not something that is, like an object, but rather something that can be only protected by action in the present; in other words, something is free for the first time through trying day by day to become free.<sup>13</sup>

As Sakaguchi Ango suggests in *On Decadence*, we may come to realize the fact that we are not really free when we have obtained all of our freedom. Maruyama Masao also points out this notion by using Fukuzawa Yukichi’s view of freedom: ‘[F]reedom that rules uniformly is no longer freedom at all: “freedom is born amidst unfreedom.”’<sup>14</sup> This is how Rikki Kersten summarized the same point: ‘Freedom was born not in triumphant struggle between two absolute ideas such as absolute freedom and dictatorship, but in the tension produced between these two concepts in a pluralistic intellectual arena. In short, “freedom is born where there is no freedom” [...] It is within the confrontational struggle between freedom and dictatorship that freedom can

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<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity’, 382–383.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 103.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 184.



be found, the lone dominance of freedom is not freedom at all.’<sup>15</sup> This must be a never-ending attempt to become free.

### **Nakagami Kenji’s permanent attempt**

In *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, the homeless people, who live on the grass-covered land, that is, the site of the demolished *roji*, made an appearance. Standing in front of the site of the *roji* (alley) which now became a vacant lot, Akiyuki describes it as follows:

路地は秋幸だった。秋幸の過去のすべてだった。降り出した雨の日、土地の方々に根を張ったその根の一つ一つのような、老化で起る様々な障害に苦しむ老婆らがおぼつかない足取りで道場に出かけて目にした半ばミイラ化した腐乱死体のように、路地跡は今、土地の真中に空洞としてある。

The alley was Akiyuki. It was all about Akiyuki’s past. The site of the alley is now present as a hollow in the middle of the land as if it were a partially-mummified decomposed body which old women in the alley who suffer from various age-related diseases witnessed when they fumbled their way to the training hall, or as if it were one of the interlocked tree roots which set down new roots around the land on the past rainy days.<sup>16</sup>

The alley used to be the maternal utopia that embraces all parts of the world and encompasses all of time and space. Now, the site of the alley exists not as a universal

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<sup>15</sup> Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan*, 72.

<sup>16</sup> Nakagami Kenji, *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, in *Nakagami Kenji Zenshū* 6, 347.

utopia any longer but a mere passing point where numerous people come and go.<sup>17</sup> One of the former residents of the alley, Yoshi-nii began to live on the site of the alley. Yoshi-nii who spent his youth with Akiyuki's biological father, Ryūzō, can be regarded as Ryūzō's alter ego. On the one hand, Ryūzō destroyed himself by committing suicide, while on the other hand Yoshi-nii claimed that he was descended from Genghis Khan, in other words, a descendant of some nomads of Genghis Khan's kinsmen. Yomota Inuhiko explains that this 'metamorphosis' in 'becoming' Genghis Khan's kinsmen does not mean the succession to someone's life through the archetype of *monogatari*, rather, it indicates that one directly 'becomes' someone, to live someone's peerless life.<sup>18</sup> This concept of nomads may enable him to sever his connections with the archetype of *monogatari*. For Yoshi-nii, every place can be mere relay points, to use Nakagami's term, 'utsuho' or 'a neutral place hanging in midair' where all sorts of people or things interplay with each other and he has no sense of belonging anywhere. As expressed by a main point of Kantian ethics posed by Karatani, in order to be free, we ought to obey the command: 'be free!' or 'be *causa sui*, self-motivated, subjective, or autonomous!' To put it more concretely, we ought to accept our fate which is determined by the external causalities as if it is deemed to be something *causa sui*, the state brought about by our free will. Taken in this light, Nakagami accepts what he is now but never stays long in a convergent state to be free, and tirelessly becomes an entity 'according to standards that arise in relation to lived, historical situations'.<sup>19</sup> In the last part of *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, Akiyuki set fire to the site of the *roji* and began a journey to an unknown land. It was rumoured that he had left for somewhere like

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<sup>17</sup> On this, see Iguchi Tokio, *Kiki to tōsō: Ōe Kenzaburō to Nakagami Kenji* (危機と闘争 大江健三郎と中上健次), Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 2004, 167–174.

<sup>18</sup> Yomota, *Kishu to tensei: Nakagami Kenji*, 181–187.

<sup>19</sup> Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan*, 182.

San Diego, Brazil or Africa.<sup>20</sup>

In the same way as Yoshi-nii or Akiyuki, from the end of 1970s, Nakagami himself travelled around underdeveloped places in various countries including South America, Korea, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan as well as Okinawa in Japan. Nakagami's seminars on contemporary novels are compiled in *Gendai shōsetsu no hōhō* (Methods for Contemporary Fiction).<sup>21</sup> In his seminar entitled *Shōsetsu o sogai suru mono* (Things that Hamper the Novel) held in Tokyo in 1984, Nakagami talked about his trip to Peshawar in Pakistan, near the border of Afghanistan. Because of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, there was millions Afghan people who took refuge in Peshawar. Nakagami met a boy called Amin who was one of the Afghan refugees. Nakagami saw Amin who commuted a long way to a trading post everyday in order to collect information about his missing father. Though Amin was not certain whether he could get any information, he did not stop walking a long distance to the post. Nakagami thought that Amin, if he wished, could have simply made a phone call to a hotel near the post in order to check whether there was some new information about his father. Nakagami wondered why Amin continued his daily routine that may have appeared a rather wasteful practice. At first, Nakagami saw Amin's long walk as waste of energy and time, however he came to realize that this Amin's act might provide an imaginative source for a novel. Nakagami explains that if people choose a seemingly easy way such as making a telephone call instead of walking, it would not supply the primary source for a good novel.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, Nakagami advocates that the more a writer depicts Amin's every move and his surroundings such as his body dripping with

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<sup>20</sup> Nakagami Kenji, *Chi no hate shijō no toki*, 452.

<sup>21</sup> Nakagami Kenji, *Gendai shōsetsu no hōhō* (現代小説の方法), Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 19–26

sweat or the wind carrying the smell of town, the more what is needed to produce good literature is accumulated. Certainly, this episode does not suggest that Nakagami encourages the little boy to walk a long distance in a war zone for the sake of the ingredients of his novel. What matters is rather that, with this episode, Nakagami tries to show his perspective that avoids jumping to the all-too-common conclusion such as ‘I was deeply touched by the courage shown by Amin in commuting to collect the information about his missing father.’ Accumulating the descriptions of one’s daily life, his or her day-to-day details and everyday environments, Nakagami succeeded in depicting how an individual establishes the autonomous freedom to choose his/her action under the environmental constraint, that is to say, the law/system of the collective. It is certainly not that all his works are successful in reflecting the notion of autonomy. In addition, his attitude of examining the same event from many angles or depicting daily trivialities many times from different point of views may sometimes make Nakagami’s descriptions look ambiguous or ambivalent. However, I believe that this ambivalence is instrumental in making Nakagami’s literature what it is today.

An illustration from a conversation between Oda Makoto (1932–2007) and Nakagami in 1989 may be informative on such a view. Oda points out that the style of Nakagami’s latest work, *Izoku*, is different from that of Nakagami’s representative works written between 1977 and 1983, namely, *Karekinada* or *Sennen no yuraku*. Oda describes the style found in *Karekinada* as well regulated. He goes on to indicate that, as the *roji*, the maternal utopia of Oryū no oba depicted in *Karekinada* and *Sennen no yuraku* had been destroyed and turned into a burnt-out empty land, the well-regulated style of Nakagami’s novel was also destroyed by Nakagami himself. Oda asked Nakagami: ‘Your *roji* goes beyond the border, and now exists in any part of

the world. You apply the issue of the *roji* not only to Asia but also everywhere in the world. In doing so, I suspect that you cannot write about the issue by using the same well-regulated style, can you?’<sup>23</sup> Nakagami, admitting Oda’s points, explained that he no longer constructed the narrative discourse with the *ki-shō-ten-ketsu* structure, that is, the structure of introduction, development, turn, and conclusion, but utilized the form of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, two major Sanskrit epics, which develop discursively and extend transversely up to infinity.<sup>24</sup> Observing the battle between Rangda and Barong that appeared in traditional Balinese mythology, Nakagami emphasizes that the binary frame will never be dialectically reconciled. Let us recall his remarks again: ‘They keep fighting an indecisive battle, sometimes winning, sometimes losing, the battle is never over. Rangda can never live in concord with Barong, and thus the endgame of this battle is spinning out endlessly.’<sup>25</sup> As we can observe here, Nakagami regards the dichotomy as a never ending binary frame. Not only delving into his own real life with the mythical landscape of Kumano but also expanding his horizons in the world: ‘becoming *burakumin* perpetually’ to establish his autonomy/autonomous self, Nakagami vigorously released controversial works one after another until his death in order to persevere with his efforts to write ‘*shōsetsu*’. Nagashima Kiyoshi cites Nakagami’s words in his later years:<sup>26</sup>

‘Kumano’ [*roji*] exists everywhere in Japan, and beyond the border, I think it

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<sup>23</sup> Nakagami Kenji and Oda Makoto, ‘Nihon bungaku no waku o koete’ (日本文学の枠を超えて), in Karatani Kōjin et al. (eds), *Nakagami Kenji hatsugen shūsei 4* (中上健次発言集成 4), Tokyo: Daisanbunmeisha, 1997, 16–17.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 18–19.

<sup>25</sup> Nakagami, ‘Futatsu no kōkyū saron’, 81.

<sup>26</sup> 「熊野はまた日本中どこでも在り、さらに日本を越えて世界中に存在するとも思っている。」 Nagashima Kiyoshi, ‘Nakagami Kenji Shōden’, 298.

exists everywhere in the world as well.

In 1992, he died of kidney cancer at forty-six, halfway through writing five novels. It seems to me that Nakagami hastened his death by devoting himself to thrusting the question of *kotoba*, *monogatari* and *nikutai* before everyone in contemporary Japan, being aware that our personal autonomy and moral responsibility coexist complementarily.

From what has been observed in previous chapters, I have come to the conclusion that the examination of the concept of autonomy in modern Japanese literature is indeed significant to me as it makes me aware that the language itself can possibly turn into a social product that promotes a one-dimensional way of thinking. Nakagami's ambivalent attitude towards his act of writing became the catalyst for me to unlearn the fixed ideas that were brought by the Japanese language itself. We tend to create the dichotomy between the two in order to seize the reason of an event, and as a result of this, it often causes a one-sided way of looking at things. For this reason, it is indeed difficult for us to become aware that our freedom of will is inevitably linked with our moral responsibility. We tend to deem ourselves to be free, but strictly speaking, all of us are bound by the law of nature, that is, external causalities. Nakagami's literary universe through an ambivalent world view shows that the dichotomy between the two will not be dialectically reconciled, rather, two poles coexist forever because one pole functions as the precondition for the other. There are no men who exclusively possess purity. The examination of Nakagami's autonomy encourages us to internalize the impure side of human beings on our own initiative. It shows us how to exercise our

autonomous freedom to determine our actions, which are inseparably related to our moral responsibility within the limits of external causalities.

In future, I would like to continue to explore the idea of other writers in modern Japanese literature and to examine whether Nakagami's endless autonomous attitude that grows out of the mutually exclusive dichotomy could be traced back to the ideas of previous writers such as Sakaguchi Ango, Miyazawa Kenji and Nakahara Chūya. I would also attempt to extend the notion of autonomy into other contemporary artists/writers who may have inherited this kind of autonomous attitude with the aim of establishing their identities. It might be interesting to compare the degree of autonomy between the autonomy of Nakagami's Akiyuki and that of the protagonist in Murakami Haruki's trilogy known as 'The Trilogy of the Rat': *Hear the Wind Sing* (1979), *Pinball, 1973* (1980) and *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1983). I will examine further the notion of autonomy through the ambivalent attitude between language and body, and apply it to those writers who regarded *kotoba* as a collective notion and developed their distrust in it, and also became aware that the body turns into a sheer reality of the individual and tried to build their autonomous freedom from it. With regard to the issue of the distrust of language and the admiration of the body, there is further evidence to show how Nakagami's notion of autonomy through the conflict between language and body has some similarities with the *yakeato* generation dramatists like Betsuyaku Minoru, Kara Jūrō and Terayama Shūji, contemporary women writers such as Tsushima Yūko, Takamura Kaoru, Tawada Yōko and Yoshimoto Banana. In principle, this dissertation focuses on autonomy in modern Japanese literature as a whole, and little attention to gender issues in discussing women writers has been given. However, I would like to expand my arguments on the purity myth, otherness, individual/social identity or the

maternal utopia. As discussed in the previous chapters, many interesting examples relating to both scepticism towards the Japanese language and thinking through the body are observed in postwar Japanese theatre, drama and contemporary Japanese literature. In my readings of recent contemporary writers, on the issue of autonomy, I am currently keeping an eye on writers such as Shōno Yoriko (笙野頼子, b. 1956), Yoshida Shūichi (吉田修一, b. 1968), and Hoshino Tomoyuki (星野智幸, b. 1965). I would like to further explore the manner in which the idea of autonomy is treated in the works of various writers in order to interpret modern Japanese literature from different perspectives, and continue to serve as a stepping-stone to address future issues and examples regarding the concept of autonomy.



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## APPENDIX: FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE AKIYUKI TRILOGY

