# Freud's Uncanny and the Poetry of Hagiwara Sakutarō

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Anxiety, alienation and psychosis are not unique to any one historical period, culture or literature, but it is often through literature that these conditions are articulated and addressed. More specifically to what extent to these conditions inform us of a writer's artistic depth? For Harold Bloom, the prolific American literary scholar and critic, "what matters in literature in the end is surely the idiosyncratic, the individual, the flavor or the color of a particular human suffering."[1] So it is with the examination of the idiosyncratic that brings me to the work of Japanese poet Hagiwara Sakutarō（1886‒1942）, whose poetry is notably characterized by "strange, gruesome, and ironic humor."[2] Even Sakutarō himself asserted that "emotional-symbolism" is the essential ingredient of what makes literature. Still, to anchor the idiosyncratic to a more historical definition might provide a better lens with which to understand his poetry, and it is through the framework of Sigmund Freud's *uncanny*, an idea that echoes Bloom's assertion, that I will begin.

This essay will explore Sakutarō's poetry in terms of the uncanny and the poet's use of negative images of nature, and how those images become constituents of a neurotic self. Secondly, the essay aims to identify the motifs of self-doubling, or what Freud identified as doppelgängers. These two issues are intrinsically linked through feelings of distress and anxiety, which are common in Freud's premise of the uncanny. Furthermore, it is my belief that Sakutarō's work represents, in part, a reflection of generalized anxieties of modernity, and Sakutarō's ultimate attempt to break from tradi-

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1    David Lehman, "A Prophet of the Truly Great: Harold Bloom's Lasting Influence," *The American Scholar,* October 21, 2019, https://theamericanscholar.org/a-prophet-of-the-truly-great/

2    Yoshiro Hayashi, "The Expressive Psychopathology of the Japanese Poet Sakutarō Hagiwara," *Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 1998, 52. 621‒627.

tional forms of Japanese poetry as he sought a new poetic ideal. However, the aesthetic engender in his poetry possess elements that place it within domain of the uncanny. In order to fully examine how the uncanny intersects with Sakutarō's work, I will first explore some of the historical background of Japanese poetry leading up to the time of Sakutarō's seminal work *Howling at the Moon,* "Tsuki ni hoeru"（1917）.

Sakutarō's collection *Howling at the Moon,*（1917）contains core signals of the uncanny which can be identified through the prevalence of doppelgängers and the ubiquity of senseless anxiety. In his 1919 essay, Freud characterizes this concept *The Uncanny* as an aesthetic that arouses "feelings of repulsion or distress," but offers a number of examples and exhaustive explanations to fully develop his concept. He first cites Ernst Jentsch's 1906 work "On the Psychology of the Uncanny," and provides a summary: "On the whole, Jentsch did not progress beyond this relation of the uncanny to the novel and unfamiliar. He ascribes the essential factor in the production of the feeling of uncanniness to intellectual uncertainty; so that the uncanny would always, as it were, be something one does not know one's way about." However, Freud defines the uncanny as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known and what is familiar." To help foster a firmer grasp of Freud's concept, it is "an experience of distortion, where the world in which we live suddenly seems strange, alienating or threatening."[3] There is a shocking quality to the uncanny, but its force is mitigated by uncertainty. Literary critic Helene Cixious, who has written extensively on Freud's uncanny called it "disquieting strangeness," while German philosopher Martin Heidegger characterizes the uncanny as "beings flight from itself." Both Cixious and Heidegger's clarifications capture the essence of the uncanny. Freud himself defines "the character of uncanny is something old and familiar that has undergone repression." Within these preliminary boundaries of the uncanny one important characteristic that is specifically related to the work of Sakutarō's is the appearance of doppelgängers, or double of a person. Freud writes "a person may identify himself with another and so become un-

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3      Jo Collins, and John Jervis. *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*.（Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008）, 1.

sure of his true self; or he may substitute the other's self for his own.  The self may thus be duplicated, divided and interchanged.  Finally there is a constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition an the same facial features, the same characters."[4]

## I. Emerging Modernism

In the early decades of the twentieth century, as Modernist thought spread from the literary intelligentsia of industrializing nations, Japan's literary circles began to absorb many of its aesthetics. As early as 1882, Japanese poets began experimenting with form and content. *Shintaishi-sho*, often sited as the first collection in Japan of translations from European poets, contained poems rendered in the conventional Japanese *waka* metric form of 7:5.[5]  As more and more Japanese poets pursued ways to express foreign poetics and the new cultural and literary concepts accompanying them, it became apparent to many Japanese poets that the dominate forms of poetry, *waka* and *haiku,* would not be easily adaptable to the changes in poetic content surrounding modernist ideals. In his essay "*The Relation of Nature and the Origin of Self-portrait,*" ［*Shizenkanren to jigazousei to* 自然関連と自画像性と］Ando Yasuhiko writes that Sakutarō's first collection *Howling at the Moon* contains residual "feelings of traditional waka."[6] In a Western context, Modernism, as defined in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetics*, was a reaction to Enlightenment thought where "'realization' had to replace description, so that instead of copying the external world the work could render it in an image insisting on its own distinctive form of reality." This rebellion of description was also underway in Japan as well. However, as Japanese scholar Ueda Makoto comments in *Modern Japanese Poets,* the way modern poetry uses "intellectual content to a de-

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4    Sigmund Freud, David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton. *The Uncanny*.（New York: Penguin Books, 2003）, 142.

5    Sakutarō Hagiwara, *Principles of Poetry,*（*Shi No Genri*）（Ithaca, N.Y.: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1998）, Into. Ix.

6    Yasuhiko Andō, *Hagiwara Sakutarō no kenkyū: Nihon kindai shiron*.（Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1998）, 58.［「 山居 」の「桔梗いろおとろへ」という表現をめぐって伝統和歌的情感 ということを言った。］

gree［was］unknown to premodern readers. Traditionally *haiku* and *tanka* poets abhorred intellectual speculation."[7]

In addition to poetic experimentation of form and content, the Japanese language itself was undergoing through changes. For example, the *genbun itchi* movement between 1868 and 1903 culminated in unifying Japanese written and spoken forms. This unification led the creation of literature that more accurately reflected the language of everyday speech. However, it should be noted that these changes developed over several years were not necessarily schisms in literature or linguistics. William Gardner writes in *Advertising Tower, Japanese Modernism and Modernity in the 1920s*, "Japanese modernism did not develop as a strictly nationalist revolt against 'prevalent literary and aesthetic traditions of the Western world'; nor was it merely an unreflexive copy of Western modernism. Rather…［it］developed and attained meaning in relation to domestic practices and institutions that, although also partly appropriated from the West, had already established their own shape and trajectory in Japan."[8]

The stead embracing of Modernist sentiments in Japan, can be see through the increase of literary publication catering to such sentiments. *Shirakaba*（1910）and *Kanjo* were two publications that help spread new poetic schools of thought such as Dadaism and Surrealism, two aesthetics that had a powerful influence on views of the natural world. "The belief that art imitates nature is inherent in all of our poets' theories. Yet the definition of nature［had］expanded considerably. . . .The introduction of European poetry to early modern Japan changed that convention. The idea that the more sordid aspects of reality could be used to a pleasing artistic end had been alien to traditional Japanese aesthetics."[9]

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7   Makoto Ueda, *Modern Japanese Writers and the Nature of Literature*.（Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976）387.

8   William O. Gardner, *Advertising Tower: Japanese Modernism and Modernity in the 1920s*.（Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006）, 34.

9   Ueda, *Modern Japanese Writers*, 383.

## II. Sakutarō, the Modernist

Hagiwara Sakutarō's work is considered to be one of the earliest examples of Japanese modern free-verse, and is also identified by an attentiveness to rhythm and colloquial speak. Additionally, his work is often characterized by the frequent presence of existential despair and unpleasant images. For readers of *Howling at the Moon,* the effect of poetry written without the thematic or aesthetic conventions of classical Japanese, and to then encounter images evoking melancholy and despair was unsettling.[10] For Sakutarō, the ugly, the depraved, and the unnatural represented a reflection of a modern self. Ueda writes that Sakutarō had an "agonizing awareness that something essential and vital within his being ［was］ deformed, ailing, or decomposing." This reoccurring imagery provides a clue to the effects modernity was having on Sakutarō, and demonstrates the poet's active departure form traditional themes and his re-evaluations his poetic heritage. Consider how the imagery and tone from the following poem "Lonely Personality" ［*sabishiijinkaku* さびしい人格］ accentuate feelings of estrangement from nature and an overwhelming desire to be part the city.

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Nature anywhere oppresses me,

and human kindnesses make me gloomy,

rather I prefer walking in a bustling city park until I get tired,

and find a bench under some lonely tree,

I prefer to be looking at the sky absent-mindedly,

ah, I prefer to be looking at the smoke and soot

flowing away far and sad over the city sky[11]

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自然はどこでも私を苦しくする、

そして人情は私を陰鬱にする、

むしろ私はにぎやかな都会の公園を歩きつかれて、

とある寂しい木蔭に椅子をみつけるのが好きだ、

ぼんやりした心で空を見てゐるのが好きだ、

ああ、都会の空をとほく悲しくながれてゆく煤煙、

またその建築の屋根をこえて、はるかに小さくつばめの飛んで行く姿を見るのが好きだ。

よにもさびしい私の人格が、

おほきな声で見知らぬ友をよんで居る、

わたしの卑屈な不思議な人格が、

鴉のやうなみすぼらしい様子をして、

人気のない冬枯れの椅子の片隅にふるえて居る。

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Here the object of anxiety is not the city as we might expect with its gloomy tone, but instead nature itself. This aversion to nature is one of telling marks of Modernist aesthetics and this explicit turning from conventional motifs of beauty is highly visible throughout Sakutarō's work. Line such as "humanity makes me gloomy," [*ninjō wa watashi o inutsu ni suru* 人情は私を陰鬱にする]*,* and "everywhere, nature causes me to suffer," [*shizenwa dokodemo watashi o kurushiku suru,* 自然はどこでも私を苦しくす] stand out as testaments to his desire to create new aesthetic, if not a new domestic poetry. However, this turning could also serve as a potential link to the uncanny since the sentiment calls into questions the poet's doubt of material reality. The poet's opposition to kindness, his attraction to the unscenic, and the mood of displeasure leave questions to the trustworthiness of the poetic speaker. This untrustworthiness is also a single for the uncanny and is related to semantic root of uncanny, Heimlich. Freud writes there is "nothing new or alien, [in the uncanny], but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression…the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light."[12]

In his essay *Nation as Artwork: The Modernist Aesthetics and Poetics of Hagiwara Sakutarō*, Mike Sugimoto writes of Sakutarō's poetry reflecting an "inherent rupture" in the development of Japan's "transform[ation] through contact with Euro-America." This rupture, according to Sugimoto, is representative to a "schizophrenic modernity" that "can be seen [in Sakutaraō's] presentation of sickness/ugliness versus beauty; poetry verse prose" and a host of other oppositional concepts. Sugimoto also suggests these characteristics encompass "critiques of the modern [that] will or should reflect the inherent split with modernity. Thus, by this definition nothing is entirely what is appears to be: "tradition" and "homeland" are mediated by the new."[13] Sugimo-

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11 The English translations of the poetry come from Sato Hiroaki's translation as listed in note 8. When specific lines are referenced within the body of the text, I have used my translation.

12 Freud, McLintock, and Haughton. *The Uncanny*, 148.

13 Mike Sugimoto, "Nation As Artwork: the Modernist Aesthetics and Poetics of Hagiwara Sakutaro". *National Identities.* 5, no. 2 (2003): 179-192.

to's suggestion that the new mediates tradition is relevant to Sakutarō's work and it relationship to the uncanny because it is through the relationship of two oppositional notions anxiety and uncertainty tend to flow from.

Another important element in the background of the poet's philosophical outlook was the poet's belief in *shiseishin* 氏精神, or "poetic spirit." Sakutarō was an avid reader of both classical Japanese literature and of Western philosophy and literature. His familiarity with a variety of European authors, most notably Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer, may have helped strengthen Sakutarō's tendency toward an "idealistic seeker." In his *Principles of Poetry*, the poet writes "All poets are truth-seekers, travelers, philosophers, revolutionaries, and existential nihilist. In short, they are all ardent seekers of the ideal life."[14] The poetic vision quest of Sakutarō's is not necessary an exclusive function of modernity nor Japan's transformation into a modern political state, but indicates the poet's belief that poets were seers and makers of something essential for public consumption. Sakutarō himself believed a poet "is a pacesetter of culture and a leader of the public."[15] Essential they have a special rank or skill surpassing the rest of humanity. This view subtly flirts with Freud's concept of the uncanny "omnipotence of thought."

According to Ueda, Sakutarō was acutely aware that the rapid Westernization of all facets of Japanese life would soon overcome Japanese traditional forms poetry. Ueda quotes Sakutarō "Whether or not we like the West, the fact remains that Japan is being westernized today. We have been educated at Western-style schools where Western science, Western music, and other subjects are taught. These books we read are all Western thought translated into Japanese. . . . Naturally our tastes and sentiments are becoming Westernized."[16] Yet Sakutarō does not embrace this change without hesitation. He writes in *Principles of* Poetry, "Japanese poets are unfortunate victims of this transitional period in Japanese culture."[17]

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14   Sakutarō Hagiwara, Principles of Poetry,（Shi No Genri）（Ithaca, N.Y.: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1998）, 68.

15   Ueda, *Modern Japanese Writers*, 182.

16   Ibid. 174

From the assessments of both Udea and Sugimoto, it should be clear that Sakutarō stands within a kind of borderland. On the one hand, he is a poet seeking to untether himself from the long history of established poetic forms and aesthetics—even to rescue Japanese literature, while on the other, his is a poet experiencing the forces of linguist, social and cultural changes brought about by Japan's journey to a modern identity.

## III. Freud's Uncanny and the Poetry of Hagiwara Sakutarō

In *Aesthetic Anxiety,* Laurie Ruth Johnson writes*:*

> Recent cultural theory has emphasized the need for a sense of estrangement in order to enable the tolerance of difference that builds a new form of community in a postmodern（or trans-modern）age. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, . . . an idea of cosmopolitan community is already indicated…but the process of creating such a community is frequently depicted in Romantic texts as neither pleasant nor beautiful, but as horrifying, repulsive, difficult, and ultimately more true to lived experience."[18]

The above quote speaks particularly to a European context, but it illustrates a trajectory of non-beauty as an emerging aesthetic in literature. Writing in the first decades of the twentieth century, Sakutarō experienced the brunt of changes underway in Japan, and the idea that one must find a means for tolerating those changes in the familiar, as Johnson suggests, speaks to Sakutarō's incorporation of the unpleasant within his work. As scholars Robert Brower and Earl Miner have pointed out in *Japanese Court Poetry,* "The task of a Japanese poet. . .［was］to make nature seem significant for human experience."[19] For centuries this was the dominant poetic aesthetic, but for Sakutarō it was a creative dead end. Yet the traditional images of pines, cherry blossoms, chrysan-

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17  Hagiwara, *Principles of Poetry,* 154
18  Laurie Ruth Johnson, *Aesthetic Anxiety: Uncanny Symptoms in German Literature and Culture.*（Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010）, 10‒11.

themums, or bamboo were not easily ignored nor easily displaced since they all had extraordinary cultural signification. Andō Yasuhiko comments that Sakutarō's use of images to capture the symbolic representation of Japanese life is the poet's attempt to "inject" [*tōnyū* 投入] the image as something unique to the poet's identity, a concept derived from the poet Hakushū Kitahara.[20]

In the *Uncanny*, Freud writes that in the rare event that a psycho-analyst were to explore the subject of aesthetics, he would normally focus on "what is beautiful, attractive and sublime—that is, with feelings of a positive nature. . .rather than with the opposite feeling of repulsion and distress."[21] For Freud, the uncanny and its tendency away from traditional concepts of beauty and the feelings they invoke is inherently negative. In an attempt to guide his reader's through the nuances of the uncanny, Freud provides the etymology of the uncanny's root, *heimlich,* and characterized its complex emotional resonance as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known and what is familiar." Freud's explicating continues with the usage of the German *heimlich* "homely or native," and it's opposite *unheimlich*. By providing the historical usage of *heimlich*, Freud demonstrates the oppositional meanings held within the word. Among the diverse meanings: *belonging to a house; of animals: tame; intimate, friendly comfortable*; and lastly *gay, cheerful,* the positive connotations are self-evident. However, *heimlich* also connotes "the name of everything that ought to have remained… secret and hidden but has not come to light." Freud refines the uncanny in terms of two possible outcomes: "an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed."[22]

19  Robert H. Brower and Earl Roy Miner. *Japanese Court Poetry*.（Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961），453.

20  Yasuhiko Andō, *Hagiwara Sakutarō no kenkyū: Nihon kindai shiron*. Tōkyō: Meiji Shoin, 1998. 65.［白秋詩学の影響は明らかだが、要は物象への自己投入、そこで物我一如の三昧境にその〈光〉の象徴主義が成立していることは見届けられる。つまり、二篇の「竹」などに見られるイメージの核質化はこうして彼の詩学の実践化でもあったわけである。言うまでもなく、詠述の契機として物をとり扱い、見るという態度は意識的に捨てられたのである。］

21  Sigmund, McLintock, and Haughton. *The Uncanny*, 123.

These outcomes allude to a sense of *uncertainty*, although both words contain elements of the familiar, that is to say, there is a remembrance of a earlier psychological experience or a return of something commonly viewed as fantastic or impossible which subsequently has been overcome by reason, but is again called into questions, hence the *uncertainty*.

However, Freud's the most compelling example of the uncanny resides in the doppelgänger, and its significance lies in his review of E.T.A Hoffmann's *The Sand Man.* Through the experiences the central character Nathaniel, Freud argues that the uncanny is produced because of Nathaniel's inability to distinguish the real from the imagined, and the imagined are the recollections of repressed feeling surrounding Natheniel's father's death and his childhood fear of having his eye torn out by the mythical Sand Man. In the story, Nathaniel exhibits several instances on uncanniness. First, he becomes enamored with an automaton, an inanimate figure in the likeness of a girl. Secondly, he regards the story's antagonist Coppelius, the lawyer/alchemist, who was present when Nathaniel's father died, as the physical incarnation of the Sand Mad. Thirdly, Nathaniel's fear of the supernatural, that is the Sand Man, is manifested once again when he sees Coppelius in the form of Coppola, an itinerant optician who sells Nathaniel a spy-glass which leads Nathaniel to spot the doll Olympia for whom Nathaniel has had an unrealistic romantic attachment. For Nathaniel the Sand Man represents several things including 1) the cause of his father's death, 2) a continual disruptor of Nathaniel's love relationships, and 3) the ultimate source of Nathaniel's fear of having his eyes stolen from the Sand-Man. The fear is also associated with Freud's reference to the story of Oedipus and Freud's theory of a castration complex. According to Freud's assumptions, Hoffmann's *Sand Man* exhibits ocular-centric allusions throughout the story that support his claim. However, the relationship to fear of castration is not quintessential to interpreting uncanny aesthetics.

Freud's analysis also suggests that a *doppelgänger*, or double of a living person is

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22　Vincent B. Leitch, ed., *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2010), 838.

also a function of the uncanny.  As Nathaniel matures and is about to marry his be-trothed Klara—even after she has witnessed several of his psychotic episodes, he is for the last time confronted again by Coppelius and the fear he represents. In the presence of Klara, Nathaniel spies Olympia（a doppelgänger）through an optical glass given to him by Coppola（i.e. the double of Coppelius and the Sand Man）. When this occurs, Nathaniel is once again confronted with a past fear and is thrown into a state of confu-sions where upon he tries to kill both Klara and the "father" of Olymipa. The emer-gence of *doppelgängers* is representational of Nathaniel's failure to identify with his material reality.

I believe what Freud tries to demonstrate through the *Sand Man* is how Nathan-iel's inability to distinguish between the real and the imaginary produces the uncanny. This can be seen throughout the story by Nathaniel's belief that the real Coppelius is the mythical Sand Man, and his adoration of an automaton, Olympia. Freud demon-strates for us Nathaniel's crisis of uncertainty. We can also gain an understanding of how strong Nathaniel's impulse is to believe this breech of reality since the people around him offer means to return to reality. For example in one of Klara's letter to Na-thaniel she writes, "All the fears and terrors of which you speak took place only in your mind and have very little to do with the true, external world." Klara's statement to Na-thaniel is essential to understanding the uncanny because of its implies that Nathaniel's fears, as observed from someone other than the experiencer, are really senseless anxiet-ies which are ultimately under his control.

By the end of Hoffman's story, we see a young man whose inability to discern the real from what is not, evoking his past childhood fears, but we are not left with a clear indication of what exactly the source of fear is.  All that remains are varying shades of meaning, but a very clear sense that Nathaniel's anxieties incited him to leap to his death from the rooftop.

Yet what are we to make of the appearing on a double? In Freud's assessment "the invention of such a doubling as a defense against annihilation," and "[anxieties] *mani-fest* motivation of the figure of a 'double'. . . [and] helps us to understand the extraordi-narily strong feeling of something uncanny that pervades the conception; . . .When all

is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted — a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. The 'double' has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons."[23] In the following poem "The Sickly face at the Bottom of the Ground" [*jimen no soko no byōki no kao* 地面の底の病気の顔] by Sakutarō, we have something approaching a double.

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|---|---|
| At the bottom of the ground a face emerging, | 地面の底に顔があらはれ、 |
| A lonely invalid's face emerging. | さみしい病人の顔があらはれ。 |
| | |
| In the dark at the bottom of the ground, | 地面の底のくらやみに、 |
| Soft vernal grass-stalks beginning to flare, | うらうら草の茎が萌えそめ、 |
| Rat's nest beginning to flare, | 鼠の巣が萌えそめ、 |
| and entangled in the nest, | 巣にこんがらかつてゐる、 |
| innumerable hairs beginning to tremble, | かずしれぬ髪の毛がふるえ出し、 |
| time the winter solstice, | 冬至のころの、 |
| from the lonely sickly ground, | さびしい病気の地面から、 |
| roots of thin blue bamboo beginning to grow, | ほそい青竹の根が生えそめ、 |
| beginning to grow, | 生えそめ、 |
| looking blurred, | それがじつにあはれふかくみえ、 |
| looking truly, truly pathetic. | けぶれるごとくに視え、 |
| | じつに、じつに、あはれふかげに視え。 |
| | |
| In the dark at the bottom of the ground, | 地面の底のくらやみに、 |
| A lonely invalid's face emerging. | さみしい病人の顔があらはれ。 |

Here, a face is separated from the poetic speaker. It is unwell and evokes dread or even a sense of decay. The poem's actions are limited to just the movement of the hair and the perceived "emerging," of a figure. A sense of morbidity is also present in the image of the face on the ground coming through the soil as if a corps were surfacing, while a rat's nest is intertwined with hair, although it is if it is from a human or a rat. The use of a double figure provokes the ready into uncertainty, in turn producing an aesthetic that resemble the uncanny. We are momentarily disoriented, even distress the

23   Freud, McLintock, and Haughton. *The Uncanny*, 143.

appearance of a face detached from the speaker. Freud writes "The other forms of ego-disturbance [is] the theme of the 'double'. They are a harking-back to particular phases in the evolution of the self-regarding feeling, a regression to a time when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world and from other people. I believe that these factors are partly responsible for the impression of uncanniness, although it is not easy to isolate and determine exactly their share of it." The poem provides little in terms of autobiographical insight, and is mostly impressionistic in design, yet there is a haunting effect that lingers.

Another example of a doppelgänger, or double in the Sakutarō's the work echoes the uncanny is "The Reason the Person Inside Looks Like a Deformed Invalid" [*naibun ni iru hito ga kikeina byōninn mieru riyū* 内部に居る人が畸形な病人に見える理由].

I am standing in the shadow of a lace curtain,
that is the reason my face looks vague.
I am holding a telescope in my hands,
I am looking through it far into the distance,
I am looking at the woods.
where dogs are made of nickel and children with bald heads are walking,
those are the reasons my eyes look somewhat smoked over.
I eat too much of the plate of cabbage this morning, and this window glass is very shoddily made,
that is the reason my face looks so excessively distorted.
To tell the truth,
I am healthy, perhaps too healthy,
and yet, why are you staring at me, there?
Why smiling so eerie a smile?
oh, of course, as for the part of my body below the waist,
if you are saying that area isn't clear,
that's a somewhat foolish question,
of course, that is, close to this pale window wall,
I am standing inside the house.

わたしは窓かけのれいすのかげに立つて居ります、
それがわたくしの顔をうすぼんやりと見せる理由です。
わたしは手に遠めがねをもつて居ります、
それでわたくしは、ずつと遠いところを見て居ります、
につける製の犬だの羊だの、
あたまのはげた子供たちの歩いてゐる林をみて居ります、
それらがわたくしの瞳を、いくらかかすんでみせる理由です。
わたくしはけさきやべつの皿を喰べすぎました、
そのうへこの窓硝子は非常に粗製です、
それがわたくしの顔をこんなに甚だしく歪んで見せる理由です。
じつさいのところを言へば、
わたくしは健康すぎるぐらゐなものです、
それだのに、なんだつて君は、そこで私をみつめてゐる。
なんだつてそんなに薄気味わるく笑つてゐる。
おお、もちろん、わたくしの腰から下ならば、
そのへんがはつきりしないといふのならば、
いくらか馬鹿げた疑問であるが、
もちろん、つまり、この青白い窓の壁にそうて、
家の内部に立つてゐるわけです。

Freud writes: "We can also speak of a living person as uncanny, and we do so when we ascribe evil intentions to him. But that is not all; in addition to this we must feel that his intentions to harm us are going to be carried out with the help of special powers." Sakutarō's poem has a peculiar air about it, especially in light of the ocular relationship the Hoffman's *Sand Man*. The figure is clearly stated as the poetic speaker, but standing behind a lace curtain obfuscates the speaker's figure and causes us to question his trustworthiness. Is the figure the speaker or a double? Both views seem possible. Moreover, the anxiety manifested through the feelings of being stared at by people who presumable have harmful, or at the very least questionable intentions, accentuates the distrust.　The "eerie smiles" come from people whom the speaker seems to know, "What's that? Why are you smiling is such an uncanny way." [*nandatte sonnani bukimi waruke waratte iru* なんだつてそんなに薄気味わるく笑つてゐる] This manner of questioning another speaker implies a kind of familiarity and informality.

Again there is a flirtation with omnipotent thought that influences the reads trust: "I am too healthy of a person." [*watakushi wa kenkō sugiru gurai na mono desu* わたくしは健康すぎるぐらゐなものです] This belief, as I have mentioned earlier, could be telling of Sakutarō's quest for a poetic ideal, but is unclear to what degree this poem is related to writing. However, the uncanny is present through the manifestation of "the deformed invalid" and its representation of negative self-imagery. For example, his "distorted face" and sense of sexual inadequacy with the line "as for the part below my waist" not being clear." The figure in the poem is never fully distinguished other than the fact the he resembles an invalid.　The speaker's sense of incompleteness, his belief in his superior health, and this continued hiddenness throughout the poem, as if haunting, are all related to the uncanny. Again Freud, "animism, magic and sorcery, the omnipotence of thoughts, man's attitude to death,… practically all the factors which turn something frightening into something uncanny."

John Jervis writes in *Uncanny Modernity* that "the uncanny is the zone of intersection between the known and the felt, and the familiar and the strange—the place of haunting, whether or not a ghost is involved."[24] In both "The Reason the Person Inside Looks Like a Deformed Invalid" and "Sickly Face at the Bottom of the Ground", the

use of a double creates a sense of uncertainty and possess imagery that is in accord with Freud's view of the uncanny as an aesthetic of non-beauty through "repulsion and distress." Although it is difficult to know precisely the source of Sakutarō's uncanny quality of his poetry, I believe we can begin to see that such images are ultimately more than experimental reactions to Japanese traditional aesthetics. There are products of the poet's search for images that express his individual self. Sakutarō's search for ways to bring the self into existence can be seen in other poems with uncanny characteristics, such a fear of being buried alive. "To some people the idea of being buried alive by mistake is the most uncanny thing of all. And yet psycho-analysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it at all, but was qualified by a certain lasciviousness," write Freud.[25] In an early poem, we found an invalid's face emerging from the ground, and in the poem "Death" [*shi* 死], a similar motif occurs as the poetic speaker is, in fact, *in the ground* with bodily appendages protruding from the soil.

| | |
|---|---|
| From the bottom of the earth I stare at, | みつめる土地の底から、 |
| Ridiculous hand sticks out, | 奇妙きてれつの手がでる、 |
| A leg sticks out, | 足がでる、 |
| A neck protrudes, | くびがでしやばる、 |
| Gentleman, | 諸君、 |
| This damned thing, what on earth, | こいつはいつたい、 |
| What kind of goose is this? | なんといふ鷲鳥だい。 |
| From the bottom of the earth I stare at, | みつめる土地の底から、 |
| Looking foolish, | 馬鹿づらをして、 |
| A hand sticks out, | 手がでる、 |
| A leg stinks out, | 足がでる、 |
| A neck protrudes. | くびがでしやばる。 |

"Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist. . .all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them, especially when. . .they prove capable of independent activity in addition."[26] Again we find a poetic speaker obfuscated, this time,

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24  Collins and Jervis. *Uncanny Modernity*, 44.
25  Freud, McLintock, and Haughton. *The Uncanny*, 150.

by dirt, and our only glimpses of him are through the mention of body parts. The speaker identifies his place and provides only one alteration in tone when he euphemistically refers to a goose's neck sticking out of the ground. "What kind of goose it that?" [*nantoiu gachōdai*なんといふ鵞鳥だい] A lascivious reference for sure. Here the uncanny works as a kind of talisman. The poem signifies the uncanny's defense against annihilation, and is a kind of preservation against extinction. By being "alive" in the ground, the poet affirms his exists albeit an anxious ridden affirmation.

In *Nature and Self in Modern Japanese Poetry*, Kishida-Ellis Toshiko writes that in Sakutarō's work "nature depicted was not meant to be a reproduction of objective reality. It is strongly subjective, to the extent the poet becomes a visionary and sees what in not physically perceptible."[27] For Sakutarō the production of images of nature in *Howling at the Moon* can be linked to the poet's quest for redefining traditional images of Japanese life, but rendering them is a person, confessional manner.[28] Moreover, Kishida-Ellis suggests Sakutarō "liberated nature from the linguistic network of signs where its diverse images constituted a paradigm of perception and suspended its accessibility by the observer." However, if we have examined Sakutarō's poetry under the framework of the uncanny, we begin to see that the object of anxiety, the use of a doubles, and negative self-imagery are not simple reactions to dominate poetic practice. The frequency of repetitive depersonalization and the sense of an estranged relationship to nature, particularly through the use of iconic images of Japan, throughout Sakutarō's work leave many questions still to be answered. Most prominent is why does Sakutarō tend toward the abject? For example, consider the following poem "The World of Bacteria," [*bakuteriya no sekai* ばくてりやの世界] (1917). Again we are confronted with senseless anxiety and distress, all seemingly brought about by innocuous items.

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26  Freud, McLintock, and Haughton. *The Uncanny*.150.
27  Toshiko Kishida-Ellis, "Nature and Self in Modern Japanese Poetry" *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 5,（December 1993）: pp. 34−47.
28  Ando Yasuhiko writes on Sakutarō's exploration of Japanese traditional images in his essay *Hagiwara Sakutarō no kenkyū: Nihon kindai shiron*. 64. See [*ninhonjin no shōchō seikatsu o hyōgen suru mono,* 日本人の象徴生活を表現するもの]

| | |
|---|---|
| Bacteria's legs, | ばくてりやの足、 |
| bacteria's mouths, | ばくてりやの口、 |
| bacteria's ears | ばくてりやの耳、 |
| bacteria's noses | ばくてりやの鼻、 |
| | |
| bacteria are swimming. | ばくてりやがおよいでゐる。 |
| | |
| Some in a person's womb | あるものは人物の胎内に、 |
| some in a clam's intestines, | あるものは貝るゐの内臓に、 |
| some in an onion's spherical core, | あるものは玉葱の球心に、 |
| some in a landscape's center. | あるものは風景の中心に。 |
| | ばくてりやがおよいでゐる。 |
| Bacteria are swimming. | |

The personification of bacteria is disturbing enough, but it is in the second stanza of the poem where Sakutarō creates anxiety and distrust of things normally not feared. The uneasiness produced by these invisible, foreign bodies is can be viewed a source of repulsion to objects that are normally are do not display harm: an onion, a clam, a landscape, a womb; Perhaps because they now carry with them tainted quality. In the last stanza we discover the repetition of one of Sakutarō's motifs: an invalid. The line reads "bacteria are living their lives as if on the skin of an invalid," [*bakuteriya ga sekatsu suru tokoto wa/ byōnin no hifu wo kasuyauni* ばくてりやが生活するところには, 病人の皮膚をすかすやうに] The anxiety these bacteria produce is excessive, since nothing in the material real, the objects in the poem, has changed.  It is only through the internalization of their knowledge that this anxiety exists. While the reader is repelled by the knowledge of living beings on an invalid's skin, they are again placed in a state of distrust and uncertainty by non-threatening objects: an onion, a clam, a landscape and the presumed safety of a womb.  We find again and again, the poet's attempts "to make the intangible tangible."[29]

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29   Johnson, *Aesthetic Anxiety*, 62.

## IV. The Uncanny and Creative Potential: Conclusion

Speaking on creativity, Sakutarō had many diverging opinions. He has cited the creative process as "a spark that flares up and dies in an instant." While he has also called creativity "divine inspiration" and a "physiological anomaly."[30] It is a small detail from the *Sand Mad*, but it is worth noting that the tragic Nathaniel was a pursuer of art. Although I do not mean to drawn a to strong a parallel, I think calling attention to creativity and the proximity to the uncanny is importing to this discussion of Sakutarō's early work. In the final paragraphs of *The Uncanny,* Freud writes of the powers of the creative writer and the use of the uncanny as a literary device.

> The imaginative writer may have invented a world that while less fantastic than that of the fairy tale, differs from the real world in that it involves supernatural entities such as demons or spirits of the dead. Within the limits set by the pre-suppositions of this literary reality, such figures forfeit any uncanny quality that might otherwise attach to them.…

> The situation is altered as soon as the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality. In this case he accepts as well all the conditions operating to produce uncanny feelings in real life; and everything that would have an uncanny effect in reality has it in his story. But in this case he can even increase his effect and multiply it far beyond what could happen in reality, by bringing about events which never or very rarely happen in fact. In doing this he is in a sense betraying us to the superstitiousness which we have ostensibly surmounted; he deceives us by promising to give us the sober truth, and then after all overstepping it.

This insightful passage is directed to prose more the poetry, but it is interesting to

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30   Ueda, *Modern Japanese Poets*, 151.

consider how Sakutarō's poetry encourages us to doubt the poetic speaker. Is the reference to illness, or are the distressing images Sakutarō's method to create in us a sense of the uncertain? As a poet, we have seen he is capable of affectively causing distress through his negative images. Also, his use of doppelgängers infuses his poetry with disquiet and uncertainty. Nature too, especially when extracted from its traditional images, plays an important role in the poet's quest for a personal poetry, and a person image. Throughout *Howling at the Moon*, Sakutarō has succeeded in creating a poetic work of strangeness that engenders feelings on uncanniness, of distrust, and uncertainty. What remains most of Sakutarō's poetry is the idiosyncratic and strangeness of a personal suffering. Although the sources of such anxiety remains speculative, examining the poems of Sakutarō by way of the uncanny provides yet another dimension to understanding one of Japan's pioneering Modernist poets.

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