

**Passages: Writing Diasporic Identity in
the Literature of Early Twentieth-Century Japanese America**

by

Kristina S. Vassil

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Ken K. Ito, Chair
Professor Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen
Associate Professor Susan Y. Najita
Associate Professor Jonathan E. Zwicker

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For my parents

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INTRODUCTION

Passages

passage, n.

(1) *The action of going or moving onward, across, or past; a movement from one place or point to another, or over or through a space or medium; transit.*

(2) *A journey by water; a voyage, a sea crossing.*¹

*To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier.*²

Bringing this project to fruition involved crossing borders at nearly every stage. By way of example, allow me to describe how I discovered the novel at the center of Chapter One—Hozaka Kiichi’s *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* (America as I see it).

In the summer of 2004 I visited the Japanese American Research Project (JARP) at the library of the University of California, Los Angeles. The collection was established in 1962 by Japanese Americans who felt the urgent need to write their own history; it has been described as the “finest collection of primary sources in the United States on Japanese immigration history.”³ Compiling a written history required an organizational body to collect and preserve documentary materials, and this was one of three objectives put forth by the JARP faculty: 1) to engage in historical studies of Japanese immigrants and their American descendants; 2) to conduct sociological research and surveys of

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “passage.” <http://0-dictionary.oed.com>

² Salmon Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991* (London: Penguin/Granta, 1991), 124-25.

³ *Fading Footsteps of the Issei: An Annotated Checklist of the Manuscript Holdings of The Japanese American Research Project Collection*, compiled by Yasuo Sakata (Los Angeles: Regents of the University of California and the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1992), xii.

Japanese Americans; and 3) to collect and preserve published materials, documents and records relating to Japanese American studies.⁴ Using two annotated bibliographies attached to the collection, I submitted a request to view three sets of literary materials—novels, literary journals, and poetry collections—and began sorting through the boxes. As a student of Japanese literature I was struck by a book that I pulled out of the first box, the second volume of a lengthy novel, *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika, gehen* (America as I saw it, part two). The book, written in 1912-1913 by a San Francisco-based newspaper journalist, was described in the JARP bibliography as a “satirical work on Japanese immigrant society, the exclusion movement, and U.S.-Japan relations, which is an adaptation of the famous Meiji novel by Natsume Sôseki, *Wagahai wa neko de aru* (I am a cat).”⁵ As I leafed through the pages I was startled by the number of chapters devoted to such topics as the “development of the Yamato race” or the “expansion of the Japanese Empire.” The studies of Japanese immigrant history with which I was familiar focused on narratives of migration, settlement, exclusion and interment—a narrative confirmed by the JARP objectives and annotations—and usually did not include discussions of Japanese imperialism, expansionism, or racial theory. Hozaka’s inclusion of these topics, coupled with the evocation of Sôseki’s *Neko* in his choice of titles, brought to light a closer intertwining of Japanese and Japanese American historical and literary themes, and pointed to larger questions about how “immigrant” writers adapted literature from the homeland into hybrid fictions set in the American hostland. Volume one, however, was missing from the JARP collection.

⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁵ Ibid., 218.

A year after this discovery I traveled to Kyoto, Japan to conduct further research. On a sweltering day in late August I wandered into a used bookstore on the busy Kawaramachi thoroughfare. The Sanmitsudô bookseller specialized in “rare and unique” works of Japanese literature, especially novels. While browsing the shelves a familiar title caught my eye—Hozaka’s *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika, jôhen* (America as I saw it, part one). My research in Los Angeles had turned up an advertisement for Hozaka’s novel in a 1913 issue of the *Nichibei*, a Japanese vernacular newspaper published in San Francisco. Still in excellent condition, the book, as promised in the announcement, came in a box, was adorned with a gilded top, and featured the work of Natsume Sôseki’s famous illustrator on its frontispiece. The *Nichibei* announcement also emphasized exceptional value if the books were purchased as a pair. The *Sanmitsudô* owned only the first volume, which was all I needed having brought the second from Los Angeles. After assuring the clerk that Hozaka’s was indeed the book I wanted to buy, I purchased it for 5,000 yen and completed the set.

The institutions housing the two volumes of the novel, one part of a project to examine the history of Japanese immigrants in the prewar period, and the other a commercial enterprise involved in buying and selling rare and unique works of Japanese literature, point to a text that sits at the crossroads of Japanese American and Japanese literary studies. In fact I argue that all of the texts I investigate occupy intersecting, yet liminal, positions in one or both of these fields. I wish to disrupt traditional literary and historical study by pushing to the center a marginal group of authors, texts or readings and spotlighting their shared domains of history, diasporic experience, and vernacular storytelling. Exploring a set of materials perceived as lying beyond the scope of Japanese

or Japanese American studies will, I hope, create opportunities for productive dialogue between the two fields.

Initiating a conversation between Japanese American and Japanese studies also means participating in the larger discussions taking place in both Area Studies and Asian American Studies that have begun to destabilize the structures of these very fields. In particular, the relevance and significance of both fields and their prescribed methods of approach in an age of globalization are now questionable, according to some. For example, in *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies* (2002), Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian look at the creation of Area Studies in the aftermath of World War II within the context of the American academy and its funding resources. Focusing their discussion on the formation of Asian Studies programs, Miyoshi and Harutoonian describe how these programs, originating in the post-World War II period, sought to meet the necessity of gathering and providing information about the “enemy,” an aim later extended to other regions of the world considered vital to U.S. interests in the Cold War. *Learning Places* argues that these origins led to privileging the nation-state as a central unit of study and an overemphasis on national particularities, and discouraged comparative and cross-cultural research. The authors state that Area Studies has now outgrown the reasons for its original inception and must therefore “critically and integrally respond to historical changes.”⁶ Put simply, the “afterlife” of Area Studies refers to a dislocating of national models—a de-centering of truths, practices and even institutions necessary to maintain relevance in a world of thickening global engagements.

⁶ Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian, eds., *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 2.

Sylvia Yanagisako's contribution to the volume concerns Japanese and Japanese American studies specifically. Entitled "Asian Exclusion Acts," Yanagisako's article illuminates some of the conceptual reasons behind the boundary that has been constructed and maintained between the two fields. Focusing her discussion on a comparison between anthropologist John Embree's classic ethnography of a Japanese village, *Suye Mura*, and his lesser known monograph *The Acculturation of the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, Yanagisako critiques the latter's reliance on established themes concerning the "process of adjustment to an alien environment" and the cultural loss and degradation that accompanies it.⁷ Yanagisako claims that important issues, those directly raised in Embree's research on *Suye Mura*, were ignored in the Kona case because of the dominance of certain anthropological theories of acculturation and the tendency to read all instances of foreign settlement through them. Ultimately, through an analysis of both monographs, Yanagisako argues that the redundant narrative of Asian American history as a story of racist domination and masculine resistance reinforces the boundary between Asian American Studies and Asian Studies and "reaffirms the typology of geopolitical spaces and the structural-functional theory of culture and society" that has shaped both fields of study.⁸

In *Orientalisms: Mapping Studies in the Asian Diaspora* (2001), Kandice Chuh and Karen Shimakawa discuss the temptation to identify Asian American studies as an alternative style of knowing to Asian Studies. Established as part of the institutionalization of U.S. ethnic studies in universities in the 1960s and 1970s, Asian American studies carries the histories of the Civil Rights Movement, the Third World

⁷ Sylvia Yanagisako, "Asian Exclusion Acts," in *Learning Places*, 180.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 186.

Peoples Movement, and the protests against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Quoting Russell Leong, Chuh and Shimakawa describe the formation of the Asian American Studies movement as “linked directly with the struggles and movements of self determination by Asian American students in response to their exclusion from the educational curriculum...and a struggle to develop longer-term strategies towards the inclusion of people of color in the social fabric and political transformation of the United States.”⁹ A major feature, then, of the formation of Asian American studies has been its focus on a U.S. location. As Shirley Geok-Lin Lim et al. confirm in the introduction to the more recent *Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits* (2006), “Asian American literature is, above all, a U.S. nation-identified production.”¹⁰ Even in narratives set in other locations, Lim notes, the narrative perspective is always assumed to originate in the United States and the thrust of critical approaches has been “charting [a] linear development model of identity, plotted from immigrant entry to successful integrations, with points of conflict, reversals, epiphanies and so forth along the narrative route.”¹¹ The authors of *Transnational Asian American Literature* acknowledge alternative narratives and encourage explorations into rearticulating Asian American subjects and the interdisciplinary practices established under the term Asian American studies. And yet, while recognizing that “even from the earliest outset of scholarship on Asian American writing a nation-bounded siting was never inflexible,” the volume reads Asian American writing as located and locatable in U.S. territory, sited on a discourse of nation. The “transnational” of the volume’s title points to the diasporic and

⁹ Kandice Chuh and Karen Shimakawa, eds., *Orientations: Mapping Studies in the Asian Diaspora* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 9.

¹⁰ Shirley Geok-lin Lim, John Blair Gamber, Stephen Hong Sohn, Gina Valentino, eds., *Transnational Asian American Literature: Sites and Transits* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 9.

¹¹ Ibid.

transmigratory nature of Asian American experience characterized by “different Asian ethnic immigrants groups each with different language and culture stock” investigated in some of the chapters of the volume, although the experiences are almost always mediated through the English language. The image of “sites and transits” evoked in the introduction to *Transnational Asian American Literature* points to the passage of Asian bodies through the field of an American-bound lens, or the passing of Asian stories and images over a U.S. literary place. I find the image of “sites and transits” used in the volume’s title useful in thinking about the texts at the center of my study, although viewing them through an America-bound lens—or a Japan-bound lens—leads, I fear, to only half of the story.

For example, in my project I take up the work of Nagai Kafû, a prominent Meiji period (1868-1912) writer who is well known in the canon of Japanese literature. Most studies of Kafû’s 1908 collection of short stories, *Amerika monogatari*, have centered on established lines of inquiry related to the author’s well known reverence for the Naturalist fiction of Maupassant and Zola and, more recently, the narrative strategies related to Naturalist writing. In other words, traditional studies of Kafû’s work emphasize the “monogatari,” or the telling, rather than the “Amerika.” This body of scholarship on *Amerika monogatari* exhibits a trend that Yoshikuni Igarashi describes in his work on Japanese American identities in postwar Japan: “Japanese studies has generally refrained from discussing Japanese American issues on the ground that they belong solely to American society,” and the “diasporic experiences of Japanese Americans, which refuses to be appropriated into the concept of Japaneseness, have safely been located outside of

national boundaries and delegated to American studies.”¹² The stories of *Amerika monogatari*, set in early twentieth-century America, move chronologically and geographically across the American expanse from the port of Seattle, to the city of New York, with about half of the stories involving interactions between a Japanese narrator and other members of the Japanese resident community. Scholars of Japanese American literature or history will find familiar themes in the rich descriptions of the “Japantowns” of Seattle and Tacoma, in the group of Japanese laborers at the center of several of the stories, or in references to Japanese exclusion policies of the early 1900s, when Kafû’s stories are set. Existing studies of Kafû’s fractured narrative strategy also elide discussion of racial and class divisions in both Japanese and American societies that the narrative structure underscores. My point in taking up Kafû’s work is not to convince readers that *Amerika monogatari* is not “Japanese” literature—a ridiculous proposal—or that it can be considered “Japanese American” literature. Rather, I hope to open up alternative readings elided through established modes of inquiry emerging from bounded fields of study.

This study also avoids using national identifications to characterize writers, a move that only leads back to familiar problems. Why are Okina Kyûin (seventeen years in the U.S.) and Hozaka Kiichi (thirteen years in the U.S.) usually considered “Japanese American” writers while Nagai Kafû (five years in the U.S. and France) and Maedakô Hiroichirô (13 years in the U.S.) are viewed as “Japanese writers,” despite the fact that both Okina and Hozaka eventually returned to Japan? I believe that we can read texts like Nagai Kafû’s *Amerika monogatari*, Okina Kyûin’s *Kosumoporitan wa kataru* (A cosmopolitan speaks), Maedakô Hiroichirô’s *Santô senkyaku* (Third-class passengers),

¹² Yoshikuni Igarashi, “In-Between in a Hybrid Nation: Construction of Japanese American Identity in Postwar Japan,” in Shirley Geok-lin Lim, et al., eds., *Transnational*, 228-249.

and Hozaka Kiichi's *Wagahai wa mitaru Amerika* all as texts by authors who shared the experience of living outside of Japan. We should look at the literary production of these authors under a common lens before deciding to define one text as "Japanese American" and the other as "Japanese" literature. This lens might focus on a set of issues that have concerned scholars of diaspora and diasporic literature: a continuing relationship with the "homeland," the trope of return, tenuous relationships with the nation, and cleavages of race, class, region and other factors that challenge the image of homogeneous diasporic communities. These are all issues that resonate in both the writings of relatively unknown "Japanese American" writers like Hozaka Kiichi and Okina Kyûin, as well as in the works of well known "Japanese" literary figures like Nagai Kafû or Maedakô Hiroichirô.

Diaspora as an Approach

This dissertation argues for the appropriateness of diasporic readings of four early twentieth-century Japanese language texts—Hozaka Kiichi's *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika*, Okina Kyûin's theory and practice of "iminchi bungei" (immigrant land literature), Nagai Kafû's *Amerika monogatari* and Maedakô Hiroichirô's *Santô senkyaku*—to underscore the varied experiences of fictionally-represented groups of Japanese overseas and their relationships with Japanese and American societies. In employing the term "diasporic reading" I recognize and choose to grapple with the ideological richness of the term *diaspora*, and acknowledge its modification and function under different circumstances. In his editorial preface to the first issue of *Diaspora*, Khachig Tölölian writes, "the term that once described Jewish, Greek and Armenian

dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community.”¹³ *Diaspora* signifies a domain of shared and discrepant meanings that requires some sorting and specifying in order to apply as a strategy of textual investigation in the works that I study.

The term *diaspora*, meaning dispersal or scattering, originated in Deuteronomy and came into general use in the late nineteenth century to describe the dispersion of Jews from Palestine to many parts of the world. For more than a century, diaspora was commonly used to refer to Jewish expatriate communities and the identities that developed via a historical experience that continued to link them in cultural terms to their homeland. In recent decades, the term has been applied to numerous other migrant groups—African, Armenians, Chinese, and Indians, to mention a few. In the 1960s U.S. the term diaspora was enlisted to describe attempts to form a Pan-African community, linking populations who were forced to disperse from their homelands to the non-African world where they were economically and politically marginalized.¹⁴ Focusing on cultural identities formed through experiences of dispersal and alienation, Asian and Asian American specialists have, since the 1980s, applied the concept of diaspora to communities of overseas Chinese and other Asian migrants. Until recently, however, dispersed populations of Japanese have received little attention. Nor does much of the existing scholarship consider them part of a diaspora.

¹³ Khachig Tölölian “The Nation State and its Others: In Lieu of a Preface.” *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1991): 3-7.

¹⁴ Nobuko Adachi, ed. *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents, Uncertain Futures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

Definitions of diaspora have sometimes been attempted dialectically, by underscoring what diaspora is *not* through descriptions of competing terms. Discourses of transnationalism, for example, have recently solicited examination of the framing principles of nation-based fields like Asian American and Asian Studies. Transnationalism recognizes contemporary flows of capital and information that seemingly find national borders irrelevant and where, as Kandice Chuh states in *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique*, “patriotic loyalties [are] displaced from nation-states to differently configured collectivities.”¹⁵ Transnationalism was a term originally used to describe corporate structures with established organizational bases in more than one nation-state, and has been applied to movements and linkages of people, ideas, goods, values, and capital across national borders. Transnational studies emphasize the dynamic process of community building across nation-states that privileges neither place of origin nor adopted homeland. Researchers looking at the movement of transnational migrants focus on how cultural ideologies and identities are formed at ethnic *boundaries* in host nations, looking particularly at how transnational migrants relate to local people socially, culturally, economically, or politically.¹⁶ My readings of several of the texts in this study can be seen as an examination of cultural identities formed in the spaces of borderlands, and therefore a study of transnational identity formation. This approach is particularly pertinent to my discussion of Okina Kyûin, who experimented with the possibilities of a cosmopolitan identity wrenched free from the repressive grip of the nation-state. On the other hand, each of the texts with which I work not only articulates cultural identities characterized by economic, political and social in-

¹⁵ Kandice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 14.

¹⁶ Adachi, *Japanese Diasporas*, 3.

betweenness, but also by the emotional pull of the homeland. It is this quality that leads me away from calling these texts “transnational” and towards the more emotionally resonant term “diasporic.”

Diaspora studies is also different from immigrant studies, which emphasizes one-way migration and processes of assimilation, although recognizing that full assimilation is never really possible. The term “immigrant” within the context of English and American Studies programs has come to signify a specific ideological narrative, that is, usually a U.S. nation-centered account of immigration to and settlement in the U.S., followed by some kind of naturalization process which brings about narrative closure. For example, college courses on American immigrant literature often focus on works such as Mary Antin’s *The Promised Land* (1912), Abraham Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917) and Israel Zangwill’s *The Melting Pot* (1926). All are considered classics in the canon of immigrant literature, and all demonstrate the central protagonist’s struggle with the passage from the Old World to the New World and subsequent adjustment to life in America.¹⁷ The object in many of these courses is to study, through a selection of autobiography and fiction written by first- or second-generation immigrants, issues of exclusion, acculturation, assimilation, and Americanism. Some programs also include discussions of ethnicity, monolingualism, and multiculturalism in order to reflect on the dynamics of American society and to investigate the relationship between immigration and ethnicity. Yet these discussions are still very much grounded in the theoretical discourses of American Studies. The question “What does it mean to be an American?”

¹⁷ There is a notable exception here. At the University of California at Berkeley classes on Chinese literature of the immigrant generation are taught and a variety of texts, both English and Chinese, are used. See Sau-ling C. Wong’s “What’s in a Name? Defining Chinese American Literature of the Immigrant Generation” in *Frontiers of Asian American Studies: Writing, Research, and Commentary*, Gail M. Nomura, ed. (Pullman, Washington: Washington State University Press, 1989), 159-167.

seems to be the central organizing principle. Unlike immigrant studies, researchers of diaspora focus more on the language and culture associated with the homeland and the diasporic community's attempts at maintaining ties with likeminded others, fostering what some scholars call "ethno-communal" consciousness in the nations in which they currently reside.¹⁸

The absence of a clear definition for the term *diaspora* is not for lack of trying. William Safran's essay in the inaugural issue of *Diaspora*, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," attempts a definition of a diasporic community by employing a checklist of six features: diasporic communities are, he says, "expatriate minority communities" that: 1) are dispersed from an original center to at least two "peripheral" places; 2) maintain a "memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland"; 3) believe they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host country; 4) see the ancestral place as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; 5) are committed to the maintenance of the homeland; and 6) are "importantly defined" by this continuing relationship with the homeland.¹⁹ Scholars have pointed out weaknesses in Safran's definition, which does not recognize the importance of institutions that diasporic communities create in their host countries to support their own frameworks of belonging. Critics have also recognized the problems in Safran's approach that implicitly create "ideal" diasporas in which all six conditions are met, rendering some communities more diasporic than others.

¹⁸Adachi, 3.

¹⁹ William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," in *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83-99.

At the same time, Safran's emphasis on the continuing relationship with the homeland as a guiding force in diasporic communities is something with which most scholars of diaspora concur. In her recent volume *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents, and Uncertain Futures*, for example, Nobuko Adachi notes that the authors of the essays in the book agree that using the term *diaspora* means examining the societies, cultures, and histories of communities of people who have left their ancestral homeland, yet "who continue to maintain cultural and emotional group identities that link them to it."²⁰ The diasporic subjects appearing in all of the texts I investigate exhibit identities culturally, ethnically and emotionally linked to Japan and who struggle with the idea of being national subjects of one nation and residents of another.

James Clifford, an anthropologist who has written extensively about the concept of diaspora, also focuses his theories on an emotional link with "home." Clifford's theories orient diaspora along an "axis of origin and return."²¹ He argues that the existence of a homeland, more than any other characteristic, shapes diasporic cultures, but unlike a conventional home, a diasporic homeland is defined by its absence rather than its presence. It is an emotionally resonant home from which one is separated by time, physical distance, and the experience of loss. Despite the separation, however, Clifford argues that diasporic subjects remain bound to the homeland through material, symbolic, or psychological ties—a collective memory that fuels a central desire: to return. Return can take various forms, from the physical to the symbolic, but however the desire manifests itself, it imparts diasporic culture with a linear quality by directing it

²⁰ Adachi, p. 2.

²¹ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 251.

towards a singular point of reference that is physically elsewhere and temporally in the past.²² The emotional link to the homeland and a desire for return is something that every one of the texts examined in this project engages in one form or another. It strongly resonates in the recombinatory telos of Hozaka and Maedakô's work, where characters wish to ideologically (and in Maedakô's case, physically) collapse the distance between diasporic subject and the people at "home." Okina Kyûin problematizes the issue of "return" by questioning the very meaning of the term for people who may no longer feel that the place to which they are returning is "home," or who experience the phenomenon of having two "homes." A more figurative aspect of return resonates in Kafû's *Amerika monogatari* where uncanny images of "Japan" appear in American contexts, rendering return possible without leaving American soil and troubling the notions of Japan and America as distinct geographic entities.

My readings of these texts, influenced by the theories of Safran and Clifford, emphasize diasporic relationships along three axes: between diasporic subject and the homeland, between other diasporic subjects (in this case the community of Japanese in the U.S., or in Hozaka's case Japanese communities in Asia as well), and between diasporic subjects and the American environment. In doing so I show how the literary products of diasporic communities incisively critique (and sometimes celebrate) the multiply-positioned spaces they inhabit, and how they invite the possibility of flexible identities.

Class and Region in Japan-America Migration

²² Ibid., 261-268.

The topic of Japanese emigration to the United States has been approached from many angles, including focus on the formation of ethnic identities, on the characteristics of generational groups within the community, on convergences and divergences between Japanese migration and the Chinese migration that preceded it, or on the struggles of certain occupational groups, like agricultural laborers.²³ A few recent studies view the dispersal of Japanese people from the perspective of the point of departure, rather than the U.S. point of arrival, and therefore read Japanese migration as part and parcel of a general movement of Japanese people to places both domestic and international during the Meiji period. In *Between Two Empires*, Eichihiro Azuma argues that in the late 1880s, when the state permitted the departure of laborers in 1885 for Hawaii and later for the U.S., many officials and educated Japanese viewed their migration in terms similar to the contemporaneous movement of surplus populations to Hokkaido and other new territories.²⁴ To my knowledge the only work that treats Japan-America migration as part of a larger “diaspora” is Nobuko Adachi’s edited volume *Japanese Diasporas*. The essays in this text explore the histories of Japanese communities in North and South America (including the U.S., Canada, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, and Argentina) as well as Hawaii and Manchuria under the variegated rubric of diaspora.

²³ For Japanese migration and ethnic identity formation see Paul R. Spickard, *Japanese Americans: The Formation and Transformations of an Ethnic Group* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), for Japanese migration in comparative contexts with other ethnic migrant groups see Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1989); and Sucheng Chan *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991). For a Japanese immigrant history organized by generational groups, see David O’Brian and Stephen Fujita, *The Japanese American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). For a study of first-generation Japanese immigrants with a special focus on labor history see Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants 1885-1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988).

²⁴ Louise Young also mentions Japanese migration to North American as part of a general Meiji period emigration movement encouraged by both the government and private organizations. See Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 312.

In this brief overview I wish to highlight the diverse body of people who left Japan for the U.S. in the early twentieth century for a variety of economic, social and personal reasons, with special attention paid to labor migration. I emphasize the details of labor migration because laborers comprised the largest group of Japanese who migrated to the United States in the early twentieth century, and because they occupy a central position in the texts of this project. In addition, in the chapters that follow a heterogeneous view of the Japanese diasporic community emerges primarily through an emphasis on class and status hierarchies within the community, with the primary cleavage cut between the laboring class (*rôdôsha*) and everyone else.

Early migration of Japanese citizens to North America began shortly after 1868, when the period of national isolation came to an end and Japan became involved in the international network of labor, capital and transportation. The development of modern medicine and public hygiene contributed to population growth, which put pressure on the new nation with limited resources.

Initially, early-Meiji period arrivals in the U.S. consisted mostly of sailors who “jumped” ship, anti-Meiji government activists and indigent students. Around the turn of the century, more and more young men left Japan to get an education in the United States, for the opportunities in Japan had become increasingly limited. Some were fortunate to get funding to attend prestigious universities on the East Coast, but most congregated in cities like San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle. Known as “school boys,” these men attended American schools while performing domestic duties for white families in exchange for room and board. The backgrounds of these early students were varied; some were recent higher school graduates who went to the U.S. to work or to

study, others had been working for a time in Japan and went abroad to further their education. Up until the 1920s the number of students emigrating to the U.S steadily increased, although the numbers declined as *a percentage* of the total emigrant population when the number of agricultural laborers going to the U.S. exploded in the 1890s.²⁵

In addition to students, historians estimate that merchants made up between 5 and 20 percent of Japanese emigration to the United States during the 1885-1924 period, depending on the year. Some were connected with major merchant houses and hoped to build new markets abroad, but most were the proprietors of small businesses who went abroad in search of capital to improve their situations at home.²⁶

The year 1885 marked the beginning of massive labor emigration from Japan. During this year the governments of Japan and Hawaii concluded the “Immigration Convention,” under which approximately twenty-nine thousand Japanese traveled to Hawaii for the next nine years to work on sugar plantations under three year contracts.²⁷ Following the period of contract labor migration to Hawaii, large numbers of laborers began migration to the Pacific Coast, some migrating directly from Japan and some moving on after completing their contracts in Hawaii. The vast majority of migration from Japan to the West Coast of the United States took place during the four decades between 1885 and 1924, when the Immigration Exclusion Act virtually ended Japanese immigration until after World War II. According to the 1880 US census, only 148 Japanese were living in the United States at the time, 86 of them in California. By 1900

²⁵ Akemi Kikumura-Yano, ed., *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas* (New York: Altamira Press, 2002), 32-49. See also Ichioka, Spikard.

²⁶ Spikard, 15.

²⁷ Yano, 35.

the number had increased to 25,000, and in 1924 there were approximately five times that number.²⁸

Under the leadership of former school boys, who could speak some English, laborers worked on farms, in sawmills, canneries, and on railroads. When the U.S. annexation of Hawaii ended contract labor in 1899, many plantation workers in Hawaii joined the growing ethnic labor force on the West Coast, until the migration of Japanese from the islands to the continent was banned by the U.S. government in 1907.

Research by historians and demographers show that, geographically, labor emigration was not distributed evenly throughout mainland Japan. The prefectures in the Southwest—around the Inland Sea and Kyushu—contributed a major portion of early emigrants. In particular, Hiroshima, Wakayama, Yamaguchi, Okayama, and Fukuoka sent more of their residents overseas prior to World War II than did any other region. Notably absent were emigrants from the major population centers around Tokyo and Osaka.

There is some disagreement as to the reasons for this imbalance of migration patterns. Some historians attribute it to economic hardship, citing notoriously poor soil conditions in Japan's Southwest region, especially for the cultivation of rice, and the size of farm plots, which were among the smallest in Japan. The new Meiji regime was predicated on Japan's participation in a new globalized international economy in which farmers needed cash to pay taxes, to buy or rent land, to make repairs, etc. Some historians cite the practical need for cash coupled with the specific conditions for farmers in the Southwest area as the primary cause of regional imbalance in international

²⁸ Spickard, 14.

migration. Other researchers claim that men from these prefectures were an experienced agricultural labor force that was actively recruited by labor companies who contracted work in Hawaii. These historians insist that while the size of farms in this region was among the smallest in the country, these farmers were not the poorest in the nation, and that once migration shifted away from contract labor to open emigration the poorest of farmers would not have been able to afford the journey to America.²⁹

I note the geographical dimensions of migration from Japan because these regional delineations have implications for class and social status divisions within the Japanese American community, distinctions that emerge frequently in the texts I investigate. For example, Hozaka's text uses Sôseki's cat to observe the Japanese communities of early twentieth-century San Francisco, where his attention is predominantly focused on a perceived "ideal" Japanese abroad. These ideal immigrants come from families of means from Northern Japan and are fortunate enough to migrate with substantial capital to start business ventures or to attend elite educational institutions on the East Coast. Members of the "uneducated, laboring classes, from Japan's Western regions" as they are referenced in the text, emerge as a block, as a group without individual histories or personal ambitions, delineated simply as an economic sector of the community. In Kafû's *Amerika monogatari*, too, a clear class division emerges between the laborers of Southern Japan, and elite students, businessmen, and artists from Tokyo, a division superimposed onto an East/West American axis. Class division based on a Japanese North/South orientation, with elite Japanese from the North and laborers from

²⁹ James Stanislaw reads the geographic disparity of Japanese labor migration in terms of economic hardship, see "Japanese Emigration and Immigration: From Meiji to the Modern." Spikard and Ichioka attribute the imbalance to economic factors in addition to a precedent set by aggressive contract labor companies who, looking for an experienced labor force, turned to farmers of the Chûgoku region. See Ichioka, 57-61 and Spikard, 13-15.

the South, gets mapped onto a divided America inhabited by Japanese laborers on the West Coast, and businessmen and diplomats on the East Coast. The North/South class dynamic of Japan reemerges on a ship in Maedakô's story *Santô senkyaku*, which takes place in the third-class cabin of a steamship bound for Japan. The third-class passengers, mainly uneducated laborers from Japan's southern regions identified by their use of dialect, are pitted against more affluent non-laboring emigrants from Japan's northern regions.

In addition to occupation and regional association, class markers attached to the laboring classes extended to the realm of moral and ethical behavior. The perceived "unsavory" lifestyles of laborers led to critiques not only by Americans, but also by members of the Japanese community who wanted to disassociate themselves from their "lower class" countrymen. I elaborate on the moral and ethical judgments applied to the laboring class in my analyses of the texts, but for now I want to note that distinctions emerge in representations of the Japanese community based on differences in class and status, differences brought forward primarily by narrators who occupy a "superior" position.

The Salience of Race and Class

Despite a keen awareness within the Japanese migrant community of its diverse and heterogeneous nature, by the 1920s Japanese immigrants had learned that regardless of differences in social background, occupation, wealth, age, gender or even citizenship rights (granted by law to second-generation Japanese), they would be subject to a racialization process that projected a homogeneity upon their diverse population.

The increase of labor migration in the late 1800s resulted in organized anti-Japanese movements in the Pacific Coast states, which saw Japanese, in addition to other Asian migrants, as part of a new Asian threat. By the time large numbers of Japanese people had migrated to the U.S. in the early 1900s, the tradition of anti-Asian racism had already been established in the local political scene. Coalitions of white labor unions and opportunistic politicians had rallied to ensure the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers for a ten-year period. It did not take long for Japanese people to be viewed as the next menace from the orient.³⁰

The racial position and image of Japanese migrants in American society were so undifferentiated that varied classes of Japanese immigrants came to share a similar, if not identical, collective racial experience.³¹ All of the texts I investigate register a resistance to this racial sameness projected onto the collective Japanese community. In *Amerika monogatari*, for example, Kafû's "superiorly"-positioned narrators struggle against association with their lower class "countrymen" by Americans who discriminate against all Japanese regardless of class or status. At the same time, Kafû's narrative strategies serve to expose the racial and class biases of the narrators themselves, who attempt to cast off their own racial identities, which have prevented them from viewing the world through the lens of a detached, wandering artist. Setting his story in the third-class cabin of a ship returning to Japan, Maedakô Hiroichirô reifies many of the same class distinctions conveyed in Kafû's work. Characters in *Santô senkyaku* demonstrate resistance to racial discrimination experienced in America by opting to leave its shores for good, and yet once on the ship they are subject to a different kind of discrimination, this

³⁰ Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 65.

³¹ Ichioka, 176.

time projected on them by “fellow countrymen” from the community’s upper classes. Hozaka Kiichi’s text is full of stories set in San Francisco’s Japantown, where battles between white oppressors and the “pure hearts” of Japanese emigrants take place within the world of local industry. Hozaka also relies on Japanese imperial discourses of overseas development (*kaigai hattenron*) to ideologically empower the American Japanese community and naturalize its existence in the American West. Hozaka’s posits the theory that population growth in Japan addition to the inherent characters traits (*yamato damashii*) of Japanese people results in the “natural” expansion of the Yamato race to other parts of the world. Okina Kyûin incorporates both Japanese and American political and religious ideology in his efforts to create a “third-space,” a cosmopolitan identity that resists the incumbencies of the nation. The battle here takes place on two fronts, one against racial discrimination in the hostland, another against what he saw as conservative and self-aggrandizing factions with the Japanese community.

Not only did the racial formation of Japanese residents in the United States involve external parameters imposed on the community from the outside, members within the community practiced racialization themselves on their own terms against other Asian groups and minorities. Japan’s victories over China in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5 and over Russia in 1905 convinced Japanese leaders of their superiority over their Asian neighbors and their equality with the West. Some in the immigrant community imagined parallels between themselves and white Americans while at the same time emphasizing hierarchical relations between Japanese and other minorities.³² At times

³² Roger Daniels, 5.

Japanese emigrants played along with exclusionist policies, not because they were helpless and lacked choices, but because their own Orientalist beliefs drove them to seek the privilege of whiteness as their entitlement as well. We see these practices emerging in, for example, Hozaka's novel in which Japanese immigrant achievement is measured not only in terms of successfully competing with white neighbors, but also in a demonstrated superiority over other immigrant groups, especially the Chinese. In Kafû's *Amerika monogatari* upper-class narrators, aligning themselves with the community of middle-class Americans populating Seattle's uptown, describe downtown Seattle's "Oriental colony" as inhabited by low-class Chinese and Japanese laborers.

I choose the term "passages" for the title of this study with the intent of exploiting its significations, one of which is to symbolize physical journeys undertaken by the featured authors and the characters that inhabit their textual worlds. Each of the texts that I investigate includes a rich description of a trans-Pacific voyage, an excerpt from which opens each chapter. Whether narrated by a hopeful traveler-*flâneur*, an aloof steerage passenger, an apprehensive returnee, or a curious cat, each selection illustrates a Pacific crossing and contains embedded meanings that provide an appropriate entry point for the chapter's larger concerns. The first two chapters explore Hozaka's *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* and Okina Kyûin's theories of *imichi bungei*, respectively. Both chapters pay significant attention to the historical and sociopolitical environments in which these texts were created. Substantial knowledge of these contexts is necessary to fully unpack what sometimes appears to be unintelligible material, and to gain a better understanding of how audiences interpreted it at the time. Chapters three and four focus on close readings

of Kafû's *Amerika monogatari* and Maedakô's *Santô senkyaku*, and can be read within the contextual material provided in the first two chapters. Although in these two chapters I work predominantly within the textual bodies themselves, an historical context fraught with American exclusionary policies hovers in the background, knowledge of which renders legible the backgrounds, motivations and mindsets of the stories' characters.

Chapter One begins with the voyage of Sôseki's cat from the port of Yokohama to San Francisco in the early 1900s. Hozaka's sequel to Natsume Sôseki's famous *Wagahai wa neko de aru* was written for an international audience of Japanese readers with the purpose of symbolically reconciling the community of North American Japanese with the homeland. In this chapter I show how Hozaka attempts, through ideological discourse, rhetorical storytelling and paratextual aids, to intensify connections between the two communities separated by migration and the passing of time. Hozaka's aims manifest Clifford's concept of a diasporic "return" trajectory in that the models for proper and productive Japanese behavior and lifestyles provided for American Japanese audiences have the ultimate purpose of contributing to the prosperity and image of the Japanese nation. Furthermore, the settlement built by such a model community of Japanese required the most "Japanese" of the Japanese populace, people imbued with vast amounts of "Japanese spirit" (*yamato damashii*). In my interpretation of this text I also bring out the complex positioning of diaporic subjects negotiating between competing empires whose governments were content to leave the community in the liminal and uncomfortable position of living as citizen subjects of one nation, yet permanent residents of another.

Okina Kyûin's concept of "immigrant land literature" is the subject of Chapter Two. I mean to suggest here a diachronic movement from Hozaka's *Wagahai*—a text very much wedded to then contemporary discussions of Japanese national expansion and the global movements of its citizenry—to Okina's call for a literature of settlement that reflected the "unique" experiences and lifestyles of a new population of Japanese people committed to permanent residency in the U.S. Okina's literature draws from existing Japanese and American political and religious theories in order to forge "cosmopolitan" identities, which strove to rise above, but were inevitably grounded in, concepts of the nation. My investigation of Okina's literary theories coalesces around a decade of writing on *iminchi bungei*, literally "immigrant land literature," a pioneering mode of literary production intended to creatively map Japanese diasporic identity.

Chapter Three reaches back to investigate a precursor to both Hozaka and Okina's work, Nagai Kafû's 1908 collection of short stories, *Amerika monogatari*. Okina criticized the work for being written by a mere "traveler" and a text that failed to represent the "actual" lives of "real" Japanese immigrants. Yet the text exhibits some of the very criteria that Okina outlines in his theories of *iminchi bungei*. In this chapter, I analyze Kafû's experimentation with narrative voice and embedded narratives in stories that feature interactions between members of a diverse group of Japanese residents. I argue that the divided narratives of *Amerika monogatari* seek to portray a fragmented "Japan" and "America" characterized by racial, class, status and regional difference.

Kafû's collection also influenced the work of Maedakô Hiroichirô, whose 1921 short story *Santôsenkyaku* is at the center of Chapter Four. In this chapter, I consider reverse migration in Maedakô's earliest piece of proletarian fiction, which is set in the

third-class cabin of a ship carrying passengers back to Japan after a decade of labor in the U.S. I wish to offer here a diasporic reading of a text relegated to the minor status of early proletarian prototype in Japanese literary history. In my analysis I examine boredom, nostalgia, and aesthetically appropriated images of the nation to illuminate group consciousness from a diasporic perspective. More specifically, my reading of *Santô senkyaku* shows how the state of boredom creates fertile ground in which the symbolic power of the nation, re-presented in a *naniwa bushi* performance, can eventually take root. In *Santô senkyaku* it is the shared experience of migration, a history of labor in the United States and a rejuvenated passion for a lost “home” that, rather than the more standard device of inter-class struggle, unifies the passenger collective in the third-class cabin.

In my conclusion, I suggest how diasporic readings of Japanese American literature not only reorient our understanding of established fields of study, but also how they shed light on the nonlinear and heterogeneous nature of migration and migrating people. I review how attention to socio-historical context in all four texts brings forward shared themes of racial and class hierarchies, and troubled relations with the nation. Finally, I suggest several possibilities for further study of literature involving Pacific crossings.

CHAPTER 1

I am a Migrating Cat: Ideological Prescriptions for Success in Hozaka Kiichi's *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* (1913-1914)

Gradually I begin to feel at ease. I can no longer tell whether I'm suffering or feeling grateful. It isn't even clear whether I'm drowning in water or relaxing in some comfortable room. And it really doesn't matter. It doesn't matter where I am or what I'm doing. I simply feel increasingly at ease. No, I can't exactly say that I feel at ease either. I'm cut off from the sun and the moon, and heaven and earth...I am dying. Through death I am drifting slowly into peace. Only by dying can this divine peace be attained. Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu. Thank you, thank you.¹

Suddenly my eyes opened. Cold. It was very cold. I felt water around me, a light mist around my face, and waves soaking my body...I raised my head and looked up at the sky. It was full of twinkling stars. It was a broad heaven, broader than the one I saw as a youth when curiosity compelled me to climb to the top of the highest chimney in the neighborhood. The weather was clear but it was dark like the middle of the night. I began to wonder whether I was alive or dead. It seemed certain that I was alive, but I didn't know whether I was still in the world of my master's house, whether I had moved on to the next world, or whether I was somewhere in between. It is a strange feeling not knowing whether you are alive or dead. As I floated along I felt generally at peace until uneasy feelings about death crept into my thoughts. In one of those moments I looked frantically around me. Wood. There was a piece of wood floating on the ocean. And I could see that I was sitting on top of it....

I continued to drift along on the board when I saw something large and black coming gradually closer. I sat up to get a better look. There was a light. It was probably land. Or maybe it was an island. The tide carried me closer until it was finally within three or four feet. If I had been a more confident swimmer I would have jumped right away. But I hesitated. Rising and falling with the motion of the waves, I floated along on the board until it brought me within a mere two feet of the shadow. "Now," I thought, "is the time to jump."

¹ Natsume Sôseki, *Wagahai wa neko de aru in Sôseki bungaku zenshû I* (Tokyo: Shûeisha, 1970), 580-581.

...Three days passed on the ship, and then four, and in the middle of the Pacific not even the shadow of an island could be seen. This ship was like a leaf floating on a vast body of water. And the leaf was carrying a large group of people. And the people had a passion for success (*seikô netsu*).¹ If at this very moment the ship were to sink, it was surely not for a lack of a spirit of success.²

In an attempt to narrate a seamless continuation of Natsume Sôseki's famous *Wagahai wa neko de aru* (1905-1906), Hozaka Kiichi's narrator, Sôseki's nameless cat, recounts his miraculous "revival." The dark shadow floating across the sea onto which the cat safely jumps turns out to be a steamship headed on a trans-Pacific journey for America. Disembarking in San Francisco, the cat spends the rest of its days reporting on events taking place in a variety of new homes and with an array of new "masters" in and around the city's Japantown. The result of the cat's observations is a 900-page novel titled *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* (1913-1914), written in two volumes, published in Japan but marketed and sold in both Japan and the United States.

Hozaka's novel begins as the famous literary cat narrates his re-birth off the coast of the Japanese archipelago, a symbolic beginning to a text that emerges not out of any neatly bounded cultural space called "America" or "Japan," but from boundary-crossing processes of migration and aesthetic appropriation. *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* can be read profitably as a diasporic work materially and aesthetically grounded in multiple

¹ "Seikô netsu," literally "success fever," points to the Meiji period ideology of self-advancement, or rising in the world. As I discuss in Chapter 3, emigration to the United States was put forth as a means by which ambitious youth could take part in the new social phenomenon. The "striving for success" mentality catered to the aspirations of indigent students to work their way through school in the American West, and the desire of agriculturalists to make a quick fortune through manual labor. See Earl H. Kinmonth, *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: From Samurai to Salary Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), or, in Japanese, Tachikawa Kenji, "Meiji kôhanki no tobei netsu," *Shinrin* 69 (May 1986): 86-91.

² Hozaka Kiichi, *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika I* (Tokyo: Yûbundô, 1913), 1-3. Volume II of Hozaka's work was published by a different company in 1914, *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika II* (Nichi-Bei Shuppan Kyôkai, 1914). All subsequent citations from *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* will come from these sources, hereafter recorded as Hozaka I or Hozaka II, followed by the page number. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

spaces and traditions, one that reflects a triangulated set of transnational ties—between the protagonist and Japan, America’s Japanese community, and the American frontier. As the preface and other paratextual materials will show, the work was written for a dual audience and simultaneously addresses the perceived needs of differently positioned people.

Although, on the one hand, the novel illustrates the complex positionality of what Eichiro Azuma calls “inter-National” subjectivities,³ one of the novel’s chief aims involves bringing the American Japanese community back into the fold of the Japanese nation from which it had been rent not only by the process of migration, but also, as Hozaka says, by diplomatic officials who “abandoned” the community in its time of need. Hozaka’s interrelated motivations for writing the novel—pragmatic and emotional—are clearly laid out in the author’s preface. Here, Hozaka appropriates the intertwined discourses of colonial advancement and the family state (*kazoku kokka*) and adapts them to serve the purposes of the Japanese settlement in North America. Emphasizing the kinship bonds between families on both sides of the Pacific, Hozaka’s logic, sometimes spurious, works towards proving that the Japanese community in the United States is an integral part of and contributor to Japan’s expansionist movement, and that diplomatic disregard of the American Japanese community is analogous to a parent abandoning his child. Hozaka’s arguments reveal a problematic and sometimes contradictory position vis-à-vis the Japanese state, but one that reflects the complex

³ Eichiro Azuma chooses the term “inter-National” to denote the “consciousness of Japanese immigrants that was wedged firmly between the established categories of Japan and the United States,” and to distinguish this subjective position from the term “transnational,” which may denote de-territorialized or denationalized people. Azuma’s assertion is that Japanese immigrants occupied an “interstitial” space between two national entities. See *Between Two Empires: Race, History and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

dynamics of Japanese diasporic subjectivity, specifically in a host country where the migrant community lacks political power.

While *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* engages the overarching “global” issues pertaining to the nation, its advancement, and the identities of its citizens, it is also inextricably bound up in the “local” — in the socioeconomic and political environment of Northern California in the early 1900s. Hozaka devotes not a few pages to explaining and assessing the economic environment of Northern California and the place of Japanese labor forces and businesses within it, and how US municipal and state policies—from city permits required to run steam-powered washing machines in San Francisco to California State alien land laws—directly affected people’s lives. In this way the novel appeals to readers less concerned with national and cross-cultural issues and more interested in improving their individual livelihoods in America. Ample depictions of everyday life “as it really is” (*sono mama*) present a “reality” of everyday existence at the level of the local over the role of the transnational. At the same time, however, these lifestyles are inhabited by a group of extraordinary people, people born with “natural” traits marking them as specifically “Japanese.” If Japanese people endowed with these inherent qualities apply them adequately and honorably, the logic argues, they will serve as keys to successful lives in America. In this way the nation and national identity permeate every corner of the novel’s social world.

Reflecting its dual audience, Hozaka’s representation of the world of Japanese settlers provides images of a loyal and productive satellite community to audiences in Japan while simultaneously offering models of “pure” and virtuous immigrant life to its readership in America. Hozaka’s book is replete with shining examples of idealized

immigrant behavior, outlook, and social and family life, which serves to offset biased impressions held by Japanese diplomats and citizens who viewed all immigrants (*imin*) as low-class laborers who tarnished Japan's reputation and caused diplomatic embarrassment. Hozaka also provides examples of idealized lifestyles in an effort to guide and unite the Japanese immigrant community by establishing a distinct and positive Japanese identity, a strategy not particularly new to the immigrant community. Scholars of Japanese American History have written about *issei* leaders' consistent efforts to use the press as a tool for establishing and promoting a Japanese national identity among their readers.⁴ However, Hozaka is among the first writers to do this in a novel, and certainly the first to attempt it on such a large scale. This chapter explores Hozaka's strategies—the use of Sôseki's protagonist-cat as an “objective” arbiter and agent of cultural communication, the trope of the family and its role in promoting solidarity across divided communities, and a rhetorical strategy that adapts Japanese colonialist ideologies to suit a diasporic community—to unify a Japanese community fractured by migration, and to bring the US Japanese community back into the protective embrace of the Japanese nation. In doing so this chapter reveals the complex and at times contradictory position held by members of the Japanese community vis-à-vis the Japanese state in the early 1900s, and the ways in which they relied on the medium of literature to express it.

*“The Most Famous Book Written by the Least Famous Author”*⁵

Wagahai no mitaru Amerika (hereafter *Wagahai*) was published in Tokyo in two volumes by two different publishers, the first in 1913 by *Yûbundô* and the second in 1914

⁴See Ichioka, *The Issei*, 45-60; Azuma, 172-180.

⁵ Quoted from the advertisement for Volume 2 of *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* in the *Asahi Shinbun*, February 23, 1914.

by the Nichibei Shuppan Kyôkai.⁶ Little is known about Hozaka Kiichi (Kamesaburô) other than he emigrated from Japan in the early 1900s and worked as a journalist in the San Francisco area. The second volume of *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* (1914) features a letter from Natsume Sôseki (1913) in which he mentions that Hozaka had not returned to Japan in ten years, and recalls three recent visits that Hozaka paid to his house near Waseda University. Sôseki's letter was dated March 18, 1913, which places Hozaka's arrival in the U.S. at around 1903. We know that he resided in the San Francisco area and helped to launch the magazine *Shokumin no tomo* (Friends of settlers), and then worked as a reporter for the San José branch of Japanese vernacular newspaper *Shin sekai* (New world). Searches at the National Diet Library in Japan reveal two other pieces of information: that Hozaka returned to Japan in 1921, and that in 1938 he was working as a middle school English instructor and had published several essays for a small press called *Mingen Kyôkai* (People's press).⁷

Critical work on Hozaka's novel is even more scant. The only article I have come across that addresses the novel as a literary work is Hibi Yoshitaka's "Sôseki no 'neko' no mitaru Amerika, nikkei imin issei no nihongo bungaku," (The America seen by Sôseki's cat: first-generation Japanese language literature), an article published in a Tsukuba University journal in 2004.⁸ Hibi apparently discovered the text while conducting archival research on Sôseki's *Wagahai wa neko de aru*. In the 1980s and

⁶It is interesting that the novel, probably the longest produced by an early Japanese diasporic author, was never serialized. Hozaka worked for the *Shin sekai* newspaper for at least ten years between 1905 and 1921 (when he left the U.S.), but searches in this paper and other vernacular dailies come up empty.

⁷ This information comes from an introductory profile on Hozaka printed in a short volume he wrote for an Osaka publisher, Hozaka Kiichi, "Eibei no shônén sekkô 'bôî sukautsu undo,'" *Osaka yagô shoten*, April 1922.

⁸ Yoshitaka Hibi, "Sôseki no 'neko' no mitaru Amerika: nikkei imin issei no nihongo bungaku," in *'Honyaku' no keniki—bunka shokuminchi aidentiti*, Tsukuba Daigaku bunka hihyô kenkyûkai, ed. 2004, 227-243.

1990s parts of the text were appropriated by historians for its views on immigrant women's issues related to the Picture Bride practice.⁹ Other than this small group of researchers, no one has given the text much notice for the better part of a century.

As a look at the table of contents below shows, *Wagahai* addresses most of the political and historical events affecting the Japanese community in America in the early 1900s. The chapters are loosely strung together by a plot that follows the cat as he wanders from household to household around the San Francisco area. In Chapter 30, "Japanese Shoe Maker" (*Nihon no kutsuya*) the cat joins a family that runs a shoe repair shop, where he stays until Chapter 39, "Store Hanada" (*Hanada shoten*) when he jumps aboard the Hanada delivery wagon that takes him into Japantown. For the rest of the novel the cat shuttles back and forth between these two households, taking the occasional excursion with his masters, either Kunino, the shoe repair owner, or one of the Hanada brothers, the proprietors of the Japanese grocery store. A small cast of characters floats in and out of the story, including extended family members of the two households, or

⁹ Historian Yuji Ichioka examines two of its chapters, "Shashin kekkon" (Picture Marriages, Chapter 73) and "Fujin no kakugo" (Expectations for Women, Chapter 74) for a 1980 article that appeared in the *Pacific Historical Review*. See Yuji Ichioka, "Amerika Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant Women in the United States 1900-1924," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (May 1980): 339-357. Two others researchers cite Hozaka's book through comments about it cited in Ichioka's article: George Pozzetta, ed. *Ethnicity and Gender: The Immigrant Woman*, (New York: Garland, 1993), in *American Immigration and Ethnicity*; vol. 12, 151, and Nancy F. Cott, *History of Women in the United States: Historical Articles On Women's Lives and Activities* (Munich: K.G. Saur) 2 (1992), n. 351. A published annotated bibliography of the Japanese American Research Project (JARP) collection in UCLA's Special Collections library contains a short description of the book in its literature section. Although limited institutional holdings may explain in part why the text has been overlooked, (ample digging is required to get it to turn up in most database searches) most researchers have probably never heard of it. Yuji Ichioka, one of the founders of the JARP collection and a primary contributor to its attached annotated bibliography, was probably the first person to catalogue and annotate the book. The process by which Ichioka and Hibi have come to write about the book underscores its potential usefulness to scholars and researchers in international contexts. The text could be mined for its views on practically every important political and social issue that emerged in the early 20th century Japanese community of Northern California; its appropriation of various strands of Japanese imperialist ideology adapted and applied to a diasporic community has implications for anyone interested in this period of Japanese history; and its incorporation of Japanese literary practices while set in Northern California could be source of interest to literary scholars of Japanese, Japanese American and American literature.

other small business owners that support the Japanese community. Most of the characters who appear from Chapter 39 onwards live in and around Japantown, they patronize each other's businesses, and they attend the same events. Although a sprawling text of 900 pages, the community that forms in it pages consists of an intimate, success-driven, multi-generational, predominantly male group most of whom are involved in small businesses located in or around San Francisco's Japantown.

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As the chapter titles indicate, the text is set in and around Northern California and focuses on the people, places, and events important to its Japanese residents. Local readers would immediately recognize events such as the great San Francisco earthquake and the issue of educating Japanese American children, while readers outside of the U.S. might be more familiar with the larger issues regarding Japanese emigration and expansion. All readers familiar with Natsume Sôseki's *Wagahai wa neko de aru*, however, would probably have made the connection between the two texts right away.

Published some seven years earlier, Sôseki's *Neko* was an immensely popular novel, originally serialized in the magazine *Hototogisu* (The Cuckoo) from January 1905 to August 1906. Even before the serialization was complete, the book's popularity prompted publishers to begin compiling sections to be published in chunks, part one in 1905, part two in 1906, and part three in 1907.¹⁰ The first full-length version came out in 1911, and since then the number of adaptations, translations, intertextualizations, sequels, and so forth bear witness to the book's popularity. In addition to books, over the years *Neko* has been appropriated by educators and turned into readers for school children, and it has provided material for filmmakers, manga artists, and so forth. Aspects of the book that have engaged its adaptors include the distinctive voice of the cat and the famous structure of the title (*I am a ~*).¹¹ Indeed, Sôseki's *Neko* has captured people's imaginations as they have substituted the cat with every kind of protagonist imaginable, from the animal world and beyond.¹²

¹⁰ Hibi Yoshitaka, "Wagahai no shinda ato ni: neko no âkaibu no seisei to kôshin," *Sôseki kenkyû*, 14 (2001): 149-163.

¹¹ Hibi's article lists eighty titles.

¹² Hibi (2001), 152.

Among the ranks of creative artists prolonging the life of *Neko* were prewar writers who lived outside of Japan. Karen Thornber discusses several Chinese and Korean adaptations written in the early 1900s in her book *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (2009). Thornber notes in her discussion of Lu Xun's "The True Story of Ah Q" (1921), early twentieth-century China's most famous short story about a bumbling, inarticulate man who longs to join "the revolution," that Lu's work parallels Sôseki's famous novel in its depictions of "societies filled with ignorant, selfish people who hurt others indiscriminately." However, she also says that while *Neko* is concerned with a nation whose citizens "lose themselves in pompous intellectual discussions, inebriated with European philosophies that flowed into Japan with the Meiji Restoration," the narrator of "The True Story of Ah Q" critiques a nation "whose citizens lose themselves in their past."¹³ Furthermore, what gets compromised in the transcultural adaptation is the "insightful critical voice of the cat that, no matter how distant from its target, at least has the power to transform attitudes and behaviors." I would argue that it is precisely the "distance from the target" that enables the cat to exercise its "insightful critique." Like Lu's adaptation, loss of critical voice is also an issue in Hozaka's text. At times Hozaka's cat applies the critical faculties of an observer standing outside of its "target," but at other times this position becomes compromised when the distance between narrating subject and object collapses.¹⁴

In the North American context another *Neko* adaptation can be found among works written by Japanese authors residing in the United States. Besides Hozaka's work

¹³ Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Asia Center), 363-364.

¹⁴ I will address this point in the next section.

there is Nagata Setsuko's *Wagahai wa inu de aru* (I am a dog), published in Fukuoka in 1952. This novel tells the story of a Japanese American family some forty years later from the perspective of its pet dog.¹⁵ In his research on the archive of *Neko* adaptations, Hibi notes that although several other sequels to *Neko* were written and published after Sôseki's death, Hozaka's *Wagahai wa mitaru Amerika* was the only sequel written while Sôseki was still alive.¹⁶

For Japanese readers in the early twentieth century there must have been some question about how to go about reading Hozaka's nine-hundred page sequel. Although readers could look through the table of contents and pick and choose whether they wanted to read an essay on a particular political issue, a description of San Francisco's Japantown, or a short vignette about the cat's visit to Petaluma, all of the chapters figure into a set of motivations that Hozaka establishes in the preface to the first volume. In other words, all of the novel's chapters purportedly fulfill one or more of four specific, authorial goals laid out in a paratext that attempts to corral, cohere, and ensure that it is read "properly." In addition, advertisements marketing the book in Japanese newspapers published in Japan and in the U.S. provide some indication on how and why the book appealed differently to readers in each country, and how it could be read by Japanese audiences in different locations.

Marketing the Text

¹⁵ Nagata Setsuko, *Wagahai wa inu de aru* (Fukuoka: Yuri Kakai Honbu, 1952), as described in Yûji Ichioka, Yasuo Sakata, Nobuya Tsuchida and Eri Yasuhara, compilers, *A Buried Past: An Annotated Bibliography of the Japanese American Research Project Collection* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 125.

¹⁶ Hibi (2001), 151.

Two almost identical advertisements ran on the front pages of the January 26, 1913 issue of the *Yomiuri Shinbun* and the January 10, 1913 issue of the *Asahi Shinbun*. Both the *Yomiuri* and *Asahi* announcements prominently feature both the names of the author *and* the illustrator, Hashiguchi Goyô, on the right side of the page. This may seem like a minor detail, but when considering that Hashiguchi also provided the famous illustrations for Soseki's *Wagahai wa neko de aru*, the publisher's motivations become a little clearer. Hashiguchi became known for his design and layout of Sôseki's book, which later led to working with other authors such as Futabatei Shimei, Uchida Roan, Tanizaki Junichirô, Nagai Kafû and Izumi Kyôka. His illustrations for Hozaka's text establishes visual continuity between the original and the sequel and his name in bold face in the advertisement would have been recognizable to many readers of the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* newspapers, far more than Hozaka Kiichi's in 1913. The advertisement also features the title of the book, in large, calligraphic font strongly resembling that of *Wagahai wa neko de aru*, which ran next to the names of the author and illustrator. Again, copying the distinctive font of Sôseki's famous novel underscored congruity and continuity between the two works.

The *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* advertisements note that readers could purchase *Wagahai* through the Yûbundô offices in Kanda, or order it and pay through a bank transfer. In addition to a domestic market, readers from outside of Japan were also expected to purchase the book. Both domestic and international shipping charges are listed in the announcement, and its textual body contains several references to the book's "worldwide" popularity. The description of the book underscores its international appeal and the character of its globe-trotting cat, written from the perspective of the cat himself:

I, Professor Natsume Sôseki's cat, have humbly gained the favor of many readers, and although I supposedly met the buddha by drowning in a barrel of water sometime ago, I was curiously able to survive and have made it all the way to America, where I live with my current master. In America I have experienced many enjoyable and amusing things, but there have been some sad times, too. Thanks to these new experiences I can reveal the happenings in one of the world's civilized countries (*bunmeikoku*). I was surprised to learn that many things I had previously learned about this place were simply incorrect. I have also met many Japanese people here, and I have learned about their lifestyles from people of all different classes (*kaikyû*). I have also learned about the anti-Japanese movement in America. My special talent is the ability to see things clearly with a critical eye. I believe that just as a cat's night vision is superior to that of a human's, my observations surpass the ordinary observations that people make. This is why I have asked my master to publish my critical observations worldwide (*etchô* 江潮). The history of the first half of my life sold well in Japan, and there is no question that the history of the second half of my life in the West will sell well worldwide.¹⁷

The advertisement also notes that reviews are “gushing with praise” and the book is “flying off shelves.”

Efforts to market the book in Japan by highlighting its connection with Sôseki's novel are clear from the overall layout of the advertisement and its deployment of the familiar voice of the cat. Adorned with a gilded top and housed in a box, Hozaka's work was marketed as a nice book to own, and one from which people could learn something that they didn't already know about a “civilized” nation, a category that Japan itself was striving to join at the time. In addition to learning something about America, however, readers could also learn something about *themselves*, about other Japanese people living abroad, people of “different classes.” The advertisement thus seems to be aimed at a middle-class readership familiar with the famous illustrator of other “high-brow” writers and curious to learn something new about America and Japanese people of other classes living there. At the same time, the book promises to deliver information about America

¹⁷ *Yomiuri Shinbun* January 26, 1913.

that is *different* from what they may have already learned. As the cat says, by living in America he learned that much of his previous knowledge about America and the Japanese people living there was “mistaken.” Much of the news regarding America covered in Japanese newspapers at the time revolved around increasingly urgent diplomatic struggles over Japanese immigration issues. Initial struggles resulted in the Gentlemen’s Agreements of 1905 and 1906, but by 1913 the situation was growing worse.¹⁸ When we look at Hozaka’s preface we will see that the book tries to “correct” and reverse the negative impressions of Japanese immigrants held by biased officials who viewed them as low-class laborers. Thus, by highlighting parallels with Sôseki’s *Neko* and referring to “inaccurate” knowledge about American life, the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* newspapers advertise a book meant to be read dialogically with its literary precursor on the one hand and with concurrent discussions concerning Japan’s relations with the United States on the other.

Advertisements for *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika* also appeared in Japanese vernacular newspapers in the United States. An announcement for Hozaka’s book appeared in the September 28, 1913 issue of the *Nichibei*, the largest newspaper with the widest circulation on the Pacific coast in the early 1900s. Written in more archaic script (*hentaiji*) than the advertisements in the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* newspapers, the *Nichibei* announcement also featured a picture of a cat and the stylized, calligraphic title of the book. Although the *Nichibei*, too, mentions that the novel’s protagonist is none other than the famous cat of Sôseki’s *Neko*, the main selling points revolve around two other features: 1) the popularity of the book among readers in the homeland (*kokyô*) and 2) the

¹⁸ The Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907-8 was a policy in which the Japanese government pledged to limit passports to non-laborers, “returning” immigrants, and families of those already in the United States.

vivid descriptions of life in America. To purchase the book, readers were instructed to contact the author himself and were offered a reduced shipping rate if they purchased the first volume and pre-ordered the second. The *Nichibei* recommends that multiple copies be purchased and sent home to parents and siblings in Japan who were “most eager” to learn details about the readers’ lives in America. The *Nichibei* advertisement also mentions that the book will provide “enjoyable” and “educational” reading to a range of people: diplomats, businessmen, housewives, people in urban and rural areas, old people and young people. The illustrators are also touted—Hashiguchi Goyô in the first volume, but also Shimada Kainan, a popular America-based Japanese illustrator featured in the second.

What is most striking about the *Nichibei* announcement, however, is the amount of hyperbolic, rhetorical language that it employs. While the *Yomiuri* and *Asahi* ads contain some rhetorical phrasing, the degree of passion and metaphor is ratcheted up in the *Nichibei* description:

- Local (*kyôdo*) literature of resident Japanese that astonished the literary world (*bundan*) of the homeland (*bokoku*).
- Full of “national (*kokudoteki*) sentiment” that with a fiery passion cuts through tangled threads like a knife.
- Household reading (*kateiteki yomimono*) featuring descriptions of lifestyles as pure and bright as a new moon and freshly cut flowers.
- A literary work with observations as cool as a reflecting pool, penetrating insights sharp as a needle, and knee-slapping humor.
- Filled with “calmness” (*ochitsuki*) and “enlightenment” (*satori*) as if watching sunlight filter through the roof of a peaceful and elegant Zen garden.¹⁹

In contrast to the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* ads, the exaggerated language of the *Nichibei* announcement targets an audience with a more passionate engagement with the material by promising a more dynamic reading experience. This is not surprising considering that

¹⁹ *Nichibei*, September 28, 1913.

Japanese readers in the United States were living the kinds of lives represented in the novel, and that their livelihoods and futures were affected on a daily bases by the political events filling its pages. Readers in Japan familiar with Sôseki's cat could learn something new about one of the world's "civilized" countries, but the reading experience did not promise to be the kind of emotional ride advertised in the *Nichibei*. The book entices readers hungry for drama with fiery passion on the one hand and cool reflection on the other, evoking a polarity of sentiments involving intense patriotism for the nation, calm and rational yet penetrating reflection about life in America, and attractive portraits of model immigrant households. And it would be funny as well. Also, by mentioning things like Zen temples and *satori* (enlightenment), the *Nichibei* advertisement exhibits an auto-orientalist nuance that would probably not appeal to a native audience in the same way. It is precisely because of spatial and temporal distancing that the *Nichibei* advertisement is able to play on the American community's feelings of nostalgia for an idealized "home."

The *Asahi*, *Yomiuri* and *Nichibei* announcements all underscore the didactic function of Hozaka's book, although in different ways. Japanese readers in Japan would presumably learn something new about America and its people living there, and the learning would be made fun by virtue of the voice of its well-known protagonist. Readers in the United States also had something to learn by reading Hozaka's novel, but the learning would take place by example rather than exposition. The advertisement emphasizes the "ideal lifestyles of fellow countrymen," lifestyles (*seikatsu*) described as "pure" and "fresh." Marketing the "purity" of idealized immigrant life—featuring households that were clean, bright, and unsullied—is significant in the context of contemporaneous reform movements taking place in the American Japanese community.

For a community whose leaders were concerned with cleaning up its image as a group of single male laborers involved in “unsavory” practices like drinking and gambling, the book offers a portal of cleanliness and virtue. Moreover, the reference to *kateiteki yomimono* or “household reading,” invokes comparisons to *katei shosetsu*, or “home novels” popular in the late Meiji period whose role involved edifying its female readers. Although the phrasing suggests a marginal female readership (for a book “also” appropriate for Japanese housewives), the *Nichibei* advertisement touts a reading experience that would contribute to making happy, healthy families by providing examples of model immigrant lifestyles.²⁰

The *Nichibei* advertisement also reveals an interesting relationship between *kyôdo* (local) and *bokoku* (homeland). The advertisement describes *Wagahai* as a “local work” that “astonished the literary world of the homeland.” Published in 1913-1914, *Wagahai* came out at a time when leaders in the immigrant community were beginning to encourage people to abandon their sojourner status and commit themselves to permanent residency, a move, it was thought, that would make them more attractive to the American people and provide some relief from exclusion. Hozaka’s text can be seen as part and parcel of this trend, as a literature of a new, permanent “home.” However, the focus of the rest of the phrase is “bokoku” (homeland), which in this case clearly refers to Japan. While the text is being marketed as a literature grounded in local space, its value is partially determined by people and an establishment located somewhere else—it

²⁰ For a discussion of Japanese household fiction (*katei shôsetsu*) see Kathryn Ragsdale “Marriage, the Newspaper Business, and the Nation-State: Ideology in the Late Meiji Serialized Katei Shôsetsu,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 24.2 (Summer 1998) and Ken K. Ito *An Age of Melodrama: Family, Gender and Social Hierarchy in the Turn-of-the-Century Japanese Novel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

astonishes the literary world of *Japan*. This interesting concept points to the possibility that one's hometown can be located outside of one's homeland.

The *Yomiuri*, *Asahi*, and *Nichibei* advertisements address how publishers and editors wished to sell and market *Wagahai* to potential readers. Next I turn to Hozaka's two prefaces, the first written by Hozaka himself and the second by the cat, which state in no uncertain terms how the author himself wanted his book to be read.²¹

A Framework for Reading: The Prefaces of Wagahai no mitaru Amerika

Read as paratexts, the overarching goal of the two introductions is, in the words of Gerand Genette, to “ensure that the text is read properly.”²² As Genette notes, because readers have already invested in the book by the time they reach the preface, the preface becomes a place to convince people that their time will not be wasted reading it. Hozaka's prefaces emphasize, however, that readers *will* be wasting their time if they expect from *Wagahai* a quality of writing on par with that of Natsume Sôseki. In other words, both introductions warn against reading the text as a purely “literary” project. In the second introduction the cat writes:

My current master is not a literary man. In other words, he is not the kind of human being who can earn a living by writing novels or saying fancy things. It is therefore very dangerous to expect my current master to do such things as describe my life cleverly, freely and easily and publish it in a book like my former master did. It is even more dangerous than asking Mr. Komura to resolve the problems between the U.S. and Japan.²³ No—it is more than dangerous. It is an impossible order...

²¹ Because the preface to volume one contains interrelated ideological concepts that build on each other from beginning to end, and which also develop throughout the work, I include a full translation in an appendix.

²² Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 12.

²³ In the first preface Hozaka critiques the diplomacy of Komura Jutarô, a Harvard-trained diplomat who served in Washington in the early stages of American-Japanese difficulties over immigration. Komura stated that America's Japanese immigrants, who were drawn from farming and labor classes, were

If someone says that my current life is not interesting, well, that is not my fault. It is because my master is not a man of letters. However, just as there is no relation between my current master's life and the field of literature, there is no relation between the greatness of Natsume Sôseki and a doctorate in literature. In other words, it is not a fancy degree that makes a person like Natsume Sôseki a great man. While I am glad that the one and only Mr. Kinnosuke wrote about the first half of my life, I am also very honored to have entrusted the latter half of my life to my current master.²⁴

I will address some of Hozaka's "literary" strategies in the following section, but the paranoia that Hozaka articulates here may be considered what Genette calls "preventative auto-criticism," a strategy in which an author engages in an imaginary dialogue with reviewers in order to neutralize criticism and to address weaknesses that he already knows exist.²⁵ In addition to taking defensive measures before readers have a chance to critique the work as "literature," such statements also encourage readers to move beyond the literary "surface" of the book. The "real" value of the book can be found not in the literary talent of the author, but rather in its "matter," in the "truths" that it tells about the topics and people it engages.

Uncovering the "real" meaning of Hozaka's novel means knowing something about the person who wrote it and his motivations for writing. The excessive diffidence pervading the prefaces may be a little trying for readers, but I interpret it as part of a rhetorical strategy aimed at constructing the image of a self-effacing, "ordinary" citizen concerned about his country and local community, a man suffering on the one hand from

detrimental to the Japanese image in the United States. In his foreign policy speech as Foreign Minister of the second Katsura cabinet in February 1909, Komura reassured the Diet that immigration difficulties were limited to areas of California and that Japan was in contact with the central government of the United States. "But in any case," he went on, "what has to be noted is that as a result of the Russo-Japanese War the status of the empire has changed and the area under its administration has grown larger; we should avoid scattering our people in foreign countries where they are lost." Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 92-94.

²⁴ Hozaka I, 2-3.

²⁵ Genette, 20.

separation from his parents and on the other from the consequences of unskilled diplomacy. The image of this man standing behind the text renders the pages that follow as emerging “naturally” from lived experience, and therefore more honest and “truthful.” At the same time, Hozaka’s humble self-portrait also reveals an educated man with access to multiple writing traditions. In calling his introduction a “Preface”²⁶ and not an “Introduction” (*jo*), Hozaka presents himself as person who can draw on Western as well as Japanese literary practices. He is also a man with enough knowledge of American history and its famous speeches to critique Komura Jûtarô’s incomplete (and “insincere”) invocation of Lincoln’s famous Gettysburg Address, all while adhering to proper Japanese form and avoiding pretension at all costs.

One of the central motifs threaded throughout the first preface is filial piety, and Hozaka spends ample time discussing how it naturally arises in one’s life and how the feeling gets amplified in international contexts.

When we think about the love that our parents feel for us, naturally our love for our parents gushes forth in return. In this we have a natural truth, and not a learned skill called “filial piety.” I am not very qualified to discuss filial piety. I am simply a person who feels for his parents. And when reading a letter from my aging parents who are far away, I can imagine to what degree they, who have no intimate knowledge of my circumstances, worry about me. And so when I think about how much all the parents of Japanese people living in America worry about their children, I have thought on countless occasions that I want to describe our surroundings and our daily lives as they really are (*sono mama ni*). That is one reason that I have published this book.²⁷

In the preface we see Hozaka expand the kinship metaphor beyond the individual and towards the nation when he says that one of the reasons for writing the book is to provide a more vivid picture of immigrant life in California for *all* of the Japanese

²⁶ “Preface” appears in English.

²⁷ Hozaka I, no page number.

parents in Japan. In this way the book serves the dual purpose of providing an “accurate” picture of the “real” lives of US Japanese residents to Japanese readers, while also allowing Hozaka, on behalf of the entire diasporic community, to fulfill his duty as a filial child. This line of argument in the preface hints at where it ends up in the final chapters of the novel. In Chapters 93 through 98, an allegorical reading gets mapped onto a scenario in which the bonds between parents and children are played out through figures of a “parental” nation-state and its “children,” the international satellite communities. As we will see, the idea gets worked through its opposite form as well, where the Japanese government’s neglect of the US settlement is rendered as “unnatural” a behavior as that of parents who neglect their children, or a cat who fails to protect its young.

To understand the “value” of Hozaka’s book we must also address the four interrelated motivations he provides for writing it: 1) to paint a vivid and accurate picture of the lifestyles of Japanese people in the United States for the parents in Japan; 2) to clearly and accurately explain how imperfect Japanese diplomacy has affected the community in the United States; 3) to offer “friendly advice” to people both in the U.S. and Japan; and 4) to promote mutual understand between the two communities. The rhetorical resonances of these four aims must be read against discussions circulating in the immigrant community that encouraged permanent settlement attempted to repair the image of Japanese residents in America. Both Hozaka’s preface and the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* advertisements emphasize “inaccurate” and “mistaken” impressions of the US Japanese community put forth in the statements of public officials. Most of Hozaka’s

novel can be considered part of an effort to correct these impressions by replacing the image of laborers with more virtuous, wholesome characters.

The cat's primary "masters," for example, are a family that owns a shoe store in Japantown, the proprietors of a Japanese grocery and sundries store, a doctor, and two schoolboys, one who eventually attends Stanford University and another who graduates from a vocational school on the East Coast and returns to California to start a business. "Laborers" (*rôdôsha*) are mentioned as a group in terms of a necessary beginning to successive waves of Japanese overseas immigration and also in terms of their overall contributions to the economy of the local Japanese settlement. By focusing on laborers as a block—a group necessary in the early stages of the settlement's historical and economic development—a bias emerges in favor of younger, ambitious settlers more suitable for literary description and who are better representatives of Japanese expansion.

The perceived vices of the Japanese resident community, however, are neither ignored nor explained away in the novel, but rather re-evaluated as either failures on the part of immigrant and diplomatic leadership to advise and set proper standards and rules for wayward community members, or as the personal failures of individuals who shed their "Japanese spirits" like an old skin. Again, the work's position regarding the problems in the community almost always reinforces a strong class bias where the uneducated laborer requires the guidance and moral leadership of his middle-class countrymen. As we will see when we take a closer look at some of the specific characters in the text, the main political message of Hozaka's book is to show concretely and specifically how the Japanese settlement in California deserves the respect and support of the Japanese people, and to demonstrate that the "development" of the Japanese

American community means contributing to the “advancement” of the Yamato race and nation. These ideological goals are carried out through a combination of editorial and anecdotal writing that describes in detail the most honorable and virtuous, though not necessarily the most materially successful, of the community’s members.

Finally, we must address the last section of the preface that specifies Hozaka’s reason for choosing Sôseki’s cat as his protagonist:

In conclusion, without the permission of Natsume Sôseki, whom I admire very much, I have brazenly borrowed the cat from his famous book *Wagahai wa neko de aru*, and I apologize for doing unnecessary damage to its literary value. When a novel called “such and such” becomes popular one often sees people indiscriminately publishing work called “the *new* such and such.” I am no slave to money and do not wish to advance myself by riding on the coattails of Sôseki’s famous novel. The reason that I have employed the cat is that human beings are not always such good observers of themselves. Once they start looking they soon lose all sense of what they are looking at. So I have requested the favor of Mr. Cat.²⁸

Although Hozaka claims that the decision to borrow Sôseki’s cat had more to do with perspective and voice than taking advantage of its name value and popularity, neither newspaper editors nor Hozaka’s publishers had any reservations using *Neko* as a marketing tool. The advertisements in the *Asahi*, *Yomiuri*, and the *Nichibei* newspapers were predicated on their readers’ knowledge of and affection for Soseki’s beloved cat, and Hozaka himself, in the cat’s preface, also recommends that his audience read Sôseki’s work if they had not already. The amount of space the cat devotes to warning readers of the vast gap in literary talent between his two “masters” also attests to his assumption that Japanese readers on both sides of the Pacific were familiar with Sôseki’s writing. Hozaka even inserts a reference to *Neko* in the first few pages of his novel, in

²⁸ Ibid.

which the cat, wandering around the third-class cabin of the ship, comes across a man reading a copy of none other than *Wagahai wa neko de aru*. “I wonder,” the cat says, “whether this man has any idea that the cat in that book and the cat standing next to him are one and the same.”²⁹ The text abounds with references like these and others that refer to Kushami-sensei and the other characters in *Neko*, which could either be glossed over or read as an ongoing subtext enjoyed between narrator and reader. They also serve as a perpetual reminder of the cat’s illustrious “roots.”

It was not only publishers and editors that eventually took advantage of the connection between Sôseki’s and Hozaka’s work. By the time the second volume of *Wagahai* was published in 1914, Hozaka had returned to Japan for a visit and had made contact with Sôseki himself. Sôseki sent Hozaka a letter while he was still in Japan, which Hozaka then used as an introduction to the second volume of his novel, a decision that allowed him to revert back to the “proper” Japanese introductory form that he was unable to carry out in volume one. The letter reveals the process by which Hozaka’s book eventually went to print, despite its unknown author. Sôseki mentions that he had been approached by a publisher with Hozaka’s “fine” (*rippa na*) manuscript some time before the first volume of *Wagahai* was published. The publisher had asked Sôseki how he would feel if it were published without the author’s name attached, an act that would presumably trick readers into thinking that the book was written by Sôseki himself. Sôseki replied that it was a terrible idea on every level, arguing that if the book were good, it was bad for the real author, if it were bad, it damaged his own reputation, and it was simply deceitful on the part of the publisher. The publisher then left. When he ran

²⁹ Hozaka II, 36.

into the man again a short time later he learned that publication had been put off. Sôseki then writes:

I am very happy that your fine manuscript eventually changed hands and was published. And I am grateful that you took my cat to America. I recall that the cat met its end in a barrel of water, but as the Taishô era has begun, I am glad that you were able to resuscitate it and give it a second life. I thank you for coming as far as the semi-rural Waseda area as many as three times while you were here in Japan, and I readily accepted the delicious gift of fruit that you mentioned was grown by our countrymen (*dôhō*) in America. I hear that your return voyage to America will take up to two weeks. I wish you good health and much success for the future.³⁰

By attaching Sôseki's letter—full of praise for the book—Hozaka is able to strengthen the connection between the two texts by highlighting the personal relationship between the two authors. In the end, Hozaka receives validation through Sôseki's approval and even gratitude for taking his cat into the next historical era. The gift of American fruit—grown in California by “fellow countrymen”—serves as a symbol of production and exchange between homeland and foreign settlement, an important ideological strand that Hozaka threads throughout the novel. Before moving into a discussion of the kinds of ideological discourses that Hozaka incorporates into the novel, it is worth first addressing a topic that Hozaka wished to downplay, that is, the book's “literary” qualities.

Wagahai as “Literature”

Although Hozaka actively discouraged comparisons between his novel and Sôseki's *Neko*, the fact that he drew on Sôseki's popular and successful literary protagonist and embedded his political ideas about the Japanese community in a *novel* makes investigating the results of his attempt worthwhile. Hozaka mentions, in his

³⁰ Ibid., no page number.

preface, the diverse structure of his text—a heteroglossic mixture of political discussion, reports, literary sketches and stories. In the first volume, Hozaka seems to have given attention to the order and arrangement of the chapters by interspersing political and economic report-like sections between anecdotal sketches and chapters on lighter topics. By the second volume, however, political and economic discourses (some replete with lists of sources) begin to outnumber the “stories.” But not all of the chapters fall into the two categories of editorial or anecdote. Many of the “stories” are mere entry points that lead into debates on larger social issues, and some of the editorial-like pieces contain dramatized historical stories. Such diversity is managed by a loose plot and the voice of the cat in the narrating present (with some shifting) to give the book unity. There is thus, similar to Sôseki’s *Neko*, what James Fujii calls “a plurality of narrative schema” that contains “an orational style, but also scripted forms, all intoned by a household cat.”³¹ Examining Hozaka’s text from the standpoint of the special voice of the cat turns up an interesting yet uneven text that at times derives punch from the vivacious storytelling methods of the cat, but at others times relies on transcriptions of lengthy editorial-like essays framed on both ends by the cat’s narration. In the latter case the critical voice of the protagonist cat gets drowned out in favor of polemical lectures inserted in quotes. The last six chapters of the book, for example, consist of ideological essays that address Japan’s expansionism and the role of the diasporic community in it, “intoned” as speeches read at a “conference” of young Japanese businessmen in California.

We might ask at this point if the *arrangement* of essays or anecdotes within and between chapters point to the cat’s hand in the creative skills of selection, editing and

³¹ James Fujii, *Complicit Fictions: the Subject In the Modern Japanese Prose Narrative* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 113.

juxtaposition. This investigation turns up little because many of the juxtaposed essays and speeches contain similar arguments articulated slightly differently, but not differently enough to produce any narrative tension. For example, Chapter 95, “The Expansion of the Yamato Race and America’s Japanese Settlement III,” contains a discursive speech about Japan’s rise in the world and its future development delivered by a participant in a gathering of Japanese businessmen. The speech is quoted verbatim by the cat. After the speech, the man explains that a friend happened to write an essay on the very same subject, which he then proceeds to paraphrase. The summary comprises the second half of the chapter. This structure weakens the trope of cat-as-writer, pointing perhaps to an author, a newspaper reporter, who was more comfortable writing in an editorial mode.

Compared to Sôseki’s *Neko*, the concept of time as an active force plays a more critical role in Hozaka’s novel. *Neko* is not constructed as a linear narrative, but rather as a record intermittingly scratched and re-spun by its narrator the cat. In Hozaka’s text, chronological sequence matters on both a discourse level and on the level of story. On the level of story, for example, we have the proprietors of the Hanada market, owners of a thriving grocery business during the peak of Japanese migration, being forced to shut down the store due to decreased sales by the end of volume two. The rise and fall of the Hanada market are affected by concurrent anti-Japanese exclusionary policies and diplomatic agreements that scaled back and eventually ended Japanese labor migration to America. On the level of discourse, the growing intensity of anti-Japanese movement is reflected in the number of polemical speeches, debates and editorial-like articles on political issues that steadily increase from beginning of the novel to the to end. We do not get the sense, as in Sôseki’s *Neko*, of a “timeless present,” but rather of a situation that is

growing more desperate chapter by chapter, a situation that imposes itself on the novel's narrative structure. In fact, Hozaka even prepares us for this shift in the notes he added to the beginning of the second volume, which state that the situation for Japanese people in America is growing more uncertain, and that the even the "power of the Japanese nation" may not be able to save them.³²

It is a little unclear exactly what Hozaka meant by "literary" when he mentions it in his preface in discouraging his audience from reading the text "purely as literature," but we can assume from comments in both introductions that the "skilled brush" to which he refers points to Sôseki's "free and easy" writing style. Adopting the perspective and voice of Sôseki's famous cat saddled the author with the responsibility of imitating Sôseki's style, something, as Hozaka points out, difficult to do without Sôseki's talent. But the more difficult task may have been maintaining a consistent narrative position and strategy from beginning to end. In addition to the variety of writing styles incorporated in Hozaka's book, readers might be struck by the shifting positionality of the protagonist-cat in relation to the Japanese community and its host country. In the preface, Hozaka states that his reasons for choosing the voice of Sôseki's cat is that its existence as a non-human entity has given it the ability to see the world of humans more clearly. Indeed, the cat sometimes uses his skills of observation from a distanced position to critically observe the people around him, and, by borrowing the voices of members in the Japanese community, to present both sides of particular debate. At others times, however, the critical distance between the cat and the humans in the Japanese community collapses altogether and focalization shifts to the perspective of a fellow Japanese citizen.

³² Hozaka II, no page number.

In Chapter 33, “American Cats,” for example, the feline narrator engages in a critique of human perspective owing to the narrowness of its vision. Here the perspective of the cat exposes the “contradictory” nature of human beings and their constructions of racial hierarchies. Attending an international “banquet” with a number of other cats on the roof of a neighboring house, the narrator joins cats from Italy, Ireland, Germany and England. When the subject of “Jap” exclusion emerges, the narrator says:

Human beings discriminate and practice exclusion on the basis of race, and then go around preaching about humanitarianism, justice and world peace. What a bunch of hypocrites. We in the feline world never judge each other on the basis of the color of our fur.³³

In this passage, which continues with a discussion of blacks in America, the cat critiques the human practice of racial discrimination from the position of a superior species that sees clearly the hypocrisy and prejudice characteristic of humans.

Chapters 68-71 focus on the visit of the Japanese naval battleships *Aso* and *Soya* to the port of San Francisco, and it is in these chapters that the cat moves from the position of “outside” observer to patriotic Japanese citizen. The family at the center of these chapters is headed by Kunino, the Japanese shoemaker, his wife, their two children, Taro and Hana, and their extended family. More will be said later about this family, but in this scene the men go off to see the battleships in the harbor while Kunino’s wife and daughter stay home and prepare for the visit of her brother-in-law, Kunino’s youngest brother, a member of the Japanese navy who has arrived on the *Aso*. The cat, also excited about the Japanese naval visit, climbs to the top of a hill to get a better view of the festivities:

³³ Hozaka I, 263.

I was speechless. Shivering, I was overcome by feelings of pride. However wise a reader may be, unless he has lived in a foreign country and has had the chance to view a battleship from his beloved homeland, I doubt he can fathom the feeling. From the welcoming ship rang the sound of Kimigayo and one could hear cheers of “Banzai” from all around. Flags fluttering and caps waving, I see people delirious with joy. As the welcoming ship turned around the two enormous battleships reversed course as well. On the ship, the sailors are scurrying around busily. Some emerged from the side of the ship and are waving their caps at the crowd. One minute, two minutes go by and, led by the customs ship, both battleships pass by accompanied by the welcoming ship. A spectacular scene of dignified beauty and peace unfolded in front of me. Representing a nation worthy of the title “The Honorable East (*appare tōyō*),” this was a respectful, dignified, and beautiful presentation made for the purpose of deepening national relations. The ships glided over the sea as calm and slick as oil, moving further and further out into the bay. I could no longer see it from my spot on the mountain. But I could hear the boom of a one, two, and three cannon salute coming from the American battleship at anchor in the harbor. When the booming stopped, I quietly descended the mountain and returned to Taro’s house.

It is unclear why Hozaka shifts tenses in the middle of the passage, though my guess is that he wanted to create a feeling of immediacy for his readers, to re-create the scene as if they were there on the hilltop watching the action themselves. We can see here how the perspective of the cat has shifted from an outside observer who might look critically at the scene to a Japanese cat watching a display of naval ships from “his beloved homeland.” Such displays of patriotism are not new to the novel, but it is in this scene where the cat’s critical voice becomes fully compromised. An earlier scene exhibits the same kind of patriotism, although the cat maintains his outside stance. In Chapter 38, during the celebration of the Emperor’s birthday, the cat describes the patriotic feeling that emerges for Japanese residents:

Japanese people who live in foreign countries are always more enthusiastic about these kinds of things than people in Japan (*naichi*). They make the long journey and then become overwhelmed thinking about their parents back home. And these

feelings are not just demonstrations of proper behavior. It is a situation where genuine heartfelt feelings arise naturally.³⁴

Hibi Yoshitaka explains the fluctuating subjective position of the cat as part of the complex positionality of Japanese immigrants, who sometimes exhibited intense loyalty and patriotism for the homeland, while at others cursed the Japanese government for its incompetent diplomacy. Eichihiro Azuma also subscribes to this way of thinking when he characterizes the totality of immigrant experience as being moved by “complex motives and desires, some of which were contradictory and nonsensical.” I agree with Hibi’s conclusion that the inconsistency of narrative voice in Hozaka’s text can perhaps represent the wavering subjective positions of Japanese diasporic residents, but from a narrative standpoint the shifting perspective also results in the loss of critical positioning for which the cat is well known.

Despite the frequent loss of critical perspective, the cat nonetheless enjoys telling a good story. One of the most useful examples illustrating both the transparently nationalistic position of the cat and its penchant for entertaining storytelling appears in Chapter 50, “The Development of the Yamato Race II.” The chapter is the second in a three-section series that reads like a basic report on labor and economic growth in the Japanese community in California, until it digresses to tell the story of a man called Tsukamoto, a kind of legend in the Japanese laundry business of San Francisco. Early in the first section of the series the cat states, “You know, one cannot separate the development of the Japanese community on the Pacific Coast without discussing a thing called labor (*rôddô*).”³⁵ Three chapters unfold that focus on the development of labor and

³⁴ Ibid., 296.

³⁵ Hozaka II, 535.

businesses, replete with statistical information on the types, number, and incomes of Japanese labor groups in the Pacific Northwest. Embedded in the first chapter is a section devoted to describing the history of the Japanese laundry business in Northern California.

The cat explains that when Japanese people entered the laundry business there were two kinds of laundry services available, the first run by Chinese immigrants—who did all the work by hand and charged very little—whose work was “sloppy and limited,” and the second run by Caucasians, who charged more but whose work was better due to their steam-powered washing machines. A man called Tsukamoto, aiming for success in the latter type of business, acquired a steam-powered machine but was unable to get a permit from the city to operate it. Rival business owners in the neighborhood began a campaign against Tsukamoto claiming that he was insufficiently trained in operating the equipment and his business posed a danger to the community, although, as the narrator points out, he once worked for a steamship company based in Hokkaido and was familiar with the technology. “Although to this day Tsukamoto’s business does not use steam machines,” the cat tells us, “it has grown into a \$50,000 corporation with more than forty employees.” The process by which Tsukamoto reached his successful position, however, comprises the crux of the story. As the cat tells us, “I would like to tell this story because the historic and tragic event wonderfully displays the pride and honor of Japanese men (*Nihondanshi*).”

When the anti-Japanese people in the neighborhood saw that Tsukamoto was denied the permit that he worked so hard to obtain, they triumphantly stuck up their noses as if to say, “That will teach him the power of US citizens!” And the white laundry owners were ecstatic that their devious plan had succeeded. The next day, however, the sound of steam engines pulsed through the neighborhood, and steam rising with life could be seen coming from the chimney of the Sunset City Cleaners. Shocked, the group of anti-Japanese called the police. The police carriage rushed to the cleaners, immediately arrested all sixteen workers and

carted them off to jail. Sadly, the sound of the steam-powered washing machines ground to a halt. The anti-Japanese crowd stood and watched, sticking out their long, red tongues. Tsukamoto, however, expected as much and made no commotion at all. He simply paid the bail and went home. The next day, as if announcing to the world that they feared nothing, the steam-powered machines started up again, their hum reverberating throughout the neighborhood. Again a call to the police was made, and again Tsukamoto and his workers were arrested. The process continued for four days. On the last day, with the aid of a lawyer, only Tsukamoto himself was arrested, and he began to prepare a lawsuit against the city. After three long years progress on the lawsuit was slow, and in the meantime Tsukamoto was repeatedly arrested, thrown in jail, released, arrested, and thrown in jail for a total of fifty-three times. Tsukamoto was, however, unrelenting. In the icy air of his prison cell he forced his pencil forward. He wrote a letter to encourage his employees. "It would be easy to simply close our business," the letter stated, "but never mind what I have lost. If we succumb to such obstacles the anti-Japanese will think that they have won, our fellow countrymen will be disgraced and our futures will be sealed. I beg you to fight for the honor of our fellow Japanese men!" Tsukamoto's sixteen employees wept as they read the letter. Under such a brave and courageous leader there was not one weak soldier. The men pledged to fight with Tsukamoto to the bitter end. You see, a large amount of capital had been fixed for purchasing the land and the equipment, but because of fluctuations in the business, with its starting, stopping, starting, and stopping again, it did not make as much money as expected. In the meantime, costs related to the lawsuit began to pile up. And bail money had become a huge liability. The sixteen employees gathered to discuss the situation. The men decided to forego their salaries for three years. They told Tsukamoto to use the money to cover the legal costs for the period. Are these not the actions of truly honorable Japanese men? But the reality was that they had to continue the business somehow. So they replaced the steam machines with more expensive electric ones. This was just about the time I was living near the yellow-light district...³⁶

On April 11, the Great San Francisco Earthquake shocked the world. Fire burned most of the city. Fortunately, the neighborhood of the Sunset City Cleaners survived the flames. Because the water main was broken, the city's primary problem was obtaining enough drinking water. Water from every well in the city was pumped out. The Sunset City Cleaners, however, had its own well, and, in their time of need, the workers pumped and distributed water to the white people in the neighborhood. The red tongues of those anti-Japanese people had burned black with thirst. How delicious the water distributed by the pure hearts of Japanese men must have tasted! And the people quickly asked the Sunset City employees to use their steam engines to pump the water out faster. Thus the steam engines previously deemed dangerous in the hands of Tsukamoto were now being called upon to save their lives. This is how the steam engines that had been out of

³⁶ The yellow-light district to which the narrator is referring is a section near a stoplight in Chinatown where he lived for a short while when he first arrived in San Francisco.

use for several years began to vigorously buzz again. Mr. Tsukamoto immediately used the opportunity to apply for a city permit to use the steam engines. The city issued it right away. By chance, the Great San Francisco Earthquake had taken the side of justice with Mr. Tsukamoto. What a happy ending it would have made if this incident had resolved the problem at the Sunset City Cleaners forever! But, alas, this was not the case. It must be human nature for men to immediately forget a favor after they have received it. All the more so when the favor is cold water. As order in the city of San Francisco was restored, the anti-Japanese opposition to Tsukamoto's steam-powered machines rose once again. The city retracted the temporary permit it had issued, and Mr. Tsukamoto once again was unable to use his steam engine. To this day the Sunset City Cleaners uses electric machines, which cost a lot. Of course Mr. Tsukamoto's struggle is just one minor example of the kinds of things that happen to Japanese businessmen here. However, I have made special mention of it because it so thoroughly illustrates the persistence of white, anti-Japanese oppression in San Francisco. Does not Mr. Tsukamoto's hard-fought battle and his employees' loyal participation have the potential to make future Japanese workers stand up to racial discrimination?³⁷

By structuring the story as a drama with a clear moral polarity—evil, white laundry owners versus virtuous Japanese laundry workers—Tsukamoto's story becomes a kind of samurai tale transplanted to the world of Japanese cleaners. Valorizing Tsukamoto and his employees' indefatigable determination, perseverance, and loyalty, the point of the story, as the narrator tells us, is to inspire the “cowardly” among Japanese residents to putting their inherent Japanese spirit to use in resisting white oppression. Not doing so, furthermore, results in personal defeat and in dishonoring all Japanese men. The theatrical storyline and hyperbolic style of narration portrays two racialized groups locked in a battle of good and evil not only with Tsukamoto's name but the honor of the entire Japanese race at stake. The hyperbolic troping of the position of Japanese men in the United States as engaged in a kind of racial war against inherently evil Caucasians who flaunt their privileges as US citizens seems, to this contemporary reader, a little over the top. The moral core of the story, however, may have resonated with readers who were

³⁷ Hozaka II, 430-431.

victims of intense racial discrimination and oppression at the time. The choice that Hozaka puts to this audience through the Tsukamoto story is clear: give up and dishonor Japan, or fight to the end.

Although the narrating cat warns the audience against expecting too “literary” of a text, Hozaka has clearly worked to shape it into a literary entity. Although the cat’s narrative position is unstable at times, the heterogeneous structure of the novel—one of stories, political essays and reports—is given unity by the voice of the cat and a loose plot that follows his movements in and around San Francisco’s Japantown. And although the cat’s intonations do not demonstrate, as Hozaka has remarked, a “free and easy” style, readers may have enjoyed the spirited tales of honor and loyalty superimposed onto the Japanese community. Or perhaps they identified with tales of its pain and struggle.

The Spirit of the Japanese Family

Whether laid out in the form of a story or a discursive lecture, and despite unevenness and inconsistency in narrative form, Hozaka’s core ideological position vis-à-vis the local community and the Japanese state is consistent from the preface to the very last chapter. As the Tsukamoto story shows, attempts to create unity between the communities in Japan and the United States hinge on conflating the categories of race and nation and fostering a unified sense of Japanese national identity. One of the ways this idea manifests in the text is through stories, like the Tsukamoto tale above, that emphasize essential Japanese character traits, namely *Yamato damashii*.

Another unifying strategy that Hozaka employs involves the trope of the family. Although separated by an ocean, members of a family are bonded by blood and are thus

expected to mine opportunities in both countries in ways that benefit its branches on both sides of the ocean. These two approaches are brought together in the portrait of a model immigrant family—with extended family in Japan who figure into the novel—whose members embody all of the elements of an essentialized Japanese character necessary to succeed in America. In describing the family at the center of the novel, a strong class dynamic also emerges in which the people possessing “ideal” characteristics also come from educated families with money and status in Japan. In this way a tension arises between Hozaka’s rhetoric of the “ordinary” citizen in the preface and the exceptional people who populate his novel.

From early on we can see that the narrator-cat strives to project the image of a hard-working, honorable and loyal Japanese population to its audiences in the U.S. and Japan. Furthermore, the idea that migration and separation creates conditions where a diasporic group can surpass its Japanese compatriots in national sentiment is put forth in examples like Tsukamoto and in descriptions of the community’s participation in events like the Emperor’s birthday and the Japanese naval ship visit. Although the first time we encounter the term *Yamato damashii* is in Chapter 12 (“Chinese Gambling”), the importance of a certain quality of spirit is introduced in the very first chapter. As quoted at the outset of this chapter, the cat tells us that the ship sailing to San Francisco was full of people endowed with a “spirit of success.” Throughout the novel the cat exhibits a strong moral judgment that praises characters displaying determination and perseverance, while chastising those who do not. In the following passage the cat has wandered into a

Chinese gambling hall in San Francisco, where he watches two Japanese men lose twenty-five dollars between them.

How unfortunate that the first Japanese people I met, and the first time I heard the Japanese language spoken in America, was in a Chinese gambling hall. Being a cat born and raised in Japan, I couldn't help but lament this occasion. Although I only actually met these two men, there are many others like them, or so I've heard. In America money doesn't just grow on trees. Twenty-five dollars is the result of hours and hours of sweat. I didn't know there were Japanese men who could lose all their money in one night in a Chinese gambling hall. Even though back in Japan they say, "We are the only beings endowed with the Japanese spirit (*Yamato damashii*)," on an individual level they have no self-discipline. Step outside of Japan and the spirit just fizzles away, and men lose all of their money to Chinese gambling. Those two fellows were young and educated, too. This is really a shame... I beg them to muster up some of that genuine Japanese spirit.³⁸

The cat then vows to follow only those men possessing "genuine" Japanese spirit. He also explains that every country has its "bad" citizens, and that the two men were simply two bad seeds (natural products of a growing Japanese population) that "shed their *Yamato damashii* like an old skin." In an effort to cast *Yamato damashii* as an essential attribute, the cat views objectionable behavior as an aberrant subject's decision to cast off his inherent spirit. The last few lines of the passage are important as well, because they show that the situation is made worse by the fact that the men are young and educated, suggesting that it is less likely and therefore more surprising that they have succumbed to wayward behavior. The cat suggests that they *especially* should know better.

In Chapter 74, through a conversation that takes place between one of the cat's former masters, a doctor, and his friend, we get a fuller picture of the background and circumstances surrounding Kunino,³⁹ the primary embodiment of *Yamato damashii* at the center of Hozaka's novel. Kunino's background is paraphrased in a conversation in which the "problem" of Japanese immigrant women in the United States emerges. We

³⁸ Hozaka I, 107-108.

³⁹ Appropriately, Kunino's name incorporates the graphs for "country" (kuni) and "field" (no).

learn that Kunino came from a Nagano samurai household with substantial land holdings and that he had a famous father who “made it all the way to the prefectural assembly.” Arriving in the U.S. some six years before the cat in hopes of launching a large-scale farming venture, Kunino and his brother had a substantial amount of capital with which to start. When a massive flood destroyed the farm, the brothers sold the land, and, using more of their inheritance, moved to San Francisco. The younger brother started a laundry business and the older started buying and selling fruit. Both businesses were thriving until the great San Francisco Earthquake wiped them both out. Since neither brother was insured, the earthquake left them with about \$300 in savings. The younger brother rebuilt his laundry business and Kunino opened a shoe repair store. Although the shoe business is thriving, Kunino’s aspirations go much further than small business. He plans to use the capital generated by the shoe store to do something “bigger and better” in the future. Despite natural disaster and racial discrimination at the hand of white Americans, Kunino is able to pull himself up by his own bootstraps and achieve a measure of success for himself and his family in the United States, embodying an ideal combination of the “spirit of success” and *Yamato damashii*.

Perhaps more important than Kunino’s individual success, however, is his ability to support his extended family in Japan, including his aging father and younger brother. We learn that Kunino’s third business venture had been successful enough to allow remittances home, which will be used to send his youngest brother, Shunzô, through naval college. Kunino thus serves as a fictional manifestation of ideas put forth in other more expository sections of the novel suggesting the ways in which the Japanese settlement contributes positively to the development of the Japanese nation. What could

be a more ideal example than a Japanese immigrant using earnings from abroad to support the military career of his youngest brother in the homeland? Moreover, it is probably no coincidence that Kunino comes from a family of wealth and status in Japan. The text mentions that Kunino drew on his Japanese inheritance for the initial outlay of capital for the large-scale farming venture and once again when it was destroyed in the flood. It was his status as the eldest son of a wealthy samurai family with substantial land holdings that enabled him to “strive for success” in a business venture abroad.

As Kunino’s story continues we learn that he was not alone in his ventures abroad, and that men were not the only Japanese people endowed with *Yamato damashii*. In order for immigrant men to succeed, they needed the support of a loyal immigrant family. The successful portrayal of a happy, healthy immigrant household—one that would inspire readers in the U.S. and foster admiration from those in Japan—also required a virtuous and supportive wife. In a continuation of the conversation between the doctor and his friend, the subject of Kunino’s wife comes up:

Well, there is one example that I can think of—an ideal wife. Yes. She is an example of the ideal immigrant wife (*shokumin fujin*). You see, when Kunino was having trouble after the San Francisco earthquake, they were left with little money. His second child had just been born, so Kunino suggested to his wife that she take the children back to Japan. But she would not hear of it. “Women are not so weak that they pack up and leave their husbands in the face of a little hardship,” she said “The children and I will stay here and support you. I will raise the children without help and take in needlework as a side job. It’s going to take a tremendous effort, but the shop is doing well. You’re able to lend money to your brother for his laundry business, you’ve invited you father here from Japan for a visit, and you are building a fine, happy family. In addition, you are sending money home to Japan to pay for your brother’s naval school fees. Sooner than not you will begin another great venture.”

Yes, Kunino’s wife is a big reason for his success.⁴⁰

The ideas presented in the story of Kunino and his wife reflect a constellation of

⁴⁰ Hozaka II, 288.

ideological discourses surrounding the family and women, which Japanese people carried with them when they migrated overseas. Researchers of women in Japanese American history have shown that *ryôσαι kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) was one of the most influential gender discourses for Japanese immigrant women in the U.S.⁴¹ Promoted in Japan since the late nineteenth century, the idea of *ryôσαι kenbo* was closely linked to both contemporary Western gender discourses and so-called “traditional” Japanese gender discourses, which were mainly associated with the samurai class. Within discussions of *ryôσαι kenbo* in Japan, there existed the fundamental assumption that “excellent” mothers would bear, raise and educate “excellent” children, and that this would contribute to the development of the patriarchal family system and the nation as a whole.⁴²

Related to *ryôσαι kenbo* and manifested in Kunino’s story is the concept of a happy “home,” another popular thread of discourse that circulated during the late Meiji period. According to Shizuko Koyama, between the 1880s and the 1890s gender discourses related to “home” coalesced around three important ideas: the emotional unity of a family; gender division in social and economic roles; and the idea that children, as people special to and different from adults, required love and education from adults, mainly from the mother. Furthermore, the wife and mother’s domain was limited to the home.⁴³ As a woman devoted to keeping the family together by raising the children “herself” and taking in piecemeal, Kunio’s wife could not be a better embodiment of *ryôσαι kenbo*, or a better protector of the all-important “home.” In addition, the image of the “home” itself

⁴¹ Ichioka (1980), 349; also see Shiori Nomura “The voices of women on birth control and childcare: a Japanese immigrant newspaper in the early twentieth-century USA,” in *Japan Forum* 21.2 (2009): 255-264.

⁴² Koyama Shizuko, *Ryôsaikenbo to iu kihan*, (Tokyo: Keisô shobô, 1991), 93.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 98.

was an ideological construct built upon the idealization of the conjugal couple.⁴⁴ In this respect, the wife's determination to stay with her husband reflects an internalizing of Meiji values, and confirms her role as an ideal wife. However, the fact that Kunino's wife is a woman with substantial education (*zuibun gakumon ari*) and status (*mibun aru*), as is Kunino himself, points to a model family whose degree of "Japanese spirit" seems to be in proportion with status position.

Finally, to complete the image of the happy home we must address the situation of the children. "Excellent" children raised by "excellent" mothers in America had a special role to play in the idealized immigrant family because they would have political rights as American citizens. As Kunino himself states in Chapter 36, "Beautiful Home,"

I am not planning to be a shoemaker forever. I am going to save some money and then move on to a bigger venture. In the meantime Tarô will become an adult, and he will have the right to vote, which is a great thing. Our generation has no rights as citizens and so it's very difficult to get ahead. But when Tarô grows up he will have all the rights of a citizen. He will be able to do the things that we cannot right now. I want him to be able to hold his head up high wherever he goes in the world. To this end I insist on a good education for him, and I will work to support him the best that I can.⁴⁵

Kunino's plan for success thus includes expanding the potential for success to his children, who will have the benefit of rights as US citizens. Although Kunino looks forward to the day that his son can exercise his rights as an American citizen, he is equally concerned with instilling in him a set of moral values that he regarded as authentically "Japanese." Taking his son to events like the Emperor's birthday celebration and to watch the Japanese navel ships in San Francisco Bay, Kunino makes an effort to maintain his son's sense of self as Japanese so that he can fulfill his generational mission of pursuing a meaningful and successful future. Moreover, the

⁴⁴ Ito, *An Age of Melodrama*, 101.

⁴⁵ Hozaka II, 288-289.

generational mission included continuing the legacy of “striving for success” while representing the racial collectivity of the group.

Bringing it “Home”: From Emigrants to Expansionists

By the end of Hozaka’s novel the trope of the family and its relationship to the nation gets reworked in specific ways to accommodate the Japanese community’s shifting status from temporary to permanent U.S. residents. As I mentioned in the discussion of the preface, the kinship ties emphasized at the personal level between Hozaka and his parents eventually expand into a metaphorical configuration whereby the Japanese state plays the role of imaginary parent and the U.S. Japanese residents its children. This was not entirely an original idea. It was Hozaka’s variation on Meiji ideological currents linking family and nation that located the Emperor as parent and the people as children. The idea of the family state (*kazoku kokka*) is articulated most clearly in the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890, which included vague directives regarding filiality towards parents, affection between siblings, and harmony between husbands and wives.⁴⁶ These injunctions were developed more specifically in Tokyo Imperial University Professor Inoue Tetsujirô’s commentary on the document:

A country is an expansion of the family and...for a ruler to direct and command his subjects is not at all different from parents giving compassionate guidance to their children. Thus, now that his majesty, our emperor, speaks to us as his subjects, we his subjects must listen attentively, with the feelings of children towards a strict father or a loving mother.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ito, *An Age of Melodrama*, 27; also see Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 126-128.

⁴⁷ Inoue Tetsujirô, *Chokoku engi* (1891) in *Kyôiku no taikai*, vol. 6 of *Meiji shisô taikai*, ed. Yamazumi Masami (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990), 43 as quoted in Ito, *An Age of Melodrama*, 27.

Using the family-state model as a base, Hozaka reconfigures it by removing the emperor and putting the Japanese state in his place, rendering the Japanese community a group of “children” living outside of the national “home.” The main problem that Hozaka encountered as the clamor for permanent settlement escalated was providing an incentive for state support of a group of people from whom it might be permanently separated, or, in the terminology of the family, parental support for children who had left home and might never return. Hozaka’s logic here, twofold, involves, 1) including the US Japanese settlement as part of “Yamato racial expansion” taking place in other parts of the world and 2) redefining the relations between the parent-state and citizen-child in terms of “detchibôkô,” or an apprenticeship model, whereby the US community could be viewed as children sent out by a large “family” unable to economically accommodate it. Sending the “child” to live and work with another “family” offered a mutually beneficial system whereby the child would be free to pursue a successful future, but also one that left the responsibilities of “compassionate guidance” and filial piety intact.

The first of Hozaka’s two-pronged approach required conflating members of America’s Japanese “colony” with other colonial communities in Asia, such as those in Korea, Manchuria, and Taiwan into a single group of Yamato “peaceful expansionists.”⁴⁸ Hozaka’s theory here is, of course, shot through with contradiction. By equating *imin* (immigrants) and *shokumin* (colonists) Hozaka strips the aggressive and forceful nature of Japanese expansionism of its colonialist implications. He ignores the specific socio-historical conditions of each overseas settlement, and conflates the communities into a group of individuals with “common goals.” Hozaka argues that *imin* and *shokumin* had

⁴⁸ Hozaka’s ideas in this section are presented in Chapters 93-97, “The Expansion of the Yamato Race and America’s Japanese Settlers” (parts 1-5). Long essays appear as speeches read at a conference of young Japanese businessmen in California.

similar aspirations, ambitions, and the same essential pioneering characteristics necessary to succeed in overseas ventures, and therefore should receive equal amounts of state attention and support. Both groups, furthermore, were pushed to migrate by state policies as part of population control initiatives in the early 1900s. Hozaka explains that the key difference between *imin* and *shokumin* involved the latter's acute *awareness* of the nation's mission. *Imin*, he says, lack such awareness. This rational would, of course, allow *imin* to become *shokumin* by simply shifting their mindsets and acquiring knowledge of Japan's mission as an expanding nation. As one of the conference speakers says:

Gentlemen—the future of the Yamato race lies with *imin*. And with *imin* that are self-aware (*jikaku seru*), in other words, with colonists (*shokumin*). America, Mexico, South America, Malay, Manchuria, Korea, Karafuto—in these places the people must have economic stability and political power in order to succeed. If these two things exist then the Yamato race will peacefully expand, and the prosperity of the homeland will be secured. We have come to America to fulfill this mission. Not as temporary sojourners, and not for the purpose to invade. We are pioneers of the world development of the Yamato race and its peaceful expansion.⁴⁹

Although not clearly stated, Hozaka's seems to be drawing from ideas presented in two books that discussed the phenomena of emigration and colonization, Ôkawahira Takamitsu's *Nihon imin ron* (Japanese emigration, 1905) and Tôgô Minoru's *Nihon shokumin ron* (Japanese colonization, 1906). Although the titles point to a bifurcation between the terms *imin* and *shokumin*, both books focused on Japanese expansion as part of a "great phenomenon of modern history," a platitude repeated in Hozaka's five chapters on Japanese expansion. Expansion, the books note, need not entail forceful seizure of other lands, but simply aimed at "seeking such areas as our people can engage

⁴⁹ Hozaka II, 430-431.

in legitimate labor and such conditions as they can develop their potentialities to the fullest.”⁵⁰ Hozaka clearly subscribed to the idea of “peaceful expansionism,” and viewed the American West as a territory open to this Japanese–style manifest destiny.

In order to replace the image of *imin* with *shokumin* for a Japan-based audience, however, Hozaka first had to break down the rampant biases associated with the word *imin*. Reflecting the elite disdain for common laborers, the term *imin* connoted to the public someone without education, manners, and without trace of national consciousness.⁵¹ In the following passage Hozaka tries to combat this image by replacing it with that of a productive group possessing a strong sense of national identity able to contribute in concrete ways to the development of the nation.

The term *imin* does not connote the weak-willed who have been pushed by difficult lifestyles to work abroad. We are a population of expansionists... If you come to the Pacific Coast of the United States and see the actual results of Japanese development here you will be able to argue for a new definition (*shin igi*) of the word *imin*. By no means are *imin* a group of poor commoners (*jinmin*). We possess land, open stores, eat the best imported rice from Japan, use the best soy sauce, drink wine, and tire of meat and fish. We are not ignorant, meek, temporary laborers. We have our own newspapers and magazines, we have established our own public organizations, schools, philanthropic organizations, and have the same occupations as Americans. We live with the same civilized conveniences. *Imin* are not an unpatriotic (*hi aikoku*), lost group of discarded people (*kimin*) that have no value (*rieki*) to the motherland (*bokoku*). We contributed to the Russo-Japanese War by sending money and supplies to the troops, and we have not neglected our country in times of flood and natural disaster. We are a group that adheres to the ways of our home country, and therefore do not have the power to assimilate (*dôkateki nôryoku naku*), and for this reason we are excluded by the people here. We are not a national disgrace.⁵²

In order to redefine the term *imin*, Hozaka attempts to prove the status and value of the American settlement by underscoring its “civilized” characteristics. *Imin*, he says, live with the same modern “civilized” conveniences of Americans, yet as Japanese people

⁵⁰Both Ôkawahira’s and Tôgô’s books are discussed in Akira Iriye (1972), 131-132.

⁵¹ Azuma, 99.

⁵² Hozaka II, 426.

they are inherently unable to assimilate with them. Japanese “expansionists” of the Pacific Northwest import and enjoy the best of Japanese rice and soy sauce, and even have enough money left over to send back to Japan in times of need. Thus Hozaka enforces the image of a population of inherently “Japanese” people pursuing “civilized” lifestyles abroad but simultaneously committed to the expansion and advancement of the homeland.

The second strategy Hozaka uses to offset the sense of increasing distance between the communities in Japan and the U. S. involves using the analogy of “*detchibôkô*,” or the practice of apprenticeship. The deployment of this term reflects a variation on Hozaka’s parent-nation/citizen-child paradigm that was being threatened by the prospect of permanent settlement. Hozaka explains the analogy in this way:

When a household’s (*ie*) economic conditions and productivity are not enough to support the child, his staying will only end up costing them and he will be of no use. That is why parents send their dear children out to another house as apprentices. This is a method that benefits all parties involved. If a family tries to support too many children who cannot be of use them because they are poor, the children will not get fed nor receive an education. As a result, the child may go down the wrong path and may very well end up in a station worse than his parents. However, the child you send out as an apprentice will not only grow up without worrying about putting food on the table or a roof over his head, he will also be trained in a profession before he reaches adulthood. Also, the profession will inspire and motivate him, and in the end he may come to lead a life several stations above his parents. There are many examples like this in society. If the choice is between keeping the child in a life of poverty without prospects for advancement or giving him the chance to learn a profession and the opportunity to rise in the world, anyone would know that the latter is better for both the parents and for the child. And if the child successfully rises in the world, it may help the original family as well. If you compare a nation to a family, *imin* are apprentices.⁵³

We can see here how Hozaka uses the *detchibôkô* model to resolve the problem of a diasporic community permanently cut off from its “parent” nation. His construct enables

⁵³ Ibid., 428.

the parent-child relationship between the Japanese state and the Japanese American community, one that continues to require loyalty and filial piety, to remain intact despite permanent separation. Hozaka also works the historical conditions of population growth and economic hardship into his new family configuration by saying that “too many children” put a strain on the “economic conditions” at home. No longer able to support the children, parents have to send them out to obtain an education or learn a profession. Moreover, the model that Hozaka puts forth encompasses the idea of striving for success, which provides the foundation for the entire structure. The quest for success is the driving force behind the “parents” decision to send their children away, and it provides the “child” with inspiration and motivation.

By rewriting the family-state model to suit the specific situation of the American Japanese community, and by elevating the imaginary status of *imin* to “self-aware” *shokumin*, Hozaka could then chastise the Japanese government for its “unnatural” and “unkind” neglect of its overseas children. A paragraph at the end of the five-chapter series entitled “The Expansion of the Yamato Race and America’s Japanese Settlers” alternates the use of “government” (*seifu*) and “parents” (*oya*) as subjects and “citizens” (*kokumin*) and “children” (*ko*) as objects to describe the current relationship between the Japanese state and the US settlement:

No one is unhappier in the world than the children of unhelpful parents. And the Japanese government’s treatment of us citizens is truly unkind. And stupid. As children who have been adopted into another household, are we really that much trouble? They tell us to assimilate on the one hand, and then tell us we are disloyal on the other. What contradictory parents. Hateful parents.⁵⁴

Although by the end of Hozaka’s novel the young Japanese men attending the fictional

⁵⁴ Ibid.

“conference” sound like children in the midst of a temper tantrum, Hozaka has worked hard to adapt Japanese expansionist rational and ideological discourses to encompass the community in America. Hozaka has stripped the expansionist rational of its colonial implications, and has glossed over the specific conditions and power dynamics of each overseas “settlement.” His approach also employs the questionable plan of chastising the Japanese government while simultaneously demanding its assistance and protection.

In the closing passages of the novel Hozaka brings us back to the cat, who, having sat patiently during the multitude of speeches delivered at the “Conference of Japanese Youth” comprising the last few chapters of the book, now files out of hall and out onto the street. He tells us that one of the presenters had written a poem and left it on a table before leaving:

A hundred years from now, they will know that we were here.

Opposite of this last page of the text is an illustration showing the back of the cat standing in front of an inkwell and a pen. The word “Finis” in large calligraphic script appears in the top left corner. The illustration bears the initials K.S., the Japanese American illustrator whose work appears in volume two. While the second volume opens with Hashiguchi’s drawing of the cat seated on a cushion with a cup of tea placed in front of it, as if it is ready to tell us a story, it ends with the image of the cat about to step away from the pen and ink. The visual reference to ink and writing, reflected in both the image of the poem scratched on paper and in the drawing of the cat walking away from his pen, foregrounds written language, moving us away from material presented orally—through the speeches of characters quoted verbatim by the cat—and towards the image of a written

record.

The record that Hozaka has left for us includes, as he outlines in the preface, detailed portraits of Japanese immigrant life, but its essays also reveal self-serving revisions of Meiji ideological discourses to argue for the relevance of a Japanese presence in United States and for continued support from the Japanese state. By positing the expansionist traits of Japanese people, which presumably still remained in their racial blood, Hozaka also extols the empire as a power naturally prepared for colonization. Hozaka's text thus provides us with an extreme view that existed within the Japanese American community, one that is not often the subject of sustained study.

Without the results of more archival research it is difficult to measure the degree to which readers responded to Hozaka's nationalistic work. If the advertisement in the *Nichibei* praising the book for its "fiery passion" and "national sentiment" is any indication, some may have appreciated the fervor of its rhetoric. At the same time, the text also marked the beginnings of a "local" literature in which readers could feel a certain amount of pride. As we will see in the next chapter, writers succeeding Hozaka began to move away from a literature tied so closely to the "homeland" and towards the development of an indigenous Japanese American literature.

In her discussion of Japanese language literature written by Japanese Americans in the 1930s, Junko Kobayashi asserts that literature written in the Japanese vernacular, a genre closed off to American readers, provided a liberating space where writers were "free to express stories and feelings of loss, anxiety and failure."⁵⁵ Such statements point to a Japanese readership in the United States that was gradually closed off from a larger

⁵⁵ Junko Kobayashi, "Bitter Sweet Home: Celebration of Biculturalism in Japanese Language Japanese American Literature, 1936-1953" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 2005).

community of readers in Japan, or at least one less concerned with improving its image to the people there. What happened between the 1910s—when Hozaka’s novel was expressing passion for the homeland, Japanese expansionism, and success—and the 1930s? The work of Okina Kyûin provides some possible answers. The next chapter investigates Okina’s literary theories and his push for a “settlement literature” that reflected “authentic” (*sono mama*) immigrant life, but also one that problematized identities based solely on the nation, which he ultimately found unsatisfying. Although at times incorporating ideological reasoning resembling Hozaka’s in *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika*, Okina’s work shows an attempt at an alternative mode of diasporic life free from the restrictive bonds of the nation.

CHAPTER 2

Mapping Japanese Diasporic Identity: Okina Kyûin's "Immigrant Land Literature," 1907-1919

In 1924 Okina Kyûin (1888-1974) wrote the following on a ship bound for Japan:

“Going home, going home, home to Japan, to Tokyo, to my birthplace, to me...”

I think it was Shibukawa Genji who sang this song on one of his journeys. I am going home. Where? To my homeland? To my home country! To the Fatherland... Here, in the middle of the Pacific, surrounded by nothing but sea and sky, I want to shout until my throat goes dry, “I am going home!”

The city of San Francisco floats up in my mind, iridescent in the afternoon sun. There, five hundred thousand people are working, struggling, breathing. While they struggle for survival, I move further and further away...

My young son prattles away, “Going home. Going home. Going home.”

“Papa, where are we going?”

“To Japan! To Japan!” (ジャパンへ！ジャパンへ！)

“Where’s Japan?”

“Beyond the sea.”

“Beyond the sea? Where’s that?”

Then again, am I really *returning*? Returning means there is a home to return *to*. Where is my homeland? ... Is it the country that has housed me over the past seventeen years? Or is it the mountain village where I grew up? Leaving my son’s homeland behind I now head towards my birthplace and the place where I will grow old. Am I the I that is returning home? No. I am merely *going*. Taking a trip. Like the poet from the West who said “I am going for the sake of going,” I am also going for the sake of going...

“Why are you going?” you ask. That is a long story... It’s about my aging father

For me there is no land—no country—to which to return. That is, there is a place where I am headed, but I could be going anywhere. But I cannot be *returning* anywhere. Without a homeland there is nowhere to return...

People say to me, “You say you have no homeland—how strange.” But I, myself, am a homeland...I carry it on my back.¹

The essay from which this excerpt is taken, *Sokoku ni kaeru ki* (A record on returning to my home country), was published twice, once shortly after it was written in the San Francisco-based *Nichibei* newspaper, and again four years later in a collection of essays, *Kosumoporitan wa kataru* (A cosmopolitan speaks). The text, written aboard ship during Okina’s final trans-Pacific journey from San Francisco to Japan, records the writer’s thoughts as the ship sails to its first stop in Hawaii. Once the ship docked in Honolulu, Okina immediately sent the manuscript back to the offices of the *Nichibei* newspaper in San Francisco, where he had worked as a journalist and editor for many years. This journey was not the first trip back to Japan that Okina had taken since first arriving in Seattle as a young man in 1907. Okina had, in fact, traveled back to Japan two other times in the seventeen years he lived in the United States. His writing also flowed back and forth across the Pacific; fiction published in Japanese vernacular newspapers in the U.S. were sent to Tokyo-centered literary journals—and those same literary journals were shipped to Japanese booksellers located up and down the West Coast. Besides the major publishing hub of Tokyo, Okina sent stories and essays to Toyama prefecture, his birthplace, where they were regularly published in the local newspaper, the *Hokuriku Taimuzu*. The transnational nature of publishing venues and circulation trends for Okina’s work points to an experience susceptible to social and structural networks in both the

¹ Okina Kyūin, *Kosumoporitan wa kataru* (Tokyo: Shueikaku, 1928), 244.

home and host countries. Furthermore, Okina's writings make clear that he had a dual and even triple audience in mind for his publications: fellow members of the immigrant community in the United States, the Japanese literary *bundan* (establishment) centered in Tokyo, and finally the people "back home" in Toyama. The circuitous routes traveled by both Okina and his writing point at once to non-linear paths of migration in general, and also to a variegated immigrant experience. Indeed, Okina was no ordinary immigrant, and for him migration to America was not a one-way trip.

The dialectic between the notion of a fixed homeland, and by extension a fixed national identity, and the more realistic, fluid nature of diasporic life becomes a central theme in many of Okina's writings. In his critical essays on literature Okina advocates for the creation of a place-based literature that embraces the heterogeneity and multiplicity of immigrant life, while at the same time grounding it in a specific geographical area. By multiplicity I mean immigrant experience shaped by multiple networks of social and power relations and immigrant identities defined, as Stuart Hall has said, "not by essence of purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity, a conception of identity which lives in and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity."²

In the long passage above, Okina's anxiety about national and cultural identity exposes a critical site of difference. For Okina there is the "I" that left Japan half a lifetime ago, and the "I" that is returning, a bifurcation highlighting a psychological journey through the discursive spaces of homeland, nationality, memory, and a struggle to establish "home" for someone who has lived more than half of his life in the United States. Okina anticipates a rupture between the Japan that he knew as a young man and

² Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in *Theorizing Diaspora*, Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannured, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 244.

the Japan to which he is returning. The “home” of Okina’s childhood—a homeland both produced and reified by feelings of attachment, nostalgia and memory—no longer exists. In fact new feelings of attachment are directed back to the port of San Francisco and to the five hundred thousand people who remain working there. Later in the article Okina identifies this difference in his conversations with other passengers. They—as the Shibukawa song lyrics suggest—are traveling back to the fatherland, to their birthplaces, to home, to *themselves*. Okina, however, is uncomfortable with the fatherland-equals-self formula, and uses the act of writing to register the struggle. For Okina recording the disorientating effects of life abroad was a way to imaginatively reintegrate himself into the environment—to map Japanese diasporic identity.

Arising from the confusion and anxiety concerning homeland and national identity is the related issue of linguistic difference. Writing about the physical journey requires choosing appropriate language to describe the movement across the Pacific. Is Okina “returning” (*kaeru*) to Japan, or simply “going” (*yuku*) there? In addition, generational difference stretched across time and space is embodied in the parallel voyage of Okina’s young American-born son, and the fact that Okina is traveling toward Japan, where his aging father had few years left to live. The son, who has acquired the nickname “Little Genghis Khan,” possesses American citizenship, speaks English as a native language, and has never been to Japan. Okina notes with embarrassment the moniker the other passengers have given his son, who ran wild on the ship deck, disturbing the other travelers and ignoring the ship’s crew. “The others,” Okina writes, “must think he is truly a child raised in America.” How will he manage in Japan? The idea of returning immigrants referring to the young boy as “Genghis Khan” suggests an

internalization of American representations of Asian barbarism. If the boy were not Asian, would they have used the same term? Yet Okina's response incorporates a similar stereotype. The boy's wild behavior suggests an *American* upbringing, reflecting, perhaps, a return to Japanese caricatures of Western barbarism. Generational and linguistic difference come together when Okina uses the *katakana* version of "Japan" to answer his son's question, "Where are we going... To Japan!"

(ジャパンへ！ ジャパンへ！). Okina's use of the transliterated form of the English "Japan" is striking. For Japanese readers it must have been odd to see the name for the nation usually rendered in familiar Chinese characters transformed into a foreign language. For Okina's son, however, it was only natural since in his realm of experience "Japan" was the land of his father's birth.

That the issues of homeland, national identity, and directionality emerge while aboard a ship seems somehow appropriate, for the open sea offers a borderless space where national boundaries and territories seem to flow into one another and disappear. For Okina the sea also offers time and an imaginary space where he envisions a life unrestricted by national borders and territory—a space where one's homeland can be carried on one's back. Interestingly and appropriately the end of the essay—and the journey—is not Japan but Hawaii, an alternative location that breaks the cycle of binaries and polarized thinking that prevails throughout the essay. For Okina everything has revolved around two mutually exclusive territories—Japan and America—and the alternate identities available to those unable to decide on either as "home." In the end the body itself becomes a homeland—a tiny island floating in an extensive Pacific border between Japan and America. Imagining the body itself as homeland signifies the

portability of home, and the imaginative strategies employed to manage the fragmented subjectivities characteristic of people living in the interstices of two cultures.

The experience of diaspora clearly complicates the terms and practices of belonging. Okina “belongs” neither to the land of his father, nor entirely to the land of his son. However, these conditions also bring with them the possibility of belonging to multiple, overlapping and sometimes opposing cross-cultural affiliations and ties. In other words, while the conditions of being located at the intersection or border between different nation-states suggest marginality, difference, and lack of belonging, they also hold out the possibility of creativity, innovation and imaginative engagement. Okina’s essay embodies one area in which this imaginative engagement manifests itself, that is, in the cultural practices of those who have experienced it. This chapter will illuminate Okina’s struggle with national and cultural identity through an investigation of his writings on literature, specifically on his conceptualization of *iminchi bungei* (immigrant land literature).³

Any diasporic community and the cultural products that emerge from it are historically situated and culturally mediated, and therefore I investigate Okina’s *iminchi bungei* with respect to the socio-historical context in which it emerged. Attention to context is extremely important here because Okina’s vision of a place-based literature and its ideological underpinnings often shifted in relation to the volatile socio-historical and even legal contexts that shaped early Japanese immigrant thought and cultural production. *Iminchi bungei*, or rather the development of *iminchi bungei*, was an ongoing process that changed over time and was sensitive to socio-political shifts and ruptures.

³ From this point I will refer to Okina’s “immigrant land literature” in the Japanese vernacular, *iminchi bungei*.

This chapter reviews ten years of *iminchi bungei* discourse, focusing on the three most important sets of articles published in the Japanese immigrant press. The first set, “Iminchi bungei no shimei” (The mission of immigrant land literature, 1916) and the second, “Iminchi bungei to imin no seikatsu” (Immigrant land literature and immigrant daily life, 1917) eventually crystallized into the third and most politically charged of the three, “Iminchi bungei no sengen” (A declaration of immigrant land literature, 1919). My discussion will focus most heavily on “Sengen,” the third in the *iminchi bungei* series. This last piece encapsulates the major concerns of the first two sets of articles while illuminating a more complex nexus of related issues concerning the Japanese community. An investigation of immigrant land literature also explores the possibility of a diasporic identity, which challenges accepted teleological concepts of immigration based on an arrival-acculturation-assimilation model. And finally, probing *iminchi bungei* discourse reveals Okina’s fascinating views on the function and meaning of literature in immigrant society, as well as his evaluation and aspirations for the position of Japanese immigrants vis à vis modern Japan, American society, and even the world at large.

I use the term “immigrant community” to refer to the Japanese resident community because it has historically been referred to as such, although I believe these immigrant communities to be diasporic in nature. I concur with Lok C. D. Siu, who argues that being diasporic not only involves sustained relationships with different places at once, it also includes “an ongoing formation of a consciousness, a positioning, a subjective expression of living at the intersection of different cultural-national formations.”⁴ Thus an investigation of *iminchi bungei* is also, I argue, an investigation of

⁴ Lok C. D. Siu, *Memories of a Future Home: Diasporic Citizenship of Chinese in Panama* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 6.

indigenous Japanese American identity formation. To be more specific, for Okina, writing about the “exceptional” qualities of Japanese American life based on shared history in Japan, the experience of migration, and racial exclusion was a means of promoting and enacting a distinct Japanese American identity.

Identity is, however, a slippery term, carrying with it enough psychological and emotional baggage to obscure the social processes and contingencies involved in its formulation. My discussion of *iminchi bungei* benefits from Stuart Hall’s theory of cultural identities as reflecting a “doubleness” of similarity and difference, a duality framed by two simultaneously operating vectors. While the vector of similarity and continuity is grounded in a shared past, the vector of difference and rupture indexes the discontinuity associated with dispersal and insertion into different locales.⁵ We might think of Japanese immigrant identities in terms of a dialogic relationship between these two axes. A shared history in Japan unifies the community, and yet the process of migration posits a critical difference. As we saw in Chapter One, Hozaka Kiichi’s theories fixate on the vector of similarity, on the possibilities of reunion, without acknowledging the impossibility of return, or the permanence of rupture. Okina acknowledges the discontinuities between the communities living in different nations—they are, to him, *both* the same and different. Unlike Hozaka, Okina wished to exploit and register the differences, discrepancies, and the ruptures, and he called on immigrant writers to do it through literature.

Underlying Hall’s argument is the contention that identity is not a static entity emanating from an essential core, but rather involves “a positioning, a politics of identification.” Okina’s *iminchi bungei* provided a means for immigrant writers to craft

⁵ Hall, 234-236.

group identity from and against racial and other images and discourses in Japanese and American public life, thus becoming a critical site of political conflict and a means of social transformation. As Lisa Lowe has stated in her seminal work on Asian American citizenship, “culture—in the form of stories, memories, icons, or narratives—is the primary terrain on which national belonging is enacted, felt, visualized and challenged.”⁶ The primary terrain on which Okina encouraged Japanese immigrant writers to map their new identities was literature. However, my focus is not simply to illuminate what these identities might be, or to measure their degree of truthfulness. My arguments assign equal importance to the style in which they are imagined.⁷

Multiple Beginnings

Born and raised in Toyama prefecture, Okina was the second son of Okina Genshi, a practitioner of Chinese medicine. Genshi was a firm believer in his children’s education and from a young age Okina was trained in the Chinese and Japanese classics. He excelled in school and was eventually accepted into Toyama’s best middle school, but participation in a school prank resulted in his expulsion in 1905 at the age of seventeen. In March of the same year Okina moved to Tokyo to attend the Junten Middle School, a private cram school run by a former Toyama resident and friend of Okina’s father. In 1906, embarrassed about failing the entrance exam to a private high school, Okina decided to pursue his education in America.⁸

⁶ Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Practices* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 2.

⁷ My phrasing here draws from the title of Benedict Anderson’s well-known book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

⁸ For information on Okina’s background I rely on three sources: *Okina Kyūin Zenshū* (The Collected Works of Okina Kyūin) (Toyama: Okina Kyūin Zenshū Kankōkai, 1971-1973), Volume 10, “Nenpu,” 457-473. Hereafter all references to this source will appear OKZ followed by the volume and page number; also

In 1907 a young Okina Kyūin arrived in Seattle, where he lived for seven years before moving to California for another ten. In Seattle Okina worked as a laborer in a variety of jobs, including a stint as a schoolboy in the rural town of Bremerton, Washington, where he was able to attend an elementary school to learn English. However, as Okina himself has stated, the more he immersed himself in the English language, the more he longed for the language of home.⁹ In his free time he turned to familiar magazines such as *Taiyō*, *Chūō kōron*, *Shinchō*, *Waseda bungaku*, *Bungei kurabu* and *Bunshō sekai*, which he either read in Seattle booksellers, or had delivered to him in more remote locations.¹⁰ While enjoying the familiarity and ease with which he could read and understand these materials, Okina also studied the poetry collections of Byron and Wordsworth, and through recitation tried to understand them as best he could.

In 1909 Okina tried his hand at writing fiction, entered a story in a contest for Seattle's *Asahi shinbun*, and took second place. In the same year he continued to study English at Union High School in Seattle while contributing more and more stories and essays to Japanese vernacular dailies. After a two-month trip back to Japan in 1914, Okina moved to Stockton, California and was eventually invited to work for a publishing company editing two literary magazines. Four years later he began work for the *Nichibei* newspaper as chief editor of its Oakland office. The *Nichibei*, a result of the merger between two smaller papers, the *Sōkō Nihon shinbun* (San Francisco Japan news) and the *Hokubei nippō* (North American daily) was one of two dailies established in the 1890s that eventually became the pillars of the Japanese immigrant press. In the late 1800s its

Itsumi Kumi, *Zaibei jūhachinen no kiseki, Okina Kyūin to imin shakai 1907-1924* (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2002), and *Shin Kannongyō kōwa: Okina Kyūin* (Toyama: Shin Sei Ai Undō Sōsho Kankōkai, 1955).

⁹ *OKZ*, 2:27.

¹⁰ *OKZ*, 2:29.

circulation never reached above the hundreds, but by 1910 the *Nichibei* had become the leading immigrant daily with subscribers throughout California and the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain region.¹¹ Okina remained in Oakland until 1924 when his father became ill and he returned to Japan for good. Okina was able to continue his career as a newspaperman in Japan as a staff writer for the Osaka branch of the *Asahi shinbun* (Asahi Newspaper), and then as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Shûkan asahi shinbun* (Weekly Asahi).

By 1923, a year before he left the United States, Okina had written and published roughly fifty stories and a larger number of essays in the immigrant press, and a book called *Ishokuju* (Transplanted trees, 1923), a collection of 11 of his best stories.¹² Three of the stories in *Ishokuju* were also published in the Japanese journal *Teikoku bungaku* (Empire's Literature).¹³ He also published a number of stories, most of them reprints from Japanese American newspapers, in his hometown newspaper in Toyama, the *Hokuriku taimuzu*. After moving back to Japan for good in 1924, Okina published another book, *Kosumoporitan wa kataru* (A cosmopolitan speaks, 1928), a series of essays based on his life in the United States.¹⁴ During World War II Okina moved back to his hometown in Toyama and became an advocate in the movement for a literature of the “hometown” (*kokyô bungei*). Until his final days he contributed regularly to a local

¹¹ *Beikoku shoki no Nihongo shinbun*, Tamura Norio and Shiramizu Shigehiko, eds. (Tokyo: Keisô Shobô, 1986), 209.

¹² *Ishokuju* was published in Oakland, California, (Ishokujusha, 1923). Okina Kyûin's youngest daughter, a scholar of Yosano Akiko, is currently trying to republish this text in Japan.

¹³ *Teikoku bungaku* (1895-1920) was the organ of Tokyo Imperial University's literature division, and from the start advocated for literature of the people (*kokumin bungaku*), in contrast to other literary journals that prioritized translations of foreign writing. See Kenneth G. Henshall, trans., *Literary Life in Tokyo, 1885-1915: Tayama Katai's Memoirs "Thirty Years in Tokyo"* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 178.

¹⁴ See opening quote and citation.

journal that was devoted to exploring the history and traditions of his hometown. He died in 1973 at the age of 85.

Over the years Okina took full advantage of the publishing opportunities provided by the Japanese print media in large cities like Seattle and San Francisco, but his work reached even greater distances through reprinting, a practice shared by many Japanese vernacular newspapers up and down the West Coast and in Hawaii. Okina was surprised to learn, for example, that in 1911 an article from Hawaii's *Nippu jiji* praised one of Okina's stories that the journalist had read in Los Angeles' *Rafu asahi shinbun*.¹⁵ The Japanese vernacular press provided Okina with a venue to voice his views on immigrant society in general and the role of literature in that society in particular.

Okina first entered the United States after the implementation of the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-1908, which sought to limit Japanese labor migration into the United States.¹⁶ Itsumi Kumi, Okina's youngest daughter and author of the most recent biography of her father, notes some of the details in Okina's acquiring a passport, which involved obtaining letters from teachers attesting to his educational level and confirming his wish to study abroad.¹⁷ Okina had been studying in Tokyo, where many Meiji youths congregated to take advantage of specialized educational and technical facilities, and

¹⁵ Nakagô Fumiko, "'Iminchi bungei' no senkusha Okina Kyûin no sôzaku katsudô: 'Bungakukai' no sôsetsu kara 'Ishokuju' made" *Ritsumeikan gengo bunka kenkyû* 3 (1992): 4.

¹⁶The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-8 was a policy in which the Japanese government pledged to limit passports to non-laborers, "returning" immigrants, and families of those already in the United States. In 1908 Japanese travelers were officially (although the practice of separating passport categories had been going on since before 1908) separated into two passport categories: *hi-imin* (non-immigrant) and *imin* (immigrant). *Hi-imin* was a new term to designate any person who was not a laborer nor intended to engage in labor once in the United States. The label served to differentiate students, professionals, merchants, clerks—people with ostensibly respectable class backgrounds, education, and status. Convinced of the "unassimilability" of the Japanese, American labor unions, interest groups, and politicians feared that the steady influx of Japanese laborers signaled an impending Asian invasion. At the start of the twentieth century, such groups rekindled racial fears that had fueled the earlier exclusion of Chinese immigrants. Pushed by the resounding West Coast cry for Japanese exclusion, President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907 convinced Japanese officials to stop the flow of laborers to the United States. See Ichioka, *The Issei*, 71-72.

¹⁷Itsumi, 87.

where upon graduation they would be eligible for white-collar work commensurate with their educational training. Okina's diaries reveal that he and several friends from Toyama were excited about the prospect of studying in Tokyo where "they could most certainly obtain better positions than if they stayed in the countryside."¹⁸ Okina and his classmates were encouraged by a group of graduates from the same school who had gone to Tokyo, studied hard, graduated from prestigious universities like Waseda and Keiô and obtained good positions as civil servants.¹⁹ The determination to achieve prestigious positions in society reflects the Meiji ideal of *risshin shusse* (striving for success), and the chief means for accomplishing it—higher education. Meiji youths like Okina looked for ways to embark on the practical road to success.²⁰ The road to success for Okina, then, began with migration from Toyama to Tokyo, and eventually from Tokyo to the United States. The process of migration and the educational opportunities that it afforded became a means for self-advancement.²¹ Okina never lost sight of these ambitions and the ultimate goals of success during his time in America. The Meiji ideals of *risshin shusse* and personal responsibility for bettering oneself and one's society are threaded throughout the essays and fiction that he produced there.

Once in the United States, Okina had little choice but to work as a manual laborer until he could learn enough English to obtain a position as a domestic servant, which

¹⁸ *OKZ*, I: 212.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Earl H. Kinmonth's book is probably the best source of information in English on *risshin shusse* and education. See *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: From Samurai to Salary Man* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 44-81.

²¹ From the mid-1890s through the following decade, migration to the United States was promoted as part of the social success boom. The print media exalted the American Dream and mass-produced magazines popularized stories of self-made Americans such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. Because "America" became synonymous with success, many youth projected their own future trajectories onto these role models. See Earl Kinmonth; also Mitsuko Sawada, *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890-1924* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 87-115; and Tachikawa Kenji, "Meiji kôhanki no tobei netsu," *Shinrin* 69 (May 1986): 86-91.

would allow him to study in the afternoons and evenings. Many Japanese migrants seeking personal advancement, unless they were independently wealthy, began their lives in America this way. As a result, class divisions within the Japanese community based on economic status leveled out since most men had little choice but to make a living through manual labor. However, the educational and writing skills that Okina acquired in Japan eventually helped him to obtain a position as reporter and editor for Japanese vernacular newspapers, and also as an officer in the Nihonjinkai (Japan Association), an important administrative body in the Japanese community.²² Attaining these positions of leadership provided Okina with what Bourdieu calls symbolic and cultural capital (i.e. one's educational level, occupational prestige, family pedigree, aesthetic competence, moral authority). In Bourdieu's vocabulary, social identities are rooted in the unconscious habits (or *habitus*) of mind and behavior that emerge with a given combination of economic and cultural capital.²³ It was often this kind of symbolic currency, rather than material wealth, that marked internal status divisions in the Japanese resident community.

Historians of Japanese American history contend that the *issei* embraced and promoted a flexible identity that transcended racial and ethnic boundaries. In his study of the prewar Japanese American community in the United States, historian Eiichiro Azuma has written, "faced with the need to reconcile simultaneous national belongings..., the *issei* refused to make a unilateral choice, selecting instead to take an eclectic approach to the presumed contradiction between things Japanese and American."²⁴ Nowhere is this "eclectic" approach more apparent than in the cultural practices—including the

²² I include a fuller description of the Nihonjinkai in a subsequent section.

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 23.

²⁴ Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

writings—of *issei*, where multiple nationalist arguments and racial ideas clashed, fused and became intertwined. As a result, many *issei* writings reflect a flexible, diasporic identity that is highly situational and elastic in nature, but at the same time confusing and at times outright contradictory.

For Okina, it was in the field of literature that this new, flexible identity began to emerge. While in Seattle, Okina was instrumental in forming a new literary society where specific issues highlighting the problems of multiple national belongings began to surface. The group's inaugural meeting in 1910 drew about fifty men and was the direct result of a formal "call for members," an article written by Okina titled "Bungakukai no sesturitsu ni tsuite" (Regarding the formation of a literature society). Published in Seattle's *Hokubei jiji*, the lengthy article ran in seven parts and began with an assessment of the Seattle area Japanese literary coterie, known at the time as the Seattle *bundan*. Okina referred to this local *bundan*, of which he was a member, as a pessimistic organization that lacked substance, meaning, and cohesion.²⁵ The members of the Seattle *bundan* were men associated with Seattle's publishing scene—editors, reporters and columnists—who had organized small literary study groups around a particular author or literary genre. For example, reading groups formed around prominent Japanese authors such as Ozaki Kôyô, Izumi Kyôka, and Kôda Rohan, and other groups coalesced around reading poetic forms such as *kanshi*, *haiku*, and *senryû*.²⁶

The new group was called simply *Bungakukai* (Society of literature), and its leaders hoped that it would envelope smaller literary groups in the Pacific Northwest as well as in British Columbia. It would be open to a wide range of people as literature

²⁵ *OKZ*, 2:98.

²⁶ *Kanshi* is a Japanese composition of Chinese poetry, and *senryû* a form of short poetry, often expressing humorous observations on human life.

enthusiasts of all authors and genres were welcome to participate. The new group would encourage the free exchange of ideas, and would promote not just reading but also writing literature, thus breathing fresh life into a sluggish, unproductive literary scene.

While Seattle served as the publishing hub for the *Bungakukai*, some members harbored the larger goal of making inroads onto the Tokyo literary scene. In his article “Bungakukai no setsuritsu,” (Establishment of a literary society) the editor of Seattle’s *Asahi shinbun*, Kuwabara Kanpo, states that “members of the Seattle literature association should take hold of other literature groups along the Pacific Northwest Coast and eventually advance onto the Tokyo literary scene.”²⁷ Kuwabara, the publisher of many of Okina’s early stories and essays, was constantly in search of literary talent, people whom he thought could write the Japanese diasporic community on the map. As Kuwabara states, and as Okina demonstrated through active efforts to publish in literary journals in Japan, immigrant writers aimed to participate in the most esteemed of literary “homes,” the venerable Tokyo *bundan*. Still, with these larger goals in mind, the establishment of the new literary society marked the beginning of a new ideological approach to the study and writing of literature for Japanese diasporics, one that exploited the “unique” lives of Japanese people in America. Working towards this goal, these leaders discouraged copying and reprinting texts from Japan, and instead encouraged writing original literature that reflected the unique situation of its constituents. Thus the leaders of the new *Bungakukai* aimed at participating as a contributor to Tokyo’s literary world, but at the same time defined itself against that same literary “center.” In this way the formation of the *Bungakukai* reflects the idea of multiple national belongings and flexible identities; the “unique” experiences of Japanese immigrants would presumably

²⁷ Kuwabara’s comments from the Seattle’s *Ashahi shinbun* are published in *OKZ*, 5:234.

interest fellow Japanese readers at “home.” In fact it would be the critical difference in the place of literary production, a difference exploited in the content of their writings, that gave this diasporic community, it was hoped, symbolic currency in the “homeland.”

The literary ambitions of *Bungakukai* leaders, however, were not always shared by constituents in the Japanese resident community. For some members, perhaps most of the novice writers towards whom the *Bungakukai* leaders’ articles were directed, reading and writing literature served the sole purpose of providing solace for the hardship of laboring in a foreign country.

We suffered a great deal in the immigrant land. To vent our mental frustrations we turned to literature. That is to say, none of us were trained professionals. While picking potatoes in the Yakima River Valley, or washing dishes in some restaurant, we sought to fill a void, so we read voraciously the literary magazines from Japan and imitated the work of then popular Naturalist writers like Tayama Katai and Iwano Hōmei. We tried our hand at writing our own...Some like Okina Kyūin sent stories to *Teikoku bungaku* back home...but for most of us the work was limited to our own narrow world.²⁸

While the initial stages in the development of *iminchi bungei* and the *Bungakukai* were organized around providing a productive outlet for some members while appealing to the ambitions of others, ideological discussions about *iminchi bungei* became increasingly more specific and urgent as the situation for Japanese immigrants in the United States worsened. As the Japanese exclusion movement on the West Coast escalated, the rhetoric of *iminchi bungei* became a tool for improving, reforming, and advancing Japanese immigrant society in the United States.

The Development of Iminchi Bungei

Advances in *iminchi bungei* theory paralleled specific developments in the Japanese

²⁸ Ito Kazuo, *Hokubei Hyakunenzakura* (PMC Shuppan, 1984), 485.

resident community, particularly those surrounding immigrant assimilation and perceptions of the immigrant community held by people back in the “homeland.” The issue of assimilation, or the perceived inability of Japanese people to assimilate into American society, concerned Japanese diplomats, and was regularly reported to the Japanese public. Japanese government officials believed that the “unassimilability” of Japanese immigrants not only tarnished Japan’s growing reputation as a world-class power, but that it was also the driving force behind racial discrimination on the West Coast. Many immigrant leaders shared this view, and were equally concerned that their accomplishments in the United States were being overshadowed in Japan by images of the brutality and coarseness of the immigrant labor experience. Other leaders attributed the assimilation “problem” to excessive media treatment in both the Japanese and American presses that focused on stories of drinking, gambling, prostitution and other “vices” of the working class. Most leaders believed, however, that racial oppression would disappear when the American people became aware of the “true” nature of the Japanese character. Immigrant leaders thus instituted a program along two tracks—assimilation and moral reform—to improve immigrant society and to quell the growing exclusion movement on the West Coast.

In 1911 the Nihonjinkai launched what it called a “campaign of education,” whose purpose was threefold. It aimed to educate the people of Japan about the “real” condition of Japanese immigrants in the United States, to educate Americans about Japan and Japanese people, and to disseminate the idea of permanent settlement. In the same year, the President of the Nihonjinkai, Ushijima Kinji, declared before an audience of *issei* representatives:

Like a bridge between the two countries, we, the Japanese in America, occupy the most important position of being representatives of Japanese national interests. Not only must we refrain from irresponsible and careless behavior, we are also obliged to elevate our individual character and improve the moral fiber of our community. We must endeavor to get [Americans] to recognize that the civilization of our nation is worthy of utmost respect... Regrettably, in spite of recent improvements within our society, many of the backwards customs still stay with us. The most serious ill is the epidemic of gambling that has poisoned our general populace in America. The solution rests with all of us here—our leadership is essential.²⁹

Ushijima's speech shows us that for immigrant leaders moral reform was tied inextricably to Japanese national identity, and that protecting national reputation required controlling the behavior of its diasporic subjects. Moral reforms spearheaded by immigrant leaders also meshed with white Progressive aims at Americanization. Unlike the Progressive goal of severing the immigrant from his/her homeland,³⁰ however, Japanese immigrant reformists aimed at turning laborers into acceptable members of multiple nation-states. Indeed, the brand of assimilation that immigrant leaders advocated never included wholesale adaptation to American society. The vast majority of the immigrant community chose to adopt what was called *gaimenteki dôka*, or "assimilation in outward appearances," which included wearing American-style clothing, following American practices like observing the Sunday Sabbath, and commemorating holidays such as Independence Day and Thanksgiving.

It was during the moral and educational reform campaigns and in an atmosphere of rising anti-Japanese sentiment that Okina first advocated for a "pure" (*jun*) *iminchi bungei*, a literature that wielded the power to reform society, and one that used immigrant daily life (*imin no seikatsu*) as primary material content. Okina believed that the status of

²⁹ *Zaibei Nihonjinkai hôkôkusho* (San Francisco: Zaibei Nihonjinkai, 1909-1918) Volume 3: 2-3, Quoted in Azuma, 47.

³⁰ *American Progressivism: A Reader*, edited and introduced by Ronald J. Pestritto and William J. Atto (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 8.

immigrant life could be raised through artistic depiction. Okina introduced and elaborated on these ideas in two sets of articles, “Iminchi bungei no shimei,” (The mission of immigrant land literature) published in the *Nichibei* in June 1916 and “Iminchi bungei to iminchi no seikatsu,” (Immigrant land literature and immigrant daily life) also published in the *Nichibei* a year later in 1917.

In “Iminchi bungei no shimei,”³¹ the shorter of the two articles, Okina compares the rise of immigrant literature to the blossoming of a flower, and tells potential writers to cast off previous notions of the function and role of literature “like an old hat.”

Although the days when literature was considered a luxury or mere entertainment are long gone, there are still conservative types who cling to these beliefs. Men like these disparage literature by calling it “feeble” and “meaningless.” Refusing to shed their old ways, these men drown in their conservatism, question the meaning of life, and stoop to hedonistic pleasures...

Allow me to conclude by reasserting that literature is no luxury, nor is it entertainment, nor should it be mere imitation. Literature should naturally blossom like a flower from the marrow of life in the land where one lives. Under the influence of this kind of literature, Japanese people will cast off their old beliefs like an old hat, encourage better relations with Americans, and reform our society.³²

The organic trope equating the creation of literature to the blossoming of a flower should have struck a familiar cord with readers familiar with Japanese literary tradition. Okina’s metaphor summons a very famous anterior text—the Preface to the *Kokinshū* (Collection of old and new Japanese poetry, 10th century). In Ki no Tsurayuki’s opening statement,

Japanese poetry has its seed in the human heart, which sprouts into myriad leaves of words. It comes into being when men use the seen and the heard to give voice to feelings aroused by innumerable events in their lives...it is poetry that moves

³¹ Hereafter referred to as “Shimei.”

³² *Nichibei*, October 12, 1916,.

heaven and earth without effort, stirs the emotions of invisible gods, harmonizes the relations between men and women, and calms the hearts of fierce warriors.³³

In Okina's appropriation, "leaves of words" must originate from a specific terrain, and from "the innumerable events" in the lives of those who occupy that terrain. This metaphor—the bearing of literary fruits from stalks rooted in the land in which writers live—appealed to a community of Japanese people whose primary form of work was agricultural, and for a community who had been encouraged to establish itself more firmly in America through purchasing land for farming. Even the title given to this literature is rooted in soil; this is *iminchi bungei*—literature of the *land* of immigrants. Like the *Kokinshū* Preface, Okina also provides literature with a similar set of powers in the immigrant community; it can improve relations between Americans and Japanese, and reform immigrant society. Okina's deployment of the metaphor reflects an attempt to attach, through intertext, symbolic value to his particular literary vision. At the same time, however, Okina's argument is extremely moralistic, accusing those who refuse to engage in his prescribed literary practices of being "hedonistic" conservatives. Unsavory aspects of immigrant life should be discarded like worn clothing, and embracing the literary arts is a necessary step in the upward trajectory of the progressive immigrant constituent.

Another important characteristic of "Shimei" is its reference to American society and culture. Okina specifically mentions forging better relations with American people in the short passage quoted above. He also opens the article with praise for American society in the area of urban planning and appreciation of beauty:

What I respect most about American society is its attentiveness to beauty and beautification when constructing their cities and towns...San Francisco is, for example, an enormous piece of art. In America, this land of giant scale, there is an

³³ *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry*, translated and edited by Helen Craig McCullough (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 3.

equally large fostering among its people of an appreciation for beauty and the arts. America is progressive in this way.³⁴

In the discourse of *iminchi bungei* this is the only article that explicitly praises American values and tastes, and we may speculate that as anti-Japanese sentiment escalated over the next few years, celebrating American society would become less and less an effective rhetorical tool in advocating for *iminchi bungei*.

After praising the American appreciation of beauty, Okina then broadens the mission of *iminchi bungei* by positioning it on an even larger literary scale. Moving from the “progressive” character of American society and art, Okina moves to the European continent, introducing forward-looking literary figures like Tolstoy, Ibsen, and Bernard Shaw, whose innovative artistic endeavors—which were “flowering the world over”—had the potential to speak beyond the specific set of circumstances in which they emerged. By including these examples in his argument, Okina presses immigrant writers to move beyond their conservative pasts and push forward to create innovative work independent from literature produced in Japan. Moreover, literary work emerging from the circumstances of Japanese immigrants—circumstances that reflected a “progressive” American appreciation for art—would not only make a contribution to the literary world in Japan, it had the potential to put Japanese literature on the global map.

The broader strokes that Okina sketches in “Shimei” are detailed in a subsequent set of articles, “*Iminchi bungei to imin no seikatsu*.” Published in seven parts, the key argument of the series was that immigrant daily life should serve as the primary focus of *iminchi bungei*. The “Seikatsu” articles attempt to firm up the conditions for the formation of this new literature, to review the special qualities of Japanese immigrant life

³⁴ *Nichibei*, October 12, 1916.

and suggest their appropriation as literary raw material and tropes, to expound upon the relationship between life (*seikatsu*) and literature, and to appeal to writers' sense of duty and responsibility (*ninmu*).

The concept of immigrant life-centered literature was enthusiastically supported by the chief editor of the *Nichibei*, Yamanaka Eiichi, who published his thoughts on the matter in his personal columns. Yamanaka added to Okina's argument by supporting its basis in contemporary Japanese immigrant life, saying that no literature exists outside of history, and no literary text can be divorced from a specific person, time and place (*hito to toki to basho*). Okina responded to this idea in a subsequent section of the "Seikatsu" series entitled "Hito to toki to basho" (People, time, place):

"People, time, place." There is no such thing as "existence" (*jitsuzon*) if one of these is missing...Up until now there have been no occurrences of Japanese people leading lives like ours. The purpose of *iminchi bungei* is to describe the truth (*shinsô*) of this particular occurrence....Immigrant life itself is low-class (*teikyû*) and vulgar (*zokuaku*)...and there is certainly value in writing ordinary artistic work that is divorced from this reality. However, using the coarseness and vulgarity of everyday immigrant life as a foundation, we have the potential to produce real literary gems...Thus, by all means, let us use our experience now. It is the duty of *iminchi bungei* to observe and treat the lives of our fellow countrymen on the Pacific Coast critically and carefully and reformulate it into art...Moreover, producing this art requires fuller understanding of both our Japanese and American backgrounds....we must make readers aware of these unique backgrounds.³⁵

This passage reinforces the multinational positionality of immigrant subjectivity, while adding a sense of urgency to the literary project. "Let us use our experience now," Okina states, to transform the coarseness of immigrant life into art. Of course the position from which he is writing shows an internalization of class division based on moral superiority. Does Okina include himself among the group of "low-class" and "vulgar"

³⁵ *Nichibei*, September 21, 1917.

immigrants whose lives he wants aestheticized? Who, precisely, has the ability to critically reflect on and refashion everyday life? Presumably Okina is referring to the community's educated elite, at least those who believed in the role of art in societal reform.

The next task for advocates of *iminchi bungei* involved spelling out the “coarse” and “vulgar” material appropriate for artistic transformation. Having declared the mission of *iminchi bungei* in the “Shimei,” Okina provides potential subject matter for *iminchi bungei* writers, specific topics that distinguished Japanese immigrant experience from those of other Japanese.

Okina begins his assessment of literary material by addressing themes that have been successfully incorporated by writers thus far. The themes exploit the tragic and emotionally-charged aspects of immigrant life, including “emotional literature of nostalgia for the homeland written by youth who have been in America for two or three years, love entanglements involving immigrants and prostitutes, tragedy resulting from the picture bride practice, hopelessness among people who had reached the 10-year mark in America, the breakdown of the Japanese family system and anxiety over the future of American-born children.” The suggestions that Okina adds to this list reflect the escalating exclusion movement, and new family issues arising from a second-generation of children that is growing older. Okina encouraged adding topics such as the cultural clashes between Japanese and American lifestyles, the struggle against racial discrimination, the rising tensions between first- and second-generation immigrants, and “unnatural” feelings emerging between parents and children who have been separated for long periods of time. In general, the topics coalesce around the tropes of family, love, and

cultural difference, material that had the potential to elicit a strong emotional reaction from audiences.

In addition to subject matter, another distinguishing characteristic of *iminchi bungei* would be the language used to express it. Okina believed that immigrant literature should include the colloquial-style speech of Japanese immigrants, which integrated English words and phrases, as well as Japanese regional dialects. Although in his critical writings Okina expands no further on this idea other than to simply suggest it, his essays and fiction are replete with his special immigrant vernacular. Okina deployed English phrases primarily for the purpose of adding emotion to character dialogue. For example, in *Kowareta sakazuki* (*A Broken Saké Cup*, 1929), a short story depicting the fate of a picture bride, the main character's husband yells, "Moo ichi do itte miro! (Say it again!) Goddamn!"³⁶ The *katakana* version of "Alright" appears frequently in Okina's fiction, as well as greetings such as "Hello," "Good afternoon," "Good evening" and "Goodnight." In some cases stories are given English titles, like *I Love You Only* (1913); this story also laces entire lines like "Hello, sweetheart," "Is it really true?" and "Tell me again!" throughout the text. Local Japanese dialects also appear in character dialogue, such as the term "Moo ii kagen ni shiro" (Come on now! Straighten up!), written in the dialect of Yamaguchi prefecture in *Oyabun* (*The Boss*, 1915) as "Moo ii kagen ni shichoke!" The heteroglossic nature of immigrant texts presented a realistic portrayal of immigrant life to which Japanese readers in America could relate, while rendering it exotic to readers in Japan. The use of regional dialect also suggests the heterogeneous nature of the immigrant population.

³⁶ The Japanese reads, 「もう一度言ってみろ！ガッデム！」 From *Amerika lunpen*, OKZ, 7:101.

Publication of the “Shimei” and “Seikatsu” articles provided the theoretical and practical underpinnings for the development and production of immigrant land literature. It was in these two series that Okina attempted to convince fellow members of the Japanese community of the value of literature, of its potential to reform immigrant society and therefore improve relations with American people. Towards the end of the decade, however, despite immigrant leaders’ best efforts to reform their society, tensions between the American and Japanese governments grew worse, and the Japanese exclusion movement on the West Coast reached new heights. As a result, Okina, as well as other leaders in the immigrant community, were forced to reassess the situation. The U.S. government started moving towards wholesale cessation of Japanese immigration into the U.S., and immigrants began to ponder what they perceived as three choices: stay in the U.S., return to Japan, or migrate to a third country.³⁷ Okina and his mentors at the *Nichibei* chose the former and began to intensify their push towards permanent settlement in their publications. For them, however, this also meant grappling with how to negotiate immigrant positionality and identity in the increasingly hostile American environment. It was in response to these concerns that Okina wrote his final critical piece on *iminchi bungei* in 1919, “Iminchi bungei no sengen.”³⁸

Declaring a Literature for Japanese Immigrants, 1919

Published thirteen years after Okina’s arrival in the United States, ten years after the formation of the Bungakukai and two years after the “Shimei” and “Seikatsu” articles, “Sengen” appeared in the September 29, 1919 issue of the *Nichibei*. Unlike

³⁷ Azuma, 135.

³⁸ Hereafter referred to as “Sengen.”

Okina's previous articles, "Sengen" was not a prose essay but rather a literary manifesto of sorts. Written in thirteen short articles, the document presents a complicated ideological matrix concerned with issues of homeland, assimilation, reform, Japanese American Christianity, and the construction of an "exceptionalist" Japanese American identity. In "Sengen," Okina encourages participation in the creative arts to inscribe immigrant life within a new space and within a new order, a task carried out by creating a fresh mode of relation to the present and the past. Although the manifesto does not overtly refer to racial discrimination or the Japanese exclusion movement, these underlying conflicts are more implicitly referenced in the combative tone and language of adversity embedded in its rhetoric. Discussions of racial discrimination and developments in anti-Japanese legislation appeared in the pages of the *Nichibei* on a daily basis. Negotiating racial tensions in the unfriendly American environment was simply a way of life for people in the Japanese community, and this process of negotiation forms the contours of a battle in Okina's text. Immigrant writers are encouraged, furthermore, to imaginatively register this battle in writing for future generations.

The text in full reads:

1. We declaim the songs of our beloved immigrant land, we glorify the essence of our people (*minzoku*), and we foretell the creation of a second homeland (*dai ni kokyō*).
2. We advocates of immigrant literature have the strength to endure oppression; we have a courageous spirit, a spirit of adventure.
3. We are the Adam and Eve of the American continent; and the story of our people on this continent will be everlasting. As forefathers we will transmit our stories to our descendants.
4. Our literature will have an appeal different from that of our motherland. It will also be different from that of the West. We poets of a second homeland will create the first literature of its kind.

5. Without adequate strength our literature will die out. And the fall of immigrant literature means that our essence will also cease to exist. As a monument to our people we express through literature our language (*moji*), our thoughts (*shisô*), our lifestyles (*seikatsu*).
6. We resolve to be the creators of a new literature. With Japanese history as a background, we are dancers on an American stage.
7. We sing of labor and describe our wanderings (*hôrô*), attempting to purify our rotting blood (*kusaran to suru ketsueki*) and resurrect our sense of selves as Japanese.
8. Our future is uncertain and we knock at the heavy door of a great, unknown world.
9. In this land we have no past. Our past lies beyond the Pacific Ocean. For us there is nothing but the present. And our future is merely the continuation of this undeniable present. We stand at the precipice of the now (*gendai*), rejecting the word “impossible.”
10. Conquerors—we are spiritual conquerors. We are rebels against our past world. We are the ultimate leaders of reform.
11. We curse the incompetence of certain immigrant groups, and we admonish the indiscriminate behavior and the dishonesty of their supporters.
12. We reject the vanity of the misguided, stubborn conservatives who destroy the thinking of newcomers and who operate under the authority of the Japanese state. We consider them a group greatly injurious to the development of the Japanese people.
13. We are the creators of new thought and must discover a new language. And we will endeavor to express it in the form of literature.³⁹

In “Sengen” Okina is clearly operating, on the one hand, on a grand, even biblical scale. Writing on topics that presumably rise above time, space and politics, he declares Japanese immigrant men and women to be the Adam and Eve of the American continent, to be the creators of a new literature, to be spiritual masters. On the other hand, the *Sengen* also points to a particular moment in time, the *gendai*, or the present. The past is long gone, and with an uncertain future ahead, only the “now” remains. Japanese history

³⁹ *Nichibei*, September 29, 1919.

is relegated to the background, the present is magnified, and writers are perched at the precipice of the future. Within a temporal framework re-inflected with new emphasis, Okina has created a world of alienation for himself and his fellow immigrants, isolated in time and space, unmoored from Japan, unmoored from America, and uninhibited by authority in general. At the same time, however, the document also imagines a world of possibility, of hope, and of new beginnings. “Sengen” is where Okina posits his vision of a new Japanese American “homeland.”

Permanent Settlement

The first task in creating a stable *place*—a geographic area and a place of psychological attachment onto which immigrant identities would be projected—entailed convincing Japanese residents to stay in the U.S. permanently. For those *Nichibei* readers who were still undecided about whether or not to stay in America, return to Japan, or move on to a third country, the message in the text is clear. Okina presents permanent residency as a *fait accompli*. His article can thus be read as part of the movement to shift immigrant mentality and practice from “sojourner” status to that of “permanent settler.”

In “Sengen,” Okina’s references to the “beloved immigrant land,” the “creation of a second homeland,” (*dai ni kokyō*) the immigrant couple as the “Adam and Eve of the American Continent” and “dancers on the American stage,” assume that his fellow immigrants will consider America a second home, that they will invest in it as such and that they will expand the Japanese population inhabiting it. One of the chief proponents of permanent settlement was Abiko Kyūtarō, a respected leader in the Japanese American community and the longtime publisher of the *Nichibei*, where, of course, Okina worked

as chief editor of the Oakland branch. A visionary who foresaw a permanent future for Japanese immigrants in the U.S., Abiko believed that the sojourner model was an obstacle to the realization of this future, and that it lay at the root of the “unsavory” features of immigrant life.⁴⁰ Abiko encouraged his fellow immigrants to abandon the sojourner ideal and lay down permanent roots on American soil, reasoning that investing in immigrant society and showing Americans a devotion to their adopted homeland would prove a solution to the problem of Japanese exclusion. Abiko disseminated his ideas about permanent settlement through the *Nichibei*, which even adopted the slogan “dochaku eijû,” or “arrival on land and permanent settlement.”⁴¹

Okina had been strongly influenced by Abiko over the years, and he, too, believed that the sojourner mentality fostered indifference to the immigrant land and precluded making any contribution to American society. The problem with the sojourner mentality, he argued, was that it was inherently “selfish,” where the solitary goal was to earn as much money as possible and return to Japan. This orientation justified doing anything to expedite the goal of returning; it was behind failed labor contracts and a refusal to observe American customs and practices; it accounted for the unsanitary labor campus with makeshift bunkhouses and the widespread prevalence of gambling as an illusory way to strike it rich. And it promoted short-term ventures for quick profit rather than sound, long-term economic undertakings.⁴² Both Abiko and Okina felt that the Japanese in America needed to make a more committed social and economic investment in American life.

⁴⁰ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 176.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 177.

There were, however, obvious obstacles to making America a second homeland for Japanese immigrants. By 1919 laws had been enacted in most parts of the American West that barred immigrants from purchasing land, stricter immigration laws had been negotiated, and eligibility for American citizenship was still decades away. Although the duress that Japanese residents were under helped immigrant leaders to delineate the borders of Japanese American group identity, the solidarity shaped by external circumstances did not preclude fractures caused by intra-group conflict. “Sengen” highlights some of these conflicts, bringing out the possibility for other non-national subjectivities. One of the ways that multiple group identities emerge in “Sengen” is through its imagining of a collective fight against enemies on multiple fronts, both internal and external to the Japanese community.

Separation of State: The Nihonjinkai

While Okina does not make the details of immigrant struggle explicit in “Sengen,” implicit barriers to creating a “second homeland” surface in “Sengen’s” language of conflict and confrontation. Okina stresses the need for “rebels” and “spiritual conquerors” to engage in battle against a “past world” and serve as leaders of “reform.” In addition to the American hegemonic system, however, Okina’s adversaries included members of the internal Japanese community. Items eleven and twelve refer to “certain immigrant groups” and “stubborn conservatives” who engage in indiscriminate behavior under the authority of the Japanese state. In these later clauses Okina has moved from an overarching creationist narrative to point a finger at certain “immigrant groups” that stood against his vision of permanent settlement. Although the text itself hints at who

these groups might be, Okina's diaries provide further interesting clues. In the years leading up to the publication of "Sengen," Okina records several skirmishes with people in the Nihonjinkai, suggesting that it was this, the administrative arm of the immigrant community, towards which his complaints were directed.⁴³

The Nihonjinkai in various cities served as key political organizations for Japanese immigrants. Wherever a significant number of Japanese settled they established local associations, which operated within the framework of a three-tiered hierarchy. Local Japanese consulates occupied the upper tier, while local associations represented the lower tier. Situated in the middle were central bodies that provided the link between the upper and lower tiers. For example, in the Pacific Northwest, local chapters in Washington and Montana were affiliated with the Northwest American Japanese Association (established in 1913) and based in Seattle under the Seattle Consulate. Local bodies in Oregon, Idaho and Wyoming were affiliated with the Nihonjinkai of Oregon, headquartered in Portland and formed in 1911 under the Portland Consulate.⁴⁴

Early in their formation, the Nihonjinkai struggled as they tried to speak on behalf of a diverse population of Japanese immigrants, but their importance surged with the recognition on the part of the immigrants that they needed to organize in order to combat anti-Japanese sentiment and policies. While local branches of the Nihonjinkai were not official extensions of the Japanese state, the Japanese government used them to implement certain policies. For example, after the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-1908 was enacted, the Japanese government made mandatory a registration system whereby all

⁴³ *OKZ*, 2:245.

⁴⁴ For an idea of how many local Nihonjinkai were associated with a given central body, in 1923 Seattle had 15 local chapters, Oregon 10, San Francisco 40 and Los Angeles 21. See Yuji Ichioka, "Japanese Associations and the Japanese Government: A Special Relationship, 1909-1926," *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 46 No. 3 (Aug. 1977): 409-437.

Japanese residents had to be issued an official certificate of registration. Because the networks of the Nihonjinkai branched out into local areas, the organization was the obvious choice for disseminating information on these compulsory procedures. Certificate applications were sent to the Japanese consulates with the recommendation of the local Nihonjinkai. Local officers served as arbiters in this process, recommending those that they considered upstanding, acceptable residents, and rejecting those that they found unworthy (i.e. chronic gamblers, prostitutes, corrupt labor contractors, etc.)

Although Okina never exposes specific Nihonjinkai branches or members, his diaries indicate that he worked as an officer in the local Nihonjinkai offices while living in California in 1915. In Stockton he openly clashed with other officers and generally disagreed with their policies. Again when he moved to Oakland in 1917 he was unhappy with the “self righteous” attitude of the local Nihonjinkai president, eventually quitting his post as secretary of the organization.⁴⁵ Over the years Okina’s personal relationship with the Nihonjinkai was on shaky ground, but in 1919, the same year of “Sengen’s” publication, an incident occurred that had practically every Japanese daily publicly railing against the collective Nihonjinkai. The incident was the endorsement of the policy to cease issuing passports to picture brides. This was a landmark event in early Japanese American history. Because Okina made no secret of his clashes with the Nihonjinkai, *Nichibei* readers may well have assumed that points eleven and twelve in “Sengen” pointed directly to the organization’s decision to align itself with this government policy. Cessation of the picture bride practice would wreak havoc on Okina’s vision of a settled

⁴⁵ OKZ, 2:245. Also see Itsumi, 86-92.

Japanese American family life, for the picture bride system was a key institution necessary in expanding the Japanese community in America.⁴⁶

As soon as the press release announcing the Nihonjinkai decision became public, a storm of criticism came down upon the organization. Okina, while aware of the shortcomings of the picture bride practice, saw it as an economical and practical way for single men to get married and settle down permanently in the United States. In fact some of his troubles with the Nihonjinkai officers in California had to do with his opposition to the \$800 in savings required of men who wanted to send for brides from Japan. Okina even wrote a play entitled “The \$800 Problem,” a comedy in the spirit of Charlie Chaplin, about a man who could not get permission from the Japanese Consulate to send for his picture bride because he could not manage to save up the \$800.⁴⁷

Although members of the immigrant community did not acquiesce quietly to the decision to end the picture-bride practice, the Japanese Foreign Ministry informed the Ambassador to the United States that it would cease issuing passports to picture brides

⁴⁶ Intense agitation against the picture bride practice emerged in California as American government officials alleged that the system violated the Gentleman’s Agreement of 1907-1908. Changes in immigration law in 1915 allowed Japanese laborers to summon wives from Japan as long as they had at least \$800 in savings for a period of at least five months. Part of the problem for American laborers, who saw Japanese immigrant labor as a threat, was that the influx of Japanese women and the increase in number of children being born as American citizens allowed them to buy land under the names of their children. As a result of the California Alien Land Law of 1913 “aliens ineligible to citizenship,” (i.e. all Japanese) were prohibited from purchasing land. In 1919 the consul of San Francisco contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and recommended that they stop issuing passports to picture brides, and on October 31st a press release in English was issued declaring that the practice should be abolished “because it not only contravenes the accepted American conception of marriage, it is also out of harmony with the growing ideals of the Japanese themselves.” The release was endorsed by the Nihonjinkai. For more on the Picture Bride practice see Yuji Ichioka, “Amerika Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant Women in the United States, 1900-1924,” *Pacific Historical Review* 48:2 (May 1980): 339-357; Mei Nakano *Japanese American Women: Three Generations, 1890-1924* (Berkeley: National Japanese American Historical Society and Mina Press, 1990), and Kazuo Ito, *A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*, Shinichiro Nakamura and Jean. S. Gerard, eds. (Seattle: Japanese Community Service, 1973). Also Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1993).

⁴⁷Note also that interracial marriage was never considered a viable option in any of Okina’s writings. Not only did it breach anti-miscegenation laws of California at the time, it also disrupted the “Japanese” nature of the group Okina was trying to create. “The \$800 Problem,” published in *OKZ*, 5: 315.

after March 1, 1920. “Sengen,” which was published in the midst of the picture-bride maelstrom, declared the men and women of the Japanese immigrant community the Adam and Eve of the American continent. By equating Japanese couples with the Biblical figures of Adam and Eve, Okina was imploring couples to stay united and form the foundations of a new Japanese American community. Much had been made in the immigrant press over the years of picture brides who absconded after arriving in America and finding a husband and a set of circumstances vastly different from their expectations. In the “Seikatsu” articles Okina even supported this narrative as an appropriate topic for *iminchi bungei*. Although stories born from the dysfunction of the picture bride practice provided interesting reading material, the polemic of “Sengen” makes it clear that the future of the immigrant community depended on stable marriages and a commitment to settlement in America. “Sengen” was a plea, therefore, to married couples to honor their marriages, create a settled family life, and expand the Japanese community.

Okina’s implicit critique of the Nihonjinkai’s specific decisions also points to the larger problem of immigrant dependence on the Japanese state. Chastising members of “certain immigrant groups” meant rebuking those who continued to entrust the Japanese community’s welfare to the authority of the Japanese government. The community Okina envisioned was comprised of upstanding Japanese families of strong spirit, “spiritual conquerors” and “rebels,” those who had the courage and determination to stand apart from state authority and the perseverance required to overcome the impediments to creating a second homeland.

Denouncing the Japanese state, however, did not mean renouncing a specific Japanese heritage and ethnic identity. Wresting the immigrant community from the

control of the Japanese government did not preclude keeping the community's Japanese racial and ethnic ties intact. The language of "Sengen," replete with the rhetorical "We Japanese," (*ware ware*) emphasizes a shared history in Japan, a common "essence" and a single bloodline. Singing the songs of immigrant experience, Okina says, will purify the "rotting" bloodstreams of immigrant society and necessarily result in the rebirth of the people as "Japanese."

A Japanese Adam and Eve and a Japanese American Christianity

The narrative of origin that Okina presents in the rhetoric of "Sengen" would require a strong, representative "immigrant couple." Equating Japanese immigrant couples with the "Adam and Eve" of the North American continent intertwined Christian iconography with the marginalized group of immigrants, as well as the creation of man with the birth of the Japanese American community. By employing this metaphor Okina could successfully bind the Japanese community together by linking them not just by choice—or political resistance—but also internally through the bonds of blood and birth.

From a practical standpoint, inclusion of the Christian thematic into the rhetoric of "Sengen" assumes not only that the majority of *Nichibei* readers would be familiar with the story Adam and Eve, but also that they would accept the idea of grafting a Japanese couple onto a presumably Western (and Caucasian) image. The Biblical allusion illuminates the Japanese community's willingness to adopt different religious and racial ways of thinking to support novel social identities. The Christian church in the Japanese American community, however, deliberately promoted Japanese culture and values to

forge a particular *Japanese American* Christian identity.⁴⁸ For example, Japanese Christians were encouraged to use the special cultural and spiritual characteristics inherent to them as Japanese people, such as *bushido* (warrior spirit) and *chûkun aikoku* (loyalty and patriotism for Japan) to battle American racism and discriminatory policies. The church sought to nurture Japanese autonomy while encouraging it to embracing the Christian values of fraternity and moral responsibility. With a special brand of Japanese American Christian identity embedded in the social fabric, Okina could use the figures of Adam and Eve to symbolize the birth of a Japanese American community without weakening any sense of “Japanese” identity.

While Okina did not write specifically about the Christian church, he published in 1920 a story that served as a warning against refusing to adopt the hybrid outlook that Japanese Christianity promoted. The short story *Mariko no jisatsu* (*Mariko's suicide*) focuses on a Japanese Christian mother and father shocked by the report that their only daughter has committed suicide. The plot centers on the rumors that circulate in the Japanese community after Mariko's death, her friendship with the church minister, and intergenerational conflict between Mariko and her father. In the story, Mariko, a young student at Berkeley, tries unsuccessfully to deny her Japanese heritage in an attempt to become wholly “American.” Appropriating a Caucasian racist view, Mariko considers American people superior to Japanese, America the “chosen land,” and the fellow Japanese people she sees on the street “ungainly” and “uncouth.” Plagued by feelings of self-loathing and repulsed by her own family, she despises the “squalid” Japanese neighborhood where she lives, a neighborhood that her father insists exemplifies “the true

⁴⁸ Yoshida Ryo, *Amerika Nihonjin imin to Kirisutokyô shakai: Kariforunia Nihonjin imin no haiseki, dôka to E. A. Sutôji* (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentâ, 1995), 15.

merit of the Japanese,” a place where “the time-honored traditions of the Yamato race are cherished.”⁴⁹ Both Mariko and her parents turn to their minister, a man called Yamagata, for guidance on a regular basis. Yamagata tells them both to pray, believing that salvation for both Mariko and her parents can be achieved through prayer and devotion to Christian values. In the end, Mariko commits suicide, leaving a note for Yamagata confessing that she is indeed “Japanese” and not “American.” In the final scene, Minister Yamagata, grieving with Mariko’s parents, turns to them, a tear-stained face suddenly brightening, and says, “Mariko has gone to the Kingdom of Everlasting Peace. In the house of God there is no racial discrimination.”⁵⁰

On the one hand, the ending of the story seems doused in a heavy dose of irony. Mariko ends up dead and her parents miserable despite their best efforts at prayer. In the “Kingdom of God” there may be no racial discrimination, but in the world of these characters there is no life without racial discrimination. The hatred stemming from racial prejudice wreaks havoc on the Japanese family and psychologically destabilizes American-born Japanese. On the other hand, the story also begs more literal interpretation, whereby the power and resonance of the final sentence eclipses the cynicism of the more ironic reading. In this version, the story ends on a note of hope and encourages faith in a higher state of existence unaffected by the color of one’s skin. That the original story was reprinted in English two years after the original publication in Japanese signifies its importance to a growing readership of second-generation immigrants without Japanese reading skills. A third reading warns young Japanese Americans of the dangers in denying one’s heritage and the impossibility of becoming

⁴⁹ *OKZ*, 6: 92.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

wholly American. Although not overtly stated, the story hints at striking a balance of maintaining a “Japanese” identity and loyalty to the Japanese community, while persevering in the American environment.

In *Mariko no jisatsu*, as in most of Okina’s stories, the world of the characters is extremely insular, populated only by family and other members of a tightly knit Japanese community. No American characters appear in the story, except a man introduced as Mariko’s possible lover and father of her unborn child. The existence of this white lover is introduced as a scandalous piece of gossip that ignites the Japanese neighborhood rumor mill and causes controversy after her death. The rumor, however, is put to rest by Minister Yamagata, who discovers the suicide note and vouches for Mariko’s chastity. The real reasons behind her death are an irreconcilable rift between Japanese and Americans based on racial discrimination, the fundamental impossibility for even American-born Japanese to become wholly American, the denial of Japanese heritage and loss of Japanese cultural character, and a weakness of spirit in adapting to these unfortunate circumstances.

Mariko no jisatsu, published within months of “Sengen” and read against the document’s rhetoric of salvation, could point to the belief that harnessing the Japanese spirit and forging a divine beginning in America was the only option for the Japanese community’s survival. The character of Mariko serves as a negative example, as a figure lacking in such spirit and thus unable to survive. For the more resilient members of the Japanese community, success could be attained in the hostile American environment as long as one had the perseverance and mental flexibility to negotiate different kinds of racial thinking.

Immigrant Exceptionalism

While the discursive logic of “Sengen” constructs a Japanese community bound together by blood, national origin, and collective political resistance, it also appropriates strands of American ideology to justify Japanese presence in the United States. Okina called his literary manifesto a “Declaration,” a term that conjures up images of early American leaders who declared independence from the United Kingdom and secured the rights of its new citizenry.⁵¹ Armed with the Japanese spirit and possessing the divine powers of Adam and Eve, Okina’s Japanese immigrant “leaders of reform” and “spiritual conquerors” resemble a group of American pioneers—also equipped with divine rights and justifications—who conquered the Western frontiers of North America. In “Sengen” Okina imbues the Japanese community not only with a distinct “Japanese” spirituality, but also with a kind of “exceptionalism” –an “immigrant exceptionalism”—to help forge a fresh initiative on the American frontier.

“American exceptionalism,” one of the most important concepts underlying modern theories of American cultural identity, has contributed to the evolution of the United States as an ideological and geographical identity. Historically it refers to the idea that the United States differs qualitatively from other developed nations because of its unique origins, national credo, historical evolution, or distinctive political and religious institutions. The difference is typically expressed as some categorical superiority, to which is usually attached some rationalization or explanation that varies greatly

⁵¹ The Japanese term for “The Declaration of Independence” is “Dokuritsu sengen.”

depending on the historical period and the political context.⁵² Often invoked to explain and justify the expansion of the United States in the nineteenth century, exceptionalism was used by American writers to characterize the unique qualities of America and American people.⁵³

In early American literature, the myth of American exceptionalism often employed the biblical Adam as a heroic figure. R.W.B. Lewis, discussing the Adamic myth in early American writing, identifies the beginning of an “American Myth,” a phenomenon originating in the early 1800s in which life and history, instead of being seen as a continuous historical process, was seen as just beginning.⁵⁴ Lewis notes that early American literature described the world as starting up again under fresh initiative, a divinely granted second chance for the human race—and inhabited by a new kind of hero, an embodiment of a new set of ideal human attributes. The new habits to be engendered on the American scene were suggested by the image of a radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure, “an individual emancipated from history, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources.”⁵⁵ This hero for a Bible-reading generation was most easily identified with Adam before the Fall.⁵⁶

On the West Coast of the United States one hundred years later, the preservation of the collective spirit of the American nation and the figure of a pure, pioneering

⁵² Arnon Gutfeld, *American Exceptionalism: The Effects of Plenty on the American Experience* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press), 34-90.

⁵³ Deborah Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 70.

⁵⁴ R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1955), 5-6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁶ Lewis' study investigates the image of Adam in the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville and Henry James.

American hero depended on the exclusion of other races and ethnicities, those people lacking “inherent resources” and “natural superiority.” Still, although the tenets of American exceptionalism were contingent upon excluding racial minorities, there was nothing stopping immigrant writers from selectively incorporating into their ideological practices what they saw as useful American values into their ideological practices. In “Sengen,” Okina creates a Japanese Adamic figure, pairs him with an equally pioneering Eve, implicitly pits them against oppressive state apparatuses, and endows them with divine powers to give birth to a new, Japanese American homeland. The rhetoric of “Sengen” reveals Okina’s desire to move beyond racism, dispossession and struggle to forge a peaceful future in the United States. The logic of Okina’s document provides a way for members of the Japanese community to discursively empower themselves, transforming their racial/national identities from unassimilable aliens to pioneering Japanese frontiersmen.

Light of the Setting Sun

Although “Sengen” avoids stigmatizing the Japanese community with an emotional discourse of racial discrimination and victimization, Okina’s earlier fiction is full of the suffering, sorrow, and tragedy of immigrant life. Stories in which characters drown their sorrows in alcohol, lose their savings to gambling, or commit suicide due to sheer despair are too numerous to count. The late 1910s, however, marks a turn in Okina’s fiction. Many of his stories from this period continue to describe immigrant pain and suffering in melodramatic fashion, but they also conclude with a rhetorical flourish of survival and hope.

Written at about the same time as “Sengen,” “Rakujitsu no hikari” (Light of the setting sun) is one such story.⁵⁷ The protagonist of the story is an older man called “Taishô” (The general), who, along with five of his friends, often sits up late at night talking about issues of the day, such as racial discrimination, international labor movements, and immigration law. All of the men have lived in the United States for about twenty years. Taishô, sullen and quiet, rarely participates in what he considers his friends’ “trifling” discussions. The third person narrator tells us that the five friends have been living in the U.S. as “parasites,” collecting incomes from their families in Japan. Feeling that their lives would never improve even if they returned to Japan, they have given up on returning home and continue to live off of a combination of money sent from Japan, and occasional work as laborers. The narrator explains that the men have been satisfied with this stagnant lifestyle for some time. After the allowance from their families runs out, they work for a short stint on the railroads or in agriculture, and when their wallets are full they return to the city and do as they please.

About halfway through the story Taishô receives a letter from his wife in Japan telling him that his father is very ill and asking him to return immediately. Taishô decides to go back to Japan, partly to escape the pressures of immigrant life, but more importantly to re-establish himself as “pure” Japanese (*jun Nihonjin*). When he arrives in Japan, however, Taishô finds that it is no longer the place he knew when he left it twenty years earlier. Finding it impossible to become a “pure” Japanese, he quickly travel back

⁵⁷ One year before publishing “Sengen” Okina wrote “Rakujitsu no Hikari” (Light of the Setting Sun, 1918). Although the publication venue remains unclear, the story appears in the *Zenshû* as “Kusare en” (An Undesirable Relation), and under the title listed above in a later collection of short stories, *Ishokuju* (1923). 1918 was a seminal year for Okina. Fed up with the arbitrary decision making of the President of the Nihonjinkai, he quit his position as Secretary, and with the help of Abiko Kyûtarô became editor of the Oakland branch of the *Nichibei*. He published articles in the *Nichibei*, the *Taihoku Nippô* and the *Shin sekai* in the same year. See *OKZ*, 10: “Nenpu.”

the U.S. determined to rise above the conditions of a life of racial discrimination, and to live as a “cosmopolitan.” Ultimately this, too, he finds impossible to carry out and he eventually commits suicide. Upon the death of their friend, the remaining four friends vow to live and surmount the pain and anguish of immigrant life.

Early in the story Taishô and his friends have the following exchange:

“So General, what do you think?” asked the one they called “Politician.”

“Ridiculous...your conversations are always the same. Many years ago we thought we could overcome the problems of race and war. You have not yet realized that we have become people with no lasting ties to anything, not to nation, not to society, not even to life. Maybe we’re beings of the past and of the future, but for now, to be alive in this kind of world...and in these times, it means death.”⁵⁸

After Taishô makes the decision to return to Japan, he turns to his friends, and, in a rare moment of openness, states:

We came here twenty years ago with hope in our hearts, thinking that America was going to be Eden on earth. We tried to forget that we were Japanese, wanting to believe that we were simply human beings. But alas, friends, in this world there is no such thing as a “human being.” There are Americans, Japanese, English, Germans...I once said good-bye to being Japanese, and yet now I must say goodbye to being a “human being”.... We’ve been friends for twenty years now, but the time has come that we part ways... In order to become a pure Japanese person again, I must leave on tomorrow’s ship.⁵⁹

As the friends go to see him off at the San Francisco port, Taisho’s parting words ring in their ears, “If there remains a place called Japan, and a thing called a Japanese person, then I will never return.”

After a break in the text we revisit the friends a few months later. Under the direction of “Politician,” the men are heading to the mountains to work as lumberjacks. Suddenly Taishô reappears, much to their surprise.

⁵⁸ *OKZ*, 7: 91.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

“Hey, Politician!” he yells, “We’re doomed no matter where we go. I went back to Japan thinking I could become Japanese again, but when I got there I realized that no such place exists anymore. It was just like before, when we came to the United States, but as soon as we stepped foot in this country the America of our dreams disappeared...I left Japan right away. Better to become a cosmopolitan you know, better to return to being a human being...”⁶⁰

After returning from their work in the mountains, the friends discover Taishô’s body and vow to overcome his death:

“Politician” raised a bottle of whiskey and looked down on the body of his friend. We will not be stopped until every tree in this forest is cut down! Since arriving in this country we have not seen one glimpse of the Western sun. If we do not cut down the forest the Western sky will never open up to us. Western light! Light of the setting sun!...

Friends, are we going to follow in the footsteps of the “General”?

The friends shout in unison, “Live! Live!”⁶¹

As in many of Okina’s other stories, the overarching theme of “Rakujitsu” is the tension between the dream of an American Eden and the imposition of racial and ethnic parameters that remove any hope of enjoying the fruits of an imagined paradise. Most of Okina’s stories revolve around how different characters—men, women, old, young, first or second generation—negotiate this tension. For Mariko in “Mariko no jisatsu” and Taishô in “Rakujitsu,” suicide becomes the only way of coping. Mariko, who dreams of radical assimilation, and Taishô, a self-declared cosmopolitan, are both obsessed with possessing a “pure” national identity, and the destabilizing effects of fragmented national subjectivity drive them to their deaths. Both characters search for ways to liberate themselves from the confining effects of a single national affiliation. However, their efforts come up short and the inability to manage this failure results in death.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 92.

⁶¹ Ibid.

The subtexts to “Rakujitsu” and “Mariko no jisatsu” involve the characters who are most deeply affected by the protagonist’s tragedy. In Taisho’s case this is the story of the five friends, the longtime “parasitic” residents of the United States, and in Mariko’s story it is her parents and the trusted minister Yamagata. In “Rakujitsu,” the narrator clearly disapproves of the lifestyles of Taisho’s friends—men who lack ambition, hopes or long-term goals in the United States. They sneer at the institutions of immigrant society, like the Nihonjinkai and the Christian church, and although they fantasize about rebelling against “arrogant Americans,” they lack the courage to act. Men of “rotting blood,” they curse their fortune as Japanese in America and reproach the immigrants who are satisfied with a meager lifestyle of labor. Taisho’s death, however, acts as a catalyst for change for these men. His death ignites the friends into initiating a better life for themselves, literally “obliterating the forest obscuring the Western light.” It is unclear what exactly Okina wanted the forest to symbolize, but in a general sense we can assume that it represents the obstacles—external and internal—to reaping the rewards of migration to America. These obstacles include racial exclusion and oppressive legislation, but also spiritual weakness and complacency. As in the choice of “immigrant land literature” for his particular literary vision, Okina uses an image linked to land and labor. Lumberjack work was a common form of labor for Japanese immigrants in the Pacific Northwest, and it was the work of choice for the characters in “Rakujitsu,” but the end of the story has transformed the friends from part-time lumberjacks to pioneering frontiersmen.

Conclusion: History in the Making

In “Sengen” Okina expresses a need to preserve the *record* of immigrant experience, to leave a chronicle of the unique exigencies of immigrant settlers. For Okina, immigrant writers had the responsibility to transmit their stories to future generations of Japanese Americans. Within the passionate and polemical atmosphere of the *Sengen*, Okina thus offers a kind of salvation—a written salvation—through literature. The salvation is directed towards a unique group of Japanese people (*minzoku*), a group with a common language, system of thought, and lifestyle. The “essence” of this group, as Okina states, can be reified through the cultural practice of writing. Imploring fellow writers to craft narratives of labor and struggle, Okina seeks to establish a positive collective destiny for the Japanese community and to seal a collective memory of accomplishment.

As a manifestation of ideology, *iminchi bungei* represents the efforts of literary producers who were not only seeking a stable map with which to situate themselves in the disorienting experience of life abroad, but also dialectically engaging in the further construction of their own identities. The challenge for immigrant leaders like Okina was to persuade, prod and cajole constituents to accept his version of a collective identity, not by breaking the laws of the larger society but by insisting that their lives transcend the traditional models and roles established for them in Japan and by the white majority in America. For a group of people who lacked legislatures through which ethnic identity could be created, or a sanctioned body that could enforce such a disposition, Okina had to employ more informal means—a literary manifesto—of promoting group boundaries. Okina attempted to offer alternatives to racial identities by creating ethnic bonds of

shared history, geography, and lineage, by constructing a secular value system influenced by Japanese American Christianity, a life of labor, and a common language. These new frameworks for identity were best expressed through novel forms of literature.

Despite the forceful means by which he declared his settlement literature into existence, the future for *iminchi bungei* in the wake of 1924 anti immigration laws was, as Okina saw it then, not particularly bright. In 1923, one year before he left the United States permanently, Okina published a collection of short stories, *Ishokuju (Transplanted trees)*, comprised in large part of edited versions of fiction published over the years in the *Nichibei*. Saddened about the inevitable decline of *iminchi bungei*, but at the same time looking towards the work of a younger generation of writers, Okina's preface to the collection is a *mélange* of remembrance and nostalgia:

These short stories have been published in various Japanese language newspapers along the Pacific Coast. Several were also published in magazines in Japan. The time period was after 1910, during which time I sank my efforts into creating a new genre of literature called "iminchi bungei." This literature would be rooted in the daily lives of Japanese immigrants. There was, however, no one to walk with me on this path. No descriptions of immigrant life have appeared in the Japanese literary world other than Nagai Kafû's *Amerika monogatari* and Tamura Shôgyo's *Hokubei no Hana*. Even these are no more than the reflections of mere travelers, and their works were not born of the daily life of real Japanese immigrants. The relationship between Japan and America has grown worse since the immigration period. Now is a time when "Japanese residents of America" are being replaced by "permanent Japanese settlers." As we enter the middle of the twentieth century, our children will begin writing stories in the language known the world over—English. Until their time comes, we, those who are the products of Japanese tradition, have set the stage for them. We will tell of the anguish we felt as residents in a foreign country.⁶²

Openly acknowledging his ambition for recognition in the Japanese literary world, Okina despairs that only the work of Nagai Kafû and Tamura Shogyô has reached Japan's

⁶² Okina Kyûin, *Ishokuju* (Oakland, CA: Nichibeisha Insatsubu, 1923), 15-16.

shores. A mere four years after his enthusiastic declaration of *iminchi bungei*, Okina accepts its inevitable demise and is ready to pass on the torch to a younger generation of Japanese Americans, who will write in English. The collection of the best of his *iminchi bungei* stories, *Ishokuju*, stands as a “monument” to his fellow immigrants.

At the same time, however, Okina stands in the ironic position of writing this introduction for “fellow immigrants” a mere one year before his return to Japan. Clearly frustrated by the fact that larger figures in the Japanese literary world—those with greater literary talents—were gaining recognition for work that reflected diasporic experience, Okina disparages these writers’ degree of commitment to their temporary “homes.” In the case of Nagai Kafû, Okina is referring to the acclaimed *Amerika monogatari* (American Stories) of 1908. The next chapter takes up this text—the work of a “mere traveler”—and explores the literary results of Kafû’s famous journey to the United States from 1903 to 1907.

Chapter 3

Tales of a Failed *Flâneur*: Race, Class and Nation in Nagai Kafû's *Amerika monogatari* (1908)

Voyages in which one must go days on end with no land in sight are unbearably tedious, and the one between Yokohama and the new port of Seattle is no exception. Once one parts from the mountains of his homeland, for more than two weeks he cannot expect to see a single island, nor a single mountain, until reaching the continent on the other side of the ocean... I have been a traveler on this desolate sea for ten days now. During the day I manage to while away the hours playing ring toss on the deck or cards in the smoking room, but once I step away from the dinner table in the evening, well, there is very little to do. Today the weather has turned very cold, and I, not wanting to cross the deck to the smoking room without a coat, have instead shut myself up in my cabin...

-“Night Talk from a Ship’s Cabin”¹

Hearing the words “migrant laborers” (*dekasegi no rôdôsha*) stirred up feelings of agitation all over again. Traveling from my homeland to this country last year, I remember how I felt looking at the group of them while strolling on the deck...Handled more like cargo than as human beings they are packed to capacity into a cramped, dirty, smelly hole; when the weather is fair they rise like plumes of smoke from the bottom of the ship to stare at the vast sky and ocean. But unlike the oversensitive of us (*warera no kokoroyowai*), they do not seem moved by any feeling; gathered in groups of three or four, five or six, they converse in loud voices, smoke tobacco with pipes brought from Japan, and scatter ashes on the deck until a passing crew member gives them a scolding. On evenings when the moon is full, they sing songs from their native places (*furusato*). Among these people there was

¹ Nagai Kafû, *Amerika monogatari* (American Stories) in *Kafû Zenshû* (The Collected Works of Kafû), Vol. 3 (Iwanami Shoten, 1962-1974), 11. Hereafter all references to this source will be recorded KZ, followed by the volume and page number. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

one man I will not forget. He was an older man with gray hair
who seemed so proud of his voice.

-“Road through a Pasture”¹

In 1923 Okina Kyūin despaired that Nagai Kafū’s 1908 short story collection *Amerika monogatari*² (American Stories) was the only description of immigrant life in the U.S. to appear in the Japanese literary world. Concerned that it was written by a “mere traveler” and hardly reflected the daily life of “real” Japanese immigrants, Okina questions the authenticity of a diasporic text based on the status of the author. Never mind that Okina, according to his own self-designed category, would have to disqualify himself as an authentic immigrant author, having returned to Japan for good in 1924. Never mind that Kafū ultimately succeeded in producing the type of literature that Okina calls for in his critical essays on immigrant land literature. And never mind that Kafū probably would have been very happy to be called a “mere traveler.” After all, it is this narrative persona—the carefree traveler—that Kafū employs to portray the American landscape in the early 1900s.

While Okina’s voyage to Japan in 1924 elicited anxiety and confusion about the meaning of returning “home,” the narrator of “Kyabin yawa” expresses no such worries. The narrator’s primary concern is combating the boredom during the long trans-Pacific

¹ KZ, 3:26.

²Nagai Kafū, born Nagai Sōkichi, left Japan for the United States in September 1903 at the age of 23 and returned home in 1908, spending the last year of his five-year sojourn in Lyon, France. During his four years in the United States, Kafū wrote about twenty short stories and essays, seventy letters, and an intermittent diary entitled *Saiyū nisshi shō* (Leaves from a leisurely trip to the West). Among the short stories and essays he wrote while in U.S., fourteen appeared in various publications in Japan before his return home. And a month after he reached Japan, in August 1908, twenty-one of them appeared in a single volume entitled *Amerika monogatari*. Subsequent editions of this volume, edited by Kafū himself, were to contain one additional story. After his death, however, publishers added another piece written while Kafū was still in the United States, so that today twenty-three pieces are generally included in what is referred to as Kafū’s *Amerika monogatari*. See Edward Seidensticker, *The Life and Writings of Nagai Kafū, 1879-1959* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 3-53; also “Translator’s Introduction” to Nagai Kafū, *American Stories*, Mitsuko Iriye, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), xi-xii.

journey, where only the occasional albatross breaks the monotony of endless undulating waves, and where one must endure, day after day, scenery comprised of nothing but ocean and gray skies. Our narrator whiles away the time playing cards, reading, and chatting with other first-class passengers. The narrating voice embodies the traveling persona put forth in the epigraph to *Amerika monogatari*, a stanza from Baudelaire's *Le Voyage* in *Les Fleurs du mal*: "But the true travelers are those, and those alone, who set out only for the journey's sake, and with light, balloon-like hearts they never swerve from their destiny, but, without knowing why, keep saying 'Let us fare forward!'"³

This narrating persona—a higher being floating across the American landscape suspended from social obligation—is contrasted in the second passage with some of the other passengers aboard the ship, those traveling in third-class. The second passage above appears in the second story of Kafû's collection, "Makiba no michi" (Road through the Pasture). I will discuss the story in more detail later, but for my purposes here I wish to bring out the obvious class distinction Kafû's narrator draws between himself and the group of third-class passengers. It was probably this strong class distinction that so disturbed Okina, who believed that the "real" story of Japanese immigrants should be critically observed, recorded and transformed into art by the people themselves.

As the passages above clearly demonstrate, the record that Kafû's narrator provides for us may include observations *about* the people, but it is far from being a record *by* the people. The narrator, perched on the ship's upper deck, is positioned—literally and figuratively—on an elevated plane from which he can observe the spectacle below. He describes the brutal travel conditions for the passengers in steerage, but

³ Baudelaire, Charles, *Baudelaire: Complete Verse*, vol. I, edited and translated by Francis Scarfe (London: Anvil Press, 1985), 241.

references to his own “sensitive nature” simultaneously render his character as one sensitive and astute enough to notice such things. The mass of third-class passengers appears like a cloud of rising smoke, and, unlike more “sensitive souls,” seem to lack any “feeling.” The passengers’ behavior is also, as the narrator indicates, inappropriate. They speak loudly, stare vacantly at the sea and sky, and carelessly scatter tobacco ashes on the deck, as if the propensity for careless, inconsiderate behavior results from their social standing.

It is no coincidence that Kafû opens his collection with a quote from Baudelaire, the man who first identified the practice of *flânerie*. The tone and viewpoint that Kafû’s narrators⁴ employ to describe their “fellow countrymen” offers the downward-looking gaze of a *flâneur*, a man endowed with heightened artistic sensibilities, a strong sense of propriety, and a critical eye for viewing the world.⁵ The narrators of *Amerika monogatari* convey a self-conscious aspect of creating narrative; they are constantly in search of a “good story,” they refer to the difficulty in articulating certain feelings and in choosing language to describe them, and they are acutely aware of their audience. Kafû’s attention to style may also have aggravated Okina, who advocated a Naturalistic style of telling to convey the “reality” of immigrant experience to Japanese-reading audiences. Okina’s notion of a literature of labor written by the people themselves would, by the Kafû narrator’s estimation, be impossible, since the laborers described in *Amerika monogatari* inherently lack the most important quality necessary to engage the larger, philosophical issues concerning their lives in America—self-reflexivity. The narrators of *Amerika*

⁴ I use “narrators” in the plural here because many of Kafû’s stories employ two (or sometimes three) different narrating voices. Up until this point I refer to the “narrator” of Kafû’s first story, “Kyabin yawa,” (Night Talks from a ship’s Cabin) in which there is a single narrator.

⁵ Keith Tester, *The Flâneur* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1-3. I give the *flâneur* and the practice of *flânerie* more attention in a later section. See pp. 18-20.

monogatari possess this important skill and thus encourage readers to trust their powers of observation and interpretation. The stories of *Amerika monogatari* become worthy of telling only after they have been filtered through a critical narrative consciousness.

While Kafû is experimenting in *Amerika monogatari* with the idea of a Japanese *flâneur* and its representations, he is at the same time exploding the boundaries of its restrictions. Readers of *Amerika monogatari* will notice that although Kafû's narrators try to maintain distance from their material—remaining undisturbed and unaffected by what they see—sometimes they simply cannot do it. The dialectic between the free-floating traveler and the weighty experiences that inevitably bring the narrators down to earth is a recurring motif in *Amerika monogatari*, and is especially apparent in those stories that contain interactions with other members of the Japanese resident community. The purpose of this chapter is to consider these stories, in addition to the narrative devices that Kafû uses to tell them, to reveal something that perhaps Okina overlooked in his dismissal of *Amerika monogatari* as an inauthentic immigrant text—an implicit *critique* of the narrators' efforts to maintain distance from the objects of their gaze. What does the style of telling reveal about the narrator, about his relationship with his material, and about race and class in early twentieth-century America? Kafû skillfully engages these questions by experimenting with narrative strategy, by shifting the position of the narrator (or narrators) in relation to his stories. Investigating the immigrant stories of *Amerika monogatari* unfolds the layers of literary, racial, and class restrictions with which Kafû struggled in expressing his artistic vision of the United States.

That Kafû's experimentation with the *flâneur*-narrator takes place in early twentieth century America is also of vital importance. Edward Seidensticker has written

that *Amerika monogatari* “has less to do with America and the remoteness of home than with family problems... and with [Kafû’s] reading in French literature, which by now includes romantics and exotics as well as Zola and Maupassant.”⁶ Certainly Kafû’s respect for Zola, Maupassant, Baudelaire, and even Poe affected this work. Much of the scholarship on Kafû’s text has traced and analyzed the influence of these authors and their work on *Amerika monogatari* in terms of plot, mood, style and narrative structure.⁷ Although Seidensticker asserts that *Amerika monogatari* has more to do with French literature than with America, I argue that this text has everything to do with America. And this is an aspect of Kafû’s writing that, until very recently, has been given scant attention by literary scholars.

I concur with the position taken by Rachael Hutchinson whose more recent investigations of *Amerika monogatari* engage twentieth-century Japan/America relations under the rubric of “alterity.” She states, “What we might call Kafû’s stance as a metacritic is evident in his close examination of prevailing Meiji images of America and the Japanese in America, as well as his attention to the imagined and political relationship between the two countries.”⁸ Employing an argument that undermines the binary structures of East/West, ancient/modern, and racial homogeneity/hybridity, Hutchinson brings consideration of the knowledge, attitudes, and expectations of a Meiji Japanese

⁶ Seidensticker, *The Life and Writings of Nagai Kafû*, 25.

⁷ See, for example, Akase Masako, *Nagai Kafû to Furansu bungaku* (Tokyo: Aratake shuppan, 1976), Amino Yoshihiro, “Amerika monogatari,” in *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* (June 1960): 51-58. Also Stephen Snyder, *Fictions of Desire: Narrative Form in the Novels of Nagai Kafû* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000).

⁸ See Rachael Hutchinson, “Who holds the whip? Power and critique in Nagai Kafû’s *Tales of America*” in Rachael Hutchinson and Mark Williams, eds. *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 66-70; also “Positioning the Observer: Interrogations of Alterity in Nagai Kafû’s *Amerika monogatari*,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 62:3 (2007): 326; and “Occidentalism and the Critique of Meiji: The West in Returnee Stories of Nagai Kafû,” in *Japan Forum*, 3(2): 195-213.

audience into her discussion of *Amerika monogatari*. But *Amerika monogatari* is a text that also questions *American* conceptions of the same issues, which themselves are often in flux. The constructed nature of the “Other” that Hutchinson explores is subject to the shifting grounds of American class structure, race relations, state and federal legislation, and regional difference. Bringing a deeper historical understanding to Kafû’s stories illuminates the *Amerika* of *Amerika monogatari*, enriching readings with intertextual meanings and cross-cultural commentary.

Although the political aspects of Kafû’s text have gone largely unstudied, what has allowed Kafû to explore these issues, however, has not. This is his experimentation with narrative strategy, the results of which successfully problematize both Japanese and American conceptions of class-, race-, and nation-based social positioning. These issues are striking in *Amerika monogatari* specifically because race and nationality were key elements in American identity formation in the early 1900s, and because of the Meiji state’s efforts to instill a sense of national identity in the Japanese populace.⁹ The narrating voices in *Amerika monogatari* and their interactions with a diverse Japanese resident community allow Kafû to put forth a kind of political argument that presents an

⁹ Kafû belonged to the second generation of Japanese in the “modern era,” people who began their careers after Japan had gone through the initial and generally successful process of “modernization” following its encounter with the West. By the late Meiji period Japan had established a constitutional form of government, carried out administrative and fiscal centralization, universalized military training, induced the Western powers to revise the “unequal treaties” and launched ambitious programs of industrialization and mass education. In the name of “enriching the nation and strengthening the army,” Japan built up a formidable military presence and fought wars successfully against China and later Russia. By the early 1900s Japan had emerged as the first “modern” nation of Asia. In addition to institutional advancements, the project of nation building also brought with it the work of creating a national identification among the “people.” Although a sense of nationhood emerged from Japan’s external interactions with other countries, (wars with China, Russia, and negotiations with the Western powers involved in the unequal treaties), Meiji leaders were also faced with internal challenges to the formation of a unified sense of national identity shared by all subjects. A variety of identities derived from geography and social status persisted in Japan after the fall of the Tokugawa (1600-1868) government. For efforts to create a homogeneous national identity to succeed, a handful of oligarchs leading the Meiji government had to dismantle non-national identities, which as competitors with nationality held out the possibility of alternative definitions of community. See Iriye, “Introduction.”

alternative to the Meiji-era project of creating a popular “national” consciousness. Kafû’s portrayals of various members of the Japanese resident community highlight Japanese identities that complicate the concept of homogeneous national identity; figures emerge, rather, that show a Japanese community with diverse regional, educational, personal and class backgrounds.

Shades of a political argument are found in the second passage quoted at the outset of this chapter. In addition to introducing issues of narrative positionality and class structure, the excerpt also presents the related problem of regional bias with regards to the “homeland.” The narrator remarks that on moonlit nights the laborers sing popular songs of their *native* places (or birthplaces, *shôgoku*), referring, of course, to Japan’s provinces. In fact, what has made the crowd of third-class passengers more interesting to this narrator is a curiosity based on the marked difference in behavior between himself and those from different regions of Japan. The implication here is that the narrator himself is not from the provinces but rather the “center”—the city of Tokyo—the hub of Japan’s cultural and artistic elite. This fracturing of the Japanese homeland seems to move against the description of the journey in the opening section of *Amerika monogatari* in which the narrator describes the sea voyage from his *home country* (*kokyô*)—Japan—to this country—America. Japan is, of course, *kokyô* for all of the passengers, but by referring to the *native* places of the third-class passengers, and by underscoring differences among national subjects based on local birthplace, Kafû is in fact subverting the notion of a single *kokyô*, and fracturing the Japanese populace into a heterogeneous group with different geographical affiliations, and social and cultural dispositions.

Telling America

Issues concerning national identity, class and representation are reflected in the very title Kafû has given his collection, *Amerika monogatari* (あめりか物語). As Seidensticker's comments indicate, Kafû's America is a place crafted through the imagination of a particular Japanese man, a notion inscribed in the phonetic rendering of "Amerika." A number of scholars have noted Kafû's deliberate use of the hiragana *Amerika*, which differs from the rendering of the same *Amerika* in the text, which appears in more familiar Chinese characters (亜米利加). Rachael Hutchinson invokes the work of Bakhtin in her explanation of Kafû's rendering: "The word in language itself is half someone else's. It becomes one's own when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention."¹⁰ Hutchinson notes that by using the hiragana script Kafû at once "normalizes" and yet "emphasizes the strangeness" or "otherness" of America, simultaneously distinguishing between the actual country and his own construction of it. Indeed, Kafû's choice of the hiragana "Amerika" calls attention to the constructive act of representation. However, the deliberate elision of Chinese characters from his choice also renders an "America" that is specifically "Japanese." This is a construction of "America" through an expressly "Japanese" lens.

That Kafû calls his work a "monogatari" also warrants some fleshing out. The term *monogatari* derives from *mono*, "thing or things" and *kataru*, "to tell, to relate,"

¹⁰Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) quoted in Rachael Hutchinson, "Positioning the Observer: Interrogations of Alterity in Nagai Kafû's *Amerika monogatari*," 326.

meaning, literally, “relating of things.” There is thus an oral aspect to the *monogatari*, an appropriate signifier for Kafû’s collection, which is a series of stories that emphasizes hearsay and the acts of telling and listening. Conventional readings of *monogatari* also carry a heavy pre-modern signification, evoking Heian (794-1158) prose narratives such as *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji) and orally-based stories derived from a body of tales such as *Heike monogatari* (Tale of the Heike, late Kamakura period, 1192-1333). Because the term shares a close association with *kokubungaku*, or Japanese national literature, Kafû invokes a kind of intertextual play with anterior texts and precedents when he calls his collection a *monogatari*. But Kafû’s appropriation of *monogatari* also plays on the idea of cultural essentialism, and on the meaning of national literature. The term *monogatari* may evoke a set of anterior texts in the Japanese literary tradition, but, as many scholars have shown, Kafû’s text is also heavily influenced by works in the French Naturalist tradition. Drawn from different “national” literary traditions and contexts, Kafû employs a more flexible usage of *monogatari*, one that embraces different temporal and national contexts. In choosing *America monogatari* for a title, Kafû thus engages in a linguistic play on the construction and signification of the nation and its literary traditions.

Fracturing the Nation

In thinking about the larger issues of national identity and narration with which Kafû is clearly preoccupied, I am drawn to scholarship on another Meiji period (1868-1912) writer who spent time abroad: Mori Ôgai. In Christopher Hill’s examination of the

resentful narrator and national identity in Mori Ôgai's "Maihime" (Dancing Girl), Hill argues that "Maihime"

was "a forceful contribution to efforts to transform the populace of the Japanese archipelago into a 'nation' mobilized with a commonly held purpose."¹¹

Hill contends that through the story of the bureaucrat Ota and his term as a student in Germany, Ôgai constructs nationality as the primary form of subjective identification, rendering alternative identities illegitimate. Hill rereads "Maihime" in these political terms, using the climax of the story, where Ota must choose whether to stay in Europe or return to Japan, to highlight the choice that all Meiji period Japanese people had to make—the choice to be *Japanese*, or another unacceptable and purely negative alternative. In "Maihime," Ota chooses to return to Japan and confesses to suffering a lasting resentment as a consequence. Resentment emerges as a characteristic of the national subject: not simply a side effect, but rather a sentiment that makes the formation of such a subject possible. The resentment that Hill observes is posited in a narrative framing device, where the story is recalled by a first-person narrator who is writing onboard a ship at some later point in time. The resentful récit of the mature narrator focuses on the experiences of his earlier self to highlight the complexities of national identity formation.

The relationship between Kafû and Ôgai is well known and well documented in Japanese literary studies, with Kafû having chosen of all the figures in Japanese letters Ôgai as his "surrogate father."¹² In most discussions of the friendship between the two men, the two themes that link them are attraction to Western culture, particularly

¹¹ Christopher Hill, "Mori Ôgai's Resentful Narrator: Trauma and the National Subject in the 'Dancing Girl'" in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, Volume 10, Number 2 (Fall 2002): 365-397.

¹² See J. Thomas Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Traditions: An Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 12.

literature; and a subsequent renewed interest in traditional Japan, which resulted in a sustained reexamination of the Japanese past in light of its confrontation with the challenges of Western culture.¹³ Stephen Snyder, however, pushes the comparison to more useful heights when he says “the friendship between the two was based on a shared interest in the project of inventing modern Japanese fiction.”¹⁴ More specifically, Kafû turned to Ôgai’s seminal texts for inspiration in narrative experimentation, to help him establish narrative positioning, and the “attitude taken in observing [his] materials.”¹⁵ These experiments included use of the narrative frame.

Hill addresses Ôgai’s use of the narrative frame in “Maihime” and its relationship to issues of national subjectivity. In “Maihime” the narrator is a man relating the story of his “earlier self.” At times Kafû, too, employs a frame whereby a person is separated from an earlier version of himself. There are also stories in which the narrative is divided between two or three different individuals. The outcome of Kafû’s narrative strategy in terms of national subjectivity, however, is the opposite of “Maihime.” The interactions of Kafû’s narrators with a heterogeneous Japanese community in the United States provide a forceful questioning of efforts to transform the populace of the Japanese archipelago into national community with a commonly held purpose. In fact, the accrued effect of reading *Amerika monogatari* is to bring to light precisely the opposite, emphasizing individual histories, experiences and tastes that cut across national and racial categories of identification.

¹³ See Seidensticker, *The Life and Writings of Nagai Kafû, 1879-1959*, 40-45; Stephen Snyder *Fictions of Desire*, 8-15; and J. Thomas Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Traditions: An Introduction*, 12-18.

¹⁴ Stephen Snyder, *Fictions of Desire*, 8-15.

¹⁵ Rimer, 15.

Journey from a Ship's Cabin

Although deployment of the narrative frame is more pronounced in the second story of *Amerika monogatari*, issues concerning narrative stance and the nation are established from the very first story. Written in 1903 and published first in *Bungei kurabu* (1904), “Kyabin yawa” (Night Talk from a Ship’s Cabin) focuses on a nighttime conversation between the narrator (*watashi*) and two other passengers as they travel from Yokohama to the port of Seattle. This story acts as a framing device for the entire collection, and is matched with the final story, which shows the narrator sailing from New York to France.

The opening passage of the story, cited at the beginning of this chapter, relays the narrator’s description of the long voyage from Yokohama to Seattle. One evening, the narrator, intimidated by the cold weather, decides to stay in his cabin when he gets a visit from a fellow passenger, Yanagida. The two men eventually call over another man, Kishimoto, from the cabin next door and the three engage in a lively evening chat. Although we learn little about the narrator other than his first-class status, Yanagida and Kishimoto are sketched in ample detail. Initially the two men are presented as polar opposites or possible ciphers for contrasting images of gentlemen in a Westernizing Japan.¹⁶ Yanagida, outspoken and robust, is a model of the Westernized businessman, sporting a thin moustache, a striped suit and a colorful necktie. He has extensive experience abroad and a command of English, which he inserts into his conversations with an exaggerated accent whenever he can. Kishimoto, on the other hand, slighter in physique and quieter in temperament than Yanagida, enters the cabin apologizing for his

¹⁶ Several commentators have made this point. See, for example, Rachael Hutchinson, “Positioning the Observer: Interrogations of Alterity in Nagai Kafû’s *Amerika monogatari*,” 326 and Amino Yoshihiro, “*Amerika monogatari*,” in *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* (June 1960): 51-58.

casual appearance and is clearly unsettled by the stormy weather. Worried about catching a cold, Kishimoto, warmer and more comfortable in Japanese clothing, wears a heavy half-coat (*haori*) over a longer kimono and flannel liner. At this point the reader may wonder where the narrator might lie on a continuum with the Westernized Yanagida on one end and the more traditional Kishimoto on the other. However, when a debate arises between Kishimoto and Yanagida about which style of clothing—Japanese or Western—keeps one warmer, the narrator offers only the conciliatory remark that neither Western nor Japanese clothing makes much difference when one is cold.¹⁷

As the evening continues, both Yanagida and Kishimoto reveal the reasons behind their decision to travel to America. Yanagida, having graduated from a “certain school,” began work in a company where he was eventually sent to Australia for a time on business. Thinking that the experience abroad would advance his career and ultimately pave the road to a happy future in Japan, he was disappointed to land only a minor translating job upon his return. Yanagida accepted the position without complaint while shifting his energies to winning the heart of a wealthy, aristocratic wife. In this, too, he was unsuccessful, for the woman on whom he had set his sights married instead a “university graduate of the island country.” Unhappy with his work as a translator, and suffering from a broken heart, Yanagida denounces everything in the “island country” and decides to pursue business in the United States. Kishimoto, a company worker in Tokyo, had been passed up for promotion time and time again by university graduates, and, on the verge of being dismissed altogether, has decided to leave a wife of considerable fortune and a son at home to pursue the key to a promising career—a

¹⁷ See Hutchinson, “Positioning the Observer,” 326.

university degree—even if he has to do it in a foreign country. Kishimoto’s hope is to obtain a degree in as short a time as possible, which he could proudly show his wife upon return to Japan.

Although the outward appearances of Yanagida and Kishimoto present a binary construction of the “West” and “Japan,” their respective stories come together in interesting ways. Both men clearly subscribe to the Meiji value of *risshin shusse*—striving for success—and have actively tried to pursue it. Kishimoto has left a wife and child at home in order to obtain a degree and a promotion. Yanagida pursued work abroad and mastered English with the hopes of landing a prestigious position in Japan. But while Kishimoto and Yanagida’s stories are testimony to an intense desire for personal success in a Meiji society where social mobility is possible, they also speak to narrowing opportunities in Japan and a sense of self-worth based entirely on educational achievement and professional position. Both men have struggled with obstacles in the pursuit of personal advancement and neither man has been able to find a suitable place for himself in a rapidly changing society.

In addition to internalizing the ideals of *risshin shusse*, both Yanagida and Kishimoto have pinned their hopes for success on the United States. By the end of this story, however, any initial optimism regarding the futures of the two men has begun to fade. In fact the prospects for each man looks worse when read against the history of the other. Yanagida’s experience abroad and knowledge of English has done him little good upon return to Japan. Not only does he fail to move up in the business world, his experiences have helped him little to win a bride. In addition, his repeated references to the “narrow-mindedness” of people in the “island country,” a remark he repeats at least

three times in the story, make us speculate about his life as a recent returnee. Is he simply bitter about not advancing through the system? Or has a suspicious or resentful reaction by people to his time abroad tainted his relationships? Whatever the reason, the hopes Yanagida has for his life in the United States, a place that we can read as being the antithesis of “small and narrow-minded” Japan, seem too high to possibly attain. It seems unlikely that America will be as vast and open-minded as Yanagida expects.

Kishimoto’s decision to pursue an education in the United States was in fact an extreme choice available to those seeking higher education during the Meiji period. Earl Kinmonth has written that in contrast to the surge in middle school education at the turn of the century, there was no comparable expansion in the higher-school system. As a consequence, admission rates, which had risen in the late 1890s, started to move downward by the early 1900s.¹⁸ As an alternative to the increasing difficulty of obtaining a degree in Japan, figures like Katayama Sen began to write about the opportunities for education in the United States. In his articles, which appeared in popular magazines like *Seikô* (Success) and *Tobei annai* (Guide to Going to America), Katayama explains that those pursuing degrees in America did not have to face entrance examinations, which doomed to failure as many as two-thirds of the applicants to higher schools in Japan. However, he also warns that men best suited for this option would be self-supporting types who had the requisite strength and perseverance to endure the hardships that come with study in America.¹⁹

A Meiji audience may have wondered why Kishimoto, married to a woman of means and probably able to afford aids to help him pass the entrance exams, chose not to

¹⁸ Earl Kinmonth, *The Self-Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: From Samurai to Salary Man* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 44-81.

¹⁹ Kinmonth, 191-193.

pursue a degree from a Japanese university. He may have been too old to enter the Japanese university system, or perhaps he did not attend one of its preparatory higher schools. A Meiji audience would have understood, moreover, that using his wife's fortune would mean reversing the financial order and upsetting the patriarchal demand for male dominance, which might also explain why the wife's offer to retire to the countryside was equally unappealing. No matter what the reason for his particular decision, however, the pathos in the situation is clear: Kishimoto has left a wife and child at home to pursue what he believes to be the key to upward social mobility, a university degree. Unfortunately the descriptions of Kishimoto—his nervousness on the ship, his delicate constitution, his reserved nature, and an uneasiness with his own decision to leave Japan—makes the future for this man very uncertain.

Although the narrator never reveals his own reasons for leaving Japan, we realize that while his primary concern is combating the boredom of the voyage, others passengers are preoccupied with more pressing issues and concerns. We may also assume that in his calm state of indifference he is less worried about the *risshin shusse* ideal than either of his fellow passengers. He is the true voyager à la Baudelaire, remaining unfettered by the concerns of other Japanese people and thus capable of recognizing weakness in others. In this respect, the narrator's portrayals of Yanagida and Kishimoto seem to point to two interrelated readings. The first suggests a critique of Meiji ideology by foregrounding the irony in Yanagida's story. For Yanagida, striving for unrealistic goals has resulted in bitter and resentful feelings towards the nation, which culminate in the decision to leave its shores for good. Kishimoto's story is highly ironic as well. A state that valorizes national identity, cohesion, and strength through the trope of the

family has pushed this man into fracturing his own family. Kishimoto's quest for self-advancement requires leaving his beloved home and moving far away from his wife and child. The second reading includes a critique as well, though this time directed at how and to what extent individuals internalize Meiji doctrine. Does the responsibility for the situation in which these men find themselves lie with the state, individual choice, or a combination of both? It is clear that the story questions the intense desire for self-advancement through education promoted by Meiji leaders, but at the same time both Yanagida and Kishimoto are victims of their own naiveté and limited vision.

The conciliatory nature of the narrator in "Kyabin yawa" prevents us from getting a clear read on his views, and this has led some scholars to interpret his role as strictly a conduit for introducing Yanagida and Kishimoto. However, while reporting on the situations of his two companions, the narrator seems to take on more than just the passive role of listener. Deriving great pleasure from hearing their stories, the narrating "I" extracts and facilitates conversation, amplifying the drama whenever possible. For example, after Yanagida explains his desire to marry and his losing a bride to a man with a university degree, the narrator comments, "You see Yanagida, Kishimoto has left Japan in order to pursue his studies, even at the expense of leaving his wife and child behind."²⁰ The statement, which seemingly goes unnoticed by Yanagida, implies that it is indeed possible to find a wife (with money at least) without a university degree. And all of Yanagida's experience abroad, an experience on which Kishimoto is about to embark, has helped him little upon return to Japan. These points come into relief through skillful juxtaposition on the part of the mediating narrator.

²⁰ *KZ*, 3:17.

By the end of the evening both visitors leave the cabin feeling slightly distressed—taking their leave in ways that reinstitute the Japan/West binary established in the beginning, Kishimoto uttering set niceties of departure in Japanese, and Yanagida saying “Goodnight” in English. The narrator is left to ponder the evening alone, or perhaps to gather his thoughts about the evening’s conversation. As the narrator himself glibly puts it, “Whenever some are having fun, others may have to suffer. Like a fire—it is a disaster to those who lose their home, but a great spectacle to the rest.”²¹ The evening’s conversation may have been the “spectacle” that the narrator was hoping for (and a disaster for his two guests), but it has told us something important about Meiji society and the struggles of its people. The narrator’s comment points to a fundamental division within Meiji society, to a separation between those who succeed at *risshin shusse* and those who do not. It points to a system that, in its effort to unite the population and advance the nation, has left some people behind in its wake.

The stories succeeding “Kyabin Yawa” introduce other members of the Japanese community who experience various degrees of success in America. Many of the stories are relayed through the eyes of a narrator who tries to view the world from the perspective of a carefree traveler, although this is a position that he cannot consistently maintain. It is through this failure, however, that the issues of politicality that I have foregrounded so far come into relief. Because it is necessary to know what the narrators are trying to achieve before we can assess how they fail, permit me to flesh out the concept of the *flâneur*.

²¹ Ibid., 21.

The Flâneur

Flânerie, the act of strolling and observing carried out by the *flâneur*, is a recurring motif in the literature of the modern, metropolitan existence. Theorized by figures such as Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, the birth of the *flâneur* has been traced to Baudelaire's essay, "The Painter of Modern Life."

For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—such are a few of the slightest passions of those independent, passionate impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define.²²

One cannot imagine a better description of the free-floating traveler of Kafû's *Amerika monogatari*. The Baudelairian *flâneur*, a wandering urban artist with a keen eye for capturing the "ephemeral, fugitive, and contingent" of modern life, enters a crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy, allowing himself to be pushed and pulled by its currents and flows. While caught up in the flow of the crowd, however, the *flâneur* never loses the dialectic of control. Tracking the crowd's movements and studying its inhabitants, the *flâneur*'s specific talent lies in his ability to sort, assess and articulate the crowd's hidden meaning.²³

Walking through the city at random and alone, the *flâneur*'s delicate balance of detachment and engagement points to a certain relationship between the *flâneur* and the object of his gaze. The tension is described in "The Painter of Modern Life" as a sort of mirror: "We might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of it's movements and reproducing the

²² Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays by Charles Baudelaire*, translated and edited by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1964), 9.

²³ Tester, 6.

multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.”²⁴ This description highlights the reciprocal aspects of watching the crowd. As an observer, the *flâneur* serves as a tool by which the illuminating spectacles of modern life are filtered and reflected. But a kaleidoscope is also an optical toy in which fragmented colors, shapes and patterns are turned and shifted to create a complex whole. Scholars such as Keith Tester have drawn from the image of the kaleidoscope to understand *flânerie* as “the activity of the sovereign spectator going about the city in order to find the things which will occupy his gaze and thus complete his incomplete identity, [and] satisfy his otherwise dissatisfied existence.”²⁵ As scholarship pertaining to it has asserted, the trope of the *flâneur* sometimes reveals less about the objects of the gaze than it does about the subjectivity of the observer. The modern, urban crowd provides the wandering poet with subject matter, but it is also central to his identity. As Tester notes, the *flâneur* is “caught in a dialectic of self-definition and definition from the outside.” For Baudelaire, it is impossible for the *flâneur* to remain detached and uninfluenced by the chaotic transience of modern life, for this chaos is an integral part of his being.²⁶

Whereas Baudelaire’s *flâneur* is a wandering poet blessed with a keen sensitivity for what he sees, Walter Benjamin’s *flâneur* is defined largely along the lines of class. Benjamin, although concerned with the relationship between the observing subject and the observed object, paints an entirely different kind of *flâneur*, one defined by a strict socio-economic structure. The intermingling of the crowd and the fluid subjectivity of Baudelaire’s *flâneur* gets frozen into a rigid social hierarchy in Benjamin’s estimation: “There was the pedestrian who wedged himself into the crowd, but there was also the

²⁴ Baudelaire, 9

²⁵ Tester, 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

flâneur who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forgo the life of a gentleman of leisure.”²⁷ Benjamin’s *flâneur* assumes complete invisibility and gains unlimited access to the city, but his wanderings are also seen as a mark of social standing. His leisure sets him apart from the urban crowd of ostensibly productive laborers and professionals. For Benjamin, the *flâneur* is inseparable from his bourgeois identity and does his utmost to maintain distance from the crowd.

Considerable critical analysis has emphasized times and places other than Baudelaire’s nineteenth-century Paris in which *flânerie* has been an important artistic response to urban space.²⁸ These studies have shown how *flânerie* enables artists to produce cultural constructions of the city. Not only is the *flâneur* a figure within the city, he is a *producer* of that city, one that reveals the interplay of self/city. Figuratively speaking, more than just the city streets are revealed; paths are paved through literal and figurative labyrinths of streets and social interaction.²⁹ *Amerika monogatari*, as the title suggests, is the product of Kafû’s vision of *Amerika*, a vision that takes in a large number of urban spaces such as Seattle/Tacoma, St. Louis, Chicago, Washington D.C. and New York. Put simply, the stories of *Amerika monogatari* develop a poetic narrator who participates in *flânerie* as a means of opening critical pathways and historical contexts for viewing the panorama of early twentieth-century America.

²⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, translated from the German by Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1983), 35.

²⁸ Examples are too numerous to count but see, for example, Kirsten Bartholomew Ortega, “The Black Flâneuse: Gwendolyn Brooks’s ‘In the Mecca,’” *Journal of Modern Literature*, Volume 30, Number 4 (Summer 2007): 139-155; Mary Gluck, “The Budapest Flâneur: Urban Modernity, Popular Culture, and the ‘Jewish Question’ in Fin-de-Siècle Hungary,” in *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Spring-Summer, 2004): 1-2; Rolf J. Goebel, Benjamin’s “Flâneur in Japan: Urban Modernity and Conceptual Relocation,” in *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Autumn, 1998): 377-391; Dana Brand “The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature” *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Mar., 1993): 505-507.

²⁹ Kirsten Bartholomew Ortega, “The Black Flâneuse: Gwendolyn Brooks’s ‘In the Mecca,’” 140.

In the stories of *Amerika monogatari*, Kafû's *flâneur*-narrators are detached controllers and domesticators of the American environment, producing interpretations of what they see in a text for the consumption of the reader or listener. The environment includes the streets of large urban areas and the suburbs surrounding them as well as individuals within the "crowds" that inhabit them. In addition to the artistic portraits of Seattle's *Japantown*, the monuments of Washington D.C., or Chinatown in New York, the *people* of Kafû's collection also stand out as remarkable figures. Like the *flâneur*, the narrator's optical engagement with the city involves scrutinizing the faces and bodies of passers-by and filtering and reflecting upon what he sees.

Kafû makes clear, though, that the promise of easy legibility is a fraud. The vicissitudes of his encounters are made clear through narrative structures that expose the failed attempts of the *flâneur*, and through the complexities of the text-world. And in early twentieth-century America, it is the structures of class and race that challenge the *flâneur*'s ability to be a liminal participant. The young Japanese man at the center of *Amerika monogatari*, like Baudelaire's *voyageur*, is a bourgeois man detached from the constraints of organized society, but once he enters America he himself is subject to the same sort of scrutiny that he imparts on the crowd. Such scrutiny in early-twentieth America meant assessing an individual's racial background and nationality.

Ken K. Ito has commented on the links between narration and race in *Amerika monogatari*. He states, "The authorial persona of *Amerika monogatari* is a curious product of cultural aspiration: a Japanese deliberately and self-consciously wearing a transparent European mask. He is a creature whose every perception is colored by his

yearning to become an artist of another race.”³⁰ The problem is, of course, that the narrator, as a *Japanese* man, is inevitably encumbered by class and racial markers himself, which constantly interfere with his efforts to provide a seamless “reading” of the text-world. Whether the observed objects are Japanese or American, or whether the narrator’s wandering takes place in “Japantown,” the urban areas of the Pacific Northwest, New York City, or even the rural countryside, the narrators are affected by racial and class differences, which themselves are unstable and subject to change depending upon geographical location. Indeed, it is unlikely that an upper-class Japanese man can blend into the crowds of downtown Tacoma or Seattle in a way that he might in Tokyo.

Following its shipboard prologue, *Amerika monogatari* begins with the narrator’s exploration of the Pacific Northwest, specifically Seattle and Tacoma, where he encounters a large Japanese resident community—students, laborers and the businessmen who cater to them—and where he experiences the uncanny sensation of feeling “away from home and yet ... everywhere at home. “Shiattorukô no hitoya” (An Evening at the Port of Seattle) features a narrator who experiences the greatest amount of success as a *flâneur* and who manages to maintain aesthetic distance from his material. It is also, however, the place where he first experiences a palpable threat to his “impartial” nature.

A Night at the Port of Seattle

“Shiattorukô no hitoya,” published in the May 1904 issue of *Bungei kurabu*, focuses on the experience of *watashi* (“I”), a newcomer to America, as he ventures for

³⁰ Ken K. Ito, *Visions of Desire: Tanizaki's Fictional Worlds* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 41.

the first time into Seattle's Japanese quarter. The narrator tells us that a crew member aboard the ship had warned him to stay away from this "dangerous" section of town full of "Japanese people," a place where "no respectable man should set foot."³¹ The warning only piques the curiosity of the narrator, however, and the story leads the reader through the quarter as *watashi* follows a group of Japanese laborers in search of a good story.

The narrator's evening begins as he walks, unnoticed, down a slope and through the crowds of First and Second Avenue, Seattle's thriving downtown, with its tall buildings, shops and brightly illuminated signs. Dazzled by the spectacle, he remarks that even Ginza in Tokyo could not be "compared to this... countless numbers of men and women rubbing shoulders and laughing under brilliant lights, crisscrossing streetcars full of passengers, and individual carriages threading their way through them."³² The busy commercial district of First Avenue, however, grows dark once he makes a turn onto Jackson, a street leading directly to Japantown (*Nihonjinmachi*). The tall stone buildings are replaced by rows of low, wooden buildings, and the stench of horse dung piled in the streets and sooty air make it difficult to breathe. The border of the Japan quarter is marked by a "strangely-shaped" building that reminds the narrator of the "Panorama-kan" in Asakusa.³³ The building is a gas tank, and the narrator, overwhelmed by the disagreeable smell, covers his nose and mouth with a handkerchief as he passes under it to formally enter the quarter.

Although the quarter is dimly lit, the narrator spots a sign written in Japanese characters and stares at it mesmerized until the sound of a samisen jolts him out of his trance. It felt, he remarks, as if he "were traveling in the countryside and listening to

³¹ *KZ*, 3:314.

³² *Ibid.*.

³³ The term "Panorama-kan" refers to the Asakusa Panorama Playhouse.

comic songs in a distant post-town in Japan.”³⁴ As the narrator moves further into the quarter, the scene becomes permeated with symbols of Japan. Signs are written entirely in Japanese, there is a Japanese bath and a grocery store, and there are tofu, sushi, and noodle restaurants. The crowd of people, however, is becoming more diverse. Although captivated by the familiarity of the scene and groups of “fellow countrymen,” the narrator takes note of the white laborers smoking large pipes and milling around the crowd. Given the name “*Japantown*” and described as a space that resembles the *shitamachi* (working-class) neighborhoods of Tokyo, the space is also racially diverse, where both white and Japanese laborers mingle freely. The initial contrast emerging between the description of a modernized “America,” symbolized by the dynamic scene of uptown Seattle, and a backwards “Japan” mapped onto the downtown quarter is complicated on a number of levels by the issues of race and class, and by a narrator who stands in the liminal position between the two worlds.

To begin, the notion of mutually exclusive national territory is complicated by the existence of a *Nihonjinmachi* within the city of Seattle. The reference to the Panorama building in Tokyo’s Asakusa makes clear the association with Tokyo’s lower-class entertainment district. Yet as the narrator moves further into the quarter the *shitamachi* allusion itself is complicated by the sound of the samisen, from which *provincial* melodies unfamiliar to the narrator are emitted. The geographical disparity in this story emerges on multiple levels, between Japan and America and between Tokyo and Japan’s provinces, both converging in the quarter to create an uncanny nexus of the familiar and unfamiliar.

³⁴ *KZ*, 3:315.

The people that inhabit the district are also of interest to the narrator, and this is where the question of race emerges most vividly in the story. At first the narrator himself does not know where to situate himself in relation to the Americans on First Street and the Japanese residents of the *Nihonjinmachi*. The warning by the ship's crewmember has already set him apart from the people of *Nihonjinmachi* and the narrator himself adopts this view by describing the people he sees as having "long torsos and short, bowed legs," noting that they must "look very strange to white people (*hakujin*).” He somehow fails to recognize the possibility that he, too, may be viewed the same way. Of particular importance here is the fact that he is able to maintain anonymity amidst the throngs of Americans on First and Second Avenues. It is only when he enters Japantown that he becomes an object of suspicion as an upper-class gentleman. One might expect precisely the opposite, where in a sea of Caucasian people the narrator might be visibly marked by race, a marker that disappears as he moves into the crowds of Japanese people in the quarter. But the main source of identity in *Nihonjinmachi* has shifted to class; it is his position as a Tokyo gentleman that makes him far more conspicuous here than his role as a tourist in uptown Seattle.

The story's focal point is a conversation that the narrator overhears after being chased off the streets by the "menacing" looks of men in the quarter. The narrator takes refuge in a soba shop where he overhears a conversation among a group of schoolboys.

How's work? That lady still keeping you busy?

It's just awful. All day every day that red-haired woman bosses me around in the kitchen. It's no easy thing being a schoolboy.

Well, we're all doing it so don't complain. All you can do is hope for a successful future.

Don't know if it's possible. Has your English improved?

Not one bit. I don't understand anything. Here I am, a grown man, going to elementary school every day with ten- and eleven-year olds. It's been six months already and still no progress...

You mustn't feel that it's hopeless. If you do you'll give up and never amount to anything. There are many examples of this happening. Take some of our predecessors. They were determined to study hard, but now they're in their thirties or even forties and they're still nothing more than servants in white peoples' homes. If you're impatient you're bound to fail. All we can do is to continue to study hard.³⁵

As some scholars have noted, the aim of the Seattle/Tacoma stories is to provide a kind of reportage on the situation for Japanese residents, to reveal the truth about the “real” lives of Japanese sojourners. The dialogue is also, however, laced with a large dose of irony. To fully grasp the irony, audiences would have to be familiar with the “schoolboy” phenomenon (where men engage in domestic labor in American households in exchange for time to attend school and a small wage), and the rhetoric that encouraged those with limited financial and educational resources to work their way towards a university degree in the United States. Clearly the Meiji ideal of attaining a degree through hard work and dedication has given way to a much harsher reality. Not only do the men fail to learn English, they are constantly subjected to the humiliating authority of the American wives for whom they work, while their “schooling” involves sitting side by side with American children. Even more pitiful is that in addition to striving for an implausible goal, the men respond by reciting the same rhetorical platitudes that resulted in their decision to become schoolboys in the first place. The story ends with an additional note of irony. As the men conclude their conversation they make their way up

³⁵ Ibid.

to a brothel on the restaurant's second floor. Not only is the possibility of attaining success through foreign education being exposed as a fraud, the hopelessness and despair experienced by the schoolboys is leading towards their "degradation" rather than their "civilization."³⁶

Although "Shiattorukô no hitoya" is told from the perspective of a single narrator, the remaining stories that I analyze employ a narrative frame structure that incorporates two or sometimes three different narrative voices. Scholars have noted the effects of using such a narrative strategy, and my analysis contributes to the discourse by discussing how the narrative strategy complicates notions of national identity. Before beginning this discussion, it may be helpful to review what others have said about Kafû's style of narration.

The Embedded Narrative

While the image of a singular, unified narrator pervades the twenty-three stories in Kafû's collection, the nature of the telling is far more fragmented. The stories are sometimes told from a single voice, or sometimes the story is passed onto another narrator or narrators, making the kernel story twice, or sometimes three times removed from the initial narrator. Edward Seidensticker has been critical of the narrative "framing" device, describing several of the "narrative-within-the-narrative" plot structures in *Amerika monogatari* as "a technique found so frequently as to make one suspect that Kafû may be hoping to create an illusion of aesthetic distance by mechanical means."³⁷ Drawing from scholarship in English literature and tracing the Maupaussant

³⁶ Here I refer to the famous Meiji period slogan, *bunmei kaika* (Civilization and Enlightenment).

³⁷ Seidensticker, 18.

stories to which it bears resemblance, Stephen Snyder investigates Kafû's narrative strategy in terms of the "intrusive narrator" and other narrative "malfunctions." Snyder proposes that "the frame, by dramatizing the act of writing and reading, calls attention to the story-like nature of the narration, effacing the notion of the narrative as independent reality and collapsing narrative distance; the teller becomes the actor, the telling the action."³⁸ Snyder's thesis points to a collection that thematizes the act of narration, debunking notions of earlier scholars who dismiss the collection as a postcard-like collection of aimless sketches lacking the deliberate structural qualities of a novel. As Snyder's work clearly demonstrates, Kafû's awareness of and experimentation with issues of narrative stance and literary construction attest to a highly deliberate approach to the act of writing.

While the fragmented style of narration underscores the act of telling and retelling in *America monogatari*, it also saddles the reader with the task of trying to position the narrator in relation to his story. This sometimes frustrating aspect of Kafû's stories, especially in the first half of the collection, is, however, an integral part of reading *Amerika monogatari*. One of the results of this structure is a portrait of the narrators refracted through the telling process—narrators defined negatively against the characters about whom they are reporting. Although Kafû's famous observers in *Amerika monogatari* bring with them a condescending, class-inflected gaze, use of the multiple frames creates a kind of mirror where the focus becomes less and less the inner-most story, and more and more the refractions of that story back onto the telling personae.

³⁸ Snyder, 36-37.

Although Snyder's valuable study illuminates narrative structure in *America monogatari*, the purpose of his work is to examine Kafû's earlier writing to see what he eventually exploits more fully later in his career. Viewing *Amerika monogatari*, especially the earlier stories in the collection, as experimental practice pieces belittles the possibility of Kafû's active investigations into the text-world of twentieth-century America. The analyses that follow explore these frames and investigate what they reveal about race, class and national identity, especially when the *flâneur*-narrator's "mirror" is another Japanese person and the setting is the American city.

*Night Fog*³⁹

We can compare the relatively seamless account of the narrator's first experience in Seattle's *Japantown* in "Shiattorukô no hitoya" with "Yoru no kiri" (Night Fog), which depicts a more problematic encounter between the narrator and a Japanese laborer. In this story, the narrator gets unwittingly involved in events on the streets.

The story follows the first-person narrator as he returns to Tacoma from a day in Seattle. As he gets off the electric train and begins to walk home, the narrator wanders through what appears to be a lower-class section of town. In the fog he encounters first drunken laborers of "this country" and then is confronted by a "fellow" Japanese. The narrator explains that "Since it is the Japanese and Chinese who sell their labor for the cheapest wages and steadily encroach upon their territory, Japs must be among the laborers' most hated enemies. I knew that people in this area universally detested

³⁹ "Yoru no kiri" appeared in the journal *Bungeikai* in July 1904, exactly two months after "Shiattorukô no hitoya" was published in *Bungei kurabu*, and is the only piece in *Amerika monogatari* written in literary Japanese. The rest of the stories are written in a colloquial style, except for one other story, "Yoaruki," (Night Stroll), which is written in epistolary style. See Iriye (2000), "Introduction."

Japanese and so I tried to get away in great fear.”⁴⁰ In making his getaway, however, the narrator is called back by a voice,

“Hey you! Wait a minute!” the person called out from behind me in muddled (*nigoritaru nihongo*) Japanese, to my great surprise. “You. You are my countryman, right? I feel like I’ve got to shake your hand for a moment.”

“What is it?” I quietly asked.

He did not answer, but stared at me with sharp eyes.⁴¹

The narrator then proceeds with a physical description of the man. He is short, over thirty years old, has the “typical” bowed legs of a Japanese person. He wears a weathered, stained fedora, a wrinkled suit, a crooked tie. It is noted that he could not be considered good-looking, even by a fellow countryman. He must, says the narrator, “be either a laborer hired for railway construction work or else a servant employed as a kitchen hand by a white family, but of no higher status.”⁴²

As the dialogue continues, the Japanese laborer becomes increasingly agitated by the coldness of the narrator, eventually grabbing his shirt, demanding to be heard, and asking not to be treated so coldly by a “fellow countryman.” He explains that although uneducated, both in the English language as well as in Japanese characters, he has a strong body, good hands and had been able to save some money as a laborer, although... And his story trails off there. When the narrator repeatedly asks the laborer to keep his voice down, embarrassed by the “disdainful looks they [American passers-by] show whenever they see Japanese,” the laborer responds, “Who cares [how loudly I’m speaking]? Are you afraid of the Yankees? Have you forgotten the Japanese spirit

⁴⁰ KZ, 3:321.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 322.

(*yamato damashii*) that's within us?"⁴³ After shouting at an American woman who looks askance at the two men, the laborer calls her a whore, spits on her shoes, and eventually gets taken away by an American policeman. The narrator, in a daze and unable to escape from this "dreadful trance" wonders how he ever made it home. The story concludes with another story, where several days later the narrator hears from a Japanese person of long-time residence in the area about a Japanese laborer who, after accumulating a large sum of money from his labor, deposited it in a savings agency organized by a group of Japanese people. The savings organization eventually went bankrupt and the man almost killed himself in despair. The laborer was eventually able to retrieve half of his savings after a post-bankruptcy investigation and settlement. However, the trauma of the bankruptcy followed by the elation of getting half of it back overwhelmed the man, who, it is said, "probably gambled it all away." He eventually went mad and ended up in an insane asylum outside of town.

Mitsuko Iriye observes that the language in which "Night Fog" is written serves to "blunt the dialogue that is carried out between Kafû and the Japanese laborer so that they are positioned on the same level, unlike in a work written in the colloquial style, which would have differentiated the two individuals' language according to their divergent social status."⁴⁴ Indeed the literary style softens the coarse language of the laborer but also blurs the starkness of the scene, in which the narrator is an equal target of scorn. Everything takes place in the misty atmosphere of downtown Tacoma, which is significant in that it obscures the one sense on which the *flâneur*-narrator is utterly dependent: his sight. The narrator's powers of observation come from the ability to view

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Iriye, xviii.

from a certain position of authority, a position from which he can “see” but not be seen. We may remember that Kafû did not include “Yoru no kiri” in his initial compilation of *Amerika monogatari*. The story, along with “Shiattoru no hitoya,” was added to the collection after his death. Iriye suspects that Kafû, a sensitive and proud person, did not want to advertise his deeply wounded feelings and therefore decided to bury the piece that revealed them in print and could damage his persona as a young artist leisurely observing American landscape, society, and culture.⁴⁵ This extrapolation not only reveals the problem of author-narrator conflation, it belies the inclusion of other stories in the collection that could also be easily considered to “damage the persona of the young artist.”

Whatever the reasons for Kafû’s exclusion of this story in his original compilation, what we can say for sure is that, like “Shiattorkô no hitoya,” it provides an alternative to the narrative of the adventurous sojourner who arrives in America, works hard, saves money, and eventually returns to Japan in a better economic position. Indeed, early Japanese sojourners were ill-prepared for the hardship they faced in the U.S., not only in terms of racial discrimination, but also at the hands of other Japanese people—fellow countrymen—who preyed on naïve newcomers, stole their money, forced them into unfair labor contracts or coerced them into prostitution. In this respect the ideas conveyed in Kafû’s stories resonate with those of other Japanese immigrant writers at the time who bluntly point out that the spiritually weak, those lacking in *yamato damashii*, cannot rise above their circumstances and survive in the immigrant land. Those weak of

⁴⁵ We remember that “Shiattoru no hitoya” and “Yoru no kiri” were the two stories Kafû elided from his original 1908 compilation.

spirit, one immigrant writer says, “go back to Japan with their tails between their legs, commit suicide, or simply go mad.”⁴⁶

Moving beyond the “inner” story of the laborer, his history, and the larger historical issues bound up in it, what of the narrator himself? What is his particular story? And, more specifically, what about the narrative strategy of including the story within “Night Fog,” presented at the end?

The narrator of “Night Fog” is a kind of *flâneur* who cannot help but be affected by what he sees, but one also unwilling to forgo the life of the gentleman of leisure. In this case, however, Tester’s “dialectic of self definition and definition from the outside” is complicated by the issue of race. The element of race—that both the bourgeois narrator and the Japanese laborer are *Japanese*—automatically creates a relationship between the narrating subject and the object of his gaze. The questions posed by the laborer echo throughout the piece, “Are you not my countryman?” “Are we not both from Japan?” Although the narrator does his best to, in Benjamin’s language “create elbow room” though a clearly class-inflected description of the man’s appearance, he ultimately fails. The laborer gradually presses in on him, grabbing his hand, and, as his anger escalates, grabbing him by the collar. The continuity of race forced upon the narrator is confirmed by the presence of the Americans in the story, all of whom sneer at the two men talking, making no distinction between the Japanese laborer and the Japanese gentlemen.

The failure of the Americans to distinguish between the narrator and the laborer is especially upsetting to the narrator, who begins his story by presenting clear class divisions through descriptions of the Tacoma nightscape and the people in it. He takes

⁴⁶ An oral history recounted in Ito Kazuo, *Hokubei hyakunenzakura*, 86.

note of the brightly-illuminated shop windows of Tacoma's commercial district, but also the poor housewives and men in tattered jackets who stare longingly at them. "It was easy to know what was on their minds," the narrator says, "but they did not seem to be embarrassed about it at all." That they did not seem embarrassed about it at all, that the Japanese laborer was not afraid of the Americans from whom his drunken behavior was drawing attention—the behavior of these lower-class people is drawn in stark contrast to that of the narrator, who appears walking in the shadows, speaking as quietly as possible, and cowering in the face of the large American policeman. What makes the narrator behave differently is a sense of class propriety. The narrator has the ability to read these characters in all their simplicity; he identifies with them yet disdains their inability to hold their feelings in check. What has made them this way? Probably their class background and a desire for material goods that they can only hope to obtain. In the case of the Japanese laborer one also wonders if his shamelessness has resulted from being of the laboring class and simply not knowing any better, or whether living in America has stripped away any "Japanese" sense of restraint.

At the end of the story the tragic history of the Japanese laborer is revealed by a friend of the narrator, a man who has been living in America for a long time. Hearing the story the narrator connects it with his own experience of a few nights previous. The laborer, sent away to the insane asylum, would probably never get out. The narrator concludes with "I was dumbfounded; all I could do was nod my head in silence. Suddenly, I felt a knot form in my stomach." Although the narrator cannot help but be moved by the laborer's story, our attention simultaneously turns to the future of the narrator. How will this experience affect him? Will he view his fellow countrymen in the

same light from this point on? In addition, the particular *way* in which this mediating presence, the second narrator and friend of the narrating “I,” relates the laborer’s story is of interest as well. In the space of about ten lines after a break in the text, the tragic tale of the laborer is succinctly, compactly related in a distinctly detached manner:

He has now been thrown within the iron gates of an asylum outside of the city. You may know this already, but in this country once you’re committed, nine times out of ten you never come out alive. So he, too, will suffer from improper treatment and soon die...You ask where the asylum is? It’s not very far away if you take the train. On Sunday perhaps you can go and see. They say that besides him two or three other Japanese laborers are incarcerated. Despair has driven them mad.⁴⁷

The narrator, as I just mentioned, remains silent and moved. Of course what strikes us about the story is not only the brutality of it, but also the way the coolly indifferent second narrator conveys it, as if these things simply cannot be helped, as if despair and insanity are reserved for the laboring classes. We are left wondering, then, if the narrating I, or the outer-most narrator, is rendered silent and moved by the laborer’s tragic story, or is simply stunned by the stone cold indifference of the person who tells it. The framing device used in this story thus illuminates divisions among the upper-class narrators; there are those who are sensitive to the tragic stories of fellow countrymen, and those that view the stories as part and parcel of immigrant life.

We also have to remember that the story of the laborer comes about through social hierarchy, through the consciousness of upper-class narrators who spend their time exploring the American landscape for enjoyment, and for whom the rhetoric of the nation means very little. These men struggle to distinguish themselves from their lower-class

⁴⁷ *KZ*, 3:329.

countrymen and to create alternative identities for themselves in a country where nation and race consistently trump class.

Road through the Pasture

Another story in Kafû's collection, "Makiba no michi" (Road through the Pasture), provides an interesting counterpart to "Yoru no kiri." Like "Yoru no kiri," "Makiba no michi" contains two narrators—an inexperienced newcomer and a veteran Japanese resident—and a tragic kernel story that revolves around Japanese laborers. In this story, however, the framing structure is adjusted to bring more attention to the "tragedy" related by the second narrator, another cynical, longtime U.S. resident. The multiple frame structure, by thematizing the act of narration and relocating the source of interest back onto the tellers, establishes a diachronic pattern of desensitization to the brutal conditions of immigrant life and ensuing social dysfunction within the Japanese resident community. And because the embedded narrative involves a history of "fellow countrymen," this story also throws the fraternal bonds of nation into question.

Some critics have attributed the overlapping plot elements of "Makiba no michi" and "Yoru no kiri" to Kafû's decision to elide "Yoru no kiri" from the original collection. While we cannot know for sure why Kafû decided not to include "Yoru no kiri" in the compilation, it is interesting that "Makiba no michi," unlike "Yoru no kiri," contains no interaction between the laborers and the narrators. Published first in the February 1906 issue of *Taiyô* as "The Strong and the Weak," (*Kyôjyaku*) this story includes a longer and more detailed story of a group of Japanese laborers told by the friend of the initial narrator. In "Makiba no michi" the kernel story about the laborers is given much more

textual space than in “Yoru no kiri.” Whereas in “Yoru no kiri” the bulk of the text consists of the narrator’s walk through Tacoma, with the embedded story of the laborer occurring at the end, at least half of the textual space in “Makiba” is devoted to the second narrator’s re-telling of the kernel story. I say re-telling here because the story we are hearing was never experienced directly by this narrator. He simply relates a story that he heard sometime earlier. Thus the innermost frame is given the most attention and the refractions of the story, on both the first and second narrator, given less space. In addition, more time seems to have elapsed between the outermost narrator’s recollection of the story and when the events involving the laborers took place, creating layers of time, experience and hearsay. That the innermost frame is given so much story space gives the story a sense of immediacy, but at the same time the outer frames envelop it in a wider realm of retrospection.

The story opens:

If I remember correctly, it was already the last Saturday of October in Tacoma, where I was staying at the time.

Fall was coming to an end, and almost all of the leaves—including those on the rows of maple trees that had provided cool shade in the parks and people’s gardens during the summer—had fallen after the previous night’s dense fog...on the advice of a friend who knew the local conditions well, I decided to spend the day bicycling around the late-autumn fields.⁴⁸

The setting moves from the urban areas of Tacoma and Seattle to the neighboring countryside. The narrator and his friend take a leisurely bicycle ride into the prairies outside of Tacoma, where the pastoral beauty of the late autumn countryside, the view of Mount Rainier and views of the city are poetically recalled in vivid detail. But the serenity of the landscape takes a dark turn as the pair head further into the countryside,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 18.

and further from the city. Cycling across bridges, up and down hills, and through a forest the two friends ride up a hill to a view of the Washington state mental asylum.

We easily recognized the tall brick building as the asylum, situated against a cheerful meadow in the distance and a thick forest in the foreground. The spacious compound was enclosed by a white picket fence and covered completely by a bright green lawn, except for a footpath that crossed the lawn. I was dazzled by the bright colors of the shrubs and flowers planted in front of a grove of trees with delicate branches. Behind the building the grass roof of a giant greenhouse could be seen, and there were benches here and there along the path, while in the shade of the trees in the open space there were swing seats. It was a silent place, and not a single person could be seen.⁴⁹

When the friend explains that there are two or three Japanese people incarcerated in the institution, the mood turns grave. “For some reason,” the narrator says, “this seemed like a rather serious matter.” The friend then adds, “but they are all migrant laborers,” and continues to tell the story of the brutish behavior of a group of Japanese lumberjacks who convince a naïve newcomer to bring his wife to their logging camp in the woods.

Upon hearing that the incarcerated Japanese are all *laborers (dekasegi no rôdôsha)*, the narrator recalls the scene of third-class passengers on the ship while journeying from Japan to Seattle. The passage, cited at the outset of this chapter, describes in vivid detail the brutal conditions for the third-class passengers, but the memory of the journey allows the narrator to further speculate on the aspirations of such people, and why they would subject themselves to such dehumanizing experiences:

Living the dream that three years of labor overseas would yield a life of wealth and happiness upon returning home, they left behind the land where their ancestors were born and died; they bade farewell to the skies of the East, more beautiful than those of Italy; and patiently submit

⁴⁹ Ibid., 19.

themselves to the humiliations of immigration laws and health examinations, in order to come to this continent.⁵⁰

The narrator wonders, sadly, how many laborers will actually realize these dreams, and once again turns his gaze to the landscape, whose cheerful meadows a moment before had epitomized peace and comfort. The view now seems strangely forlorn, and the dense forests appear as “hiding places of secrecy and terror.” At this point the narrator turns to his friend and asks if he knows why the men went insane, to which the friend answers “loss of hope, for the most part, but in some cases there were other reasons, including one particularly sad case...”

The text breaks here and the friend takes over the narration. The friend explains that a few nights after the wife’s arrival in the logging camp the men ask if they can “borrow” her, arguing that “fellow countrymen” should share their belongings. The woman’s husband laughs, thinking the request a joke, but the men take the wife anyway. The man faints at hearing his wife’s screams and ends up in the state mental asylum. This is the kernel story upon which the initial narrator reflects.

While the initial narrator can comment on his feelings as he watched the crowds of passengers in steerage emerge on the ship’s deck, the second narrator has the experience and knowledge to describe the “history” of these laborers once they have landed. He begins his story by explaining that “back then” things were not as they are “now,” and that the hooligans allowed into America in the past wandered up and down the West Coast openly committing crimes and living off the lifeblood of inexperienced newcomers. The friend is sufficiently self-aware to confirm he is relaying a story that has actually been told to him before, but both the flourish with which he tells it coupled with

⁵⁰ Ibid., 20.

his judgmental tone alerts readers to the fact that we cannot separate the story from the person telling it.

The friend, like the initial narrator, is a man of leisure possessing the ability to “read” people and their situations in all their simplicity. Of course this role is encouraged by the initial narrator, who from the beginning has established himself in a role as inexperienced newcomer, agreeing, “on the advice of a friend” to explore the country roads outside of Seattle. The friend serves as the initial narrator’s trusted guide, knowledgeable enough to lead him around the back roads of the Seattle countryside. It was also his idea to bring his friend to the asylum at the top of the hill, “a well known place in these parts.” The friend also seems to enjoy telling a good story.

In the beginning of his story about the new logger and his wife, the friend explains that “sharp-eyed employment brokers, lodging house agents, and prostitute smugglers” greeted the newcomers on the wharf and “used all their power to capture their prey and toss them into their nets.” The unsuspecting couple arrives in the new land and is led by one of the ruffians “through dirty streets packed with enormous wagons, evil-looking Americans, and pushes them through a dark door and, instead of going upstairs, leads them to a dimly lit underground room...”⁵¹ Relishing the telling, the friend creates suspense at key moments and emphatically recites dialogue between the laborers, all of which make readers suspicious of the truthfulness of the story and the reliability of this narrator. It seems, after all, too good a story to be, as the friend remarks, “not particularly unusual for this country.”

⁵¹ Ibid.

Also striking in this story is the superior and judgmental attitude the friend shows towards the new logger. While the brutish behavior of the laborers is obvious, the narrator subtly implies that the man's gullible and reckless nature were in part to blame for the tragedy that followed. The man did, after all, impulsively leave the fields of Kishû "where buckwheat flowers bloomed" after hearing "exaggerated stories" of America and its "gold bearing trees." Furthermore, *after hearing that women bring in more wages than men*, the man decided to bring his wife along and move to a city "whose name he could not even pronounce," in a land "about which he knew nothing." Once in America, the friend explains, the man is easily duped not once but twice, once into paying an exorbitant commission to set his wife up in a laundry and himself in the logging camp, and again by the unscrupulous workers in the logging camp, whose own exaggerated stories seem all but transparent to everyone but the man.

At this point an interesting parallel emerges between the newcomer from Kishû, the sinister laborers in the logging camp and the outermost narrator and his storytelling guide. Both the men in the camp and the initial narrator's friend are jaded veteran residents attempting to "educate" the new arrivals in the ways of the new land. The leader of the logging camp, like the second narrator, also seems to enjoy telling a story, as he tells the man what happens to women once they arrive in America. Puffing on a pipe (one might remember that the friend skillfully rolls a cigarette as he begins his story) the leader begins,

In this country any broad, as long as she is a woman, is a treasure chest worth a thousand ryô... I mean a thousand dollars. So, procurers called pimps are always on the lookout for women, and sometimes they do pretty ruthless things. I'll tell you a true story: Once a couple was walking down a street and a guy came up from behind them, knocked the husband down, grabbed the wife, and

disappeared. This America is a big country. And who knows? If you go far away and sell a woman as a whore you can easily earn a thousand dollars. You, too, had better watch out before something bad happens.⁵²

The man, who looks as if he were about to cry, is thus convinced to bring his wife to the camp, where she will be safe. “With only three of us Japanese in the hut,” the leader argues, “there is nothing to worry about.” Whereas the sinister intentions of the laborers are clear—they want the man’s wife—those of the second narrator are less so. What might he have to gain from telling this story to his new friend? There does not seem to be any good answer to this question, other than to enjoy playing the role of trusted educator, to instill fear in the naïve newcomer, but also to provide a “reading” of America as a lawless place where belief in camaraderie and filial bonds based on national origins are rendered meaningless. In this way the parallel narrative structure has resulted in two stories (the initial story and the story within a story) that coalesce around a similar theme.

Similar to the friend of the initial narrator in “Yoru no kiri,” the friend in “Makiba no michi” also ends his story with an empty platitude. “The episode,” he says, “could not be helped... it was [the man’s] misfortune to have met such a fate. We are simply helpless in the face of those stronger than ourselves.”⁵³ Laughing cheerfully the friend then hops on his bicycle and pedals away. The initial narrator, shocked into silence by the story, is left to ponder its deeper meaning, but quickly follows on his bicycle “so as not to get left behind.” The initial narrator concludes by saying, “the sound of cow bells could be heard somewhere nearby and a train heading south towards Portland was running

⁵² Ibid., 21.

⁵³ Ibid., 28.

along the edge of the field.” Thus we see both narrators racing out of the woods and back to the civilization of the city.

“Makiba no michi” points to a heterogeneity within the Japanese resident community based primarily on class, but it also reveals further internal divisions within classes themselves. There are honest laborers with a strong sense of propriety and values, and those without, just as between the two narrators we find one upper-class man with enough sensitivity to recognize the pathos in the laborer stories, and another who can relate the story with utter detachment. Class difference must also be strongly emphasized here because it is consistently the laborers who are prone to brutish and violent behavior. While the mediating narrators of both “Yoru no kiri” and “Makiba no michi” can be accused of insensitivity, the cruelest acts and the potential for madness are reserved for men of the lower classes.

As in “Yoru no kiri,” the rhetoric of the nation emerges as a central theme in “Makiba no michi” as well, although here it is used for the far more sinister purpose of perpetuating a rape. The loggers in the camp play on the newcomer’s sense of loyalty to “fellow countrymen,” claiming that the treasures of one Japanese man should be shared among the others. As the leader of the loggers says, “We only have each other to trust in a foreign country. Let’s be like brothers and work together from now on.” The loggers subvert any notion of national identity as involving shared moral sympathies when they use its rhetoric to commit a crime. The senior loggers betray their “brother” and at the same violate the notion of family — a structure so important to Meiji nationalists.

In addition to the newcomer himself, the figure of his wife is exploited on multiple levels in this story, reinforcing yet at the same time complicating traditional

gender hierarchies. The narrator notes that the man from Kishû made the decision to travel with his wife to America because he heard that women “brought in more money than men.” Clearly the man hadn’t considered why this would be so, or what kinds of employment his wife would have to accept to make such sums of money, but he was still willing to accept an alternative gender hierarchy in order to bring in cash. Once the wife is summoned to the logging camp a more traditional hierarchy is restored—she assumes the domestic role of cooking and doing the laundry for the men.

The wife’s story in “Makiba no michi” also reflects aspects of early immigrant life documented by historians. In the early 1900s before immigrant leaders began encouraging permanent settlement, the community was comprised predominantly of a transient male population. Yuji Ichioka notes that in 1900 there were only about 400 immigrant wives living in the United States altogether.⁵⁴ It was this imbalance in the male-female ratio and the lack of a stable family life that led, it was thought, to the “unsavory” practices of gambling, drinking and prostitution, and for the precarious position of women in early Japanese immigrant society. We remember that the leader of the lumberjacks uses the potentially “dangerous” situation for women living alone in the city to convince the man from Kishû to summon his wife to the camp. Again, social hierarchy is the key issue here, for it is the desire for money and a susceptibility to believing “exaggerated” stories of potentially striking it rich in the U.S. that precipitate the man’s decision to migrate, exposing him and his wife to the “dangers” of immigrant society. These are, of course, dangers that the narrators never experience as men of means.

⁵⁴ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 89-90.

Although in “Makiba no michi” brutish behavior is reserved for the lower classes, another of Kafû’s stories explores the potential for evil and betrayal among members of the upper-class elite. Through the story of an educated man from Tokyo whose “business venture” involves smuggling Japanese prostitutes into Seattle brothels, Kafû problematizes class hierarchies that divide the Japanese community into groups of upstanding educated elite and boorish manual laborers. Moreover, the Meiji nationalist rhetoric that binds Japanese people living in America through the bonds of family is shown to be completely irrelevant to men who are, by nature, simply rotten to the core.

An Evil Friend

“Akuyû” (An Evil Friend, *Bungakukai*, 1907) appears later in Kafû’s collection and skillfully integrates descriptions of Seattle’s *Nihonjinmachi* with a description of East Coast residents. The story moves from a general discussion among a group of Japanese expatriates living New York City to the story of an acquaintance of one of the men, a close friend of the man’s brother, who makes a living by kidnapping and smuggling women into prostitution for brothels on the West Coast. Again employing the narrative frame, Kafû exploits the device to the fullest by dividing the piece into four parts. The first is narrated by a participant in the general discussion who introduces the protagonist of the kernel story, a pimp called Yamaza. The next two sections are narrated by a man, Shimazaki, who recalls his own arrival in America, including his experiences in Seattle’s Japanese quarter, before explaining how he knows the mysterious Yamaza. In the final section the story is passed on to Yamaza himself, who tell the story in his own words.

Although the story contains what have become familiar elements in terms of characters, setting, and narrative structure, “Akuyû” diverges from the others in that the established categories of class—elite narrating figures and lower-class laborers—have been mapped onto both an East Coast/West Coast and Tokyo/provinces configuration, and are dismantled through descriptions of figures that 1) move from one coast to another and 2) rise to or fall from one social class to another despite coming from upper-class backgrounds and having university degrees.

The story initially focuses on a group of Japanese residents in New York City as they discuss Japan-America relations and the possibility of war:

It was not so long ago when news of the expulsion of Japanese children from California schools was at the forefront, and various hypotheses arose in American newspapers, beginning with those in New York, about a possible war between Japan and the United States. Naturally, we Japanese in New York started to talk more about the situation on the West Coast whenever we met.

One evening, at a certain place, we were engaged in our usual discussions about the race question, the “Yellow Peril,” internationalism, the quality of Roosevelt’s character, justice, and humanism, when one of us suddenly remembered something and abruptly asked “Hey—there are a lot of Japanese prostitutes out there aren’t there?”

Spreading like dark rain clouds on the edge of a sweltering hot day, this silly question completely changed the tone of our conversation, driving out the more serious talk about current affairs. A few even pulled up their chairs as if to suggest that an even more serious subject had been introduced.⁵⁵

Kafû sets up the embedded stories that follow in an arena permeated by political issues related to state power and race, opening with a reference to the matter of Japanese children in the California school system.⁵⁶ Kafû is most certainly referring here to the issue of Japanese students and the San Francisco City School Board, an incident that

⁵⁵ *KZ*, 3:120.

⁵⁶ Hutchinson, “Who hold the whip,” 396.

preceded Kafû's penning the story by less than a year. The expulsion of Japanese schoolchildren from San Francisco schools was an event that reached not only the ears of the East Coast Japanese community, it also made headlines in Japan and was an indication of rising tensions between the two countries.

In 1906 the San Francisco School Board directed school principals to send "all Chinese, Japanese and Korean children to Oriental school," thus segregating Japanese children from public schools and officially establishing an "Oriental" minority group. The decision sent shock waves across the Pacific and the Japanese government quickly sent a protest to Washington, angrily claiming that the school board action violated a treaty provision guaranteeing Japanese children in the United States equal educational opportunities.⁵⁷ President Theodore Roosevelt, who had both respect and concern for Japanese military power (demonstrated during its recent victory over Russia in 1905), was anxious to avoid a confrontation and scolded the school board for segregating the Japanese students. Roosevelt's concern for the San Francisco Japanese residents was merely strategic, however, momentarily shrouding his personal racist attitudes documented earlier that expressed a commitment to "preserving America as a heritage of white people," and implying that "mixing the long lines of heritage from people of divergent cultures would be fraught with peril."⁵⁸ Roosevelt eventually convinced the school board to rescind its decision (regarding the Japanese, but not the Chinese or Korean children) because there were only ninety-three students in question. In exchange, however, Roosevelt turned to the larger issue of Japanese exclusion and immigration to

⁵⁷ Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 79-82.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 12.

California, eventually extracting an understanding from Japan that it would limit the immigration of laborers to the United States. The Japanese resident community also resisted the school board's policy, arguing that Japanese students should not be grouped together with Chinese or other oriental students because the small number of Japanese involved were all "upstanding, respectable men." Leaders in the Japanese resident community, in addition to Japanese government officials, believed that association with Chinese immigrants contributed to the American view that the Japanese were unassimilable. The Japanese community in the U.S. and the Japanese government put pressure on the San Francisco school board to reverse its decision based on "distinguishing" characteristics of the Japanese race. Their Japanese "natures" it was said, endowed them with strong moral fiber and vast amounts of *yamato damashii*.⁵⁹ Not only does this line of argument call attention to the constructed nature of race itself, for Japanese people did not see themselves as racially united with Chinese or other Asian people, it also illuminates an internalization of racial biases of which they themselves had been victims.

This diversion into the extra-literary context of "Akuyû" is important because Kafû carefully selected the political issues with which to begin his story. The Yellow Peril, Roosevelt's character, and the subject of race and justice cannot be separated from the San Francisco School Board incident. Readers privy to the details of the incident will see how it resonates in the characters' fictional stories that follow, which bear out notions of an "oriental colony," immigration, class, and children's education.

⁵⁹ See Ichioka, *The Issei*, 146-148.

At the beginning of the story the men discuss the subject of the West Coast, a place “even more convenient than Japan” in that familiar conveniences and entertainment—bath houses, archery grounds, sushi restaurants, noodle shops—are easily accessible. They also note, however, that such a place could never be suitable for *them*, since the tastes of the Japanese in New York are categorically different from those on the West Coast. As one man remarks, the Japanese on the West Coast are primarily laborers from the Kyûshû and Chûgoku areas, and “for those of us from Tokyo the food as well as the women from these areas are totally unappealing.” The man then begins a personal anecdote about having traveled the West Coast from San Francisco to Portland, to Seattle, Tacoma and Vancouver, Canada where the situation of women, he explains, is always the same, “except for one half-decent-looking woman whom he met in Seattle.” The woman, naturally, had come from Tokyo. Furthermore, the man continues, a prized woman like that is “almost never available having certainly been claimed by some hooligan.” “Lower classes,” he continues, “may want to give it a go, but *we* have to be on our guard.” In any case the woman, he heard, was married to a renowned English-speaking thug from Seattle with a university degree. As the man reaches a pause in his story, the reticent Shimazaki, a serious man who had “never shown interest in drinking and women before,” speaks up from a corner seat to corroborate the man’s story. He also has met the woman, for her husband is the former friend of his late brother.

Tensions between the Japanese laborers on the West Coast and the upper-class gentlemen on the East, between the laborers of Western Japan and the gentlemen of Tokyo are again mapped out for us in these opening passages. The comment about the hypothesis of war emerging first from newspapers on the East Coast also contributes to

this argument, as if incidents of interest can *occur* on the West Coast but require the intellectual faculties of people on the East Coast to analyze and discuss. These oppositions and biases begin to unravel, however, as Shimazaki begins his story.

Shimazaki begins the second section of the story with an account of his first days in America spent in a shabby inn overlooking Seattle's Japanese quarter. He explains that the ship's evening arrival had kept him onboard for a night until immigration officials returned the next morning. When he finally disembarks he is led directly to the Japan quarter by a desk clerk of an inn who approached him at the port. The inn stands at a crossroads of the city, affording a view of both the backs of the downtown buildings of Seattle as well as the run-down "oriental colony" with its cramped alleys, low wooden buildings and street full of wagons, laborers, and horse dung.

These alleys and filthy wooden houses were none other than the den [*sôkutsu*] of the Japanese and Chinese, a colony of Orientals [*Tôyôjin no koronii*], while at the same time it was also a place where down-and-out Westerners and oppressed blacks could find a roof over their heads.⁶⁰

Shimazaki, unlike the narrators of "Yoru no kiri" or "Seattoru no hitoya," is located literally and figuratively at the border of *Nihonjinmachi*, a position that allows him to blend into crowds both in downtown Seattle or the lower-class port district. Kafû has found a voice in Shimazaki, after some experimentation, with enough class ambiguity to be able to anonymously roam the streets of the Japanese quarter without drawing attention to himself. Although clearly not of the laboring classes, he admits that he, too, was subject to immigration checks and a degree of anxiety as he waited a whole night, "star[ing] at the waters and mountains of this foreign country" from the ships' deck.

⁶⁰ KZ, 3:121.

Shimazaki enters the U.S. “without incident” but the fact that he is accosted by an employee from a Japanese inn tells us that perhaps he looked like the sort of person who would stay in such a place. After arriving at the inn Shimazaki mentions that upon viewing the squalor of the “oriental colony” from his window he was tempted to leave for a hotel for Westerners, but immediately adds that as a student he could not afford such a hotel. Shimazaki thus remains at the Japanese inn, and while waiting for a friend with whom he had planned to travel to the East Coast, spends his days and nights walking the streets of Seattle and its environs.

While Shimazaki is able to walk unnoticed through the Japanese quarter, he draws the attention of American children “wherever he goes,” who jeer “sukebei” (lecher) as he walks by. Shimazaki finds it odd that a term used by prostitutes to describe a certain type of Japanese man has now been appropriated by American children. The fact that the Americans doing the chiding are children is also significant. Resonating with the theme of children’s education initiated by the reference to the San Francisco School Board incident, the children’s heckling emphasizes that racial bias and discrimination, like anything else, are learned from a young age. Whether the children are aware of what their taunts actually mean is unclear; they are simply imitating what they have learned from adults. In addition, like the sneers of passers-by the narrator experiences in “Yoru no kiri,” the gesture also serves to eliminate any class boundaries that may have been perceived between the laborers and Shimazaki himself on the part of the American community. The children chide *any* Japanese man passing by, an act that positions race and nationality as primary forms of identification.

The jarring effect of hearing the word “sukebei” emitted from the mouths of American children extends to other aspects in the Japanese quarter. Shimazaki’s description of the quarter focuses on the dissonant mix of sights and sounds from “East” and “West.”

The riffraff who loitered around the area during the day were joined later by laborers who had finished their day’s work at various piers and construction sites and came out of nowhere to gather together on the sidewalks. The result was that the air, already offensive, was now permeated by the smell of alcohol and sweat. Accompanied by the sound of heavy shoes and people shouting, rows of soiled torn shirts, torn trousers, and torn hats steadily moved like dark shadows towards the alley of the Japanese quarter. And from that alley one could hear the constant babble of voices accompanied by the noise of band music, all of which sounded like the clanging of a circus, probably produced by gramophones in bars and shooting ranges. In addition, the sound of the samisen was everywhere, echoing “chinten, chinten” as if calling and answering one another. This was followed by the sounds of women singing and men clapping their hands...

Try to imagine it. In contrast to the glory of the surrounding American environment you have on one hand the noise of the “West” presented by train whistles and band music played on gramophones, and on the other you have the long-trailing, sleepy country songs from the Kyushu region, accompanied by the brief intermittent sounds of strings. No music is sadder, giving rise to such dissonant, complex, and unpleasant sensations.⁶¹

The cacophony of sounds in the quarter point to a confused state of mind where seemingly clear-cut categories like nation and race have been thrown into question. Whereas the quarter first appears to be an “oriental colony” comprised of Japanese and Chinese laborers, upon closer inspection Shimazaki discovers that it is a place where American laborers, too, both Caucasian and black, congregate after the day’s work. As Shimazaki “joins the line of laborers and start[s] walking towards the alley,” he notices the huge crowds of Japanese people everywhere, from the archery grounds to the billiard

⁶¹ Ibid.

houses. These people walked with self-possession and looked at the Caucasian workers as “foreigners.” Shimazaki’s observations here resemble the portrayals of Japantown provided by the *flâneur*-narrators of “Yoru no kiri” and “Seattorukô no hitoya,” although Shimazaki’s description makes more of the divide between East (Japan) and West (America) as well as the Eastern regions of Japan verses the Kyushu and Chûgoku areas.

These divisions extend to Shimazaki’s descriptions of the women:

Women’s faces could be seen on and off drawing the curtains aside and peeking outside from the windows of wooden-framed houses. Some of them called out in shrill voices. All were women from Western Japan with flat noses, narrow eyes, and flat faces. Hair swept back in buns at the back and bangs in front, they wore what appeared to be Western-style dresses. I’m not sure how to describe the feeling I had while looking at this scene. Was it satisfaction or uneasiness? In any case I couldn’t bear to get any closer.⁶²

The women and laborers from “East” and “West” that Shimazaki observes going in and out of “what looks like gaping holes” between small shops selling tobacco and fruit bring this confusing atmosphere to dizzying heights. Here in Seattle’s “Japanese” quarter women from Japan’s provinces dress in Western-style clothing and service the variety of men of the “oriental colony,” including American laborers.

While this section reinforces the image of *Nihonjinmachi* depicted in other stories, Shimazaki’s recollection of his time spent there tells us something important about him as well. He is fascinated by red-light districts, an interest at odds with the assessment of the initial narrator who describes him as a man wholly uninterested in women or drinking. Shimazaki feels “satisfied” watching the women in the brothel, although he is hesitant to move any closer. At this point in the story we don’t know what causes the simultaneous feeling of discomfort, although we might guess that Shimazaki is

⁶² Ibid., 122.

uncomfortable with his own attraction to the scene. Earlier in the section Shimazaki tells of a similar sensation he experienced in a red-light district of Tokyo, which he visited before leaving Japan for the purpose of observing “social customs.” We know that the New York audience of men perceive Shimazaki as an upstanding and slightly priggish man, and there are reasons why upholding this image would be important to him. The next section of the story reveals some of these reasons, which are connected to the protagonist of the kernel story, Yamaza. And it is the profile of Yamaza, a “gentleman of fine appearance” that Shimazaki recognizes milling through the crowd in Seattle’s Japantown.

The third section of the story situates Yamaza’s story in the context of his relations with the Shimazaki family. Although it is difficult to pinpoint Shimazaki’s views on the man at this juncture, the purpose of this section is, rather, to foreground the moral and ethical climate of the Shimazaki household. Yamaza and the eldest Shimazaki son graduated from the same university and were working in the same company when things started to go awry. Both men engaged in “dissolute” behavior, borrowing money at high interest rates, and swindling people to pay off debts. Eventually both men were arrested, along with two other men, but Yamaza and Shimazaki’s brother were able to escape punishment due to family status and wealth. After two years of “idling away his time,” the brother died of consumption. Although the family had looked upon the brother as if here were an “ill omen” or “plague,” his early death absolves him of guilt; the blame for the brother’s behavior has been shifted onto the “evil friend.” Yamaza became the object of the family’s scorn; when his name was invoked every year around the time of

the brother's death, moral lessons would be imparted to Shimazaki, and the maxim "those who keep company with wolves will learn to howl" repeated.

The tone of this story suggests Shimazaki's ambivalent feelings towards his late brother. On the one hand the brother led "a dissolute life causing the father endless grief," and spent another two years "idling away his time becoming the family's focus of fear and aversion" before his untimely death. On the other hand, Shimazaki paints a family portrait shaded with considerable status and wealth, high expectations, and moral rectitude. As the youngest son, Shimazaki must now hold the family's expectations as the remaining heir. The final sentence of the section, which emphasizes the passing of years marked by annual moral lessons and repeating of maxims, shows a young man weary of the preaching. This first embedded story, with its description of the Shimazaki family dynamics, sheds light on why Shimazaki has become the man he is. Reserved and straightlaced, he grew up in the shadow of an outlandish brother whose behavior dominated the family's attention. Frequently warned against following in his brother's footsteps, Shimazaki, the filial son, avoided the dissolute lifestyle of his brother, pursued a degree in the U.S. and has landed a successful job. Readers may wonder why Shimazaki decided to leave Japan at all. As the remaining son of a wealthy family with social status and influence, Shimazaki surely could have obtained a good position in Japan. And, as Earl Kinmonth has shown, obtaining a degree abroad was second in line to earning one at home. Later in the story Yamaza asks Shimazaki himself, "Why did you come to the United States? To study?... This is no place for men like you." One wonders whether the oppressive atmosphere of the family, its history with a troubled son and the

pressure placed on Shimazaki to carry on the integrity of the family line, led him to seek opportunities, at least for a while, somewhere far away from them.

The fourth and final section of the story moves from an explanation of Yamaza's relationship with the Shimazaki family to the character himself. This section marks the story's steady inward progression from issues surrounding society as a whole, to the social landscape of Seattle's Japantown, to the environment of the Shimazaki family unit, to the interior motivations of one particular character. Yet, while the narrative progression heads towards Yamaza himself, it simultaneously illuminates the multifaceted nature of Shimazaki. This is yet another example where Kafû has exploited the narrative frame. While the narrative moves towards Yamaza's kernel story, the mirror of Yamaza's story refracts even more complex revelations about Shimazaki.

Yamaza's story, it turns out, reveals no great mystery. Rather, the story within the story exposes a person who is simply rotten to the core. After learning of the Shimazaki brother's death, Yamaza left Japan for San Francisco, where he learned that he could live easily off of women. He promptly returned to Japan and brought back a maid from a sukiyaki house. Eventually settling down in Seattle, he makes a living smuggling in prostitutes and gambling. As he takes over the narrative for half of this final section, Yamaza explains his simple life philosophy:

Scholars who don't know the world seem to think human beings will continue to fall if let alone, but don't worry. They might fall halfway, becoming neither good nor bad, but to settle down into a bottomless pit beyond that point is hard work for anyone who has any measure of education. You have to completely subdue the creature called 'conscience' that sticks its head in from time to time. That's much easier said than done. There's nothing unusual about a guy born into a family of beggars who eventually becomes a beggar. And it takes no effort for someone born into a good family to become an ordinary good citizen. The problem is what

comes next, whether to take another step and become a great figure, or to retreat a step and move to the wrong side of society, neither of which is easy. The effort and training involved in either course are the same though different as night and day. So the choice comes down to whether one wants to become a Napoleon or an Ishikawa Goemon.⁶³

Downing cupfuls of saké Yamaza carries on with his story. Clearly he has fallen far on the wrong side of society, despite having the advantages of family status and education. There is a convoluted logic to Yamaza's self-assessment, which seeks to place him on equal footing with the great men of the world. He, too, has chosen the "difficult" path of falling to the very bottom of society's depths, which requires as much effort and education as one who climbs to its highest peaks. Ignoring one's conscience to reach society's "bottomless pit" is, he says, a great endeavor. The character of Yamaza demonstrates the potential for ruthless, cruel and brutal behavior on the part of anyone, regardless of social standing. Education and family background has done nothing for this man who now uses his "education," to take advantage of his "countrymen," both men and women, in the pursuit of wealth and his twisted view of self-advancement. Yamaza's attempt to valorize the effort and education necessary to fall to such depths makes his character all the more repulsive.

More interesting than Yamaza's story, however, is Shimazaki's reaction to it. He chooses to feign interest in the conversation, chalking it up to the "eccentric satire of a man with an injured past." For Shimazaki, the encounter seems to have triggered a deep nostalgia for home and family rather than uncover any deep personal mystery about Yamaza. Unlike the other kernel stories, where tragedy provides the impetus for deep

⁶³ Ibid., 124. Ishikawa Goemon is a notorious bandit from the 16th century.

reflection and emotion, the two points in this section where Shimazaki is “moved to sadness and tears” are not directly related to Yamaza’s story at all. What moves him is the voice of Yamaza’s wife, which reveals a Tokyo accent, and the shape of her face, which reminds him of “the type of woman one saw frequently among the maids at small restaurants or *sukiyaki* houses in Asakusa.” “Suddenly” he says, “the feelings of loneliness from having come to a foreign land a long way from home welled up in my heart making me a little sad.”⁶⁴ The second moment occurs at the conclusion of the story. Shimazaki notes that in a letter to his mother he casually mentions the encounter with Yamaza, to which she responds by saying everything, good or bad “was now but a dream,” and sends a can of roasted seaweed to pass on to Yamaza when they next meet. Shimazaki is moved by the kindness of the gesture, but also because his mother had “no understanding of the actual distance between Seattle and New York.”

While the narrator ends here with a reference to the physical distance between the two cities, the story has in fact undermined distinctions made between East Coast and West Coast, Tokyo and the provinces, and “Japan” and “America.” Descriptions of a Japantown located in America inhabited by contingents from Tokyo, regions in Western Japan, and black and white American laborers show an intermingling of national spaces and people and the formation of community based on class. The presence of Yamaza, too, as an educated upper-class Japanese making a living in Seattle’s brothels effectively disrupts the schema presented at the outset of the story whereby upper-class Japanese are mapped onto America’s East Coast and lower-class on the West Coast. The idea of a “brotherhood” of citizens, too, is countered by Yamaza’s practice of selling Japanese

⁶⁴ Ibid., 125.

women into prostitution. Here the rhetoric of the nation is undermined by simple greed. The fact that Yamaza holds a university degree is significant as well, for instead of using education to rise in the world and advance the nation he uses it to support his business as a pimp. Shimazaki's mother is perhaps the only figure mentioned in the story that adheres to Meiji principle—to her Yamaza is recast simply as another Japanese man living abroad who must be longing for home.

Conclusion: The Forest through the Trees

The dimensions of class, race and nation made explicit in “Shiattoru no hitoya,” “Yoru no kiri,” “Makiba no michi” and “Akuyū” revolve around the relations among a large cast of Japanese people—gentlemen, businessmen, students, and laborers, both newcomers and veteran residents—that comprised the immigrant community in the early 1900s. The effects of Kafū's experimentation with narrative strategy—expanding and contracting a kernel story, shifting its position within the narrative, and embedding it within one or two external frames—include not only thematizing the act of narration, but also exposing a mirror-like function where the kernel story's refractions throw the superior position of the *flâneur*-narrator(s) into question. I would like to conclude with a final reading of a story in Kafū's collection that also focuses on issues of race, class, and nation, but this time in the context of American black/white race relations and history. “Rinkan” (In the Woods) spotlights the complex historical underpinnings of race relations in the United States and their reverberations into the domains of state authority, class, and national identity. Consideration of “Rinkan” can thus serve as a larger

reflective device, informing the stories heretofore discussed in the collection where the central concern is Japan and America.

Rachael Hutchinson's recent scholarship on *Amerika monogatari* provides a reading of "Rinkan" through the tropes of power and race.⁶⁵ Like other scholars of *Amerika monogatari*, Hutchinson highlights narrative strategy in "Rinkan," where the Japanese man at the center of the story is an outside observer whose focus is Washington D.C.⁶⁶ As a Japanese man the narrator stands outside the racial system based on black and white, but this position also gives him a more critical positioning with which to view American race and class dynamics. The narrator questions "the legitimacy of binary relations which unavoidably involve power and marginalization,"⁶⁷ and which leave no place for those who stand outside the system. In addition, similar to stories in *Amerika monogatari* where a layered narrative structure brings out diversity in the Japanese resident community, the narrator in "Rinkan" highlights a heterogeneous American population with various racial, class and regional inflections.

In the opening of "Rinkan," the narrator, a "wanderer in this new continent," tells us that after seeing everything "one is supposed to see as a visitor" in Washington—the White House, Capitol, and other government buildings—he has ventured into the surrounding areas to admire the fall foliage at its peak. After paying homage to the grave of George Washington in Mount Vernon, the narrator strolls through the meadows of Maryland, and then crosses back over the Potomac into the wooded areas of Northern Virginia. There is a topographical progression here reminiscent of "Makiba no michi,"

⁶⁵ Rachael Hutchinson, "Who Holds the Whip," 66.

⁶⁶ See for example, Sakagami Hiroichi, "Nagai Kafû Amerika monogatari ikoku fûdo no hakken," in *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō*, Volume 62, Number 12 (December 1997): 93-98 and Suenobu Yoshiharu, *Nagai Kafû no mita Amerika* (Tokyo: Chûo Kôron sha, 1997), 135.

⁶⁷ Hutchinson, "Who holds the whip," 66.

which begins with the narrator's bicycle ride through the Seattle suburbs and into the woods, a ride that, in contrast to the serenity of its surroundings, uncovers the more sinister elements of society. "Rinkan" similarly gets under the surface of the city, exposing a darker side of the majestic capital.

The narrator states that visitors to Washington D.C. typically notice two things about the capital: the park-like design of the landscape, and the large number of "ugly" blacks wandering around the city. Although the observations of the racist narrator highlight a contrast between the beauty of the scenery and the "ugliness" of many of its inhabitants, the relationship between the two elements is actually more complex. Those familiar with the capital city's history will remember that George Washington appointed Pierre L'Enfant, a French-born architect and engineer, to design the city, on land that was initially procured by colonial proprietors. Furthermore, L'Enfant's design included not only a park-like layout, which incorporated, like the French capital, diagonal fairways that intersect at grand circles, it also contained a plan for various government buildings and monuments, which were built, in turn, on the backs of slave labor.

That the city's architecture and design was influenced by French culture probably appealed to the narrator's artistic sensibilities. Ken Ito has written about the narrator's persona in terms of René Girard's notion of "triangulated desire," where "the intrusion of a mediating presence shapes a subject's longing for a given object."⁶⁸ The mediating presence here is the narrator's appreciation and appropriation of the Orientalist gaze of nineteenth-century French literature. As Ito demonstrates, the narrator's adopted Orientalist perception plays out in striking descriptions of the Washington skyline,

⁶⁸ Ito, *Visions of Desire*, 41.

specifically in a spectacular portrayal of the Washington Monument, dyed in the reds of the setting sun.

Yet, while the scenery is tinted in the vibrant colors of a Turkish hanging, it is also stained in a history of colonial power, military authority, oppression, and slavery. Following the intoxicating description of the monument, which the narrator has viewed from a small station on the outskirts of the city, the narrator pulls back to reflect on the political and social hues imbricated in the cityscape:

It was a clear, wide panorama. I was suddenly aware that this was the capital city presiding over this great continent of the Western Hemisphere, and gazing at the setting sun reflected on the water, certain abstract impressions floated up in my mind like the many layers of the summer clouds: race (*jinrui*), humanity (*jindô*), nation (*kokka*), political power (*seiken*), ambition (*yashin*), reputation (*meibô*), history (*rekishi*). As these things piled up in my mind, I could not find a way to express a single concrete idea to others. I was simply pursuing the vague shadow of something very important, while at the same time something was pressing down at the base of my neck. ⁶⁹

Although the narrator does his best to lose himself in the capital's twilight landscape, he cannot divorce the view from its symbolic value as the seat of American power and state authority. The narrator eventually finds a way to articulate his impressions through the embedded story of a soldier and a young maid whom he comes across in the woods.

To be sure, the narrator's impressions have been affected by his immediate surroundings, which have shifted from the panoramic view of the elegant monuments to the prosaic public cemetery, military training grounds, army barracks and officers' residences surrounding the small train station in Northern Virginia. Milling around the scene are uniformed soldiers, young black maids ("probably servants in the officers'

⁶⁹ KZ, 3:110.

homes”), and middle-aged white women returning from their shopping in the city. The narrator categorizes the people inhabiting the area in terms of race and social class—either as white consumers, or black employees, with the soldiers falling somewhere in between. The soldiers are embedded in the rigid hierarchy of the military complex, serving the officers but possessing none of their freedom, wealth or status. Still, the officers, their wives, and the soldiers occupy a social station above the laboring class, represented here by the presence of the black maids.

The dynamics of race, class and national identity come under closer scrutiny in the following scene, in which the narrator leaves the station and overhears a soldier and a young, half-black maid quarreling in the woods. The soldier is dressed in khakis and the young black girl, “perhaps half white,” sits kneeling before him with her hands clasped in prayer. In an emotional, melodramatic scene, the maid clings to the man’s hand and begs him not to end their relationship.

“Please, please...” the girl’s voice echoed from the depth of her bosom, her hands clasped and pressed against it.

“What a bunch of nonsense.” About to leave, the soldier looked away in disgust, spitting tobacco.

“Don’t!” the girl sank to the ground, grabbing the soldier’s hand. “You are really asking me to break this off?”

“Me asking you?” Laughing haughtily the soldier spitefully declared, “Nonsense. I’m not asking you, I don’t care what you do. It is I who is breaking up with you.”⁷⁰

The narrator notes that the soldier, “a respectable American,” must have taken offense at the presumption that the girl, “a mere daughter of slaves,” was breaking up with him.

The narrator continues to listen to the conversation, until he can bear no more, at which

⁷⁰ Ibid., 111.

point a blood-red shaft of light strikes at his feet. Worried that he might be seen eavesdropping, the narrator quickly flees and contemplates the larger implications of the brutal scene:

I was thinking not so much about the problem of love but about the long-term problem of the relationship between the black and white races in this country. Why are the black so hated by whites? Is it their unsightly looks, or simply because they are black? Or is it because fifty years ago they were slaves? Is there no way for a race to avoid persecution unless it organizes itself as a political body? Will there always be a need for nations and the military?⁷¹

Here the narrator connects the scene in the woods to the interlocking issues of race, nation and political power. Mapped onto the characters of the soldier and the young girl, the relationship put forth between race and nation seems fairly obvious; the soldier, Caucasian, is a “respectable American” and the maid, a “daughter of slaves,” less so. Although both the man and the girl are American citizens, one is a symbol of state authority while the other is rendered completely powerless.⁷² The narrator wonders why this is the case, and how, other than mobilizing as a political group, can the situation be rectified?

There is another dimension to the layers of power, race, and class in this story that commentaries on this story have yet to acknowledge: miscegenation. It is no coincidence that Kafû set this portion of the story in Virginia, a southern state, a former slave state where racial boundaries were strictly demarcated. The institutional manifestation of these boundaries lies in the anti-miscegenation laws that prevailed at the time, which forbade the marriage of blacks to whites. In addition to exposing entrenched racial boundaries, anti-miscegenation statutes positioned racialized “Others” in strict opposition to white

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Hutchinson, “Who holds the whip,” 67.

middle-class practices and values, implying the threat of interracial relations as deviant and dangerous.⁷³ Although the girl in the story is utterly powerless in the face of the young soldier, she is also portrayed, at least from the soldier's standpoint, as sexually promiscuous and psychologically unhinged. Later in the story the soldier tries to pass the girl onto his friend but warns that she is a "Negro," "crazy about men," and could "cause trouble if she gets too crazy." The suggestion on the part of the soldier to use the girl and pass her on to the next man points to the tragedy of a group of people with questionable racial backgrounds destined to live at the margins of society.

The position of the young girl somewhat resembles that of the Japanese laborers in some of the other stories. Both appear prone to "insanity" and both exhibit libidinous natures. As non-white non-citizens the laborers, too, are doomed to suffer in a country whose construction of race and class is based on a history of troubled race relations. The fact that the young girl is a citizen and is still a marginalized member of society portends a bleak future for the Japanese laborers. The story seems to be saying that even with citizenship rights and a degree of political power they are doomed as a racialized group from the lower classes.

Although the thrust of this story emphasizes state power and authority through the character of the soldier, at the same time the very constitution of the half-black girl serves to undermine such authority. The maid, the product of a conjugal union between people of different races, undermines the ideology of racial purity that the laws were supposed to uphold. Not only does the state's legislative effort dictate who can marry whom, it also forces upon them an artificial racialized hierarchy, limiting their personal freedoms and

⁷³ Susan Koshy, *Sexual Naturalization: Asian Americans and Miscegenation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1-25.

intruding on their personal lives. The nature of anti-miscegenation laws effectively blocks out the possibility for human emotion. This aspect of state influence plays out in the figure of the soldier, who, while youthful and strong, also appears “drained of any feeling by an oppressive state apparatus.” As the narrator states, “The physical agony of this oppression is somehow reflected in their faces, suntanned skin and bloodshot eyes, making them appear fearful yet pitiful at the same time.”

Unpacking the issues of nation, race, class and history imbricated in the stories of *Amerika monogatari* poses a challenge to readers who are also wrestling with the complicated narrative structures characteristic of Kafû’s early work. But scholars who have dismissed the work as a “post-card”-like collection of vignettes spun across the American landscape elide the interrogations of race, class, and nation in which Kafû clearly engages. And it was probably these interrogations, rather than the function of narrative framing, that interested Japanese-reading audiences in both early twentieth-century America and Meiji Japan. Despite the complexities of Kafû’s narration, however, any reader of Kafû’s stories will recognize the hero at the center of the tales—an upper-class gentleman observer—who stands apart from the people about whom he is reporting. For writers like Okina Kyûin, who wanted instead to hear the voices of the people themselves, this poses a serious problem. Okina may have been more satisfied reading stories set in the steerage section of a ship instead of its first-class cabins. The next chapter will focus on such a text, which centers on the voyage of a group of third-class passengers making the reverse journey back to their beloved “homeland.”

CHAPTER 4

They Waited with Tears in their Eyes: Boredom, Nostalgia and the Nation in Maedakô Hiroichirô's *Santô senkyaku* (1921)

The sound of people's conversations was like a monotony that never ended. From time to time the murmur was cut by the sound of the lavatory doors on the second floor as they swung against the poles of the swaying ship, or by the clattering rhythm of fry pans hung on the wall. All of these sounds, in combination with the steady beat of the waves hitting the hold of the ship, made the atmosphere especially drowsy. The sour, animal-like odor emanating from the bodies in the packed cabin, trapped by the closed ventilator, had nowhere to escape and was forced up to the lavatories on the second level where it mixed with the acidic smell of urine and ammonia, flowed back down into the cabin, and seeped into the old cotton bedding of some eighty bunks, the piles of luggage and baskets of fruit, and sank deep into the lungs of sleeping, pallid-faced women. Also steeped in the foul air were men showing only the backs of their feet whose big toes twitched from time to time, nursing women whose drooping breasts spread out after feeding their infants, and young girls baring ashen-white bellies. In the shadows of the electric lights lay children tangled up in piles of bedding, forming black masses so that one could not tell child from futon. All uniformly inhaled the foul air. And from time to time multiple sets of eyes followed the figure of a pregnant woman who, breathing heavily, and holding onto the steel bedposts for support, tottered up to the bathroom on the second floor and disappeared.

The enormous room, more like a storage space than a ship's cabin, had only five small portholes. Beyond the sooty glass was the twilight sea, where endless waves stimulated by the cold air flowed backwards and out. At times the blackish-blue bands of water crashed up against the hold forming gigantic waterfalls. And when the waves receded the layers of water looked like icebergs that, while drifting away from the boat, embraced the approaching waves. The two opposing forces met forming valleys and swirls, frightening those who looked upon the scene. To them it looked like the strange, violent force of a different world.

-Maedakô Hiroichirô, *Santô senkyaku*, 1921¹

¹ Maedakô Hiroichirô, *Santô senkyaku* (Third-class passengers), *Nihon gendai bungaku zenshû*, vol. 69 of *Puroretaria bungaku shû*, 3-23. All subsequent citations from *Santô senkyaku* will refer to this source and will be recorded SS, followed by the page number. All translations are my own.

When Maedakô Hiroichirô (1888-1957) wrote this passage to describe the third-class cabin in his story *Santô senkyaku*, he most certainly had read Nagai Kafû's *Amerika monogatari*, published sixteen years earlier. Maedakô and Kafû had, in fact, a few things in common. Both men lived in the United States, and in New York as well, and both men worked for Japanese organizations in the city, Maedakô as secretary for the New York branch of the Nihonjinkai¹, and Kafû as a clerk for the Yokohama Specie Bank. Both men also returned to Japan and published stories about their experiences abroad. The similarities, however, probably stop there. Although the men missed each other in New York by several years, had they been there together it is doubtful that they would have been friends. Maedakô never wrote about Kafû specifically, but when he returned to Japan in 1920 he often criticized the "literary dilettantes living off of their fathers' money" in his polemical articles railing against the structure of the *bundan* (literary establishment). As an early member and staunch supporter of Japan's proletarian literary movement, it is unlikely that Maedakô would have had anything kind to say about Kafû at all.

Although Maedakô may not have admired Kafû personally, Maedakô's story owes much to Kafû's earlier work. It seems more than coincidence that both "Kyabin yawa" (Night talk from a ship's cabin) and *Santô senkyaku* are set on ships, whose insular quality is heightened by descriptions of the raging sea beyond its portholes, both stories employ the voices of detached narrators, both emphasize a diverse Japanese migrant

¹ Nihonjinkai, or Association of Japanese, see Chapter 2, pp. 30-31.

community, and both works engage the concept of a collective, national identity.² In *Santô senkyaku*, it is as if Maedakô leads us from the upper decks of Kafû's ship—sailing not to America but away from it—into the “cramped, dirty, smelly hole” of the steerage section, where we become acquainted with a group of passengers who have pinned their hopes on an abstract homeland, “Japan.” Like Kafû's narrator, the passengers of *Santô senkyaku* must also endure the tedium of the two-week voyage, although the nature of the boredom and the manner with which it is dealt diverge significantly. While the narrator of Kafû's story, alone in his cabin, combats the monotony of the voyage by calling over fellow passengers for an evening chat, the endless hum of conversation in Maedakô's third-class cabin, rather than breaking the monotony, is instead a key contributor to it.

In addition to the trope of boredom, the elements of class and directionality in “Kyabin yawa” get reworked in Maedakô's story. While Kafû's narrator and his fellow passengers enjoy a private evening chat—replete with cigars and whiskey provided by the cabin boy—the passengers of *Santô senkyaku* enjoy games of blackjack, flasks of whiskey and coarse conversation under the haze of cheap tobacco smoke. In Kafû's story, the narrator's fellow shipmates, Yanagida and Kishimoto, unable to succeed in Japan, look to America as a place of hope and fulfillment, while Maedakô's passengers, having suffered through years of labor in the United States, now turn their hopes back onto the “homeland.”

The subject of return migration may remind us less of Kafû's *Amerika monogatari* and more of the work of Okina Kyûin. Like Okina's meditation on the meaning of “return” in “Sokoku ni kaeru ki” (A record on returning home), *Santô*

² Nakada Sachiko briefly mentions the influence of Kafû on Maedakô's work in terms of madness and institutionalization in “Makiba no michi” and “Yoru no Kiri.” See *Maedakô Hiroichirô ni okeru “Amerika”* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankôkai, 2000), 103-104.

senkyaku deals with issues of anxiety and return, but focuses on group sensibility and dynamics rather than on the obsessive thoughts of a single individual. Okina, prompted by the view of San Francisco slowly receding into the background, turned to cosmopolitanism for validation and a vision of homeland as something that could be “carried on one’s back.” Conversely, the telos of Maedakô’s story is an intense, unifying anticipation for a lost home that reaches its zenith as the Japanese islands slowly become visible from the ship deck.

Although the remarkable ending of *Santô senkyaku* brings us out of the stale air and onto the ship deck where the passengers rejoice in seeing their homeland again, most of the story takes place within the four, sooty walls of the third-class cabin. The opening passage quoted above presents a typical description of the cabin to which, like a slightly nauseating refrain, the story returns again and again. Depictions of the stifling atmosphere, conveyed in stomach-turning language, set the mood for the entire piece and consistently emphasize the heavy, putrid air that flows down, around and inside people. The air, “uniformly” inhaled, fills the spaces between passengers, creating a bond that symbolizes the story’s central concern—the formation of a collective consciousness among the third-class passengers.

Maedakô’s effort to make the protagonist of *Santô senkyaku* the *group* of third-class passengers is something that resonated ideologically with and was later emulated by other proletarian writers.³ Indeed, skillful portrayal of group consciousness is a hallmark of proletarian writing and an outstanding feature of this story. In relation to *Santô*

³ Scholars assert that Maedakô’s story served as the model for two celebrated works of proletarian literature, Hayama Yoshiki’s *Umi ni ikuru hitobito* (People who live on the sea, 1926) and Kobayashi Takiji’s *Kani kôsen* (The factory ship, 1929). See Kôno Toshirô, “Maedakô Hiroichirô,” in *Puroretaria bungaku*, Nihon Bungaku Kenkyû Shiryô Kankôkai, ed. (Tokyo: Yûseidô, 1971), 5; also, Yamada Seizaburô, *Puroretaria bungakushi—wakame no jidai* (jôkan) (Tokyo: Rironsha, 1954), 249.

senkyaku, however, few critics have addressed *how* Maedakô manages to do this. I will elaborate on this a little later in this chapter, but the thrust of my investigation will be to examine the *nature* of the group consciousness, which is catalyzed by class status, a shared history of labor in the United States and a rejuvenated passion for “Japan.” In fact it is these factors, and not inter-class struggle, a more standard device deployed by proletarian writers, that set the unifying process into motion. In *Santô senkyaku*, the passengers come together as a group of people who rediscover the meaning of their existence as *Japanese* returnees facing a homeland for the second time.

This chapter examines boredom, nostalgia, and aesthetic appropriations of the nation to illuminate group consciousness from a diasporic perspective. More specifically, my reading shows how the state of boredom creates fertile ground in which the symbolic power of the nation can eventually take root. Group-consciousness in this story is constructed on a number of levels. Thematically, it is constructed through social status and linguistic expression, shared feelings of nostalgia, and a rediscovery of the nation. On a narrative level, a sense of collectivity emerges through imagery and unanimistic⁴ plot devices deployed to emphasize group solidarity. My goal is to offer an alternative reading of a text that has been relegated to the role of proletarian literary prototype in the sweep of Japanese literary history.

From the Banks of the Hirose River to America and Back

Up until he returned to Japan in 1920, Maedakô had been publishing primarily in American socialist journals and was therefore relatively unknown to members of Japan’s

⁴ I discuss Maedakô’s appropriation of French unanimism in a later section. See pp. 15-18.

influential *bundan*. The publication of *Santô senkyaku* in 1921 provided an entry into the Japanese literary world. Because Maedakô's experiences abroad greatly influenced the subject matter of his work, and because it also played a part in his eventual role of outsider in the *bundan*, I feel it is worthwhile to sketch out something of his personal history.

Born in Sendai in 1888, Maedakô Hiroichirô⁵ was the illegitimate son of a carpenter and the youngest daughter of a samurai family. Shortly after his birth he was saved by his maternal grandmother from his drunken father's attempt to throw him into the Hirose River. Growing up principally under the grandmother's protection, he was eventually taken in by his maternal uncle. Maedakô completed his elementary education in Sendai and entered Miyagi Prefecture First Middle School, but withdrew in the middle of his fifth year. In 1905, at the age of seventeen, he went to Tokyo where he was eventually taken in by the writer Tokutomi Roka, who recognized his talent for writing. Under Roka's tutelage Maedakô was introduced to Christian justice and social concerns, although he never converted to Christianity himself. Roka financed Maedakô's trip to America in 1907, where he spent the next thirteen and a half years supporting himself with odd jobs such as dishwasher, candy store boy, and farm hand.⁶

In the U.S. Maedakô first lived in Chicago with two Japanese friends, socialist anarchists who had gone to America a year earlier. In Chicago he became acquainted with the Japanese socialist Kaneko Kiiichi (1876-1909) and his wife Josephine Conger, who were joint publishers of the socialist paper, *The Progressive Woman*. Through them

⁵ Sometimes read Maedakô Kôichirô or Maedagawa Kôichirô, although a document signed in romanized characters indicates that Maedakô preferred Maedakô Hiroichirô.

⁶ I draw Maedakô's biography from Nakada Sachiko *Maedakô Hiroichirô ni okeru "Amerika"* (Tokyo: Kokusho kankôkai, 2000), 13-16.

he met Floyd Dell (1887-1969), who was at the time the editor of the *Friday Literary Review* supplement of the *Chicago Evening Post*. With the help of his friends, Maedakô published a few pieces in English in *The Progressive Woman*, the *Friday Literary Review*, the *Coming Nation*, and the *International*. Late in 1915, following the example of Dell, Maedakô moved to New York to further his luck with writing. He wrote a few essays for a small Greenwich Village literary magazine, but soon gave up writing in English. He started work as a desk clerk for the Nihonjinkai in New York, and later as the yearbook editor of the *Nichibei shûhō*, a Japanese language newspaper. With earnings from his work at the *Nichibei shûhō*, Maedakô returned to Japan in 1920, with what he called a “vague socialist class consciousness.”⁷ He began work for the magazine *Chûgai* (*Home and abroad*), and it is here where his first story, *Santô senkyaku*, was published in November 1921. Feeling dissatisfied with the social conditions in Japan he became increasingly critical of society, participating in the organization of the *Shakaishugi dômei* (Socialist League) in 1920 and actively joining the proletarian literary movement when he joined the coterie of the magazine *Tane maku hito* (*The Sowers*). In 1924 he became an editor of the journal *Bungei sensen* (*Literary Front*), the stronghold of proletarian writers in the early years of the movement. By 1928 Maedakô had become a leading polemicist⁸ as well as a prolific writer, producing several novels, plays, and numerous short stories, almost all of which were based on his life in the U.S.

⁷ Nakada, 15.

⁸ Among the best known of Maedakô's polemical writing is a series of articles and responses that started with “Kikuchi Kan muyô ron” (The superfluous Kikuchi Kan), published in the inaugural issue of *Bungei shunjû*. Maedakô called for writers to move in the direction of popular fiction, urging young writers to break away from those “literary creations” that are nothing more than “playful dalliances of intellectuals,” and to instead adopt the popular novel that “possesses the ideological power to move a million men.” See, Maedakô Hiroichirô, “Tsûzoku shôsetsu e no kôjô,” (Advancing toward a popular novel.) *Yomiuri Shinbun* January 31-February 1, 1925, quoted in Maeda Ai, “The Development of Popular Fiction in the Late Taishô Era: Increasing Readership of Women's Magazines,” Rebecca Copeland, trans. in *Text and the City: Essays*

Deep Focus: Critical Reception and Bringing Background to the Fore

Scholarly work on *Santô senkyaku* has centered on Maedakô's effort to depict a collective of returning Japanese, and most discussions of the text go no further than repeating this basic claim. In one of the definitive collections on Japanese proletarian literary history, Yamada Seizaburô summarizes the contributions of Maedakô's story to the genre of proletarian works set on ships:

Santô senkyaku is fresh and original in that it features no protagonist, observes society aboard a ship, and depicts a collective group of people. In these respects, it is the forerunner of Hayama Yoshiki's *Umi ni ikuru hitobito* and Kobayashi Takiji's *Kani kôsen*, and their significance in the history of Japanese proletarian literature cannot be obscured.⁹

Kôno Toshirô also notes that the outstanding feature of *Santô senkyaku* is the "vivid description of the character and feelings of the group of passengers, which lacks a protagonist."¹⁰ Shizu Hiroshi describes the text's primary strength as a "skillful portrayal of group sensibility" while also critiquing the story for its failure to "to articulate a specific proletarian theory or engage in any class analysis."¹¹ Some commentators have

on *Japanese Modernity*, James Fujii, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 189-190. Maedakô had in fact been expressing his dissatisfaction with the structure of the *bundan* in a series of earlier articles. He felt that its conservative nature prohibited fresh young writers from getting their work published. Maedakô's critique also hinged on the commercial, capitalistic aspect of publishing and the fact that writers were slaves of publishers who were not cognizant of their own capitalist tendencies. "Young writers are slaves of the publishers," he said, "they are pushed to publish small amounts too frequently and the quality then suffers." See Maedakô Hiroichirô, "Pen no tôsôsei" *Yomiuri Shinbun* February 2, 1922; "Futsûseki kara mita bundan," *Yomiuri Shinbun*, November 13-16, 1922.

⁹ Yamada, 249. The scant material in English on the story repeats Yamada's assertion. G. T. Shea, probably drawing from Yamada's comments, also notes that *Santô senkyaku* is "significant in the history of Japanese proletarian literature in anticipation of Hayama Yoshiki's *Umi ni ikuru hitobito* and Kobayashi Takiji's "Kani Kôsen," which similarly describe group subjects." G.T. Shea, *Leftwing Literature in Japan: A Brief History of the Proletarian Literary Movement* (Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 1964), 64.

¹⁰ Kôno Toshirô, "Maedakô Hiroichirô 'Santô senkyaku made,'" in *Shakaikagaku tôkyû* (Waseda bungaku shakaigaku kenyûsho) Volume 14, No. 3 (1974): 137.

¹¹ Shizu Hiroshi, "Maedakô Hiroichirô 'Santô senkyaku,'" *Minshu bungaku*, Volume 31 (June 1968): 148.

criticized the text for its lack of “class consciousness” altogether. G. T. Shea, for example, states:

Santô senkyaku is not an outstanding work. In its description of a group of Japanese—a penniless student, a middle-aged woman of indifferent morals, a *naniwa bushi* reciter, a pregnant woman who has her baby on the voyage—there is nothing to be found of a conscious class character.¹²

One reason that scholars have overlooked the evidence of class-consciousness in the text is that it arises, first and foremost, against a background of labor and racial discrimination that the passengers have experienced in the U.S. I argue that the characters have already internalized an entire discourse of racial conflict and class status before they set foot on the ship, a discourse related to exclusionary policies that were escalating during the passengers’ time in the U.S.¹³ Both narrative description and passenger dialogue point to a group of people who have internalized racial and class divisions between Japanese and Caucasians. The narrator tells us that the passengers occupied a “position in a foreign land where they were lonely, helpless, and oppressed,” evidence of which emerges in dialogue interspersed throughout the story. For example, after overhearing a group of men’s crass conversation about a prostitute they call the “handkerchief woman” (named so because, although she treated customers well, her unattractive face required that they put a handkerchief over it), a woman remarks, “Well,

¹² Shea, 65. While scholars looking at *Santô senkyaku* within the framework of proletarian literature view the piece as an incomplete precursor, reviews written closer to *Santô senkyaku*’s original publication date in 1921 underscore the “international” aspects of the story, and Maedakô’s perspective as a writer who spent over thirteen years in the United States. Yamazaki Akira reviews *Santô senkyaku* in the *Yomiuri shinbun* a few months after the story’s appearance in *Chûgai* in 1921. Yamazaki specifically mentions that the work can be a valuable addition to *bundan* fiction precisely because of its “unique” perspective. Concurring with the comments of an editor who wrote a short introduction to the piece in *Chûgai*, Yamazaki says that Maedakô’s thirteen-year absence from Japan allows him to “ignore the everyday concept of border” and examine the mindset of people who see Japan “differently than those who have lived their entire lives there.” See Yamazaki Akira, “Maedakô Hiroichirô-kun no shingyô ‘Santôsenkyaku’ o yonde,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 8, 1921.

¹³ See Chapter 2, pp. 17-18.

hearing talk like that it's no wonder the Americans [*Merikenjin*] want to shut us out [*haiseki*]. They've been carrying on so about picture brides—all that's just a cover. We all know what the *real* reason is behind that stuff."¹⁴ Another woman continues the conversation, "Yes, well, white people may think we look small when they hear men talk like that, but it goes both ways, you know. Not all white people are saints, that's for sure. All that talk about how the Japs do this and the Japs do that, but just look at President Wilson, he's a lecherous one alright... ." ¹⁵

Having lived through escalating Japanese exclusionary policies the passengers' decision to leave America already demonstrates a resistance to living as poor, racial "others" and a determination to start again in Japan. Although some critics have asserted that Maedakô expressed no interest in the history and circumstances of his characters before they boarded the ship,¹⁶ I believe that such circumstances actually set the stage for everything that occurs on the ship. Knowledge of the socio-historical context and the developing tension between Japan and the U.S. provides important background information about the characters and informs the social ideology of the work. Such knowledge allows us, for example, to categorize characters into "types," and this typology informs events that take place on the ship in important ways. Passenger background is implicit; we know, for example, the kind of life that "the student" led, presumably as a Japanese schoolboy, or "the woman in berth 13" as a picture bride who absconded her marriage. In addition, knowledge of the background helps us contextualize the depiction

¹⁴ SS, 11. The woman is no doubt referring to racial prejudice.

¹⁵ SS, 11.

¹⁶ Donald Keene says "Unlike a Naturalist author, Maedakô showed no interest in the circumstances of his characters before they boarded the ship, in the burden of heredity each one bore, or in similar individual characteristics." *Dawn to the West, Japanese Literature of the Modern Era* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1894), 596-597.

of passengers who turn to gambling to combat the boredom of the two-week voyage. The narrative arc involving a student who loses all of his savings in a game of high-stakes poker is tragic, yet not unpredictable, and provides a situation in microcosm of a larger immigrant story. Reports of this type of activity, specifically admonitions against losing one's hard-earned money on "unsavory" forms of entertainment and thus tarnishing Japan's reputation in the world, had been publicized in both Japan and the U.S. since the early 1900s.

Santô senkyaku does not present the narrative plot of class consciousness realized in other proletarian works, but class conflict emerges as an integral part of this story, although it is implicit and cuts across national borders. I do not wish to emphasize the presence of class conflict in the story, however, in order to place it more squarely within the canon of Japanese proletarian literature. Rather, I want to underscore the fact that retrospective assessments of this text based on its degree of "proletarianism" have elided implicit, cross-cultural issues of class and race that inform passenger experience in important ways. Reading the story retrospectively within a set proletarian framework, by an author who firmly situated himself in the proletarian literary camp, has foreclosed attempts at alternate readings.

Santô senkyaku

Santô senkyaku was published in November 1921 in the short-lived socialist journal *Chûgai* (Home and abroad), which ran under the slogan "Overthrowing Militarism, Bureaucracy and Industrial Conglomerates."¹⁷ Nakada Sachiko notes that the

¹⁷ The slogan in Japanese reads: 「打倒軍国、官僚、財閥」 (Datôgunkoku, kanryô, zaibatsu).

front of the Tokyo building housing the *Chûgai* offices not only featured the journal title but also the subheading “Integrating East and West, Fostering International Awareness, and Building Socialism.”¹⁸ Maedakô began work as an editor for the journal when he arrived back in Japan in 1920. *Santô senkyaku* was published again a year later in a collection with four of his other stories, and again a year after that in 1922 in *Tane maku hito* (The sowers).¹⁹

Set in the same time period in which it was written and published, Maedakô’s story depicts the languid atmosphere among third class-passengers who are returning to Japan after a sojourn in the United States. The entire story takes place on a ship sailing from San Francisco to Yokohama, with a brief stop in Honolulu. The story, written in four sections, alternates between lengthy descriptions of the cabin, short clips of passenger dialogue, and descriptions of various episodes involving the group of passengers. Embedded in the cabin descriptions are occasional discursive passages that comment on the power of language, the position of the working class, or the symbolic significance of the nation.

In addition to occasional rhetorical passages, clusters of activity punctuate the long descriptive sections on boredom. These revolve around meal times, card games, a *naniwa bushi* performance, a stop in Honolulu, the birth of a baby, and finally the sighting of the Japanese archipelago from the ship deck. The events in the story are not, however, causally linked. The only causal sequence is the thematic connection between the stop in Hawaii, the *naniwa bushi* performance and the end of the journey, which are all strung together by a longing for social unity and the increasingly prominent symbol of

¹⁸ Nakada, 86. In Japanese: 「東洋文化の融和、国際知識の普及、社会主義の確立」

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14. The collection was published by *Shizensha* in 1922 and included *Santô senkyaku*, *Kumasan no shi*, *Jigoku*, *Modorosu no gun*, and *Robô no hitobito*.

“Japan.” Rather than temporally, the progression of the story is marked spatially. We arrive approximately halfway through the text at the stop in Honolulu, and, at the end of the text, we gain a view of the Japanese coastline. These markers, in addition to knowing the length of a trans-Pacific journey, allow readers to determine how much time has elapsed between the beginning of the story and the end—about two weeks.

Maedakô and the unanimism of Jules Romains

In a 1926 article published in *Bungei*, Maedakô revealed that his motivation for writing *Santô senkyaku* was “to put into practice Jules Romains’ concept of *unanimism*.”²⁰ This admission coincided with a movement in the proletarian literary camp to make the ideological purpose of proletarian literature more prominent.²¹ The movement, titled “Shizen seichô to mokuteki ishiki,” (Natural development and conscious purpose) centered on a somewhat vague concept drawn from Marxist theory that began to gain attention in 1926 with Aono Suekichi’s call for a proletarian literature with a “conscious purpose.” The movement, which caused fierce controversy and eventually divided the proletarian literary camp into two factions, stated that the “natural development” of proletarian literature was insufficient, and that in order to foster change and influence the greatest number of readers an author had to have a conscious proletarian purpose in mind when writing.²² It is probably more than a coincidence that Maedakô came forward with his fresh insight regarding the unanimistic basis of *Santô*

²⁰ Maedakô Hiroichirô, “Shijûnisai no genzai made,” *Bungei* (July 1926).

²¹ Some critics have noticed that this motivation contrasts with Maedakô’s earlier claim that *Santô senkyaku* served merely as a “meishikawari” (name card exchange) for the *bundan*. See Maedakô Hiroichirô “Santô senkyaku no sujô, kotsugara,” *Bungei kurabu* (April 1925).

²² Aono Suekichi, “Shizen seichô to mokuteki ishiki,” *Nihon puroretaria bungaku hyôronshu*, Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke, Aono Suekichi shû, III (Tokyo: Shin Nihon Shuppansha, 1990). Originally published in *Bungei sensen* (September 1926).

senkyaku during the debates over the importance of “conscious purpose.” In fact, there was probably no theory of literature that meshed more perfectly with the proletarian philosophy of “conscious purpose.”

The unanimism (*l'unanimisme*) of Jules Romains can be described briefly as a theory and ideal of collective life presented in literary form. Appearing in print for the first time in a 1905 review called *Le Penseur*, the term was used by Romains to describe his poetic vision of the world—the literary portrayal of collective movements and feelings. Romains held the belief that the fundamental reality of social life is essentially a collective one; that life is concerned first and foremost with a collective consciousness, which is superior to the sum of its individual parts. Romains' concept of the collective consciousness was based on the intuitive idea that when a number of people meet, however unintended the meeting may be, they become part of an individuality greater than their own.²³ The process of forming unanimity included the absorption of individuals by a greater collectivity and the absorption of the collective in the consciousness of the individual.²⁴

Unanimism as an ideal held a preference for social life founded on the greatest possible unity and solidarity, and included the idea that prosaic everyday life could be transformed into a superior level of existence by means of “privileged moments” characterized by group consciousness. There was thus a distinction between positive, active existence and the negative, passive life before regeneration. Unanimism could

²³ P.J. Norrish, *Drama of the Group: A Study of Unanimism in the Plays of Jules Romains* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 45.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

prove the difference between mere existence and *living*, where the former is dull and meaningless and the latter, illuminated by unanimism, spiritually satisfying.²⁵

The process of *unanimism* in Romains's poetry is marked by a series of narrative events; a narrative arc that follows a pattern of group formation, group deformation, and, finally, subtle group transformation. Group formation is often concretized by a struggle, where the social energy generated by the formation of the group is eventually directed towards outsiders or other groups. For Romains, this process sets into motion the *unanimist* phenomena. Interestingly, the plot of a *unanimist* piece does not end with the unifying spirit of the group, but rather the *dissolution* of the group. As the group disbands, traces of the group spirit remain in each individual, transforming them in some way.

Ironically, however, and in contradiction to unanimist principles that posit the natural formation of group consciousness, narration is key to the process as a whole. The collectivity does not exist passively by itself; in order to come into being it requires the active consciousness of the observer. It follows from this that the narrator is somehow privileged in possessing an intuitive access to group consciousness. The narrator remains dominant; the suprahuman reality with which he claims to be in communion is in fact ordered through his individual creative imagination.

The "transformation" that takes place among the individuals is often induced by a theatrical performance, and requires an animator, who by implication must be a superior individual able to captivate the collectivity. In *Santô senkyaku*, the plot elements of unanimist literature come through most clearly in the depiction of the *naniwa bushi* performance that occurs almost halfway through the story. The role of "animator" of the

²⁵ Ibid., 40.

performance is filled by the recitor himself, a man able to capture the attention of the audience not only with his theatrical skills, but also with the type of language he uses to address the crowd. The description of the *naniwa bushi* performance follows the same narrative pattern of group (in this case audience) formation, deformation and transformation. In the episode, the narrator describes the audience members as they file into the third-class cabin from all parts of ship and gradually unite under the single purpose of watching the performance. Halfway through the performance a conflict arises between the audience and several members of the ship's crew who disrupt the show. A brawl ensues, which unites the group as they fight against the crew, although it takes the crowd out of the mesmerizing world of the performance. Finally, traces of group spirit remain in the consciousness of the passengers even after the disturbance leaves both the performer and audience drained of energy and vitality. The *naniwa bushi* recitor finishes the performance, which does not carry the same resonance after the scuffle. However, as the narrator notes, not just a few passengers go to bed that night humming lines from the evening's performance.

Before moving into a more detailed discussion of the *naniwa bushi* performance, we must first address the state of mind of the passengers in the cabin, which helped prime them for the powerful and unifying forces of the *naniwa bushi* recital. The opening sections of Romain's unanimist works often describes individuals who are isolated from one another in private thought. Individual isolation in Maedakô's story arises out of a debilitating state of boredom, initiated not only by the tedium and repetitious nature of life on the ship, but also by the inability of passengers to fill the time "meaningfully."

Indeed, time in the cabin seems to stand still and for the passengers it is filled with the mind-numbing tedium that permeates the cabin like the stale air.

The Trope of Boredom

Every event that took place on the ship was stale and repetitive as if it were mimicking the events of the previous day. The rice that tasted bad on the tongue one day was served again on the next, accompanied by the same, salty side dishes. Strolls on the deck, the taste of cigarettes, and the topics of conversation flowing beneath the layer of cheap tobacco smoke—nothing changed for these people who no longer had regular work since leaving the port of San Francisco. As if wearing prison uniforms and subject to regular surveillance, their spirits (*kokoro*) were stifled and they could not come up with anything novel to do.... most passengers blindly put their lives in the hands of the steamship, falling into self-abandoned idleness and spending each day thinking about as little as possible all the way from San Francisco to Yokohama. These people, when they were not eating, chose either to fall into a dull, heavy sleep, or to waste time talking about nothing at all. Once in a while they would go up to the deck, or read books, but these were actions spurred only by momentary impulse, nothing that had any relation to the rest of their lives.²⁶

Although clusters of intense activity punctuate the trip, the cabin always returns to the same state of unremitting boredom. Their spirits dampened, the passengers do nothing but submit to the routines of daily life or momentary impulse. The impulses take the form of gambling, and, for most of the single men in the cabin, harassing the one single woman traveling in third-class. As the narrator suggests, however, these diversions are just temporary fixes that mask a much deeper problem.

Cultural critics note that although boredom is often characterized by feelings of tiresomeness, weariness and disinterestedness, these elements suggest a superficial and easily remedied ailment for what is often a more complicated psychological condition. Sean Healy asserts that the view of boredom as a trivial and fleeting problem has

²⁶ SS, 11.

provided a “smokescreen behind which has lurked a grave sickness of the spirit, potentially destructive of the individual and possibly even society as a whole.”²⁷ In *Santô senkyaku*, boredom characterized by “stifled spirits” and “self-abandoned idleness” seems to point less to a case of the doldrums and more to a crisis of self.

Researchers of boredom agree that a fundamental characteristic of the condition is a loss of personal meaning and that the condition can be divided into various stages or degrees. There is boredom and then there is *boredom*; one is a situational problem, the other an existential crisis. This construction is drawn in part from the writings of Flaubert, who distinguishes between “common boredom,” a longing for something that is desired, and “modern boredom,” a state bereft of any feelings of desire at all.²⁸ Flaubert’s introduction of the element of desire, or lack of desire, is interesting in terms of Maedakô’s story. Lacking desire for anything “significant,” passengers fall into a state of mental vacuity. They are frequently distracted by feelings of sexual desire, but these momentary and thus “insignificant” feelings get replaced at the end of the story by an intense desire for the nation. This transformation—from the vacuous state of boredom towards an ecstatic state upon reaching Japan—comprises the central thrust of the story.

Although the *naniwa bushi* performance plays a vital role in cultivating a desire for the nation in each one of the passengers, the positioning of the narrator in this process also serves to situate it in a hierarchy of class experience. As I will explain shortly, in studies of the Forty-seven Rônin (performed for the cabin) and *naniwa bushi*, we see both performers and their political patrons making an important intellectual class distinction between people who appreciate *naniwa bushi* for what it is—an art form—and those who

²⁷ Seán Desmond Healy, *Boredom, Self, And Culture* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 20.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

take the material at face value—the lower-class audience. We see this paradigm represented in the performance aboard Maedakô's ship, where there is a distinction made between the group of passengers who become completely mesmerized by the action in the stories, and a critical narrator who understands the story's underlying ideological and didactic forces.²⁹ The nostalgic sentiments produced by a specific *naniwa bushi* performance style allow the audience of third-class passengers to reconnect with 'traditional' and 'unique' Japanese values, thus reintegrating them in the imagined community of the nation. It is, however, the enlightened consciousness of the narrator with his superior critical and intellectual skills that renders the process legible.

Aesthetic Appropriations of the Nation: Nostalgia and Naniwa bushi

In the scene where a *naniwa bushi* (浪花節)³⁰ performer recites a traditional samurai tale of revenge filled with "traditional" Japanese sentiments, the passengers become spellbound by their own imaginings of the perfect homeland. The nation, or an abstract notion of the nation, emerges through recitation of the historical ballad, and the passengers, captivated by the performance, begin to regain a sense of themselves as

²⁹ Boredom also emerges as a kind of class marker in the story. Although boredom for the passengers encompasses something more than a simple "reaction to the immediate," third-class passenger boredom is different from the *ennui* of the narrator who senses that there is potential beyond the immediate circumstances. The laborers are defined not only by their uses of "empty" time and their output, but also by what they *don't* do—by their utter lack of imagination. I draw here from discussions of the semantic differences between boredom and *ennui*. See Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Boredom: the Literary History of a State of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 123.

³⁰ The story-singing tradition of *naniwa bushi*, also known as *rôkoku*, was a popular form of mass entertainment in Japan throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Rising from the streets of Tokyo in the early Meiji period, it emerged on the big theater stage during the later part of Meiji. Appealing to all classes and referred to as a truly "national" form of expression, the basic form was a single storyteller alternating between song and ordinary speech, accompanied by a *samisen* player who offered periodic verbal interjections for timing and encouragement. Its appeal to all audiences was mainly because of its clearly defined melodic lines and easily comprehensible language. See Hyôdô Hiromi and Henry D. Smith II, "Singing Tales of the Gishi: *Naniwa bushi* and the Forty Seven Rônin in Late Meiji Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica*, Volume 61, Number 4 (Winter 2006): 459-508 and Hyôdô, Hiromi, '*Koe' no kokumin kokka*, (Tokyo: Nihon Nippon Hôsdô Shuppan Kyôkai, 2000).

“Japanese.” During the course of the performance the passengers insert themselves into the drama, installing themselves in the mythical legacies of the past, and naturalizing their positions in a history and society from which they have been separated for many years. This was a way for them to reaffirm identities that had been battered by the turmoil of life in the United States at the height of exclusion.

I identify two interrelated processes that allow this reaffirmation to take place. One is the production of nostalgic sentiment, which some theorists describe as a “means employed to construct, maintain, or reconstruct an identity that is in flux,”³¹ and the other is connected to the nature of the *naniwa bushi* performance—an art form that evolved around didactic formulations of the nation. I will engage both processes to show how the passengers moved from a state of lethargy and stasis to one of renewed vigor and appreciation for the nation.

The etymology of the term nostalgia, from the Greek *nostos*—to return home—and *algia*—a painful condition—establishes a link between travel and longing for home. Coined by a Swiss physician in the late seventeenth century, the term designated a familiar condition of homesickness among Swiss mercenaries fighting far from their native land.³² Andre Wernick notes that by the end of the nineteenth century nostalgia not only referred to homesickness, it was a term whose meaning was being extended from place to time. The meaning of nostalgia moved increasingly towards a temporal pole, towards a time in the past and an “over-sentimental valuation” of that past. That past, furthermore, might be individual, might be collective and historical, or might never have

³¹ Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 3.

³² Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 13.

been present at all.³³ The nostalgic feelings experienced by the passengers in *Santô senkyaku* arise from an aesthetically re-presented past of heroic warriors of the Edo period (1600-1868). The passengers' nostalgia involves an active and imaginative recreating of this time, but in doing so it becomes a way of relating to the present, or even the future.

Theorists have not only focused on nostalgia as a way of relating the past to the present and future, they have also identified the social conditions in which it is most likely to arise. Deeply implicated in the political life of a people and in their historical sense of themselves, feelings of nostalgia emerge when one's stable identity has been threatened with discontinuity. As Fred Davis notes, nostalgia is a "crepuscular" emotion, one that takes hold when "the dark of impending change is seen to be encroaching."³⁴ And Kathleen Stewart defines nostalgia as a cultural practice that increases in importance as social life becomes diffuse, ambiguous, and fragmented.³⁵

Returning to Japan after a decade of labor in the United States, the passengers in *Santô senkyaku* had reached a critical juncture in their lives. Scholars of Japanese American history have researched the trend of reverse migration among Japanese residents in the United States in the early 1920s. Although the research focuses on the quantifiable aspects of migration and the gradual increase in numbers that eventually resulted in a negative ratio of people immigrating to and emigrating from the U.S., the reasons for return to Japan were fairly obvious. In the U.S. the passengers experienced

³³ Andrew Wernick, "Resort to Nostalgia: Mountain, Memories, and Myths of Time," in *Buy this Book: Studies in Advertising and Consumption*, ed. Mica Nava, Andrew Blake, Iain MacRury, and Barry Richards (New York: Routledge, 1997), 219.

³⁴ Davis, 12.

³⁵ Kathleen Stewart, "Nostalgia: A Polemic," in *Cultural Anthropology*, Volume 3, No. 3 (August 1988): 227-241.

intense racial discrimination, they were prohibited from owning land, they were denied American citizenship and new laws were preventing further immigration from Japan. The Los Angeles *Rafu Shimpô* noted in 1923, “During this period the extreme dejected spirits of the Japanese people cannot be concealed. Many are thinking of returning to Japan. Some are seeking a safe haven out of state or in a third country.”³⁶ The narrator of *Santô senkyaku* reveals something of the misery experienced by the passengers during their sojourn in the U.S.:

From their positions in a foreign land where they were lonely, helpless, oppressed and persecuted, and separated by a vast ocean they had crossed only once in their lifetime, they began to yearn for home. Enduring every hardship, taking on every kind of arduous work, and resigning themselves to indignity and humiliation, their only desire in the long sojourn was to return richer, stronger, and more famous than before. They silently endured unbearable psychological abuse, but being ignorant (*muchi*), they had no other choice but to simply resist with a kind of blind patriotism against foreigners and the liberal ideas they used to slander the Japanese nation (*kokutai*), its military actions, its social organizations, and its business practices. In their hearts they screamed “Just you wait,” but in the end they simply lived the lives of poor immigrants (*imin*) who lost, and lost, and lost again.³⁷

With their futures uncertain, a return to Japan caused abrupt social changes and discontinuities with which the passengers had to cope. Aboard the ship, these conditions created a fertile social and psychological medium for the production and diffusion of nostalgic sentiment. As Davis says, “Nostalgia thrives on transition, on the subjective discontinuities that engender our yearning for continuity.”³⁸ Nostalgia facilitated the suturing of fractured identities by allowing the passengers, through narrative, to place themselves in a larger schema of historical and cultural meaning. And the schema of

³⁶ Masao Suzuki, “Success Story? Japanese Immigrant Economic Achievement and Return Migration, 1920-1930,” *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Dec. 1995): 889-901.

³⁷ SS, 16.

³⁸ Davis, 40.

meaning for Maedakô's passengers cannot be separated from the medium of *naniwa bushi* and its relationship to the nation.

The material of the nostalgic formula is the past, and the way that the passengers experience the past is through an aesthetic recreation of specially chosen material. The genre of *naniwa bushi*, both its rise to popularity in the late Meiji period and the influence of its most famous practitioner, Kumoemon Tôchûken, has some bearing on why this particular performance was able to move the crowd of passengers the way that it did. Popular among all classes of people, *naniwa bushi* appealed to those who enjoyed the song and the style of performance as well as elite politicians who saw its propagation as a possible opportunity to “educate” the masses and to forge a national voice.

Ultimately, I show that the production of nostalgia initiated by the *naniwa bushi* performance occurs in the individual minds of the passengers, in a privatized space where the passengers, in their imaginations, insert themselves into the action. But the performance also provides a public space for the passengers to gather for a singular cause. One effect of the *naniwa bushi* performance is to provide a forum for collective nostalgia, thereby binding the group together. The narrator has made a point to describe the initial gathering:

They came together—third-class passengers from the bow and the other passengers from the stern—like people of different races. At first they had nothing to say to each other, but in no time at all one was asking another for a light, another shared a bit of gossip about the evening's performer, and someone else made a crack about the woman sitting in front of them. They gathered together for a common purpose, and in the end they were transformed into a simple crowd of people. (*onaji mokuteki no shita ni atsumatta, tanjun na fukusû ni kawatte shimatta*)³⁹

³⁹ SS, 13.

The description here applies one stage of Romaine's unanimist progression of showing individuals isolated in private thought being absorbed by a greater collectivity. In addition to providing an opportunity for passengers to unite as a group for a single purpose, the collective experience of the group is enhanced by the fact that the particular stories being performed were familiar to all of the audience.

Naniwa bushi performances during the late-Meiji and early-Taishô periods were dominated by tales of the Forty-seven Righteous Samurai of Akô (known as Akô Gishi, or simply Gishi). And indeed the performance aboard Maedakô's ship told the story of Nakayama Yasubei, sometimes known as Horibe Yasubei, one of the Forty-seven Rônin. In addition, the man performing the *naniwa bushi* in *Santô senkyaku*, the narrator tells us, was a disciple of Kumoemon Tôchûken, a man famous for his depictions of Nakayama Yasubei. The popularity of these tales in late Meiji, as Hyôdô and Smith write, was due to the fact that "it fed on and gave new shape to the national enthusiasm for military tales in the wake of victory over Russia, appealing to widespread if inchoate enthusiasm for Bushidô."⁴⁰

The public appreciated the material of *naniwa bushi* performances, but government supporters believed in its ability to serve as a didactic instrument for mass moral education. One such supporter in the Meiji bureaucracy was Koga Renzô, a specialist in criminal law who served as head of the Police Bureau in the Home Ministry from 1906-1912. Koga connected his two passions, bushidô and *naniwa bushi*, by promoting the values of bushidô through the medium of *naniwa bushi*. Koga, joined by Home Minister Tokutomi (whose name gets mentioned in Maedakô's story), embarked on a campaign of improving *naniwa bushi* so that it could serve as a vehicle for the

⁴⁰ Hyôdô and Smith, 450.

propagation of such “healthy” official values as filial piety, loyalty to the Emperor, and patriotism. Koga was interested in using *naniwa bushi* as a means to change the attitudes of wayward Japanese and set them on the straight and narrow path of becoming ideal citizens. In 1907, Kumoemon Tôchûken said in a probable effort at self-promotion, “I have selected stories about loyal retainers [*chûshin resshi*] and intend to deliver them with all my spirit and passion as a form of popular education [*tsûzoku kyôiku*].”⁴¹

The ways in which this didacticism works for the passengers in *Santô senkyaku* is shown in their response to the *naniwa bushi* performance:

Every line in every verse conjured up images of life during the feudal era, or of those unnatural ideologies (*fushizen na shisô*) that could only be understood in Japan, or of the natural phenomena like flowers and clouds that were used to mask the evil and darkness that they enfolded, or of the crude glorification of heroes (*hizoku na eiyû sūhai*). The rise and fall of the reciter’s voice, which at first carried the boisterous lines steadily up and down the musical scale, eventually leveled out at the end and became soft and mellow. As if charmed (*châmu*) by the quality of his own voice, the performer closed his eyes, rapped on the table with his fan, and drew out long notes as if enduring the suffering of the characters in the tale himself, and then finished by letting the silence swallow his voice. Then, in an instant, in an exaggerated, colloquial style typical of *naniwa bushi*, descriptions of various events unfolded smoothly... A fierce warrior, sheathed sword at his side, a crowd of townsmen with their hair tied back in queues (*sakayaki*), a servant’s dutiful attendance, a woman’s traditional manner of abandoning her human rights and encouraging a man’s oppression –these episodes were woven in simple revenge ballads with howls and moans that dripped down like water. As the people listened, they forgot that they, returning to their homeland (*kokoku*) after years of drifting abroad, were listening to a frivolous (*keihaku*) *naniwa bushi* recited in a filthy third-class cabin. Some shut their eyes tightly, buried their chins in their knees, and sat perfectly still. Some shook their heads left and right, keeping time with the rhythm of the stories. Some exhaled from the bottom of their lungs, exclaiming ‘excellent’ to the man sitting next to them. Some listened carefully with the most melancholic expressions on their faces, nestling themselves against the wall. Rather than appreciating the art of *naniwa bushi*, these people instead felt that each one of them had become an actor himself, creating, reciting, and being moved by the romantic, epic events taking place in his own head.⁴²

⁴¹ Byôbyô-an Tenchô, “Tôchûken Kumoemon,” *Engi gahô*, Volume I: 7 (1907): 64-67. Quoted in Hyôdô and Smith, 496.

⁴² SS, 13.

Within this description we see at work another instance of class-based response manifested in the two very different viewing experiences of the narrator and the passengers. The degree to which the combination of artistic skill and historical drama moves the crowd seems to match the degree of irritation and disdain it brings about in the narrator. While the people become completely absorbed in the performance, using words like “excellent” to describe the experience, the narrator stands at a distance from it, dismissing it as “unnatural, “crude” and “frivolous.” Experiencing the story of Nakayama Yasubei as people separated from Japan by half a lifetime of labor abroad, the crowd is moved to the extent that it “forgets” the “art” altogether. For the narrator, on the other hand, there is nothing but performance, and once more it is a performance exuding a “crude” ideological didacticism.

For all the musical and personal appeal of the performer, it was also the particular story that appealed to Maedakô’s audience.

Everything that they knew was embedded in that heavenly verse. Maybe because it was a tale that they had heard many times since they were born, or even before they were born, or maybe because they themselves had somehow lived the events being recalled, every one of them became a Nakayama Yasubei strolling the streets of old Edo looking for cheap saké joints. Eyes bleary with drink, it must have been startling to see themselves living those events of long ago. The events seemed a lifetime away from their current lot as people who worked long and hard in America, saved a little money, and were now going back to Japan. How surprised they must have felt to see themselves single-handedly fighting their mortal enemies in the battle at Takadanobaba for the sake of their adoptive uncle.⁴³

Encoded within the nostalgic performance is a moment of self-reflexivity that establishes a certain relationship with the temporal past. It is a relationship that at once distances it from, while also placing it firmly within, the present. And this is part of what the

⁴³ Ibid., 14.

performance was designed to do. The artist knows by training and prior exercise what configuration of lines, sounds, movements, or words will reach the audience more immediately, and touch certain “chords.” The audience, upon hearing and seeing the material, respond nostalgically since it has, through long associative exposure, assimilated the aesthetic code that evokes the emotion. As Leonard Meyer states the matter generally for music, “thus particular musical devices—melodic figure, harmonic progressions, or rhythmic relationships—become formulas which indicate a culturally codified mood or sentiment.”⁴⁴ The history, values, and culture presented in the performance are resources removed from the passengers’ lives yet still central to their vision of national cultural identity. The act of inserting themselves into the drama facilitates a sense of coherence, consistency, and a sense of who they are in relation to Japanese history and culture. By experiencing the performance nostalgically the characters have become actors in a drama that emphasizes the unique qualities and historical past of the Japanese nation.

But what, specifically, is the drama in which the passengers see themselves acting? Answering this question necessitates a closer look at the story of Nakayama Yasubei. Considered the finest swordsman of all the Forty-seven Rōnin, Nakayama Yasubei was orphaned as a child and raised by a master swordsman in Edo who became his adoptive uncle. The uncle was challenged to a duel at Takadabobaba by an envious rival, which turned out to be a fatal ambush by the rival and his friends. Yasubei avenged his uncle’s death by slaughtering the killers. By coincidence, the wife and daughter of Horibe Yahei, a samurai of the Akō domain, happened to be among the spectators at Takadanobaba. When Horibe Yahei heard of Yasubei’s remarkable swordsmanship, he

⁴⁴ Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 267.

was so impressed that he offered the young man the hand of his daughter and the honor of adoption into the Horibe family. Later, both father and adopted son were among the Forty-seven Rônin who avenged their lord.⁴⁵

We know that the *naniwa bushi* performer in *Santô senkyaku* had reached the epic battle at Takadanobaba before it was disrupted by hecklers among the crew, and had included a description of Yasubei's famous stop at a sakaya for a drink before heading to the Takadanobaba riding grounds. Any number of things may have appealed to Maedakô's passengers here; perhaps it was an invigorating infusion of the warrior spirit, the description of a flawed hero, the touching story of a wandering samurai, alone in the world, who eventually gained a family, or feelings of intense loyalty and dedication to an adoptive parent. Henry Smith has summarized what he finds to be the overarching moral of the Gishi tales in general told through *naniwa bushii*:

The moral of all these stories, beyond the powerful catharsis that they inspire after the final successes of revenge, is that if only one perseveres with sincerity of heart, one will achieve successes in life, even though it may be necessary to dissemble and endure humiliation along the way.⁴⁶

For obvious reasons a message like this had appeal for a group of returning laborers. With this sentiment taken to heart, the struggle and humiliation experienced in the U.S. could be accepted and put behind them as part of a natural order of things, and, if approached with a sincere heart, the potential for future successes affirmed.

In the end of the scene, the mesmerizing performance is disrupted by jeers from a few crewmembers who have gathered on the steps of the ladder leading down into the cabin. The crewmembers, we eventually find out, feel resentful of the performer because

⁴⁵ Sarah E. Thompson, *Utagawa Kuniyoshi: The Sixty-nine Stations of the Kisokaidô* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2009), 76.

⁴⁶ Hyôdô and Smith, 500.

it is they who usually provide the ship's entertainment, for a small salary. The presence of a "real" *naniwa bushi* practitioner on board has rendered their services unnecessary. In the case of the collective consciousness emerging from the *naniwa bushi* scene and subsequent fight, however, a Romaines-like evocation of a flicker of solidarity remains as the melody and lyrics of the story linger on the lips of the passengers as they slowly make their way back to their bunks.

The "Free" Social Institution of Language

Although an intuitive, collective will hovers over the consciousness of the group, a more concrete manifestation of Maedakô's unanimistic vision can be found in the linguistic qualities of *Santô senkyaku*. Studies of the development and influence of French *unanimism* have focused on stylistic innovation, which researchers felt went hand in hand with the emotional emphasis on collective forms of existence. Scholars have parsed Romaines's verse for repeated images, metaphors, and innovative syntactic and semantic uses of words and expressions. One fundamental linguistic characteristic taken for granted in the French language but one that cannot be overlooked in the Japanese case is the use of plural subjects. Expressing plurality, a given when transmitted through a language that requires subjects, becomes more complicated when expressed in a language that often omits them. Maedakô saturates his story with plural pronouns and other adjectival clauses to signify a plural mode. Maedakô's text is full of the pronoun "karera" (they). Precisely because the subjects of Japanese sentences are often elided, frequent use of the subject marker "karera" serves to repeatedly emphasize the collective space and feelings of the third-class cabin in a way that overuse of the personal pronoun "I" might

emphasize the insular, self-absorbed nature of the narrator in a *shishôsetsu* (personal novel). Maedakô liberally inserts the third persona plural “karera” as subjects, subject phrases, or pronouns to emphasize group experience, mentality, and identity: *karera no rôdô* (their labor), *karera no hyôhaku* (their wandering), *karera no shisô* (their thinking), *karera no kankaku* (their feelings), *karera no kotoba* (their words), *karera no kaiwa* (their conversations), *karera no naisei* (their reflections), *karera no kioku* (their memories), *karera no kitai* (their expectations), *karera no mokuteki* (their goals), *kareara no kokoro* (their hearts). Other plural pronouns appear frequently, such as *danjo* (men and woman), *hitobito* (people), *subete no hitobito* (all of the people), *ôzei* (large number), *gun* (group), *gunshû* (crowd), *ichidan no danjo* (group of men and women), *otokotachi* (men), *onnatachi* (women). In addition, the adjective “fukusû” (multiple) is sometimes attached to nouns to indicate plurality, as in *fukusû no me* (sets of eyes), *fukusû no koe* (voices).⁴⁷

In addition to nouns and pronouns, Maedakô implements the recurring image of individual parts coming together to form a complete whole in a variety of contexts. Disparate parts coalesce forming a cluster or mass (*katamari*). Children sleeping together in tangled bedding form a black mound (*katamari*), the fists of the men in the cabin come together to form one large mass (*katamari*), bodies from all parts of ship gather together to make a simple group (*tanjun na fukusû*). One reviewer of *Santô senkyaku* suggests that the practice of regularly inserting subjects at the heads of sentences, in addition to instances of unusual particle usage, creates awkwardness and indicates rustiness with the Japanese language. He adds that it may also indicate a subconscious influence of the

⁴⁷ Maedakô sometimes takes liberties with the character, sometimes pairing it with another to form unusual compounds. Ex. 複音, meaning more than one sound.

English language, which requires consistent subject markings.⁴⁸ I agree that overuse of plural signs makes the text awkward and repetitive at times, but this was surely a stylistic choice deployed expressly to emphasize group collectivity rather than an indication of rusty Japanese or an internalizing of English syntax.

In addition to working on a narrative level, language practice is a chief mechanism contributing to the group's sense of unity. Linguistic cleavages and schisms arise between third-class passengers and some of the other passengers aboard the ship, emerging from contrasting linguistic styles, which involve both the formal elements of language (semantics, diction, registers of politeness and formality), and the related ideological workings of *hyôjungo*, or "standard language." For the passengers, words have the power to enhance or diminish individuality, to elevate or subordinate group status, and to expose the hegemonic forces of *hyôjungo*. The linguistic identity of the group hinges on the ideological stance inherent in *hyôjungo* that pits a standardized (Tokyo) accent in opposition to regional dialect. In addition, facility in applying and the ability to understand honorific and humble structures sets the group of passengers apart from some of the other travelers. These linguistic mechanisms and their applications are, furthermore, inextricable from notions of class and nation.

The significance of linguistic style comes forward at the outset of the story in the way some characters are defined by their specific ways of speaking. Typical of a proletarian text that uses character "types" instead of individual characters, *Santô senkyakaku* employs characters without names. Instead they are identified by other distinguishing factors such as physical features (*katame no otoko*, the man with one eye), occupation (*Shosei-san*, student), or gender (*jûsanban no onna*, woman in berth 13).

⁴⁸ Kôno, 6.

Other passengers are identified by their regional Japanese accent, such as *Kishû namari no otoku* (the man with the Kishû accent) and *Ôshûben no otoku* (the man with the Northern dialect). In addition, much of the character dialogue is laced with regional inflection, which is sometimes accompanied by diacritical marks, and other times without. For example, towards the beginning of the story when the cabin boy makes an announcement about the ensuing inspection and meal, he reveals a Kansai accent: “Please do not drop things on the floor (doozo yuka no ue e mono o *okkoto* san yoo ni shite kudasai).” *Okkotosu* is a Kansai dialect-inflected form of the verb *otosu*, to drop. A little later in the story a man with an accent from Western Japan tries to take the woman from berth 13 to the deck, “Let’s go to the deck, just the two of us—(*kanpan e derya, anta to futarikiri jyake ni, yo,—*).

That most of the characters in the story speak with regional accents is significant because by the early 1900s institutions within the Japanese government were making a conscious effort to “standardize” the Japanese language, which included efforts to stamp out regional dialects. These changes to language began in the Meiji period as leaders recognized that a standardized language would have an important function both in expediting the flow of information necessary for rapid modernization and also in providing a focus for national pride. In 1895, the term *hyôjungo* (standard language) was coined by Ueda Kazutoshi (1867-1937), a linguistic scholar and Meiji intellectual. While referring to a common language that could be used throughout the country, *hyôjungo* also incorporated the idea of a standard of excellence to which users of that language should

aspire. It thus designates an idealized and perhaps unattainable form of that language.⁴⁹ By virtue of the implication of moral superiority inherent in *hyôjungo*, the use of this term as the goal of language planning in the late Meiji period led in time to the “dialect complex,” an effort to wipe out dialects through the teaching of *hyôjungo*.⁵⁰

Theorists like Bourdieu tell us that standardization reflects the prevailing ideology and functions as a vehicle by which an elite maintains the status quo. Access to language defines a “linguistic market,” a system of rewards and penalties that endow particular forms of language with greater or lesser value.⁵¹ Thus the effort to standardize language, and more specifically to promote teaching the educated Tokyo dialect as the “norm,” simultaneously made explicit to the masses the perceived inadequacy in other types of languages, including regional dialect, and awarded its practitioners with social currency.

Aspiring to use a dialect-free standard version of “beautiful” Japanese enabled citizens to contribute to the modernization and sophistication of the new nation. Ueda Kazutoshi published a paper in 1895 entitled *Hyôjungo ni tsukite* (Regarding standard language), in which he observed that because advanced European countries like England, Germany, France, and Italy had developed and established standard languages, it behooved Japan to nurture a beautiful, polished standard language as well.⁵² In 1900,

⁴⁹ Nanette Twine, “Standardizing Written Japanese: A Factor in Modernization,” in *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 43:4 (Winter 1988): 432-435.

⁵⁰ Twine, 446.

⁵¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

⁵² Ueda’s paper is summarized in Yeounsuk Lee, *The Ideology of Kokugo: Nationalizing Language in Modern Japan*, Maki Hirano Hubbard, trans. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 73. An early supporter of direct intervention in language planning on both pragmatic and nationalist grounds, Ueda was an undergraduate in the Department of Japanese Literature at Tokyo Imperial University where he studied under Basil Hall Chamberlain. The British scholar’s views on the need for style and orthographic form stimulated Ueda’s interest in his own language. After his graduation in 1888, Ueda proceeded to postgraduate studies and in 1890 was sent to Germany by the government to study linguistics in Germany and France. Upon return to Japan he was given charge of the linguistics program Tokyo Imperial

Hoshino Kôichi, one of Ueda's followers and a linguist especially interested in the relationship between *hyôjungo* and *hôgen* (dialect), makes the ideological connections between standard language, dialect and nation abundantly clear when he wrote the following in *Gengogaku taii* (Outline of linguistics):

I hope you understand by now how urgent a task it is to overthrow *hôgen* in order to bring unity to *kokugo* (national language). This task may be naturally accomplished to a certain extent as our civilization progresses, but we must accelerate the process with the art of sophistication. What I mean by the "art of sophistication" is the establishment of *hyôjungo* to the extermination of *hôgen*.⁵³

Perhaps disguised as linguistics theory, the political nature of Hoshino's statement wants to make obvious and strong the influential power of the central language to accelerate unification and maintain purity. It also clearly reveals the political prejudice against regional dialect. While *hyôjungo* was upheld as a way to unify the nation, the primitive and divisive nature of *hôgen* posed a dangerous threat to it.

With this ideological framework in the background, how is regional dialect working in *Santô senkyaku*? For Maedakô's passengers the pervasiveness of regional dialect underscores, on the one hand, a linguistic community based on shared practice of speaking "non-standard" Japanese, but on the other hand it also highlights linguistic diversity within that community. Passengers on the ship speak in an array of accents, from Northern Japan, the Kansai region, Western and Southern Japan, and from the Tokyo area. Within this linguistic community of dialects, however, a class hierarchy emerges between the laborers, who speak with regional inflections from Western Japan,

University. His students also became prominent in Japanese linguistics circles. Ueda was also well known for his discursive essays on the Japanese language, of which 'Kokugo to kokka to' (Language and nation), 1894, and 'Hyôjungo ni tsukite' (A standard language), 1895, are the most well known. See Lee, 73-113; also Twine, 446-450.

⁵³ Lee, 159.

and the character from the North, whom we learn worked as a reporter writer for Japanese vernacular newspapers in the U.S. As I discussed in the Introduction, class divisions based on a northern and southern axis has roots in the history of Japanese immigration dating from the late 1800s.⁵⁴

We must also take note that the heteroglossic display of speaking styles presented in *Santô senkyaku* comes forward against the background of *hyôjungo* employed by the narrator. As we have seen, this is a narrator who, although writing from a position within the third-class cabin, embodies a set of critical and intellectual skills wholly apart from the other passengers. Rather than regional dialect itself, the *way* that the passengers use language, including those from third-class as well as visitors from the upper decks, elicits criticism from the narrator. Regional dialect is not met with the narrator's disapproval until it gets mixed in with something else—the addition of English words and phrases—or a perceived posturing deployed through polite language/phrasing. By highlighting these instances in the story the narrator, instead of revealing the ideological inequalities and biases inherent in the concept of a national language, actually succeeds in reinforcing them.

Towards the end of the story, the narrator describes passenger language in this way:

Language (*kotoba*) was the only free social institution allowed to them. And words were abused in every possible way. The people embraced each other with words, coveted and attained sexual desire with words, and struck their competitors with words. The smallest contact—random handshakes, an inadvertent smile—exchanged between a man and a woman immediately became the center of name-calling and slander. This was the language of people who were gradually losing their individuality; their words diminished any shading in their various interests, personalities, or occupations. The words that came out of their

⁵⁴ See “Class and Region in Japan-America Migration” in the Introduction.

mouths were often just cries of meaningless, frenzied obscenity. They fired language, which had been wearing away over the years in the colony (*shokuminchi*), at everything as if attempting to create a world separated from land, while crawling around in a chaotic mud, flinging unintelligible English and Japanese at each other. Into the mire they mixed in the coarsest of American slang and blasphemy.⁵⁵

The psychological conditions tied to the context of the voyage, I believe, have some bearing on the narrator's comments. Feelings of boredom, frustration and anxiety have built up for a crowd crammed into a stifling cabin, living without privacy and with constant noise for the better part of two weeks. Not knowing what to do with the endless "time" piled up in front of them, passenger attention, especially the men in the cabin, automatically focuses on the "basest" of instincts. The narrator has commented on this phenomenon consistently since the beginning of the journey, and the agitated passengers seem to have worked themselves into a frenzy by this point in the story. The passage appears before a momentous card game in which the entire cabin gets caught up, and the sighting of the Japanese islands at the end of the story. Like the physical conditions in the cabin that steadily deteriorate as the trip goes on, the tempers of the passengers have grown short. As the narrator remarks, words, the only "free institution" available to the passengers, have become weapons with which to hurl abuse. And in the process words become abused themselves. Different but also inextricable from both English and Japanese, the linguistic medium of the cabin represents a confused and chaotic world caught between two national tongues.

Embedded in the narrator's disparaging remarks about the quality of passenger language is the idea that a separate world—not of land—emerges through their experiences as a dislocated group. The power of language to distinguish individuals and

⁵⁵ SS, 17.

give them something of their own is an important concept, one that Okina Kyûin in Chapter Two encouraged and celebrated in his writings on *iminchi bungei*. Okina said that Japanese settlers should write literature that reflected the language used by the very people who were writing it, including the use of regional accents and dialect as well as English phrases to make it distinctive and unique. For Okina, an imagined community of Japanese immigrants could be created through literary representation that reflected the unique speech patterns of the people. While the narrator of *Santô senkykau* seems to acknowledge this potential in the passage above, he laments that the *quality* of language has worn away to such a degree in America that it reverses its desired effect, which includes celebrating individuality by bringing out nuanced shading in character, interest and occupation. While the narrator makes no overt claim for linguistic “purity,” he does emphasize the degree to which the passengers’ language has been adulterated by mixing the coarsest of both American and Japanese languages to the point where neither an American nor a Japanese person can understand it. In other words, not only is the language of the passengers unintelligible for speakers of standard Japanese (or English), its practitioners are degraded by its impure nature.

The narrator possesses a sensitive radar for perceived incongruities in language practice, not only the “crude” code-sharing between English and Japanese, but also combinations of regional accent and a perceived incompatibility with certain voice and posturing. The narrator thus makes an implicit case for language consistency, congruity, and cohesion, and indirectly hints at the potency inherent within. Several occasions arise

where odd combinations of speech, accent and posturing result in the inability to take a character seriously.⁵⁶

Because the relationship between character language and positioning hinges on the use of honorific language (*keigo*), and because the term is directly addressed in the text, it is worth fleshing out some of its rules and properties. First and foremost, *keigo* offers a grammatical resource for indexing social relationships and self-presentation with respect to both the addressee and a third-person referent. In other words, *keigo* expresses a vertical social hierarchy in which a speaker shows proper respect either by elevating the listener or referent, or by subordinating the self. One has a choice of several forms of *keigo* to show proper respect. Prewar linguists (as well as contemporary advanced language textbooks) divided *keigo* into three types: *sonkeigo*, (honorific) *kenjôgo* (humble) and *teineigo* (polite). Using *sonkeigo* shows respect to the listener or referent through special polite forms, while *kenjôgo* subordinates the self through other special forms. It is the categories of *sonkeigo* and *kenjôgo* that bear the most influence on the linguistic schema of *Santô senkyaku*.

Although verbally indicating social hierarchy is the primary function of *keigo*, the work of social linguists has recently opened up more lateral views of its usage by focusing attention on social context, and by investigating the feelings of those who are both on the giving and receiving end of it.⁵⁷ Under what circumstances do people feel

⁵⁶ This is an idea that gets worked through other mediums as well, such as race during in the stop in Hawaii, which I discuss next.

⁵⁷ The sociolinguists to which I refer, and whose work I take up in this section are Patricia J. Wetzel, *Keigo in Modern Japan: Polite Language from Meiji to the Present* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 2004); Joy Hendry “The Armour of Honorific Speech: Some Lateral Thinking about *Keigo*,” in *Rethinking Japan*, Adriana Boscaro, Franco Gatti, and Massimo Raveri, eds. (New York: St. Martin’s Press), 111-116. Also see Sachiko Ide “Sex Difference and Politeness in Japanese?” *International Journal of the Sociology of*

keigo is appropriate, and what kinds of effects does it have on those receiving it? Social linguists have concluded that in addition to showing proper respect to the listener or referent, *keigo* can also express other kinds of meaningful behaviors such as self-protection, masked aggression, control or domination. Although these findings are the result of more recent linguistic studies, I find the conclusions useful for looking at how *keigo* is functioning in *Santô senkyaku*.

In Joy Hendry's study in the mid 1980s, for example, the phrase that many people used to describe when to use *keigo* was "aratamatta toki," which in English translates roughly as "formal occasions." Ide's study in 1990 chooses the word "carefulness" in order to measure a concept related to *keigo* usage in terms indicating a perceived distance between a subject and a variety of other people. An appropriate occasion for using *keigo*, then, might be when one has to be careful, when one must be on his best behavior, and when one wishes to put a certain distance between the participants in the exchange. Another word sometimes used by people discussing *keigo* is "kamaeru," which may be translated as "to take a posture," "to assume an attitude," "to prepare oneself," or "to get ready." The term is sometimes used to describe the ways one gets ready to participate in an aesthetic activity, when it is inappropriate to relax. "Kamaeru" is close to "kamau," "to mind" or "to care," which is often heard in the negative *kaimaimasen*, or the opposite of "to mind" or "to care." Hendry reads these terms associated with *keigo* as indicating a stance of self-protection, or a kind of "invisible armor." Both Hendry and Ide's studies document the potential of *keigo* to create an unfriendly, impersonal and distancing between speaker and listener, an effect that is sometimes deliberately employed.

Language, Vol. 58 (1990): 25-36; I also refer to Ôishi Hatsutarô, *Keigo* (Tokyo: Chikuma, 1975) although Ôishi's field is linguistics and not the subfield of socio linguistics.

Discussions of *keigo* were also part of linguistic discourses on language standardization and grammar analysis that took place during the prewar period. Although linguists were still working out a proper vocabulary for articulating differences in registers and types of polite language, a connection was being formed between the nation and *keigo* acquisition. While addressing its importance to Japan's "national" language (*kokugo*) Yamada Yoshio says in *Keigohô no kenkyû*:

Keigo as a formal feature of language used in social contacts, is not a phenomenon which is to be found only in our national language, but there is no other language in the world in which such a feature has developed as fully as it has in Japanese.⁵⁸

Matsushita Daizaburô also remarks, "Keigo is a manifestation of the thoughtfulness (*omoiyari*) in (our) national character; it is a very precious thing."⁵⁹ The vernacular model of *keigo* thus carried with it a kind of cultural currency; it was a commodity whose proper acquisition and deployment carried symbolic meaning. Not only was a citizen who could manipulate its forms fluently and appropriately perceived to be sophisticated, sensitive and educated, he also embodied elements important to the formation of a national character.

In *Santô senkyaku*, divisions emerge between characters who can deftly and appropriately apply *keigo* in both its honorific and humble applications, and those who barely manage to understand it. The matters of dialect and honorific language come together in the descriptions of a distinctive character from the North, *Ôshûben no otoko*, who visits the third-class cabin from the upper decks to announce and host the *naniwa bushi* event.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Wetzel, 19.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Ôishi Hatsutarô, Toyama Shigehiko, Jugaku Akiko, Yoneda Takeshi and Nishimura Hidetoshi, *Atarashii keigo: Utsukushii kotoba*, Nihongo shimpujiamu 4 (Tokyo: Bunka-chô, 1983).

A heavyset man with small, squinty eyes forced to labor in a fleshy face resembling a lump of meat (*niku no katamari*) called down to the cabin. “Excuse me please, I have something to ask you.” The crowd turned to see who was speaking in such a strange voice. The man looked like a well-fed piece of livestock. In back of him stood the one-eyed man and the student, who shoved their hands in their pockets as they looked around the cabin.

“Well, (*zutsu wa*)⁶⁰ this evening we have traveling with us an authority, if you will, in the realm of *naniwa bushi*, who these days is filling the shoes of the late and great Kumoemon Tôchûken. Mr. Kimura Yûen, who has performed a great deal in America, and who has been granted the patronage of many, is requesting the favor of a performance for this one evening only. So, after consulting with you about possibly borrowing this space as it is set apart from the engine room, I am happy to announce a possible performance. So, if it is not too much of an intrusion, how about it everyone? Well then, if there is no objection, let us begin preparations right away.” The man finished his speech and, playing with the thick brass buttons on his coat, took a measured glance around the cabin. The combination of the man’s heavy Northern accent, in contrast to the sentimental voice he gave off (*shinatta senchimentaru na koe*), had the most amusing effect.

The English translation of the passage belies the comical effect of the man’s request. As the narrator tells us, the rhetorical effect comes through in the contrast between the “sentimental voice” and his Northern accent.⁶¹ Although the narrator makes a point of referring to the “voice” of the man and not the language itself, I believe that the *way* in which he speaks, including not only tone of voice but the *posture* that he adopts, including tone of voice and word choice, contrasts with the perceived backwardness of the Northern accent. The posturing to which I refer manifests in the excessive use of humble verb forms and endings, including humble forms of to do (*itasu*), to say (*môsu*), to be (*oru*), along with the humble form of the copula “desu” (*de gozaimasu*), passive forms in their polite applications (*iwareru, korareru,*), honorific prefixes attached to all

⁶⁰“Zutsu wa” appears in the text with diacritical marks. The standard Japanese version is “jitsu wa.”

⁶¹ 「彼の奥州弁は、撓ったセンチメンタルな声と対照して、ちょっと滑稽な感じを与えたのであった。」

nouns referring to the passengers (*ojama*, *gohiiki*, *goseichô*, *gosôdan*, *goigi*), and nouns modified by verbs in their longer polite configurations.

According to the rules of *keigo*, and *kenjôgo* in particular, the humble form of a verb subordinates the speaker's position, thus showing proper respect and deference to the listener, and should be used when addressing a superior. This is clearly not the situation here, where the speaker, an educated newspaperman from the North, descends into the cabin to talk to the third-class passengers. The superior status of the man is clear, a point visually reinforced by the symbol of shiny brass buttons on the man's overcoat. Furthermore, the physical description of the man coupled with his manner of speaking—heavyset and from the North spewing *keigo* at every turn—seems to point to a typical representation of the bourgeoisie. The man's deployment of *kenjôgo*, then, must come from something other than wanting to show respect to a superior.

As the work of sociolinguistics has told us, *keigo* has other functions besides indexing vertical hierarchies. People feel compelled to use *keigo* in formal situations that require extra attention or care, and in doing so they attain a certain position, or posture. The man from the North acts in compliance with social conventions in that he is speaking in public, making a public announcement and requesting something specific from the people—he needs their permission to use the cabin. But public and formal situations are also characterized by marked positions of power and social distancing. The problem here is that the man has misread his public, and his self-deprecating language cultivates neither respect nor a response from them. In fact, one questions whether they even understood it. After asking for permission to use the cabin, the man's request is met with

silence until another person steps in and “replaces” the man’s speech with his own

(*tsukekawaru*):

Standing next to the Northerner was the one-eyed man, who, in a sharp, raised voice, said, “Tonight, as the man here said, this Mr. Kimura is going to do one of his best roles, that of the big-shot (*ôtatemono*) samurai Nakayama Yasubei.” On his own and in his own voice (*jibun de jibun no kotoba ni*), the one-eyed man repeated the announcement and, though met with applause and cheers from the cabin, left the room looking quite embarrassed.

One wonders if the one-eyed man is embarrassed because the passengers decided to ignore the man from Ôshû, or whether he is self-conscious about having played the role of linguistic mediator. Probably a combination of the two elicited the one-eyed man’s reaction. While understanding the man from Ôshû’s request and translating it effectively means working for the benefit of the cabin, interpreting for the passengers also necessitates that he separate himself from them. It should also be noted that although the humor in the man’s announcement is perceived by the narrator, we do not know to what degree the passengers notice it. They do, however, detect in it something disingenuous. One of the reasons the passengers appreciate the one-eyed man’s translation is because he did it *in his own words*, implying that the man from Ôshû was perhaps using someone else’s.

The specific posture adopted by the man from the North gains transparency when he returns to the cabin later to formally introduce the *naniwa bushi* performance.

“Unworthy though I may be, I am a representative of writers for Japanese language newspapers published in America. It is truly a great honor to have been given the responsibility of hosting the festivities this evening. The honorable Home Minister Tokonami feels that *naniwa bushi* is a prime mechanism through which to promote the great spirit of Japanese loyalty and patriotism, and I feel that this has a special significance for us tonight. I, myself, am of a similar mind and an ardent supporter of Home Minister Tokonami, and I know that tonight’s performance will not disappoint in this respect. Now then, the relationship between art (*geijutsu*) and ideas (*shisô*)...” The man spoke on for a long time on

this topic that set their teeth on edge (*ha no uku yô na gara*), using crude, colonialist phrasing (*seikô na shokuminchishiki na jukugo*).

In this introduction, the man places himself in the same intellectual category as the Home Minister, aligns himself with the state, and envisions himself a fellow promulgator of such national sentiments as loyalty and patriotism. With this in mind the man's ideological position becomes clear. Presenting himself as a sort of state-sponsored educator, a role reinforced by class position but also manifested in the deployment of *keigo*, the man assigns the audience the role of citizen-pupil. Although in the end the people are indeed moved by the performance, this has little to do with the man from Ôshû's formal lecturing. As the passage above indicates, rather than appealing to the audience's sense of national belonging, the man's references to the spirit of Japanese loyalty and patriotism, conveyed in a patronizing tone, only succeeds in eliciting group anxiety.

Although the people simply sit quietly and wait for Kimura to make his entrance, there are specific reasons why the man from Ôshû's nationalistic phrasing "sets the people's teeth on edge." Throughout their time in the U.S. the passengers have had a troubled and problematic relationship with the Japanese state, which provided little protection and support for its citizens at the height of the exclusion movement on the West Coast. As the text indicates a little later in the story, the people had been disappointed by "incompetent resident officials" and by "tongue-tied diplomats," who, bowing to U.S. policy, cast them aside, making their concerns secondary to the larger considerations of Japan's developing place in the world. In addition, although the situation for Japanese on the West Coast did not constitute a "colonialist" existence per

se, experiencing institutionalized racial prejudice on a number of levels has made the passengers sensitive to the patterns and dynamics of political and economic domination and subordination.

The posturing of the man from the North is drawn in stark contrast to the *naniwa bushi* performer himself, who also employs *keigo* to a much different effect, eliciting an entirely different reaction from the crowd. Immediately following the man from Ôshû's introductory commentary, he humbly asks for the attention of the cabin:

Leaving San Francisco and putting America behind us for the port of Yokohama and the blossoming cherries, for sixteen days and nights I have been accompanying you on this long journey. I humbly request your attention for an evening as I fill some of our time with my presentation of this hackneyed (*kikifurushi*) title.

This flourish of *keigô*, which they had not had an occasion to hear even once while living abroad, with its extreme self-deprecation, and coming from a man overwhelmed with humility, successfully elevated the people. Sitting there listening to these graceful words, the language left a lasting impression on the minds of the people.⁶²

The hierarchical postulations of *kenjôgo* in this case are working pretty much by the book. As the narrator tells us, the extremely self-deprecating language of the performer succeeds in elevating the audience to an extent that they had not experienced in America, and the experience moves them. This *keigo*, spoken by a person perceived as honest and sincere, can be taken at face value and exudes a sentimentality that, unlike the man from Ôshû, engenders trust and makes a lasting impression on the passengers. In true unanimist fashion, skillful use of *keigo* has welded together and elevated a group of linguistically diverse people. We must also remember that the performer's perceived humility and sincerity has allowed this process to take place. One possible explanation for the effectiveness of the speech arises from congruity between perceived class status

⁶² SS, 13.

and the usage of *kenjôgo*. *Kenjôgo* is supposed to be used when addressing superiors, and the reputed humble status of entertainers in general and *naniwa bushi* performers in particular may have rendered this a correct and appropriate occasion to use it.

In addition, although linguistically subordinating himself to the group, Kimura is able to collapse the distance between himself and the other passengers by emphasizing shared experience. The long journey across the Pacific is made *together*, and together they have had to deal with the excess of empty time. And the sentimentality and sincerity of the language is made more attractive by the poetic reference to the cherished nature of Japan—a Yokohama port blossoming with cherries—to which they are all heading.

Disillusion in Hawaii

After the *naniwa bushi* recital within the heavy, sodden air of the third-class cabin, the anticipation of nearing the tropical region of Hawaii began to change the outlook of the passengers, reminding them that the journey had some kind of purpose. The word “Hawaii” began to crop up in their daily conversations. Ultimately, however, the frenzied, chaotic nature of the stop in Honolulu did little to satisfy the needs of the passengers because the comfort that could only come in the form of a collective, harmonious experience could not be found in the disorientating atmosphere of Honolulu. The narrator foreshadows the unfriendliness and even a perceived danger in the stop in Honolulu by using the image of “sharks” and “natives” (*dojin*)—“One day after the *naniwa bushi* performance the steamship pulled into the bay of Honolulu, where sharks and natives were swimming about.” If any place existed that embodied the opposite of

Japan's comforting "home," this was it. As the narrator tells us, the passengers left the ship focused on individual goals for the stop, and they returned disorientated and disappointed:

The stop in Honolulu passed by like a rushed dream...Their time limited, they entered the town, but the harried sightseeing in Honolulu could provide neither the comfort nor the pleasure that they had anticipated. The men aboard the ship dreamt of taking the woman from berth 13 to the back room of a Japanese-style inn, leisurely drinking cups of saké together, and, if things went well... Others fantasized about seeking out some Caucasian prostitutes in Chinatown, or painting the town red with the local geisha. In fits of boredom they sketched these plans out in their minds, but once they entered the plaza permeated by the smell of tar and the tap tap tap of machinery driving in steel nails; once they witnessed the sight of people of various races (*jinsu*), like a patchwork of fabrics thrown together from all over the world; once they saw this mix of humanity and hit the blazing pavement where every person frantically raced around doing his or her own business, they realized that their elaborate plans, which were really just the cowardly workmanship of sexual desire, would never materialize.

[In the town] there were Americans—men who barely considered colored faces human—strutting around puffing on cigars, ugly natives (*dojin*) with only a shirt and slacks to hide their chocolate-colored skin, Western housewives dressed in light, cool clothing doing their afternoon shopping, and small shop owners whose sole goal was to sell as much as they could in as short a time as possible. There were Chinese men slinking about here and there, heads down, in the shade of the buildings, rows of Japanese inns with ship schedules slapped on signs in large brush strokes, overgrown tropical vegetation whose leaves drooped as they exhaled all the chlorophyll they could muster, a backdrop of food stalls with rows of greasy *inari zushi*. The people walked around this squalid colonial-like (*shokuminchi rashii*) atmosphere that lacked any unified impression, and in the end it left no more than a tiny blip on their memories.⁶³

The disorientating effect of time spent in Honolulu works both with and against the outcome of the previous *naniwa bushi* episode. If the *naniwa bushi* performance cultivated a desire for home by offering the image of a historically coherent and consistent place imbued with traditional "Japanese" sentiment, the time spent in Honolulu reinforced it by offering a contrasting and disconcerting alternative of chaos and instability. On the one hand there is the image of a "homeland" that seems to have stood

⁶³ Ibid., 15.

still in time, inhabited by such historical figures like samurai and Edo period townsmen, and on the other we have a port teeming with people of different races running around a plaza permeated with the sounds and smells of heavy construction. The trope extends to the natural imagery as well. Images of Honolulu's overgrown tropical foliage, which appears gasping for breath, are contrasted with eternal symbols of beauty like cherry blossoms and Mt. Fuji described in the next section. Hawaii represented, in all respects, the opposite of nation.

The disorientating experience also stems from the city's capitalist orientation. Honolulu is presented as a town bustling with commercial activity, with most of its inhabitants involved in buying or selling in one form or another. There are Western women doing their afternoon shopping, rows of shopkeepers hustling their goods, a string of Japanese inns catering to travelers, and Japanese food stalls selling sushi. Moreover, the commercialism of the city is overlaid with explicit racial hierarchies that contribute to the "colonial-like atmosphere." Components of this "mix of humanity" include (racist) descriptions of its inhabitants: Caucasian men and women, native people, and Japanese and Chinese workers.

The concluding line of the passage sums up the visit in terms consistent with the story's central concern—it was an experience that lacked any *unified impression*, and therefore could not leave any lasting impression in the minds of the passengers. The problem with Honolulu was that it could not offer the unifying experience that differentiates, in Romaine's words, existence from life. It offered no form of national identity, no common history, no group of people with a similar set of cultural values with which to identify. Once back on the ship, the people "tried their best" to collect,

consolidate, and share the experience through talk about the general scenery of Honolulu—its bleached-white rows of houses, the lines of palm trees and vast orchards. Although the cacophonous space of Honolulu discouraged rather than encouraged unity among the passengers, the stories of “hard-won” purchases that they collected and savored lingered in the air like the “sweet, mellow scent” of the bananas and pineapples they stored under their beds.

The rushed stopover in Hawaii did serve several important, interrelated functions, however. One, as the beginning of the above passage indicates, was to expose the superficial and cursory nature of the passengers’ initial plans, driven by nothing, as the narrator tells us, but sexual desire. This realization indicates the kind of productive reflection that the crowd lacked earlier in the story, marking a change in the passengers who had relied solely on the “basest” of instincts for stimulation. Another important result of the visit was to increase desire for, literally, “dry land” on the one hand, and, figuratively, the unity and comfort that “Japan” could bring on the other. In terms of the narrative, once an intense desire for Japan was artistically evoked through nostalgic evocations of the nation, the stop in Hawaii only reaffirmed it as a utopian place that would satisfy all of their needs:

Once the stop in Hawaii was behind them, there was one noticeable change in people. It was the budding awareness, like a sprouting in their hearts, that with each passing day they moved closer and closer to Japan. For them, Japan was not simply a homeland (*kokoku*) like it was for the Japanese people who lived there (*naichijin*). It was the final resting place after half a lifetime of isolation and labor. It was the haven for which they had longed with tears in their eyes every single day until now.... And they believed that by going back there all of their hopes would materialize, and that their lives, like old trees, would sprout young buds as soon as they set foot on its soil again.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Ibid., 16.

While life on the ship was reduced to basic, animal-like functioning, the homeland is imbued with symbolic significance. The Japan for which the passengers yearn is, however, a little unsettling, and cannot be separated from ideological notions tied to the nation. It is a “home” but also a homogeneous place of mythical origins, a place that appeals to common bloodlines and notions of racial and ethnic homogeneity. As we have seen through the *naniwa bushi*’s nostalgic evocation of “traditional” Japanese history and culture, the passengers, by virtue of their birthplace, have become re-naturalized citizens of the nation. Unlike the U.S. or Hawaii, the Japan that the people have constructed contains no trace of racial or ethnic tensions. The Japanese homeland for the passengers draws on comforting images of a deeply-rooted past, offering security and sentimental appeal. Yet what the narrator has also implied through references to character use of imperial discourse is a parallel ideological stance adopted by a body seeking to legitimize imperial power—the state. If we approach it through the lens of Japanese imperialism in the early 1900s, the story exposes the possibilities of exploitation—arising out of the myth of a settled home and homeland—of people from unprivileged classes.

The final emotional sweep of the story is triggered by the sighting of the Japanese coastline from the ship deck. The word “Japan” passes from mouth to mouth, spreading throughout the cabin and culminating in a single, unifying cry.

All of a sudden people became idealists (*risôka*). Their lives now—including the misery in America and the misfortune of the world in general—when touched by that sacred concept (*shinsei na gainen*) “Japan,” shone like metal that had passed through a melting pot (*rutsubo*). They suddenly became prophets of everything. As if all of heaven and earth suddenly became bright and cheerful, they started talking to whomever they came across. A woman who had been seasick and pale to her hairline suddenly got up and busily began cleaning the area around her

bunk. Children, infected by the energy of the crowd, ran madly around the cabin donning happy faces for no apparent reason. On each and every passenger's face furrowed brows were replaced by gentle, kindhearted expressions. On the tired and musty floor that they had been staring at for sixteen days, scattered with grains of rice from the morning meal, their hearts (*kokoro*), full of an indescribable happiness, sang in unison, "Japan, Japan, Japan ---"⁶⁵

The hyperbolic state of elation expressed in this passage points to the construction of Japan as a mythical place that permeates the crowd like a miracle drug. If previous descriptions of the cabin portray it as a putrid space of sickness and despair, through the healing powers of "sacred" Japan it had now become a place of renewed spirit and vitality. Its inhabitants, people who in frenzied states abused each other with a chaotic mix of languages, now embrace each other with smiles and kindness. The melting pot image is one curiously re-appropriated here. An obvious symbol of American immigrant assimilation whereby heterogeneous parts fuse to form a harmonious whole of a common "American" culture, the lives of the passengers, previously tainted by the bitterness and trauma associated with life in America, attain a gold-like purity having been touched by the transformative powers of "Japan." Yet, similar to the ways in which the image of the melting pot gives a false sense of unity to a heterogeneous American populace, the miracle drug of Japan induces a false sense of group consciousness in the crowd. The passengers unite as "Japanese" people ready to reenter the "nation," but the "nation" that they see is one that has been initiated by the ideological workings of a performance art.

The concluding section of the story takes us out into the bracing air of the ship deck but the closing scene pulls us back into stale air of the cabin. A passenger, *Shosei-san*, a man who had usually refrained from participating in the cabin's frequent card games, has lost his entire savings in a frenzied game of poker. The last few lines of the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 22.

text detail how, while all the other passengers ascend to the deck to catch a glimpse of the approaching Japanese archipelago, *Shosei-san* remains in the cabin and steals the savings of a fellow passenger who has stored his money in a trunk beneath his bed. Realizing that the student was missing the excitement on deck, the woman in berth 13 goes back to the cabin to retrieve him. As she descends the stairs she discovers him, paralyzed with fear, holding the trunk of stolen money. The story ends with a critical moment of tension and dissonance, cutting into the harmonious image of the group standing together on deck, hearts singing in unison. The sentimental unity is disrupted here, but Maedakô chooses to end his story by emphasizing division and moral disorder that lies beneath easy assertions of the nation.

Conclusion

I chose to call this project “Passages” in order to symbolize the trans-oceanic voyages undertaken by the featured authors and the characters that inhabit their textual worlds. “Passages” also points to a moving forward in Japanese and Japanese American literary studies towards more cross-cultural research and investigations of non-canonical work. My aim was to highlight the flexible identities embodied by early twentieth-century Japanese immigrants; to investigate how they imaginatively grappled with the problems of migration, settlement and return; and to examine how they represented their struggles in the domains of fiction and literary criticism. In my readings of Japanese diasporic literature I have also tried to emphasize a heterogeneous community of Japanese Americans marked by differences in class, status, region, linguistic disposition, occupation, and personal motivations. My wish was to bring forward a group of texts that would collectively add contour and complexity to the picture of Japanese American immigrant experience.

My approach to the texts also involved yoking together perspectives on narrative and on then contemporary social and political discourses, which could be read dialogically with the fiction itself. Gaining a better understanding of what the texts mean and how they work necessitated close engagement with socio-historical context. In my analysis of Hozaka’s *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika*, I show how an author deploys Japanese expansionist and imperial discourses to justify a Japanese presence in America

and to garner support from the Japanese state. Hozaka attempts to reconnect the American Japanese settlement and the Japanese homeland through using expansionist rhetoric, glorifying the shared and innate character traits of the Yamato race, and borrowing the voice of a beloved feline narrator well known in Japan. Okina Kyûin's "Sengen" requires specific knowledge about the immigrant community, its organizations and reform movements, its specific form of Christianity and so on to render the document legible. His *iminchi bungei* serves as an artistic manifestation of the move from sojourner to permanent settler. Okina tries to create a new "home" born of the unique positionality of immigrants, a home manifested in literature spun from the everyday lives of those who experienced it. While his efforts demonstrate the beginnings of an indigenous Japanese American ethnic community, Okina's work also registers a resistance to identifications based solely on race and nation. A diasporic reading of Maedakô Hiroichirô's *Santô senkyaku* requires an understanding of the characters' history in the United States in order to grasp the importance of national belonging to a group of returning passengers. Weaving in discussions of French *unanimism*, nostalgia, the Japanese language, and concurrent developments in *naniwa bushi*, I show constructions of local identities based on shared transnational history, linguistic cleavages and class. The prominence of local communities in Maedakô's story also supports his critique of seductive and easy formulations of the nation. My readings of Kafû's *Amerika monogatari*, and of my other texts, depend on knowledge of Meiji period constructions of the nation and of exclusionary policies taking place on the West Coast of the U.S. And all of the texts, intentionally or not, work to undermine a false collective formed under the rubric of "nation." This comes forward most clearly in *Amerika monogatari*, where Kafû, through

embedded narratives, sets upper-class Japanese narrators in opposition to their lower-class “countrymen.” Settings in Kafû’s tales are also key; regional differences in the American environment produce variegated immigrant experiences and create further divisions within the Japanese community in the United States. Finally, I show how these divisions are brought about through the failures of Kafû’s *flâneur*-narrators.

In this project I have looked at the issues of nation, class and narrative strategy in a variety of literary forms—Hozaka’s long novel, Maedakô’s short story, Kafû’s collection of stories, and Okina’s literary criticism. But there are other forms where these issues bear out. Starting from the late 1800s, there are vast amounts of poetry written by Japanese immigrants in journals, anthologies and in daily vernacular newspapers published in the United States starting from the late 1800s. The problem I encountered in my approach to this poetry was collecting the materials and limiting the scope of study. Since much of the poetry has not been archived, I faced the challenge of deciding with which newspapers I should work and from what point I should start. I learned that a discussion of Japanese immigrant poetry could fill several dissertation studies.

Although I use the term diaspora (a term that suggests a dispersal of people to *multiple* localities) to describe the texts at hand, I have focused solely on the Japanese community in the United States. As I note in the Introduction, recent work in Japanese diasporic studies involves cross-cultural comparisons among a variety of communities, including Canadian, Peruvian, Bolivian, Brazilian, and Argentinian Japanese settlements. How does the writing of Japanese American immigrants compare with that of Japanese writers from South America? Or the writings of Japanese residents in the colonies of Korea, Taiwan, or Manchuria? Ideas presented in Hozaka’s work, which draw parallels

between the settlers in America and in parts of Asia, suggest that it may be worth comparing colonial period literature to immigrant literature set in the United States. One might start by looking at the writings of a community of Japanese who were not part of the elite stratum of government administrators, people who, looking for a chance to earn better wages, worked as day laborers, factory workers, carpenters, maids, peddlers and so forth. In her investigations of Japanese immigrant *senryû* in Korea, Helen Lee shows a process of oppression, rejection and partial assimilation of non-elite Japanese immigrants by the host society.¹ What might the poetry of this community have in common with Japanese settlements in other parts of the world?

Hibi Yoshitaka's research on Japanese bookstores in the Pacific Northwest also points to overlooked connections between immigration and colonization. Lists of new and regular inventory published by booksellers in Japanese vernacular newspapers show, among the titles, the names of newspapers and journals published in colonial territories. Historians have also written about early twentieth-century movements of people to multiple locations, from, for example, Japan to Hawaii, Hawaii to the U.S., the U.S to Japan, and Japan to Manchuria.² There is thus evidence to suggest that "colonial" and "immigrant" settlements were in closer contact than we may have originally thought. The challenge in drawing comparisons with colonial period or other immigrant settlement literatures is that studying other localities means acquiring knowledge of the socio-historical contexts *and* the languages of those locations. Many of the poems that Lee

¹ Helen J.S. Lee, "Writing Colonial Relations of Everyday Life in Senryu," in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* (Duke University Press) 16:3 (Winter 2008): 601-628.

² See Azuma (2005), 80-81; also John J. Stephan, "Hijacked by Utopia: American Nikkei in Manchuria," *Amerasia Journal* 23 (Winter 1997-1998): 1-42. There is also the possibility that members of the same family dispersed to different overseas settlements. Their personal connections create continuity between overseas communities in transnational locales. My grandfather, for example, immigrated to the U.S. in 1918 and maintained contact with his youngest brother, who lived in Manchuria as part of Japan's colonial regime.

highlights in her study, for example, incorporate Korean vocabulary and slang. In order to understand the poems one must not only know the Korean language, one must also understand how it is being used by non-Koreans in the colonial context.

Finally, the case of Hawaii deserves more attention in a study that deals with Pacific crossings. Both Okina and Maedakô refer to this major node on their journeys from the U.S. to Japan. And Hozaka makes much of the negative effects on the West Coast Japanese community of laws that stopped Japanese immigration from Hawaii. An interesting place to start here might be with Nakajima Naoto's 1930 collection of stories, *Hawaii monogatari* (Tales of Hawaii). Nakajima, a man born in Hawaii and educated in Japan, writes about his Hawaiian "homeland" from the perspective of his current position in Japan. Projecting feelings of nostalgia (*tsuikai*) and homesickness (*bôkyô*) onto his Hawaiian birthplace, Nakajima disrupts the binary configuration that I have constructed between the American hostland and the Japanese homeland. Reading Nakajima's work necessitates being versed in the local context and vernacular of Hawaii in the 1920s, but this text could provide an interesting tension and problematic to a polarized U.S./Japan framework.

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, the study of contemporary movements of people and their cultural products has captured the attention of many. Much energy is now focused on the newest forms of literature emerging from these recent migrations. I argue that in this rush forward it is worthwhile to stop, turn back, and reexamine texts from an earlier time. Older materials, produced by the literary predecessors of today's transnational writers, help us to dialectically define newer work.

In this dissertation, however, I set out to do more than use neglected historical texts to throw contemporary material into relief. I set out to show that attention to Japanese language literary texts is crucial to achieving more complete and nuanced understandings of the immigrant communities in the U.S., and that the field of Asian American Studies can benefit from more attention to literary work written in Japanese. At the same time, I argue that Asian Studies also has much to gain from adopting cross-cultural reading strategies that deeply engage the historical and ideological contexts of writing produced by the passages of people and discourses across borders and oceans.

APPENDIX

Preface to Volume 1 of Hozaka Kiichi's *Wagahai no mitaru Amerika*

An introduction (*jo*) is something usually written by someone else. That is the general practice, it seems. One purpose of the *jo* is to introduce an unknown author, while another is to have someone explain the author's motivation for writing and the value of the work. I am not one to disregard proper form and practice. Unfortunately, I do not have a senior colleague whom I can ask to write an introduction. I feel it would be inappropriate to make this request in a letter, and because I am currently in America I cannot go to ask in person. Apparently there is something called a "self-written introduction" (*jijo*), but somehow asserting myself by placing the word "self" before the word "introduction" feels like I am damaging the integrity of the latter so I gave up on that idea, too. When reading Western books, there is something called a "PREFACE,"¹ which an author may write himself. I have decided to use this term. It is not that I am trying to sound pretentious.

"Dear Father, I received your letter of ~month and ~ day and despite the great distance between us I am happy to find that you are in good health." Many a time I have sent this kind of letter to my hometown (*kokyō*), and I regret that in my reply the "present" is only partially described. It appears like a flash of lightening, while the "past" and the "future" remain completely in the dark. I have been feeling for a while now that I need to describe the land in which I am currently living, my surroundings, and my daily life in more detail. Indeed, I am not as filial as the old adage says, "Do not stray too far away while your parents are alive." In the past I have felt like these kinds of sayings had little to do with one's real life, and that the values that they espoused were outdated. But once I left for a foreign country and I started to think about my parents' concern for me, I began to repeat this saying deep in my heart, and for the first time I have come to appreciate what it means for older people. From a contemporary perspective, one may argue that elders lecture on ideal parent-child relations and the virtue of filial piety simply to force children to obey them. For example, in elementary school I learned the saying, "Pigeons perch three branches below [their parents] and crows dutifully feed [their aging parents]." The saying was even accompanied by an illustrated hand scroll. At the time, just like any other child, I took the saying literally, and I wholeheartedly believed that people should be filial so as not to be outdone by pigeons and crows. When I got older I realized that believing in this saying had no value whatsoever. Certainly I had seen a small pigeon perched three branches below an older pigeon, but that might have been a mere coincidence. I had also seen crows feeding other crows, but I could not tell if the child crow was feeding the parent crow, or vice-versa. I suspect my teacher himself did not

¹ The term appears in English.

believe in the saying he was teaching us, either. On more than one occasion I have thought back and laughed when I recalled the teacher's serious face as he provided this false education. I have also felt a kind of resentment when thinking about this artificial manner of teaching filial piety. It is insulting to human beings and damages the authority of education.

Nature has taught me that the love parents feel for their children can be found among the smallest of animals. If a starving cat catches a mouse she will give it to her kitten instead of eating it herself. And if a big dog approaches her kitten she will display vast amounts of courage and attack it. I understand the love that parents feel for their children as a truth of nature, and this truth, which has been set in the past and must continue into the future, has been carved into my heart. I have not researched it and therefore do not know whether cats and dogs recognize their instincts as the love of a parent for a child, or whether they are capable of never forgetting it, but fortunately human beings possess powers of cognizance, comprehension and memory. Therefore, when we think about the love that our parents feel for us, naturally our love for our parents gushes forth in return. In this we have a natural truth, and not a learned skill called "filial piety." I am not very qualified to discuss filial piety. I am simply a person who feels for his parents. And when reading a letter from his aging parents who are far away, I can imagine to what degree they, who have no intimate knowledge of my circumstances, worry about me. And so when I think about how much all the parents of Japanese people living in America worry about their children, I have thought on countless occasions that I want to describe our surroundings and our daily lives as they really are (*sono mama ni*). That is one reason that I have published this book.

I am not a scholar, nor am I a politician. I am just a nameless human being. But in wishing for the prosperity of my nation (*kokka*) and the welfare of its people, I am second to none. The diplomatic policy in place since the time of Komura Jûtarô¹ is something with which I have been unsatisfied for a long time. Komura, one of the distinguished diplomats of our country (*wagakuni*), must have had the people's prosperity at heart, and perhaps he has been a most skilled and resourceful negotiator. However, I feel I can say with certainty that the heart of his diplomacy was not with the people. Before leaving the United States he said this in a parting speech: "The diplomacy of today is not between governments, but between people (*minzoku*)." Borrowing the words of Abraham Lincoln, Komura goes no further than saying "Diplomacy by the people." "Diplomacy for the people" has been completely left out of his speech, and it is questionable whether he really understood the conditions of the people, a necessary premise for using the remainder of the phrase, "Diplomacy of the people." I believe that diplomacy by the people must be for the benefit of the people. And there is no question that diplomacy that works for the benefit of the people will result in the nation's prosperity. There may be some people who think that it is impudent for a nameless person to talk of diplomatic relations, and I myself do not like people who take pleasure in openly cursing authority without adequate knowledge of the details or the circumstances involved. At the same time, however, I want to explain clearly and accurately how clumsy diplomacy has harmed the people and hindered their development, and to place the blame where it

¹ See Chapter 1, note 24.

belongs. This is especially important so that past mistakes will not be repeated. As a Japanese resident in America I myself have been greatly inconvenienced by poor policy. Because poor diplomatic policy has affected me directly, my claims are not simply empty protests. As promoters of diplomacy “by the people,” do not diplomats like Komura have an obligation to sit up and listen to the people? And is it acceptable for people to sit back and leave policy for the professional politicians, claiming that it is not their concern? Is it right for the general population not to adequately understand important government policy? No. We simply must understand it. And this is the second reason that I have published this book.

Nowadays there are travel books available that describe the American landscape and many of its famous places. Therefore there is no reason for me to sketch these things out with an unskilled brush and imperfect eye. The state of California is becoming a powerful place in America both economically and politically. Soon Westward expansion will make San Francisco a second New York. As Dr. Mitake has said, the “American spirit” has moved from New York to Chicago, and from Chicago to the Western regions. This is a sharp observation. I believe it is no mistake to say that the colorful state of California is an important part of the Western region to which Dr. Mitake refers. California, on the Pacific Coast, is also a place where many negotiations involving Japanese people have occurred. I am not interested in problems that concern places outside of this area. In the ten years that I have spent in the United States, there have been a few times when I have thought, “It should be like this in Japan as well.” I have also thought from time to time that there are things my fellow Japanese residents should do to improve their lives here. The improvements that I, an ordinary person, humbly suggest are things that any ordinary person can do. Extraordinary people will perhaps find this book boring. But progress for the nation means progress for the people, and by people I mean the ordinary masses. Therefore, if one has aspirations to govern the nation and to stabilize the lives of its citizens, he must think about advancing the lives of ordinary people. That is what I, an ordinary person, have always thought. This is the third reason that I have published this book, to suggest some *friendly advice*² from an ordinary countryman.

Four thousand seven hundred nautical miles West of Tokyo lies the state of California. And here ten thousand Japanese people are building a fine settlement (*rippa na shokuminchi*). The foundation for this fine settlement is being built by hand, brick by brick. There are many people in Japan who mistakenly believe that the group of Japanese immigrants here is comprised of nothing more than low-class (*katô*) laborers. For the sake of Japan’s development (*nihon no hatten*), it is imperative that people both inside and outside of Japan better understand each other. This is the fourth goal of this book.

For something called a novel this book contains many political essays, and for a loose collection of essays there is a connecting plotline. For a set of literary sketches the writing is neither refined nor elegant, and for a collection of reports there are far too many stories. People reading this book only for its literary value will surely be disappointed. However, I am confident that the people who read through this volume will see what I am trying to get at, and will not regret that they spent their leisure time reading

² The phrase appears in italicized English.

it. Although it may seem like boasting, I strongly believe that some of what I have written will linger in the minds of readers.

Finally, without the permission of Natsume Sôseki, whom I admire very much, I have brazenly borrowed the cat from his famous book *Wagahai wa neko de aru*, and I apologize for doing unnecessary damage to its literary value. When a novel called “such and such” becomes popular one often sees people indiscriminately publishing work called “the *new* such and such.” I am no slave to money and do not wish to advance myself by riding on the coattails of Sôseki’s famous novel. The reason that I have employed the cat is that human beings are not always such good observers of themselves. Once they start looking they soon lose all sense of what they are looking at. So I have requested the favor of Mr. Cat. I believe that the careful reader will understand what my true intentions are.

San Francisco, near the Golden Gate Bridge
Meiji 45 (1912), July

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