



Recasting Red Culture in Proletarian Japan: Childhood, Korea, and the Historical Avant-Garde

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<https://doi.org/10.21313/hawaii/9780824838935.001.0001>

Published: 2014

Online ISBN: 9780824869557

Print ISBN: 9780824838935

CHAPTER

## 1 Introduction: Recasting Red Culture in Proletarian Japan

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<https://doi.org/10.21313/hawaii/9780824838935.003.0001> Pages 1–11

Published: January 2014

### Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of the book's main themes. This book aims to restore much of the forgotten ideological and aesthetic complexity of Japan's proletarian movement and show that it must be central to any understanding of modern Japanese culture in the early Shōwa period. Instead of focusing on the celebrated novels of proletarian literature, a body of fiction that was canonized in large part by the Japanese Communist Party, it excavates from the historical archive hitherto unexamined works of proletarian culture: fairy tales, children's songs, propaganda, “wall fiction,” as well as several works of poetry, fiction, and criticism about colonial Korea. These short narratives were not simply epiphenomena of theoretical debates of the time, but constituted theoretically rich documents themselves and were engaged in a dialogue with historical events, broader intellectual and social practices, as well as questions of political consciousness and literary representation. By translating and performing close readings of many of these unknown pieces, the book offers a new portrait of the movement, its major concerns, and its mode of dialectical analysis, in part to challenge the misconception of proletarian literature as a crude instrument of propaganda.

**Keywords:** [proletarian cultural movement](#), [Japan](#), [Japanese culture](#), [Japanese literature](#), [proletarian literature](#), [proletarian culture](#)

**Subject:** [Asian Studies](#)

So commonplace it comforts me  
That Lenin, too, loved  
Reading Pushkin's poetry.

—Ishigure Shigeru

LET US BEGIN WITH THAT unforgettable image: Yanase Masamu's red hand, adorning the frontispiece of this book, which stretches out from a page of the *Musansha shinbun* (Proletarian news) in a gesture of solidarity,

strength, and reassurance. Yanase's artistry is impeccable if self-consciously crude, different shades of red and black ink brought together with such meticulous craftsmanship that the hand offers the illusion of having three dimensions—of reflecting a source of light from somewhere above. The stylized headline calls out to the same reader the arm reaches out to: "Join hands with 50,000 readers of the *Proletarian News*, a true friend of the people!!"<sup>1</sup>

p. 2 Yanase's image did not appear on the pages of the *Musansha shinbun* itself, but rather formed the centerpiece of a promotional poster meant to publicize the newspaper, first published in 1925 when various proletarian cultural organizations began to consolidate themselves throughout Japan in the wake of the Russian Revolution. The poster indeed acknowledges the familiar icons of Soviet revolutionary modernity; a hammer, sickle, and red star lie in the lower left-hand corner. But on the opposite side, offering the clever illusion of a dog-eared page, there also appears an advertisement within the promotional poster itself. The advertisement features the "complete translation" of Karl Marx's *Capital*, translated by Kyoto University professor Kawakami Hajime and published by Iwanami Shoten, one of Japan's premier publishing houses. In the background we find a partial image of a gated factory and several articles that offer important context. They report on the anti-Japanese resistance movement in Manchuria and Mongolia, on the first general elections soon to be held in Japan, and on the government's expenditures of some nine hundred million yen in "blood taxes" extracted from the people.

Whatever its intended effect in early twentieth-century Japan, what Yanase's poster for the *Musansha shinbun* does for us now is to make visible the extraordinary coincidence of political revolution, sophisticated social analysis, and a highly advanced, consumer society in the Empire of Japan, a country where intellectuals, publishing houses, and proletarian artists such as Yanase had begun to lend their formidable talents and resources to a working-class movement. As many have argued, Japan was experiencing a period of cultural "doubling" in the early twentieth century, a widespread effort to reproduce forms of capitalist culture in line with Western modernity, which had already led Japan to create its own distinctive forms of modern art and literature.<sup>2</sup> But here was a "doubling" of a very different sort, whereby that capitalist culture newly reproduced in Japan was helping to create the conditions for its overturning. This was an exhilarating time for revolutionary artists and intellectuals across the globe, a time when the aspirations of the international avant-garde were focused not only on the innovation of new artistic forms, but also on new strategies for activism and new forms of social life, a moment when culture was understood as both a matter of aesthetics as well as mode of daily practice.

Bringing together bourgeois aesthetics, radical politics, and a flourishing popular print culture, the proletarian cultural movement in Japan thus emerged out of a complex and contradictory intersection of local and global forces. A highly capitalized marketplace had helped to precipitate a widespread interest in Marxist analysis as well as the formation of institutions dedicated to improving the lives of the poor, and new communities of cultural workers committed to translating communist egalitarianism into forms of Japanese culture and social practice. What were the defining characteristics of a cultural movement that took shape under these specific conditions, and how did Japanese cultural workers seek to accommodate the many contradictions they engendered? What people, ideas, and institutions helped the movement to sustain a faith in the idea that even art and literature were indispensable to the task of revolution?

p. 3 It was from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s that an unprecedented number of cultural workers came together under the banner of proletarian cultural. The movement's political allegiances ranged from Christian socialism to anarchism to internationalist communism; its aesthetic forms ran the gamut from comic books to *Bildungsromans*, and from muckracking reportage to new takes on haiku. By 1928, when a male suffrage law meant to contain the threat of radical politics came into effect, there were already dozens of journals and presses dedicated to the translation of revolutionary politics into a variety of cultural practices: educating children, agitating farmers and women workers, challenging the military's influence on civic life, and crafting new forms of art and literature that might play a role in constructing a socialist

future. While it was illegal at the time to criticize the Japanese emperor, to challenge the system of private property, and even to threaten the ambiguously defined “national body” (*kokutai*) of Japan, proletarian culture played a crucial role in enabling criticisms of an authoritarian government, large corporate structures, as well as the imperial armed forces, which were being held accountable for a collective insouciance to the plight of the poor, for a failure to establish forms of truly democratic governance, and for a misguided celebration of Japan’s expanding empire.

Notwithstanding its many shifts in direction and its eventual reorganization by the Communist Party in the early 1930s—often setting die-hard communists against the democratic socialists they called “social fascists”—the broader proletarian movement managed for more than a decade to enlist teachers, actors, scientists, and musicians into their ranks, fostering the creation of local discussion groups (*bungaku sākuru*) and producing a wide range of proletarian magazines and newspapers, including *Sekki* (Red flag), the *Bijutsu shinbun* (Arts gazette), and *Hataraku fujin* (Working women), to name just a few.<sup>3</sup> Although government censors frequently issued bans on the sale and distribution of publications that carried the more incendiary variety of proletarian literature and criticism, many highbrow journals such as *Chūō kōron* (Central review) and *Kaizō* (Reconstruction), as well as daily newspapers like the *Miyako shinbun*, still commonly published works by proletarian writers, even those written by members of the illegal Communist Party. It is to this wide-ranging archive of print culture that this book turns in order to reconstruct the historical contours of one of twentieth-century Japan’s most vibrant and admirable moments of cultural and intellectual history.

In *Recasting Red Culture*, I restore much of the forgotten ideological and aesthetic complexity of Japan’s proletarian movement and show that it must be central to any understanding of modern Japanese culture in the early Shōwa period. Instead of focusing on the celebrated novels of proletarian literature, a body of fiction that was canonized in large part by the Japanese Communist Party, I excavate from the historical archive hitherto unexamined works of proletarian culture: fairy tales, children’s songs, propaganda, “wall fiction,” as well as several works of poetry, fiction, and criticism about colonial Korea.<sup>4</sup> These short narratives were not simply epiphenomena of theoretical debates of the time, but constituted theoretically rich documents themselves and were engaged in a dialogue with historical events, broader intellectual and social practices, as well as questions of political consciousness and literary representation. By translating and performing close readings of many of these unknown pieces, I offer a new portrait of the movement, its major concerns, and its mode of dialectical analysis, in part to challenge the widespread misconception of proletarian literature as a crude instrument of propaganda. That said, proletarian cultural workers themselves saw “literature” as a historical construction—as a body of specialized writing with complex aesthetic dimensions, and at the same time as a process of social participation, by which both writers and readers of many different backgrounds might learn to feel and act in new ways that would eventually change what counted as literature. *Recasting Red Culture* itself casts a wide net in its own understanding of literature to include a full range of writing, from reportage to fairy tales and from poetry to the pedagogical journal.

*Recasting Red Culture* also attempts to restore a historically specific understanding of class to an interpretation of the proletarian cultural movement. The popularization of revolutionary ideas in Japan did not coincide with a blanket claim to representative universality in Japan, and although the Communist Party and proletarian writers are often criticized for privileging a monolithic, working-class male subject, class consciousness was in fact a highly nuanced mode of social analysis, one that enabled cultural workers in Japan to imagine the subject of revolutionary struggle through a complex model of subjectivity that far exceeded the stereotype of a Japanese male industrial worker. The proletarian subject was understood to be dialectically related to the specific histories and needs of the different groups that constituted the proletariat, including farmers, colonized people, students, and the petit bourgeois, as well as women, children, soldiers, and the *burakumin* underclass.<sup>5</sup> Thus, contrary to one dominant paradigm of scholarship on proletarian literature, which would read class simply as a discourse that “subordinated” race, nation, gender, and other forms of identity, proletarian thinkers made a concerted, dialectical effort to consider the

universality of proletarian culture in relation to the particular needs and demands of a full range of constituencies, without which the proletariat and Japanese proletarian culture simply would not have existed.

p. 5 This is not to argue that racism, patriarchy, paternalism, and other mechanisms of discrimination—usually inscribed in the forms it borrowed from bourgeois culture—did not taint proletarian practices. Rather, cultural workers were being newly equipped with an entirely novel way of understanding and appreciating what writer Kobayashi Takiji called “plurality” (*tayōsei*), the need for forming broad alliances among all oppressed people that might help construct new institutions that served them all.<sup>6</sup> Arguing against colleagues who suggested that the struggles of individual interest groups were not the equivalent of the broader proletarian struggle, poet and critic Nakano Shigeharu (1902–1979), for example, used the metaphor of a great river and its tributaries in 1931 to describe the nature of these alliances. For Nakano, “each group’s individual struggle merged ... in a churning up of different waters into a single roaring cascade.”<sup>7</sup> The waters of this proletarian cascade would eventually enfranchise a diverse generation of budding artists, journalists, scholars, and teachers throughout Japan. The movement’s expansion of class analysis to accommodate the experiences of women, children, and other minority groups in particular—over the fields of elite, popular, and activist culture—would also help to generate the embryonic but still class-conscious forms of multiculturalism and feminism that cultural workers would continue to foster in the aftermath of the movement’s demise, especially in the post–World War II period.

As for the delicate position of the largely middle-class intellectuals and cultural workers who were instrumental in integrating Marxism into the working-class movement, proletarian birth control activist Yamamoto Senji (1889–1929) perhaps summed up an early consensus. A drunk and playboy in his youth who was saved by Christian missionaries and went on to study medicine in Canada, Yamamoto wrote in 1926 that “We indeed have a drawback in that as members of the middle class we are liable to forget that we ourselves are intellectual laborers, and it can therefore be difficult to serve the class struggle in a restrained fashion as part of the rank and file.” But for Yamamoto it sufficed to acknowledge the potential weaknesses of one’s own bourgeois background and “from within a place of non-deception” to work one’s hardest for the revolution.<sup>8</sup> The division between manual and mental labor was understood by Japanese cultural workers, after all, to be a historical phenomenon, not an inevitability. What was necessary for both workers and intellectuals alike was thus not an idealization of labor and the working class, but rather a political commitment that was informed by an understanding of a social world that extended well beyond one’s own class position. This was an understanding of the “totality,” as Lenin had put it, that existed well beyond the reach of any one individual’s social purview and life experiences.

p. 6 The three cases this book examines in detail—proletarian practices involving children, the revolutionary genre of “wall fiction,” and works of literature about Koreans—foreground three different perspectives on this social totality, perspectives that many consider to have existed only on the margins of proletarian culture. Childhood, the historical avant-garde, and the activism of Koreans in fact fell outside the main concerns of scholarship on proletarian literature for decades; no fairy tales, no wall fiction, and few if any stories about Koreans existed in the first compendium of proletarian literature published in 1954–1955.<sup>9</sup> But the archives tell a much more complicated history, one that brought a critique of imperialism, a careful examination of childhood development, and questions about the nature of creativity itself into the realm of literary and critical speculation. Children’s culture was a preoccupation of the movement from its inception, and narratives for and about children are staggering in their numbers. Avant-garde “wall fiction” appeared late in the movement’s development, but debates over the nature of literary form had been ongoing since the mid-1920s. Koreans in Japan were deeply involved in leftist politics in the early 1920s, but became particularly important to the Communist Party in the early 1930s, even while their representation in literature was complicated by a paucity of Korean writers who wrote in Japanese and by the “imperial eyes” through which Japanese literature had often seen the Korean colony and its people.<sup>10</sup> The asymmetry of

these three cases helps me highlight different ways in which the movement both drew on and challenged pre-existing forms of Japanese culture.

The narratives I examine in chapter 2 include fairy tales and children's songs, as well as social scientific studies, propaganda, and works of reportage. I show through this broad range of texts how the children's movement worked largely within existing liberal concepts of childhood, while simultaneously contesting many middle-class assumptions. Seeing childhood scientifically as a specific stage of human development and at the same time as a heterogeneous experience largely inflected by class, proletarian activists created forms of culture for and about poor children that reflected this dialectical vision. But if childhood was for proletarian activists both a real stage of social development as well as a historical construction, works of proletarian literature at the same time often carried different emphases and intentions relating to the proclivities of individual authors and the material sites of their publication.

Chapter 3 is constructed around six translated works of "wall fiction," a literary genre that was celebrated in the early 1930s as a unique Japanese contribution to international experiments in revolutionary form. Taking up issues of gender, popular culture, antiwar activism, and colonial education, these stories collectively show how proletarian literature deserves a place in the history of Japanese modernism as well as the historical avant-garde. Methodologically, this chapter takes a more traditional approach by setting works of fiction in relation to proletarian theories of creative writing and organization, which contributed to the popularity of these extremely short narratives. As I do in chapter 2, I also underscore here how the mark of proletarian creativity lies as much in its institutional as in its literary experimentation, a creativity often put into question by critics deeply invested in the Western ideology of autonomous art, which polices the affirmation of sophistication and complexity into the narrow confines of the artifact itself and to the exclusion of its deeper social connections. My inclusion of these very short stories into my narrative, though perhaps unconventional, is meant to enrich my own analyses, but I hope it also offers readers a chance to experience these works in ways that speak beyond the limits of my own readings.

In recasting the history of Japanese proletarian culture my book also joins a growing bookshelf of monographs that has over the past decade sought to expand what the "Japanese" of Japanese literature actually means, by incorporating texts written about the Korean colony as well as resident Koreans, the Zainichi minority that lived, and continues to live, in Japan today.<sup>11</sup> A boom in industrial production during World War I brought thousands of Korean farmers to the Japanese islands as low-paid laborers in the early 1920s, but its subsequent collapse resulted in what Ken Kawashima calls an "uncontrollable colonial surplus" of Koreans on the Japanese islands.<sup>12</sup> The role of Koreans in the revolutionary movement and its literature, which I touch on in each of my chapters, becomes the more concerted subject of chapter 4, which performs close readings of several works of Japanese proletarian literature produced at a time when Koreans made up at least a third if not more of the Japanese Communist Party. The complex figurations of Koreans in Japanese proletarian fiction at this time reflected the broader contradictions that governed their participation in the Communist Party, its labor unions, and the Japanese proletarian cultural movement in general, where they were often seen as the boldest of revolutionaries and simultaneously stigmatized as low-level activists. Depending on the site of their publication, Korean participation in the revolutionary movement was often represented in forms of literature that celebrated local color in the colonial peripheries or fetishized Koreans in exotic and seemingly nonrevolutionary ways. My work diverges from many recent studies of Japanese empire, however, in that I focus exclusively on a Japanese resistance movement that was opposed to the empire, and I try to restore the complexity and contradictions of its contemporary critique of imperialism.<sup>13</sup>

Women contributed significantly to the proletarian cultural movement, and while gender is not a main focus of this study, I have made a concerted effort to insert into the stories I tell the important roles that women played. Murayama Kazuko (1903–1946), for example, prolific author and self-proclaimed communist, as well as wife of the famous artist Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901–1977), is often left out of

proletarian cultural history because of her connections with the commercial press and because of her unique sensibilities, which are not seen as representative of the dominant voice of the proletarian movement. Her work, however, enables us to see proletarian children's culture much more dialectically, as a body of writing that was just as attentive to the needs of childhood in general as it was to the needs of poor children in particular. In my discussion of wall fiction, too, I frame my chapter with the work of two of the most talented proletarian writers—Sata Ineko (1904–1998) and the Korean writer Kang Kyŏng-ae (1906–1944)—and I discuss important works that feature women or girls as their main protagonists, as a way of suggesting how gender was a decisive pressure within proletarian fiction. Although in the postwar period the Japanese Communist Party was unfairly singled out as a sexist, patriarchal institution (just as it had been in the 1930s by the Special Higher Police and the mass media), committed communist women writers and cultural activists in the proletarian movement worked tirelessly to expand class analysis into realms beyond that of the traditional workplace: family, sexuality, domesticity.<sup>14</sup> The movement in the end also enfranchised a generation of new women writers, such as Murayama Kazuko, Arai Mitsuko, Sata Ineko, Miyamoto Yuriko, Matsuda Tokiko, and Kang Kyŏng-ae, all of whom I discuss at some length in this book.

The understudied body of proletarian writing that I examine in *Recasting Red Culture* poses several difficulties for the scholar. Most of the works I discuss are noncanonical works of literature that have not been closely examined before, and I do not have the benefit of responding to the arguments and analyses of other critics. Given that most were also composed within the context of a vibrant political movement, it is often difficult to appreciate the ways they were read by those committed to the cause or, as the case may be, by workers, farmers, housewives, or youthful soldiers, who were increasingly convinced by the mass media that the Communist Party and its institutions were dangerously antiestablishment, insufficiently patriotic, and disrespectful of the Japanese emperor. The many different activist journals and newsletters these narratives appeared in do not necessarily lend themselves to one approach; scholars of literature, cultural studies, or history might all approach these texts in different ways. I myself try to bring a sensitivity to literary form, different subject positions, and a careful consideration of cultural and intellectual context to bear on all the works I examine, with the larger goal of historicizing the movement, the commitment of its cultural workers, and the rich meaning of its narratives.

p. 9

On one level the main argument of this book is simple: proletarian culture in Japan was as rich and diverse as were the social experiences of its many participants, and it came into being within a history that gave a particular shape to its evolving aesthetic forms, critical consciousness, and social practices in Japan. Shedding light on the movement's broader contribution to Japanese modernity, *Recasting Red Culture* brings together a discussion of institutions, critical debates, and the activities of individual artists, while reserving special attention to the workings of individual texts that played a key role in the shaping of meanings as much as they were shaped themselves by external forces. Each of my chapters also contributes to a closely related claim—that proletarian culture was an indelible record of contradictions, a process whereby competing notions of literature, childhood, and Korean otherness, among other concerns, reflected that singularly complex effort to bring together revolutionary politics and bourgeois culture, which lay at the heart of the movement. "I still feel plagued by a petit bourgeois consciousness when I try to write truthfully about the lives and consciousness of the proletariat," lamented writer Sata Ineko, the most highly published Japanese author of the year 1931.<sup>15</sup> Recasting bourgeois culture into a body of ideas, values, and feelings that aligned themselves with the struggles of the oppressed was understood as a bedeviling, but necessary, task in the early Shōwa period. The efforts of cultural workers to accommodate these contradictions, and the concrete results of those efforts, are in part what made the proletarian movement such a diverse and influential aspect of modern Japanese culture.

Before delving into my three case studies, it may be prudent to offer some sense of how competing concepts of proletarian culture first emerged in Japan and how writers understood its deeply contradictory nature as it evolved in the specific context of the 1920s and early 1930s. As Yanase Masamu's stunning red arm on the

*Musansha shinbun* poster might suggest, the proletarian movement took philosophical and aesthetic inspiration from the Soviet Union, which had distinguished itself as the first nation to have translated Marx's political and economic analyses into the successful creation of a worker-farmer state. But cultural activists were not interested in blindly importing predetermined forms of revolutionary culture. Instead they were intent on translating the political and economic insights of Marx, Lenin, and other revolutionary thinkers into analyses of Japan's (and Korea's) own experience of modernity in the hope of formulating a variety of new, more egalitarian cultural practices specific to that experience.

p. 10 The intellectual traffic speeding into Japan and its colonies from Bolshevik Russia in the late Taishō (1912–1926) and early Shōwa (1926–1989) years, however, was hardly unanimous in its comprehension or advocacy of what the movement in Japan would embrace as “proletarian culture.” For some Soviet revolutionaries the idea referred to the lived reality of the suffering masses, for others it designated the art and literature of enlightened communist workers, and for one particularly significant figure it referred to something of a theoretical impossibility. Stripped of whatever culture they once had enjoyed, exhausted by their daily labor, and unable on their meager wages to afford even the price of a book, the proletariat simply had no culture to speak of, and thus the term “proletarian culture” was itself an oxymoron. This final position was the argument of Leon Trotsky, whose 1923 *Literature and Revolution* was translated into Japanese just as the proletarian literary movement in Japan was consolidating itself as a fledgling institution.<sup>16</sup> In *Literature and Revolution* Trotsky had launched a powerful criticism of the Russian proletarian literary movement from within the terms of a Marxist dialectic, arguing that the very term “proletarian culture” “erroneously compress[es] the culture of the future into the narrow limits of the present day.”<sup>17</sup> For Trotsky, proletarian culture and bourgeois culture were not theoretical equivalents and therefore could not be set up in opposition to each other. As the July 1926 installment of Shigemori Tadashi's translation of Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution* concludes:

One cannot turn the concept of culture into the small change of individual daily living and determine the success of a class culture by the proletarian passports of individual inventors or poets. Culture is the organic sum of knowledge and capacity which characterizes the entire society, or at least its ruling class. It embraces and penetrates all fields of human work and unifies them into a system. Individual achievements rise above this level and elevate it gradually.<sup>18</sup>

Doggedly retaining an overarching concept of high culture, Trotsky embraces the contribution of all members of society to its development and later calls “monstrous” the suggestion that the techniques of bourgeois art are not necessary for the working class. Trotsky goes on to argue that given the widespread illiteracy throughout the Soviet Union, the task of the Russian Proletcult (Organization for Proletarian Culture) should be that of “elevating the literary level of the working class,” not that of the speedy creation of a “new literature” that could now be heralded as that of the proletariat.<sup>19</sup> The proletarian movement in Japan, however, where nearly the entire population was literate, had the luxury and the altogether different challenge of simultaneously pursuing different kinds of proletarian culture. For it sought to fuse radical thinking together with highly professionalized forms of art, as well as with forms of social activism and mass culture (*taishū bunka*) that were developing in tandem with efforts on the part of the state to respond to the needs and desires of a working-class population.

p. 11 For Trotsky and many other European Marxists, whom Japanese critics were reading, the very point of the proletariat class was to achieve its own undoing. In contrast to the bourgeoisie, who were content with consolidating their own power as a class, the revolutionary proletariat would, in its transformation of the world into a classless society, necessarily lead to its own liquidation.<sup>20</sup> As Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács put it, writing in his 1920 *History and Class Consciousness*, “the revolutionary victory of the proletariat does not imply, as with former classes, the immediate realisation of the socially given existence of the class, but, as the young Marx clearly saw and defined, its self-annihilation.”<sup>21</sup> Proletarian culture, according to this

logic, could only exist as an intermediary stage of cultural production in Japan, or elsewhere for that matter; it bore the burden of consolidating itself only to the extent that it could also imagine its disappearance. Before a truly socialist culture had the chance to develop, in other words, proletarian culture would have to recast the inheritance of bourgeois cultural forms in ways that might help forge the emerging sensibilities of an unknown future.

It was precisely for this reason that Nakano Shigeharu, for example, did not lament the cultural legacies of the past, but rather stressed the importance of understanding them historically. Arguing that Walt Whitman's poetry, for instance, was able to celebrate the feelings of a newly emergent middle class in the United States, the purpose of studying bourgeois poetry, wrote Nakano, was "not for the sake of criticizing its weakness, but rather for identifying its virtues."<sup>22</sup> Because of his famous break with Stalin and the Communist Party in 1927, Trotsky himself would subsequently be denounced by proletarian writers in Japan for an ostensibly elitist attitude toward proletarian culture. But in their efforts to accommodate a revolutionary consciousness within Japanese culture, writers like Nakano Shigeharu, Yamamoto Senji, and Sata Ineko in fact enacted Trotsky's dialectical method better than they themselves ever acknowledged, even as they doggedly clung to the moniker "proletarian." Understanding how the particular idea and practice of proletarian culture took shape historically in twentieth-century Japan is the task I have set out to accomplish in the pages that follow.

## Notes

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1. Yanase Masamu, poster for the *Musansha shinbun*, featuring the front page of the newspaper published on September 25, 1927.
2. See, for example, Harry Harootunian, *History's Disquiet, History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), xvii.
3. The various acronyms used to refer to the various proletarian arts associations in Japan and colonial Korea can be confusing. Though there were many proletarian cultural associations in Japan, especially early on, the two major communist-affiliated associations were Zen Nihon musansha geijutsu renmei (All Japan Federation of Proletarian Arts), usually referred to as NAPF, and Nihon puroretaria bunka renmei (Japanese Proletarian Culture Association), usually referred to as KOPF, into which NAPF was absorbed in 1931. In Korea, KAPF, or the Chosŏn p'ŭrollet'aria yesul tongmaeng (Korean Proletarian Arts Federation) retained its name for a decade (1925–1935) but underwent various shifts in policy, leadership, and organization.
4. Heather Bowen-Struyk makes a cogent argument about canonization in her "Rethinking Japanese Proletarian Literature" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2001).
5. Nakano Shigeharu explicitly includes these different groups in a definition of the proletarian "we" (*wareware*) in 1927. See Nakano Shigeharu, "Geijutsu ni kansuru hashirigakiteki oboegaki," *Nakano Shigeharu zenshu*, vol. 9, 72; originally in *Puroretaria geijutsu* (October 1927).
6. Kobayashi Takiji emphasized the importance of respecting heterogeneity in proletarian reading groups, in particular where cultural workers had to understand the "plurality" (*tayōsei*) of the reading public and respect the "mixed assortment of different characters" (*samazama zatta na shitsu*) of its members. Kobayashi Takiji, "Kinkyū no kadai," *Miyako shinbun*, August 16–20, 1931.
7. Nakano Shigeharu, "Geijutsu undō no soshiki," *Puroretaria bungaku* 1, no. 2 (August 1927).
8. Yamamoto Senji, "Sei to shakai," in *Yamamoto Senji zenshū*, vol. 3, ed. Sasaki Toshiji and Akinori Odagiri, 393–394 (Tokyo: Chōbunsha, 1979).
9. Hirano Ken, Kurahara Korehito, Odagiri Hideo, Noma Hiroshi, Takeuchi Yoshimi, eds., *Nihon puroretaria bungaku taikai* (San'ichi Shobō, 1955), 9 vols. By contrast the forty-volume anthology of proletarian literature (*Nihon puroretaria bungakushū*), published in the mid-1980s, devotes an entire volume to "wall fiction" and carries several stories about Koreans in Japan scattered throughout various volumes, but still contains no children's stories whatsoever.
10. Akita Ujaku, *Gojūnen seikatsu nenpu* (Tokyo: Naukasha, 1936); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).
11. For an admirable study of Zainichi literature beginning in the 1960s, see Melissa Wender's *Lamentation as History: Narratives by Koreans in Japan, 1965–2000* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005). Also an invaluable resource is



- her edited collection of short stories, Melissa Wender ed., *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Koreans in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010). Sociologist John Lie also incorporates literary sources into his study *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
12. Ken C. Kawashima, *The Proletarian Gamble: Korean Workers in Interwar Japan* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009), 28.
  13. For a recent study of how Japanese constructed a cultural identity in relation to its colonies, see Robert Thomas Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery: The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). For a wide-ranging collection of critical essays on Japanese culture in the period immediately following that of my study, see Alan Tansman, ed., *The Culture of Japanese Fascism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009). Karen Thornber also offers an important account of how Korean, Taiwanese, and Chinese writers drew on and transformed Japanese narratives in the production of their own literature. See Karen Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion: Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese Transculturations of Japanese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).
  14. The canard of the “communist housekeeper” in particular was used to scandalize the Communist Party in the 1950, much as the women activists had been scandalized in the 1920s and 1930s for their involvement in communist activism, all of which has cast a shadow on the movement’s relationship to gender. Proletarian women writers themselves, however, were quick to criticize these tactics of bourgeois criticism in the 1930s. See “Eroban no dema ni kōgi suru,” *Hataraku fujin*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Feb. 1933): 34–35.
  15. Celebrated modernist Kawabata Yasunari, who often praised Sata’s work, makes this observation after having taken into account all the mainstream, but not necessarily all the proletarian, journals and newspapers published in 1931. According to Kawabata, Sata shared the distinction with writer Murō Saisei. Kawabata Yasunari, “Hitotsu no seiriki (bundan),” *Fujin saron* 3, no. 12 (1931), reprinted in *Kawabata Yasunari zenshū* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1999).
  16. For a translation of the first part of *Literature and Revolution*, see *Bungaku to kakumei*, trans. Shigemori Tadashi (Tokyo: Kaizōsha, 1925). For the later part, including Trotsky’s theory of proletarian literature, see Shigemori’s translations published under the title “Torotsukī no puroretaria geijutsu kōwa” (Trotsky’s lectures on proletarian art) in the proletarian journal *Bungei sensen*, serialized from May to September 1926.
  17. Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 205.
  18. *Ibid.*, 200. For the Japanese of this passage, see “Torotsukī no puroretaria geijutsu kōwa,” trans. Shigemori Tadashi, *Bungei sensen* 3, no. 7 (1926): 55.
  19. For a similar criticism of a later Stalinist social realism, see John Berger, *Art and Revolution* (New York: Vintage International, 1997), 56.
  20. *Ibid.*, 196.
  21. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), 70.
  22. Nakano Shigeharu, “Burujoa shi no hihan—kako no shi no kenkyū,” in Akita Ujaku and Eguchi Kan, eds., *Sōgō puroretaria geijutsu kōza*, 33–60 (Tokyo: Naigaisha, 1931).