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**Rival Imagined Communities:  
Class and Nation in Japanese Proletarian Literature**

Heather Bowen-Struyk

It may seem a bit contrary to pursue the question of the nation in Japanese proletarian literature. After all, amid the increasing clamor of nationalist writing in Japan in the 1930s, proletarian writers joined with Korean, Taiwanese, and Chinese writers and activists in an organized resistance to Japanese imperialism and the entry into the Pacific War. This is an important point that still deserves to be emphasized in and beyond this article. Indeed, Comintern (Communist International) analysts and most Japanese Marxists, especially early on, insisted that nationalism was a tool of the bourgeois state to exploit the masses, and proletarian literature that dealt with the issue of the state generally also dealt with nationalism as something that needed to be overcome.

At the same time, the nation deserves more than a cursory rejection as something that would interest only a fascist, even in the midst of the interna-

tionalist proletarianism of the 1920s and 1930s. The nation — sometimes cultural, sometimes biological, and sometimes more ambiguously ethnic — offered the allure of an imagined community that might help weather the storm of rapid industrial transformation and the high costs of capitalist-imperialist expansion. By using the term *nation*, I join Benedict Anderson and others in seeing it as a primarily constructed, imagined community, although one that was increasingly subject to worldwide scientific attempts to delineate race and ethnicity; in Japan, biological elements of the nation were being newly imagined in the challenging context of an expanding Japanese empire.<sup>1</sup> The nation had many possible meanings depending on whether one was a Japanese subject on the Japanese archipelago or in a colony in Asia, a manager-level employee for a Japanese company or a wage laborer or a tenant-farmer, an impoverished settler on the Asian mainland or a trafficker in drugs and arms, an infantryman or an officer in the military.

If the nation offered an alluring community, so, too, did the vision of international proletarianism propagated in proletarian journals. Formed not by blood or soil but by the shared fate of class oppression, international proletarianism offered an alternative imagined community aware of the nation as its doppelgänger. The major proletarian journals of the time — *Zen'ei* (*Vanguard*), *Pworetaria geijutsu* (*Proletarian Art*), *Bungei sensen* (*Literary Front*), and *Senki* (*Battle Flag*) — display a commitment to internationalism and anti-imperialism regardless of whether they were affiliated with the Comintern. These journals participate in the imagining of an international community through articles, fiction, photographs, and illustrations of oppression and uprisings throughout the world. By virtue of being published next to each other, articles on worker's conditions in India, China, Mexico, and the United States, for example, together with articles on advances in Russia, emphasize the simultaneity of international proletarian shared experience, with Bolshevik-inspired revolution as the utopian payoff. For example, in the October 1930 edition of *Bungei sensen*, a photo montage makes visible an amalgamation of different national masses demonstrating in New York (featuring a man with a Chinese Soviet sign), California, Berlin, as well as a five-country (Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, and Japan) demonstration on the border of Germany and Belgium. The images are united by a great

canon that runs from the lower right to the upper left of the page, bearing the Soviet insignia and the slogan “Worker-Farmers resolutely oppose the XXist war.” The “XX” here, indicating censored material, is likely “Imperial.” The table of contents of this same issue, readable as another form of montage, also demonstrates this international imagined community: there are feature articles about China, Russia, Budapest, and France; there are articles on Japanese issues; and there are general articles that emphasize the internationalism of the proletarian movement, such as “Talk of the International Farming Crisis” (“Kokusai nōgyō kyōfu no hanashi”). Despite their important disagreements, rival proletarian journals shared this strategy of representing a worldwide class-based community.

In a historical moment characterized by the utopian possibilities of international Bolshevik-inspired revolution institutionalized in the Soviet Union, revolutionary strategizing was still taking place, first and foremost, on the level of the nation-state. Whether or not the state would eventually wither away after the proletarian revolution, the nation-state was vital to revolutionary strategy both because it helped to set the stage for the proletarian revolution by furthering the development of bourgeois capital and because, as an oppressive organ of bourgeois capital, it repressed the working classes’ interests.<sup>2</sup> The nation-state was also vital to revolutionary strategy because of its allure for working-class people as well as for the intelligentsia.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of Japan, Comintern strategists offered sometimes contradictory and sometimes hypocritical assessments of the role of nationalism in Japan, no doubt because Japanese nationalism threatened the possibility of a Chinese revolution as well as threatened Soviet territory. The Comintern’s 1927 (July) “Theses on the Japan Problem” spelled out clearly that Japan had become “a first-class imperialist power of the vast Asiatic continent.”<sup>4</sup> The 1927 theses governed the policy of the Japanese Communist Party and, since the elected leadership of the strongest proletarian organization, NAPF (Nippona Artista Proletaria Federacio), was Communist, these and the subsequently issued theses in 1931 and 1932 constituted a significant horizon of awareness for writers in the proletarian literature movement in Japan.<sup>5</sup> Those proletarian writers who refused the leadership of NAPF disagreed on whether Japan was as “backward” as Comintern theses insisted, and as

evidence of their position, they, too, emphasized the development of the “imperialist bourgeoisie.”<sup>6</sup>

If this period was characterized by the spirit of internationalism and the nagging sense that Japanese imperialism was going to become more rather than less of an issue, at the same time, intellectuals and artists were checked in their ability to respond to these changes by the 1925 Chian iji hō (Public Order Law), which made it illegal to “alter the *kokutai* (national essence).”<sup>7</sup> The mass arrests beginning in 1928 impressed upon writers’ bodies and psyches the consequences of participating in a movement that the state had good reason to consider threatening. These restrictions notwithstanding, writers associated with proletarian literary organizations did write about Japanese capitalist expansion in the colonies, the treatment of Chinese and Korean laborers, the issue of Korean independence, the collusion between Japanese military and capital, the way that the Japanese proletariat experienced colonialism differently from the bourgeoisie, the unfortunate position of farmers conscripted into the military, as well as other topics related to the expansion of the Japanese empire. Japanese writers who dealt with these issues include Nakano Shigeharu, Nakanishi Inosuke, Hirabayashi Taiko, Kuroshima Denji, Tokunaga Sunao, Kobayashi Takiji, Fujimori Seikichi, Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, Maedakō Hiroichirō, Satō Sachiko, Aoi Itsuko, Togawa Shizuko, Senda Koreya, Ema Shū, Sata Ineko, Miyamoto Yuriko; the numerous colonial subjects working, studying, publishing, and protesting in the Japanese empire who dealt with these issues include a number of writers discussed in other essays in this volume, such as Yang Kui, Chang Hyōk-chu, Kang Kyōng-ae, An Mak, Kim Tu-yong, Kim Hŭi-myōng, Han Sik, and Yi Pung-man.

As we will see, the Japanese nation and imperialism as a proletarian literary *topos* dealt with the variable meaning of *Japan*, the dependence of Japanese capital on Chinese markets and labor, the collusion between the Japanese state and bourgeoisie against the interests of the proletariat, Russian Socialism as an alternative, the threat or promise of Chinese revolution, and the relationship between globalizing capitalism and nation-states. This essay reflects on the important issues of the nation-state, nationalism, and transnational-ethnic alliances in revolutionary strategy and proletarian literature in Japan, pausing for an intimate engagement with two important Japanese

proletarian novels, Kobayashi Takiji's *The Factory Ship* (*Kani kōsen*, 1929) and Kuroshima Denji's *Militarized Streets* (*Busō seru shigai*, 1930). At a time of capitalist crisis, the nation and the proletariat both offered up alternative visions of redemptive imagined communities, and proletarian writers worked hard to convince readers that falling prey to the allure of the nation would only strengthen the imperialist bourgeoisie's already growing power. As we will see, however, Takiji's and Kuroshima's novels—both set in the borderlands of the expanding empire—manifest an anxiety regarding the nation, one that I will argue surfaces at moments of international unions because the characters (and perhaps the authors and readers) are not yet ready to embrace the newly imaginable community of international proletarianism, but cling to the erstwhile solace afforded by the community of the nation.

### **“We cannot take from them what they have not got”**

Marx and Engels made it seem so simple when they famously proclaimed: “The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got.”<sup>8</sup> Through the bourgeois revolution, the bourgeoisie had not merely grabbed political power from the aristocracy; it had created fundamentally new forms of self-serving political power in the modern nation-state. However, the simplicity of this assertion has been variously undermined. For developing nation-states in which bourgeois hegemony was as of yet incomplete, for example, nationalism was helpful, indeed necessary, to complete the bourgeois revolution, which was a necessary precursor to the proletarian revolution. Germaine Hoston writes: “Indeed, for Marx and Engels, Lenin and Luxemburg, nationalism had in Europe's past played a progressive historical role, contributing to the transition from feudal to capitalist society. In Western Europe, the nationalistic impulses that had fueled the creation of the national state that Marx now sought to transcend had coincided with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the succession of the feudal order by industrial capitalism.”<sup>9</sup>

The Comintern deliberated on the role that nationalism should or should not play in Japanese revolutionary development. A grave theoretical problem confronting Comintern and East Asian Marxists was whether there

was bourgeois hegemony in Japan. The Kōzaha, named after the lectures they published, tried to demonstrate the veracity of Comintern pronouncements that Japan's bourgeois revolution had been incomplete. Despite the self-evident prosperity of industrial capitalism by the 1920s and the development of Japan as an imperialist power propelled by the growth of capital, they cited as evidence the perseverance of such "semi-feudal" elements as the emperor system and a "backward" rural sector that, being dominated by landlords, looked a lot like feudal serfdom. If, as the Kōzaha worked so hard to confirm, Japan's bourgeois revolution was incomplete, then a two-stage strategy was necessary: first, finish the bourgeois revolution by overthrowing the emperor system; second, proceed to the proletarian revolution. This, however, was to be carried out in an environment dominated by a strong bourgeoisie, which resulted in the "untenable formula of the revolution as 'a bourgeois revolution versus bourgeois power.'"<sup>10</sup>

Japanese Marxists did not all agree with the leadership of the Comintern, however. In fact, early Japanese Communist Party (JCP) leader Yamakawa Hitoshi and others, as part of a group known as the Rōnōha (Labor-Farmer Faction), argued otherwise. The Rōnōha argued that Comintern strategy failed to recognize that the Japanese emperor system was not the same as the Russian czar and that it was not impeding the development of bourgeois democracy represented most spectacularly by the passage of the Universal Manhood Suffrage Act in 1925. As for so-called feudal landlords in the rural sector, the Rōnōha argued, they were investing their capital into industrial factories and other projects, so the rural landlord system appeared misleadingly to be feudal but was in fact already permeated by capital. As Hoston writes: "Against the Comintern's view that Japan's uneven development and backwardness in the agrarian sphere required a vanguard party to lead a two-stage revolution, Yamakawa and Inomata [Tsunao] counterposed a model of a highly advanced capitalist state dominated by the 'imperialist bourgeoisie'" (187). While disagreeing on the crucial point of the emperor system, both the Kōzaha and the Rōnōha agreed that Japan's imperialism was a product of the development of the imperialist bourgeoisie's rising power, and that Japan's imperialism must be opposed.

Revolutionary strategy for East Asia was, therefore, conflicted on issues

regarding the function of the nation-state and nationalism in Japan. Hoston describes how the Comintern's assessment of Japanese capitalism stressed its backwardness: "[In] somewhat 'Orientalist' fashion, the Soviets were predisposed to view Japan's development as inferior to that of Europe and Russia. The theses drafted under Bukharin's leadership stressed the backwardness of Japan's agrarian sector and its reflection in the political sphere, calling on the JCP to overthrow the 'semi-feudal' emperor system. A two-stage revolutionary process was prescribed for the 'backward' Japan, as it was for China; but in Japan there was to be no positive role for nationalistic sentiment" (91). If the Comintern insisted that Japan was "backward" and "semi-feudal," then it should have advocated nationalism — as it did in its strategizing for China. However, Japanese imperialism in Asia was a direct threat not only to the possibility of a Chinese revolution but also to Russia, which, no doubt, remembered what it was like to lose a war to Japan in 1905. The result was a policy that many Japanese Marxists considered to be contradictory. As Hoston observes: "Nationalism could be such a progressive force only among colonized peoples, Lenin argued after the war, and this view was the theoretical basis for Comintern policy for all Asian countries except Japan after 1921" (90).

Rogue Marxist Takahashi Kamekichi offered a theory that was pro-imperialist, which, by virtue of being divergent, highlights the fact that most Marxist thinkers were anti-imperialist, and yet also calls attention to the fact that it could have been otherwise. Takahashi argued that Japan's "petit imperialism" — which differed from European imperialism in that Japan was an LDC (Late Developing Country) and global spheres of influence had already been decided by the time Japan started so that Japan might never be able to catch up — should be viewed as being in the best interest of the nation-state and suggested that Marxists were misguided when they opposed imperialism. As Hoston summarizes his point of view: "[Japan's] proletarian revolutionary movement, therefore, should not despise nationalism, as the Comintern's program urged the JCP to do. Rather it must incorporate nationalistic elements into its movement in the manner prescribed by Lenin for the colonial areas, and, from its relatively advantaged position vis-à-vis China and India, take the lead in liberating the oppressed



peoples of Asia” (81). Takahashi also warned that, if the Communists failed to incorporate nationalism into the proletarian movement, they would lose the masses to the right, and “the left itself would be to blame for the rise of fascism in Japan” (81). Takahashi’s assessment would have an ominous ring, especially in light of the infamous political renunciations by JCP leaders Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika and the consequent collapse of the organized movement in the mid-1930s.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Hairy Problem of the Nation: Kobayashi Takiji’s *The Factory Ship***

For those proletarian writers who identified unambiguously as Japanese, dealing with the national question presented two major tasks: one, to unveil the way that the instruments of the state operate against the interests of the unpropertied majority; and two, to flush out the sometimes deeply held feelings of nationalism so that they may be overcome and a new imagined community based on class interest be embraced. Exposing the ruthless self-interest of the collusion between the state and capital—the state problem—was simple compared to accomplishing the second task of convincing a reader to disavow a national community (differently refracted according to an individual’s investments) for an emerging community based on class interest.

Even before arriving in Tokyo in 1930 in order to pursue the life of an activist-writer in the metropole, Kobayashi Takiji had begun to earn respect in the movement for his writings. Tokunaga Sunao, for example, credits Takiji’s long story “The March 15th Incident” (“Senkyūhyaku nijūhachinen sangatsu jūgonichi”), dealing with the mass arrests in 1928 and consequent imprisonment and torture, with inspiring him to write his popular novel of a printing strike, *The Sunless Street* (*Taiyō no nai machi*, 1929).<sup>12</sup> Takiji brought to the proletarian literature movement centered in Tokyo the important experience of growing up in Hokkaido, Japan’s northern frontier territory with a still palpable sense of colonization and an uneasy relation to “Japan.”

Takiji dramatized the state problem in a short story, “For the Sake of Citizens,” in which Arisuke, a righteous young man, helps the people of

Tokyo resume their normal commutes during a streetcar strike, but whose revelry afterward takes a dark turn when a geisha enlightens him as to the true nature of his involvement. The geisha unveils the network of right-wing interests that have conspired with the government against the people by using such young men as Arisuke as scabs, clothing them with the pride that their intervention is “for the sake of the citizens.”<sup>13</sup> Drunk with liquor and shame, Arisuke ends his life, but the narrator tells us forebodingly that “there are more Arisuke’s.” Arisuke is not cast as a villainous scab or nationalist right-winger, but rather as an upright man from beginning to end. His moral certitude, however, seems to have obscured what the geisha knew (and the narrative tells us that one often finds such knowledgeable women in the pleasure quarters) about the network of government and capitalist interests that exploit and oppress the working classes. Having lost the nation and his proud investment in it, Arisuke was apparently irredeemable as a part of a new imagined community.

Another story that dramatizes the state problem as the unveiling of the nation-state’s networks of conspiracy against the proletariat is Kataoka Teppei’s “Linesmen” (“Tsūshin kōshu”).<sup>14</sup> Like Yokomitsu Riichi and Nakamoto Takako, discussed by Brian Bergstrom in this issue, Kataoka Teppei was a proletarian writer who had earlier been affiliated with the experimental New Sensationists (Shinkankakuha). Kataoka’s story uses modernist grammar and imagery to represent the dictum that the “working man has no country.” The opening of the story highlights the attributes of capitalist development and their relationship to a global capitalist order in a choppy style:

Aerial wires, underground wires, submarines wires; encircling our planet like a huge spider’s web.

Telephones. Telegraphs.

Countless wires stretched taut and strong above our heads, under our feet.

Linking up the world’s capitalists. Capitalists in their spider-parlours, organizing themselves over these wires.<sup>15</sup>

In this story, the workers are sent out in a gale to repair the broken wires, although they wonder out loud if anyone other than the capitalists cares that

they are down. Risking their lives for a measly income, they are intensely aware of how the urban unemployed would take over their job in a second if they complained. And yet, they wonder, if it is true as they are told repeatedly that this job is of utmost national importance, then why are they paid so little?

At the beginning of the story, the protagonist Tokimoto is repairing a wire and accidentally overhears a conversation about buying a finger and a cultural club. He forgets it in the confusion surrounding the snowstorm. At the end of the story, he is attending a three-day renewal at the cultural club when a suspicious-looking man stands up to make a speech. He tells them that he was once a member of the Communist Party. To prove his sincerity, he chops off a finger. Tokimoto suddenly realizes that the “finger” was purchased from this man for this display of nationalism and anti-Communism. In a twist of irony, the finger intended as a display of anti-Communist sincerity becomes the sign that, in fact, nationalism and capitalism are colluding against the working class, buying up its bodies and discarding them. The capitalist’s spider web, the network of capitalism, imperialism, and nationalism—all are poised to catch the unwary proletarian and mutilate his body and labor.

The workers in Kataoka’s story are suspicious of nationalist encouragement to keep laboring, so the unveiling of the complicity between the state, nationalism, and the interests of capital does not encounter strong resistance. In contrast, Kobayashi Takiji’s celebrated novella *The Factory Ship* dramatizes both the coercive repression of the nation-state and the psychic pull of the nation on workers.<sup>16</sup> The first chapter skillfully sets up the main themes of the novella: the inhumane conditions of the workers, the class antagonism between the workers and management, the collusion between the (to use Louis Althusser’s term) Repressive State Apparatuses (police, navy) and capital, the issue of competition (ostensibly over fishing) between Russia and Japan, and, finally, a spontaneous threat by a couple of workers toward the captain. First we see the workers (sailors, factory hands, and fishermen) prepare the ship to leave the Japanese port and then retire to their quarters: “Cigarette smoke and the stench from human bodies clogged the stale air. The hold itself was like a vast cesspool and the men in the bunks resembled maggots.”<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, a coterie of privileged fellows (who, it will turn

out, are unified in their commitment to defending the interests of capital against the interests of workers) celebrate the launch with an indulgent feast.

The issues of class antagonism and the way that capitalism harnesses nationalism for its purposes are highlighted when the superintendent, now drunk, descends partway down the stairs, eyes the filth and spits, and then sternly lectures the workers on their national duty:

“Some of you may know this, so I don’t have to tell you. But the rest of you — don’t get the idea that this is just a money-making operation run by the corporation. We’re involved in a serious international problem. It boils down to this: who’s stronger — we, the people of the Japanese empire, or the Russkies? It’s a crucial, man-to-man battle. If we lose — and I don’t think it will ever happen — every one of you sons of Japan with balls swinging from your crotch must be prepared to slit open your belly and dump yourself in the Kamchatka Sea. We’re small, but I’ll be damned if we’ll go down before those big stupid Russkies. . . . From the international standpoint, we’re way ahead of the other nations in this area [crab-canning]. And this ship also has an important role in the problems of overpopulation and food in Japan. I don’t know if what I’m saying makes sense to you. Anyway, just remember that we are going to fight our way through the northern seas for this mission even at the risk of our lives. That’s why arrangements were made for the imperial navy to protect us every minute while we’re there. Let me warn you, any of you who acts like a Russky, the way so many are doing, trying to pull tricks on us, is no better than a traitor to our country.”<sup>18</sup>

The superintendent uses nationalism to keep the workers in line and working hard by suggesting that their labor is implicated in the ideological war already being waged between Japan(ese capitalism) and Russia(n Communism), and for much of the novella, this is effective because the workers certainly do feel themselves to be a part of the Japanese imperial nation. The chapter ends with one of the workers spontaneously and idly threatening the superintendent’s life after his departure. The structure of this first chapter suggests the direction the novella will take: the workers, degraded by inhumane conditions, will, simply by observing their surroundings and

reacting to them, come to challenge the ideology of the superintendent's speech, leading them to strive to topple him and all he represents.

The superintendent repeatedly offers patriotism as motivation to work harder, as in the following example in the second half of the novella: "What's the matter with you? If you can't get up, I'll drag you out of bed myself! Your work is important to the country, and you know it. It's the same as being at war. You've got to carry on as though you were offering your life to your country! Idiot!"<sup>19</sup> And on the next page the superintendent offers a "pep talk": "Look at the Russkies. They didn't stay on the job one minute more than they had to, even with the fish running before their eyes. So look what happened to their country. We're Japanese. We can't let that happen to us!" (47).

What is particularly skillful about Takiji's presentation is the way that he demonstrates that the workers embrace nationalism; and why not? From the beginning, the superintendent invokes a war between "them" and "us" and the men fall prey to its spell because, in fact, they take pride in being Japanese. If Althusser's Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) are present in the form of the superintendent's authority to punish a rebellious worker with death, not to mention the threat represented by the destroyer hovering on the horizon, so, too, are his mutually reinforcing Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), such as the films shown for the workers' relaxation. And the films provided by the company, despite the fact that they reinforce capitalist-imperialist ideology, also offer what little solace, emotional satisfaction, distraction, and humor the workers can get while aboard the ship. The first film, for example, is a documentary of scenic and significant places in Japan, such as Kyoto, Enoshima, and the Imperial Palace. While the documentary was undoubtedly picked strategically to arouse feelings of nationalism and pride in the workers so that they will continue to be coercible, why would it not also actually give them pleasure? The second film, a foreign film depicting the love between a "workman and daughter of the company director" against the backdrop of the taming of the West is a similarly transparent reinforcement of the imperialist ideology of the taming of the wild hinterlands at great sacrifice even as it offers the fantasy of a cross-class romance. After that a foreign slapstick movie follows that makes the men laugh uproariously, and then a Japanese film about a worker who, through

diligence, rises to become a rich man. The last film shows beauty shots of corporate headquarters.

In other words, the problem of the nation-state and what to do about it is not merely a question of who has power and what interests it serves. The appeal of the nation-state is more complicated because it presents itself in already thoroughly digested forms such as romance, aesthetics, and humor, and it speaks to the ways that individuals act when they imagine themselves to belong to a nation. Interestingly, the workers have so internalized capitalist-nationalist-imperialist ideology that it is available for use in unintended ways. For example, the character known as “the student” encourages the workers to participate in a strike by citing a Home Ministry film about teamwork and national unity (66).

With the nation-state so thoroughly digested and (re)interpreted as their own, the workers-sailors simply cannot understand that the nation-state is not fully theirs to protect and be protected by, until circumstances turn dire. The destroyer, so the sailors and workers are told, was sent to protect them while fishing in the contested waters of the Russian shoreline. And when a question is raised during preparations for a strike, the workers respond: “It’s our own destroyer. It’s got to take our side.” . . . “What do you mean? A ship of the empire not side with us people? Where do you get that idea?” (79). However, in the ultimate betrayal, the strike fails as the destroyer comes not to their aid, but to the aid of the superintendent: “Dense as they were, experience had finally made clear to them who their enemies were and how (and this was what came as a bolt from the blue) their enemies were linked together” (80–81). The language resonates with Kataoka’s later characterization of bourgeois forces — police, telegraph lines, company managers — as a network of oppression. The major thrust of the novella is about overcoming nationalism and coming to see the possibility of supranational, class-based fraternity.

Many of the sailors and workers aboard the crab-cannery boat come from the destitute frontierland, Hokkaido, which, having been made a part of Japan in the latter half of the nineteenth century, retained the imprint of colonization. The narrator explains why capitalism is freer to exploit at the peripheries of the empire, where the workers come from, as well as how capitalism uses imperialism to grow and the terrible cost of that growth

in human lives. For example, one of the workers who had formerly been a miner describes the awful conditions in the mines, and the narrator takes the opportunity to discuss the connection between capitalism and imperialism: "In the eyes of the capitalists, the laborers on Honshu [the main island of Japan] had become arrogant and recalcitrant. Besides, the market was pretty thoroughly exploited and the entrepreneurs had reached an impasse. So they had begun to extend their rapacious claws into Hokkaido and Sakhalin. There, as in the colonies of Korea and Taiwan, they could exploit brutally with an absolutely free hand, knowing full well that they were above censure" (38). Capital reached out to Hokkaido as well as to the colonies of Taiwan and Korea because of its need for new markets, because complaining workers in the peripheries would be less likely to be heard in the metropole, and because the natural resources offered faster, more productive industry. Like Kataoka's representation of the way that the proletariat must sell his body to be mutilated in the service of capitalist growth and control, Takiji's narrator describes the disposability of labor's bodies: "To open a new mine, the capitalists used wave after wave of laborers (who were, after all, as expendable as guinea pigs) to determine the existence of gas accumulations or other risks. . . . The walls of the mines were literally strengthened, layer upon layer, by flesh torn from the workers' bodies like fillets of fish" (40).

What I am calling the "hair problem of the nation" emerges in a well-known scene that takes place in Russia. After a storm strands a Japanese fishing boat on shore in Russia, the workers on the factory ship begin to mourn for the loss of their fellow workers, aware that the superintendent is relieved only to have retrieved a lost boat from another ship to cover his losses. Once the fishermen return to the ship alive, they narrate their adventure in Russia. The narrative tells us they were both charmed by the kindness of the nice Russian family and neighbors who take them in, as well as estranged by their foreignness: "The men were first apprehensive about being among foreigners who spoke a language they did not understand and whose hair and eyes were of a different color." Gradually they come to see that "the Russians were, after all, human beings" (28). Then a Japanese-speaking Chinese man, using his imperfect Japanese and pantomiming, interprets the speech of a Russian man on how Communism views capi-

talism: the rich do not work and get richer while the poor who work are squeezed. The fishermen understand that this is “red propaganda” and that it is not, after all, something they have to fear. They are told that “Japan will be a good country if it has only workers—a proletarian country” (30).

The fishermen, overcome by enthusiasm, pledge to make Communism happen in Japan, and the Russians in turn grab their hands and embrace them: “Hugging the men, they pressed their hairy cheeks against the cheeks of the Japanese. The flustered Japanese stiffened and reared back, not knowing how to respond” (31). The narrative immediately segues back to the workers aboard the ship who have been listening to this story. The dialogue between Russians and Japanese is mediated by a Japanese-speaking Chinese man in Russia, someone whose linguistic skills invoke both the problem (Japanese imperialism in China) and the solution (internationalism).

Takiji dramatizes both the utopian homosocial possibilities—represented by the international dialogue vis-à-vis imperfect Japanese and pantomime and the hug—and the limits of this utopianism as the Japanese men are involuntarily repelled when confronted by a hairy cheek in the international embrace. When men actually confront other ethnic-national men, the insistence on internationalism works (inadvertently sometimes) to reify nationalism through the different ethnic-national representations of masculinity. The moment of ecstasy over international union (the hug) is cut short abruptly by the experience of difference—the hairy cheek—which signifies not merely fashion but racial, ethnic, and national masculinity all at the same time. And the narrative is oddly incapable of resolving the tension—on the contrary, the tension is left as though the union was a celebration of difference. But, why, then, did the narrative work to undo ethnic-national difference as the fishermen’s first impressions? Kataoka’s story titillates with its experimental narrative but it does not confront the issues involved in the possibility of an international union or the question of what is left when one tries to dismantle the state. Nor does it deal with what it feels like to overcome one’s own nationalism. In this instance of the international embrace, we see but a hint of the complexities of the national problem, as it embodies ethnic-national prejudices that do not necessarily go away because one seeks to embrace a newly imagined international community.



**Anti-imperialist Internationalism from within the Military:  
Kuroshima Denji's *Militarized Streets***

The short-lived united front precursor organization to NAPF managed to publish a collection of antiwar literature, *War against War* (*Sensō ni taisuru sensō*), in 1928. This volume represents a significant effort to present a united front against Japanese imperialism by Japanese writers although many of the stories are reprints of antiwar pieces from as far back as the Russo-Japan War (1904–5) and most do not explicitly address the contemporary context of Japanese imperialism.<sup>20</sup> One of the most significant and often cited stories from this collection is “The Sleigh” (“Sori,” originally published in 1927 in *Bungei sensen*) by Kuroshima Denji.<sup>21</sup> Set in Siberia shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution when Japanese troops were sent to Siberia, some say, to challenge the revolution, the short story is part of an opus of antiwar works by Kuroshima who was himself stationed for a year in Siberia in the early 1920s. “The Sleigh” underscores the similarities between the Japanese farmers and Russian farmers — such as when a Japanese character identifies with the suffering and resentment of the Russian farmers against the Japanese requisitioning of animals and sleighs, saying that unless you have raised livestock, you do not know what it is to lose them — even as it emphasizes the differences between the Japanese officers, represented in a caricatured way as piggish, and the Japanese soldiers, many of whom were former farmers.<sup>22</sup> Kuroshima’s other Siberian works, like “A Flock of Swirling Crows” and “Siberia in the Snow,” suggest the bleakness of the dispatched soldier’s psychology through the landscape of unrelenting snow.

Like his Siberian stories, Kuroshima Denji’s *Militarized Streets* (*Busō seru shigai*, 1930) deals with the deployment of the military overseas; however, in contrast to the short stories, *Militarized Streets* develops the conflict between the infantrymen and commanding officers in the context of Japanese, Chinese, and American capitalist interests in China.<sup>23</sup> Like “Linesmen” and *The Factory Ship*, *Militarized Streets* dramatizes the collusions between the nation-state and capital, but in contrast to *The Factory Ship*, the possibility of proletarian internationalism and rebellion against the imperialist-capitalist power bloc comes from within the military.<sup>24</sup> The violence committed in Jinan on May 3, 1928, has become one of the keystones in China’s insistence

that Japan has yet to come to terms with atrocities committed during the war.<sup>25</sup> Considering the historical role this incident has played in narratives of the violence committed by the Japanese military, it is quite extraordinary that *Militarized Streets* suggests that an international proletarian alliance might have emerged from within the Japanese military.

*Militarized Streets* is set in the Shandong Peninsula during the spring of 1928 when Japanese expeditionary forces were sent to “protect the citizens and property of Jinan” during Chiang Kai-shek’s (Jiang Jieshi’s) Second Northern Expedition. While the existence of Japanese settlers in the region no doubt helped to justify the dispatch of troops, the novel argues that it is not the people nor their homes that the Japanese military is sent to protect but rather Japanese capital and territory. A lengthy excerpt from an official-sounding treatise in *Militarized Streets* introduces the reader to the significance of the Shandong Peninsula, originally a concession to Japan after World War I, for Japan’s plans for expansion: in addition to being exceedingly rich in coal and iron-ore, Shandong also provided a necessary buffer to protect Japanese investments in Manchuria and Mongolia.<sup>26</sup> In an essay called “Antiwar Literature,” Kuroshima, citing and summarizing Lenin generously, argues that even in times of peace, the attributes of capitalist bourgeois governments such as science, industry, technology, and communications are simply preparations for the next war, the next opportunity to grab land, natural resources, new markets, and cheap labor for the furthering of bourgeois power.<sup>27</sup> Kuroshima argues that proletarian antiwar literature must clarify these issues as well as spell out the role that the proletariat is called to play: “Those driven before our very eyes into the arenas of a thievish quarrel over carving up the turf are human beings united by their poverty—even if their skin color be different—and the proletariat must unconditionally oppose their mutual wounding and killing.”<sup>28</sup>

*Militarized Streets* follows settler Inokawa Kantarō’s family and the Japanese-owned match factory where he is a manager-level employee. The family, scraping by with Kantarō’s salary and a small-scale illegal drug trade, consists of his formerly upright father now brought low by heroin addiction, his mother, his two younger sisters, and his two-year-old son abandoned by his wife who returned to Japan. An acquaintance of Kantarō’s father, the middle-aged ex-mounted bandit Nakatsu, visits the home frequently when

on leave from his position as a hired gun for a warlord. He soon develops a strong affection for Kantarō's younger sisters, who embody for him the "fragrance of the [Japanese] mainland (naichi)" in a way that is different from other Japanese girls who have been educated in China, and his desire sparks an ill-advised plan to abduct the oldest, nineteen-year-old Suzu.<sup>29</sup> However, the two sisters anticipate the arrival of his gang of thugs by mere minutes, and together with their young nephew, they escape aided by their Chinese neighbor, Ma Guanzhi. However, Nakatsu and his gang are not to be disappointed and they take out their frustrations by plundering the house. A Chinese guard walking by sees the violence, and, in the already charged environment, one thing leads to another: "This is the origins of the fierce, famous street fighting."<sup>30</sup>

It is significant that the "militarized streets" are not a direct result of escalating class tensions. In addition to the capriciousness of Nakatsu's abduction attempt, the novel suggests that Yamazaki has paid Nakatsu to start a disturbance in order to create victims to further justify Japanese military intervention in China, implying that the violence between nation-states is orchestrated by an idiosyncratic character.<sup>31</sup> By comparison, Yokomitsu Riichi's *Shanghai* (1928–32), a novel that describes the solipsistic affairs of a motley crew of Japanese entrepreneurs, bathhouse workers, dancehall girls, Chinese revolutionaries, and Russian prostitutes, to name a few, details the eruption of violence in the May 30, 1925, demonstrations in Shanghai against foreign capital.<sup>32</sup> Despite its professed distance from proletarian narratives, *Shanghai* nevertheless indicates that the ensuing conflict is a result of the growing discontent of Chinese workers and Chinese capitalists with Japanese capitalist exploitation. *Shanghai*, like *Militarized Streets*, is first published in this period, and explores the meaning of the Japanese nation in the midst of capital-driven diaspora while detailing the outbreak of violence in semi-colonial China. Unlike the other works discussed in this article, *Shanghai* does not advocate revolution nor propose the necessity of forming alliances based on class, but it does dramatize the trauma of capitalist-driven reductions of human beings to exchange values. *Shanghai* and *Militarized Streets* bear comparison for their striking similarities: they both focus on Japanese businessmen living and working in China; they both tell the story of Japanese capital—in particular, an exploitative Japanese-owned factory—that

suffers an uprising in the midst of larger political unrest; they both are set in the context of real, recent historical events associated with the Chinese nationalist and revolutionary movement; they both reflect at length on the relationship between Japanese imperialism and capital; they both obsess over national identity; and oddly, they both marginalize the role of labor and anti-Japanese sentiments in the ensuing protests. Both of these novels explore the significance of competing visions of imagined communities based on class and the nation. And both of these novels reflect tirelessly on the significance of capital and the nation for those living in the perilous peripheries of an expanding Japanese empire, sites which are nonetheless of crucial strategic importance to the sustenance of that expanding empire. What seems strange, then, is that *Militarized Streets* has set up the conflict (not unlike *Shanghai*) as one that will erupt out of the tensions of international capitalist exploitation, and yet the violence in the streets does not stem from this. And indeed, while Yuchi Asao might argue that Yokomitsu has dismissed the important anti-Japanese sentiments of the uprising by having the first shot fired by an Indian, *Shanghai* does nevertheless allow the strife to be a result of Chinese semicolonial frustrations.<sup>33</sup>

*Militarized Streets* highlights the national question as characters are shown to have tenuous and variable relationships to Japan: factory managers who double as drug-smugglers, spies, hired guns, low-level managerial types, female and male settlers, infantrymen, and officers. The workers and sailors aboard Takiji's crab-cannery boat will return to Japan at the end of the term, but the characters in *Militarized Streets*, as in *Shanghai*, do not have a Japan to which they can return.<sup>34</sup> The Japanese settlers represented in *Militarized Streets* are generally people who could not make it in Japan either because they were criminals looking for ever greater exploits or because they were impoverished and lacked the means for survival in their home village. In the first case, the narrator tells us that some of the settlers came to Shandong "longing for unfettered land," after finding Korea, Manchuria, and Beijing uninteresting.<sup>35</sup> In the second case, as in Kantarō's family, settlers came to Shandong only once they had no way to support themselves in their home village. For example, Kantarō's father, once well known as an upright man, had tried to combat an instance of embezzlement in the village only to find the entire village turn against him. With no recourse, he had emigrated

to Shandong with Kantarō and then later brought the rest of his family over. The first type includes the highest-ranking managers at the Japanese factories as they either support, or themselves dabble in, arms and drug dealing. The second type, like Kantarō's family, suffer the punishments for small-scale drug dealing (which the first class avoids) while they live tenuously and impoverished. These two types of settlers govern the logic of the narrative, forcing us to recognize different classes among settlers, even as most settlers are said to be implicated in illegal trade: "Most foreigners living in the vast, chaotic mainland of China engaged in hard-line [weapons dealing] and soft-line [drugs: opium, morphine, cocaine, heroin, codeine] trade. That includes the English and the French; the Germans and Spanish also did it" (137).

The upper-level managers at the factory presume that being Japanese ensures class privilege in colonial Shandong. With the difficulties at home, Kantarō is at odds with the implied privileges of being Japanese and finds instead that he is sympathetic with the Chinese workers. Working conditions in the factory are inhumane; deprived of adequate sunlight and nutrition, the workers endure fifteen-hour workdays with the extremely poisonous yellow phosphorous, a substance that has been banned throughout the world because of its toxicity (145). Some of the most appalling descriptions involve children, too small to reach the work area without a box, who have been sold outright to the factory as laborers and thus receive no wages. Kantarō is part of the management at the match factory, but unlike the other Japanese managers, he advocates for the Chinese workers to receive their back-wages that have been withheld to prevent them from running off: "Actually, Kantarō had more affection for the Chinese than for the shameless Japanese. And the factory workers appeared friendlier and more open with him than the others like Koyama and Morita" (133). Japanese management explains that they cannot pay the workers back-wages because they fear the Chinese workers will run away as soon as they get paid. At one point, Kantarō argues for the workers: "We should pay them. Their wages are like any commodity; once you've bought it you have to pay for it." The boss, Koyama, responds by challenging his nationality: "What are you, Chinese? Russian? Extremist?" (145). This exchange demonstrates the slippage between political affiliation and nationality. This exchange also echoes an earlier exchange, "What are you—Chinese? Or are you Japanese?" also

provoked by anxiety over whether cross-class allegiances might be stronger than national allegiances (132–33). Kantarō, a character on the border between the privileges of the management class and the poverty of his family, represents the bifurcation of Japan according to class. Near the end of the novel, Kantarō's father is arrested for drug peddling and taken into custody. In agony from sudden heroin withdrawal, he breaks his own toe off in order to be transferred to a hospital where his wife could smuggle in some heroin. His father's despair leads Kantarō to lament, "The privilege of being Japanese means nothing for the poor" (193).

Reminiscent of Takiji's *The Factory Ship*, the Japanese settlers in Shandong, worried about the approach of Chiang Kai-shek's army, at first imagine that the arrival of Japanese troops will restore their tranquility because, surely, the troops will defend the settlers and their belongings. As their lives and property are threatened, the Japanese settlers take comfort in reaffirming the community of the nation: "Foreigners felt strongly moved just by seeing the occasional face of a compatriot" (168). They feel themselves moved and comforted by the logic of nationalism:

With the bond of language and nationality connecting them, they sought to combine their strength and endure whatever hardships or assaults might befall them in these turbulent times. They were seduced by the sentimental, feudal feeling of ethnic unity [*dōhō*]. They uniformly wished: "If only those khaki-clad troops would arrive quickly!" They did not wonder simply for whom or for what the troops were coming. They thought, if only the troops would come, they would be rescued from their dire circumstances.<sup>36</sup>

The narrator dismisses the nationalist sentiments of the settlers based on a sense of ethnic unity as feudal, and clearly the logic of the novel undermines such a sensibility. What is not clear, however, is whether the narrative posits such a thing as a tangible ethnic unity or whether it is merely a sensibility that may be overcome.

As a matter of course, the settlers in Shandong at first feel deep gratitude upon seeing the arrival of the khaki-clad troops. One woman is beside herself with joy when she recognizes a soldier, Kakimoto, as a distant relative from her home village (168). This initial sentiment of the settlers dramatizes the tremendous allure of the nation that, like in *The Factory Ship*, will be

betrayed. Without much ado, the Japanese troops immediately disabuse the settlers of their romanticized visions of Japanese national unity as they set up bases in two factories (one of which is the match factory where Kantarō works) and a bank:

Many of the settlers stood nostalgically watching the soldiers march off in the opposite direction from their houses. The children cheerfully followed after them waving flags. But what about the adults who had sent off a petition after running about collecting personal stamps one by one to appeal for an expeditionary force? Were they not angered and upset at the deception they felt when the long-awaited soldiers, coming all this way in response to their appeal, left their small houses behind and set out to protect the bank and factories? (169)

Just as in *The Factory Ship*, the military has come to the aid not of the Japanese people but of Japanese capital.

Like *The Factory Ship*, the factory managers sense that the presence of the military gives them greater leverage (i.e., protection from the workers' resistance) to abuse the workers. The infantrymen are forbidden from visiting the factories, because there are women there, but also to avoid being contaminated by dangerous Communist ideas that might be lurking there: "Be careful—among the Chinese, there are those who harbor bad ideas. Naturally, it would not behoove those of us who embody the Japanese spirit [*yamato damashii*] to be turned commie by those fellows. Such a thing would be a disgrace for the Japanese army!" (170–71).

Nevertheless, Privates Kakimoto, Takatori, and others refuse to ignore the way that the Japanese factory managers are taking advantage of the presence of the Japanese military. In one moving scene, the manager Koyama is torturing a Chinese worker, Yu Liling, who has gone in on behalf of the others to request their withheld wages. After piercing Yu's fingernails with needles, Koyama swells with satisfaction at the strength he feels as Japanese soldiers approach him. The Chinese workers also sense that the Japanese soldiers are preventing them from rebellion. When Kakimoto insists that Koyama stop torturing the Chinese worker, Koyama ignores him and lashes out at Yu Liling with a wet leather whip only to find Takatori grab him and threaten him if he hurts the workers again (174–75).

Together, the soldiers discuss their dissatisfaction at being unable to protect relatives living in Jinan, and, with Takatori as their leader, come into consciousness of the way that they are the tools of the imperialist bourgeoisie. Moreover, most of the soldiers come from poor working and farming backgrounds, so they begin to sympathize more and more with the Chinese workers: “The soldiers and factory workers—were they not twins bearing the same fate?” (180). Takatori tops off a lecture with an emotional appeal: “‘What fools soldiers are,’ Takatori said with profound emotion. ‘Though we’re poor farmers and workers ourselves, just because we’re wearing uniforms with stand-up collars we’re putting down workers’ and farmers’ resistance. We’ve been sent into a colony and we’re risking our lives to make the bourgeoisie richer and richer. We’re so blind we don’t understand what on earth we’re doing! We’re actually strangling ourselves with our own hands!’”<sup>37</sup>

Takatori and four others come to the attention of a lieutenant, and one day the five infantrymen do not return. Sure enough, their bodies are found after the battles are over, and they are given a heroes’ burial. But Kakimoto reflects on Takatori’s enigmatic last words that they would never win without the assistance of the Chinese.<sup>38</sup> And the narrator explains that more than anything, the officers feared the “bolshevization [*sekka*] of the soldiers united with the workers” (208). The postscript tells us that in the wake of the battles, the soldiers did join together with the workers, but the capitalists retrenched and they all have more battles ahead. In *The Factory Ship*, the military is represented as a homogenous force, acting robotically at the behest of the crab-cannery’s superintendent to shut down the strike. In contrast, in *Militarized Streets*, the military is broken down into classes that correspond to oppressor (officers) and oppressed, and the infantrymen offer a vision of international solidarity.

One of the most remarkable scenes in *Militarized Streets* involves the massacre at the hospital in Jinan. Invoking the choppy style of modernists, the scene begins with the soldiers, including Takatori, hearing gunfire coming from the hospital and wondering about the outcome. Then they watch as an officer leads a charge into the hospital, a charge that, presumably, they join. The narrative mentions in rapid succession uniformed nurses, patients organized according to illness, muddy shoes up on tables, and surgical glass shat-



tering. Apparently incapable of narrating further, the narrator introduces a record of the event produced at the time that speaks vaguely in formal language of the unfortunate turn of events. After this extradiegetic narration, the narrative jumps back into the heads of the soldiers thirty minutes later as they reel from the “unpleasant memory seared into their brains” (203). In the wake of this tragedy, the troops are seen to feel in unison: “Their compatriots have been brutally murdered and their houses pillaged. . . . For whose sake have they done all this?” (204). What is extraordinary is that *Militarized Streets* asks the reader to forgive these soldiers (while blaming their officers) and to see them as an important link in international solidarity.

In *Militarized Streets*, there is a clear-cut rejection of a salvational alliance based on the national-ethnic-state and an open embrace of an alliance based on class. But, as in *The Factory Ship*, it is not clear what would become of the nation in this new alliance. The storylines and character descriptions in *Militarized Streets* seem obsessed with national-ethnic identity and, moreover, with instances of slippages. The narrative details characters’ national-ethnic attributes that are sometimes biological, sometimes cultural, and sometimes indeterminate, such as scent, leg length, style of blowing one’s nose, language use, clothing style, house style, profession, and facial features. As the novel is set in the periphery of an expanding empire, the characters are understandably troubled by the constant flux of identity in the midst of acculturation and the multiple, newly possible communities for identification.

Many of the Japanese main characters, such as Kantarō, Yamazaki, and Kantarō’s son Shōichi, speak fluent Chinese, and the Japanese soldiers are able to learn much about the terrible conditions in the factory by Chinese workers who speak Japanese, although they are said to not speak it well. As in *The Factory Ship*, transnational class alliances are enabled by the linguistic skills promoted by imperialist capitalist expansion. In addition to linguistic border-crossers, many of the characters cross-dress ethnically. In one instance, for example, the manager Koyama goes unrecognized and the police mistake him for a Chinese man because he is wearing Chinese clothing.

Indeed, ethnic-national border crossings form the major plot points of the novel, and it is in these instances that we see clearly how the anxiety of ethnic-national border-crossing is used to novelistic effect. Two of the char-

acters—information-gatherer Yamazaki and two-year-old Shōichi—are national-ethnic border-crossers who embody the tragedies and utopian possibilities of transnational-ethnic crossing. In the first case, Yamazaki is a self-interested spy who collects information on the Southern Army’s advances, warlord armies and munitions acquisitions, American support for the Southern Army, and may ultimately have been responsible for paying Nakatsu to create a pretext for the Japanese army to fight against Chiang Kai-shek’s army. Yamazaki thinks he is “his own nation” (*jikokujin*) (138), and prides himself on being able to pass as Chinese.<sup>39</sup> However, the narrator hints that Yamazaki’s hubris has overstepped ethnic-national bounds: “Language, clothes, interests are no different from the Chinese. He believed he could go wherever without the risk of being given away” (162). Elsewhere, the narrator points out that no matter how Yamazaki may master the cultural attributes of being Chinese, he cannot acquire biological traits:

[Yamazaki] thought himself no different than a Chinese in terms of the way that he walked, talked or looked. He blew his nose with his fingers and was content to smear the snot stuck to his fingers. He wore a black rimless hat with a button on top; both his clothes and shoes were just like the Chinese. He imitated the Chinese, growing his nails long. There was just one thing missing of which he was unaware: his sharp eyes with the boundaries between the whites and pupils were drawn too clearly. Because of this, he could not fool anyone professionally or anthropologically. He differed from the cloudy, dull Chinese. (134)

Yamazaki dies near the end of the novel because he is so caught up in his mission to share inflammatory and possibly inflated information about atrocities against the Japanese. Upon approaching the Japanese camp, Yamazaki fails to hear the sentry’s hails and, moreover, fails to recognize that he appears to be Chinese. Yamazaki earns his death in the logic of the novel by having betrayed his Chinese informant, Chen, another border-crosser, by shooting him instead of paying him. But his act of violence to clear his debt is typical of this extreme self-interest and privileging of exchange value over human lives. The kind of border-crossing that he represents is the kind enabled and cultivated by imperialist capitalist ideology that increasingly reduces all things and all people to exchange values.

In the second case, the tragedies of the city's warfare are thrown into stark relief when, after the sisters Suzu and Shun attempt to escape, they discover that in their effort to flee from Nakatsu and the ensuing violence, they have lost little Shōichi. Huddled in a shelter for the Japanese, they mourn their loss. However, the postscript describes Kantarō walking through his now demolished former neighborhood when a little boy dressed and coifed like a Chinese boy appears and calls out, as he did throughout the novel, in Chinese to him. The boy turns out to be cross-dressed Shōichi who was rescued and being raised by the neighbor, Ma Guanzhi. Is this the utopian possibility of transnational-ethnic crossing or simply a novelistic flight of fancy? Or, does Shōichi embody the promise of a new kind of border-crosser, one that cannot be contained within the boundaries of the novel proper?

It is significant that, in a novel advocating international class-based revolutionary union, not all internationalism is utopian. The instances of transnational-ethnic mixing are potentially tragic or utopian. Moreover, I think it is important that neither the happy resolution of the acculturated Shōichi nor the union between soldiers and Chinese workers appears in the novel proper, but in the postscript. Like *The Factory Ship*, *Militarized Streets* presents the need for anti-imperialist internationalist proletarian organization, but what will it look like? It is not clear how the nation would be discarded, or what international union would look like or feel like. *Militarized Streets* and *The Factory Ship* both insist upon the need for an anti-imperialist union of the international proletariat, but both hint that the nation still remains to be dealt with.

Two works by writer Maedakō Hiroichirō—*China (Shina)*, 1929) and the drama *Chiang Kai-shek* (published in *Bungei sensen*, 1929)—merit further attention as full-length works published in this period that deal with Japanese imperialist-capitalist expansion into Asia and the Chinese revolutionary movement.<sup>40</sup> Anti-imperialist and internationalist journalism flourished in Japan in the period between the publication of the 1927 theses (even by those writers who refused the leadership of the Comintern) and the Manchurian Incident (September 18, 1931), the point at which the previously antiwar dailies switched sides and began to support the war effort on the Chinese mainland, and continued on for a couple more years in proletarian journals and in several general circulation journals.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, since Japanese

literary historians trace the origins of proletarian literature in Japan to the establishment of *Tanemaķu hito* (*The Sowers*) in 1921 by Komaki Ōmi after his engagement with Henri Barbusse's internationalist antiwar *Clarté* movement in France, it could be argued that antiwar internationalism is one of the founding principles of proletarian literature in Japan.

Writers on the right and left in this period agreed that capitalist expansion was exploiting the masses of workers and farmers. How they differed, then, was in the assessment of what was to be done about it. Those on the right embraced the nation as its prerogative while those on the left renounced nationalism as the ideology of the imperialist bourgeoisie. The capitalist-imperialist diaspora of Japanese settlers and entrepreneurs on the Asian mainland caused writers on the right and left to reexamine imagined communities. While *Shanghai* may, as Yuchi Asao has argued, be narrated from the perspective of the imperialist in contrast to the anti-imperialist stance of *Militarized Streets*, it is nevertheless equally conscious of the exploitation of the world's working classes by global capital, even if it does not advocate revolutionary consciousness.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, what all of these works manifest is a keen anxiety that capital is reducing everything and everyone to exchange value, and they are intent upon exploring the significance of imagined communities—the nation and the proletariat—as collectives that promise safe harbor from the globalizing reductions of capitalism.

## Notes

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

- 1 For work on Japanese concepts of ethnicity and race in the 1920s and 1930s, see work by Kevin Doak, including "Culture, Ethnicity and the State in Early Twentieth-Century Japan," in *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900–1930*, ed. Sharon Minichiello (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 181–205; and "Liberal Nationalism in Imperial Japan: The Dilemma of Nationalism and Internationalism," in *Nationalism and Internationalism in Imperial Japan*, ed. Dick Stegewerns (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 17–41. See also Julia Adeney Thomas, "Naturalizing Nationhood: Ideology and Practice in Early Twentieth-Century Japan" (114–32) and Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Becoming Japanese: Imperial Expansion and Identity Crises in the Early Twentieth Century" (157–80), both in Minichiello, *Japan's Competing Modernities*.
- 2 For a discussion of the implications of Engels's assertion that the state would "wither away,"

- see *Vladimir Lenin*, “The State and Revolution,” in *Essential Works of Lenin: “What Is to Be Done?” and Other Writings*, ed. Henry M. Christman (1966; New York: Dover, 1987), 280–85, 348–49.
- 3 For a discussion of Japanese Marxism and nationalism to which this article is much indebted, see Germaine Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986). On the topic of political renunciation and nationalist ideology, see p. 184. For work on how the ethnic nation was important to postwar Japanese Marxism, see Curtis Anderson Gayle, *Marxist History and Postwar Japanese Nationalism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). Gayle traces the “idea of ethnic nationalism, or *minzokushugi*, as a progressive space from which to critique the state and its policies” (21).
  - 4 George M. Beckmann and Okubo Genji, *The Japanese Communist Party, 1922–1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 295. Appendix D contains complete translations of the theses, which were originally published in Japanese in *Shakai shisō* (*Social Thought*, February 1928) and *Marukusu-shugi* (*Marxism*, March 1928).
  - 5 Barbara Foley has argued that the influence of the United States Communist Party on individual writers—both members and nonmembers—has been overstated leading to the ridiculous historical narrative that U.S. proletarian writers were mere automatons following Party directives. Similarly, my point is not that the Communist Party’s directives (or NAPF’s directives for that matter) were definitive, but that they constituted a horizon of awareness for writers to engage, ignore, or disagree with. Barbara Foley, *Radical Representation: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929–1941* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).
  - 6 This viewpoint was represented most notably by *Bungei sensen* and the Rōnōha publications.
  - 7 Richard H. Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), 67.
  - 8 “The Communist Manifesto,” in *The Portable Karl Marx*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 224.
  - 9 Germaine Hoston, *The State, Identity, and the National Question in China and Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5. My discussion of the Comintern and Japan is much indebted to this work and *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Japan*. See also Sandra Wilson, “The Comintern and the Japanese Communist Party,” in *International Communism and the Communist International, 1919–1943*, ed. Tim Rees and Andrew Thorpe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 285–307.
  - 10 Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis*, 68.
  - 11 Sano Manabu and Nabeyama Sadachika, “Kyōdō hikoku dōshi ni tsuguru sho” (“Letter to Our Fellow Defendants”), *Kaizō*, July 1933.
  - 12 Tokunaga Sunao, “Kaisetsu” (“Essay”), in *Taiyō no nai machi* (*The Sunless Street*) (1929; Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), 285–86.

- 13 Kobayashi Takiji, “For the Sake of the Citizens” (“Shimin no tame ni”), in *The Cannery Boat and Other Japanese Short Stories*, trans. anonymous (New York: International Publishers, 1933), 171–91.
- 14 Kataoka Teppei, “Linesmen” (“Senro Kōfu”), in *The Cannery Boat*, 171–91.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 173.
- 16 *The Factory Ship* was published in the May and June 1929 editions of *Senki* (*Battle Flag*), and despite the use of *fuseji* (Xs in place of objectionable words or phrases), the June issue was banned. Despite the fact that it was banned, both the May and June journals managed to be circulated in editions of twelve thousand and probably reached many more readers. See “Kaidai” (“Bibliographical essay”), in *Kobayashi Takiji zenshū* (*The Complete Works of Kobayashi Takiji*), vol. 4 (Tokyo: Shin Nihon Shuppansha, 1968), 212. The *Senki* publishers tried to publish the novel again three times that year. All three of these editions were banned despite the different strategies employed, but it has been speculated that thirty-five thousand of these differently bowdlerized copies managed to make it into circulation (*ibid.*, 212). The complete novel was not published until 1949 (*ibid.*, 221–22). A partial English-language version, based on the May edition of *Senki*, appeared in 1933 in *The Cannery Boat*, and a full translation appeared in 1973: Kobayashi Takiji, “*The Factory Ship*” and “*The Absentee Landlord*,” trans. Frank Motofuji (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973). Quotations from *The Factory Ship* used in this essay are from the Motofuji translation. Judging from the many syllabi for Japanese literature courses being offered at universities in the United States that I perused on the Internet, it appears that *The Factory Ship* is an oft-taught work, despite the fact that it is out of print. One online used-book store I consulted is selling used copies beginning at \$100 and another has copies beginning at \$80.
- 17 Takiji, “*Factory Ship*,” 9–10.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 10–11. Interestingly, the only thing censored in this passage in the May 1929 version is the word “testicles” (*kintama*), as in the phrase the translator rendered: “you sons of Japan with balls swinging from your crotch.” For a discussion of reading censorship in Japanese proletarian literature, see Heather Bowen-Struyk, “Revolutionizing the Japanese Family: Miyamoto Yuriko’s ‘The Family of Koiwai,’” *positions: east asia cultures critique* 12 (2004): 479–507.
- 19 Takiji, “*Factory Ship*,” 45.
- 20 *Sensō ni taisuru sensō* (*War against War*), ed. Kurahara Korehito (Tokyo: Nanshō Shoin, 1928; repr., Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1984).
- 21 “The Sleigh” (“Sori”) is available in Kuroshima Denji, *A Flock of Swirling Crows and Other Proletarian Writings*, trans. Zeljko Cipris (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005). Citations here are my translations from Hayama Yoshiki, *Kuroshima Denji, Hirabayashi Taijō shū* (*Collected Works of Hayama Yoshiki, Kuroshima Denji, and Hirabayashi Taijō*), vol. 56 of *Gendai Nihon bungaku taijō* (*Collection of Contemporary Japanese Literature*) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967).

- 22 Kuroshima, "The Sleigh," 216.
- 23 Kuroshima Denji's *Busō seru shigai* (*Militarized Streets*) was first published in November 1930 by Nihon hyōronsha, but despite the precautions taken in the form of deleted words and passages, it was immediately banned (*hatsubai kinshi*). The novel was not published again until 1953, after the end of the U.S. Occupation, and was published this time in its entirety. In the introductory essay included in the 1953 paperback, Tsuboi Shigeji is harshly critical of the U.S. Occupation, which refused to allow the book to be published, accusing them of the same capitalist-imperialist motives that had prompted the Japanese government to ban the book in 1930. G. T. Shea, in his momentous study of proletarian literature in Japan, suggests that the prohibition during the Occupation "can only be viewed now as an unfortunate mistake of misdirected authority." See G. T. Shea, *Leftwing Literature in Japan: A Brief History of the Proletarian Literary Movement* (Tokyo: Hōsei University Press, 1964), 184n2. We should note, however, that both Japan and the United States are explicitly implicated in capitalist-imperialist expansion in the novel, as the narrator explains that the real war is not between Japan and China, but between Japan and the United States because "if Japan didn't take Manchuria, Mongolia, and the Shandong region, then the United States would" (*Busō seru shigai*, in Hayama Yoshiki, *Kuroshima Denji, Hirabayashi Taijō shū*, 164). An English translation is available in Kuroshima, *A Flock of Swirling Crows*. I would like to thank Zeljko Cipris, the translator of that volume, for sharing his translation with me. For this article, quotations from *Militarized Streets* are my own translations, from Hayama Yoshiki, *Kuroshima Denji, Hirabayashi Taijō shū*, unless otherwise noted.
- 24 Unlike Takiji's or Kataoka's works, this was not published under the auspices of NAPF, although postwar scholarship has reclaimed Kuroshima's writing from this time and earlier as having already been in line with NAPF policy. Yuchi Asao, *Puroretaria bungaku undō: sono risō to genjitsu* (*The Proletarian Literary Movement: Ideal and Real*) (Tokyo: Banseisha, 1991), 299.
- 25 Along with the May Thirtieth (1925) Incident and the Manchurian Incident (September 18, 1931), the Jinan Incident (May 3, 1928; also called a "massacre") is often cited on Web sites as one of the key points in the development of the second Sino-Japanese War. English-language Web sites originating in China or Taiwan seem to be aimed at educating the world and thereby forcing international pressure to cause Japan to come to terms with these atrocities. See, for example, "The Birth of a New China: As Introduced by the Yearbook of the Republic of China," Taiwan.com.au, [www.taiwan.com.au/Polieco/History/report03.html](http://www.taiwan.com.au/Polieco/History/report03.html) (accessed May 2, 2004); Ah Xiang, "Civil Wars and Resistance War," *Political, Social, Cultural, Historical Analysis of China*, [www.uglychinese.org/campaign.htm#2ndcampaign](http://www.uglychinese.org/campaign.htm#2ndcampaign) (accessed May 2, 2004); and Chen Shin, "Japan Must Acknowledge Injustice," trans. Perry Svensson, *Taipei Times*, September 7, 2001, [www.taipetimes.com/News/edit/archives/2001/09/07/101936](http://www.taipetimes.com/News/edit/archives/2001/09/07/101936). Sites in Japanese are mixed: some share this desire to publicize war crimes and atone for them while others focus on descriptions of atrocities committed against

- Japanese settlers with a strong emphasis on women. For the latter, see “Sainan jiken” (“The Jinan Incident”), [sinobu10.hp.infoseek.co.jp/sainannjikenn1.html](http://sinobu10.hp.infoseek.co.jp/sainannjikenn1.html) (accessed May 2, 2004).
- 26 Kuroshima, *Busō seru shigai*, 158–59.
- 27 Kuroshima Denji, “Antiwar Literature” (“Hansen bungakuron”), vol. 1 of *Puroretaria geijutsu kyōtei* (Tokyo: Sekaisha, 1929). A translation by Zeljko Cipris appears in Heather Bowen-Struyk and Norma Field, eds., “Literature for Revolution: An Anthology of Japanese Proletarian Writings,” (unpublished manuscript, n.d.).
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Kuroshima, *Busō seru shigai*, 156. It is important to note that these young women signify Japan in a particularly satisfying, undiluted, and eroticized way. As the novel focuses primarily on men in national-colonial borderlands, it throws the relationships between nationalities and masculinities into relief. In this case, the brutish Nakatsu’s desire for these young women seems to stem from his desire to recapture what he can never have again: his youth and Japan.
- 30 Ibid., 197.
- 31 Ibid., 190–91, 196.
- 32 The works that make up Yokomitsu Riichi’s *Shanghai* were originally published serially in *Kaizō* November 1928 through June 1932, then recomposed and published as a novel in 1932. *Shanghai* is available in paperback in Japanese by mass market publisher Kōdansha (1991), as well as being available in English translation: Yokomitsu Riichi, *Shanghai: A Novel by Yokomitsu Riichi*, trans. Dennis Washburn (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001). My reading is based on these versions as well as the installments published in *Kaizō*.
- 33 Yuchi, *Puroretaria bungaku undō*, 325.
- 34 *Shanghai* repeats this sense of dislocation felt by Japanese in the colonies: “But considering everything, [Sanki’s] problems would be worse if he went back to Japan. This was true for just about anyone of any nationality who had gathered in this colony [Shanghai] in China. If they went back to their homeland they would have absolutely no way to make a living.” Yokomitsu, *Shanghai*, 44.
- 35 Kuroshima, *Busō seru shigai*, 143.
- 36 The choice to render *dōhō* as ethnic unity was influenced by consulting with Zeljko Cipris’s translation.
- 37 This quotation comes from Zeljko Cipris’s translation. See also Kuroshima, *Busō seru shigai*, 180–81.
- 38 Kuroshima, *Busō seru shigai*, 208.
- 39 At one point, he starts yelling at one of the Japanese managers in fluent Chinese: “‘How am I different from the Chinese?’ However, it appeared to be a joke to amuse Uchikawa.” Ibid., 135.



- 40 Maedakō Hiroichirō, *China (Shina, 1929)* and *Chiang Kai-shek* (serialized in *Bungei sensen*, 1929).
- 41 Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 81.
- 42 Yuchi, *Puroretaria bungaku undō*, 326.