Literary Reflection and Journey of Self-Redemption:

Gender, Ethnicity, and Identity in Shimada Masahiko's *Mugen Kanon* Trilogy

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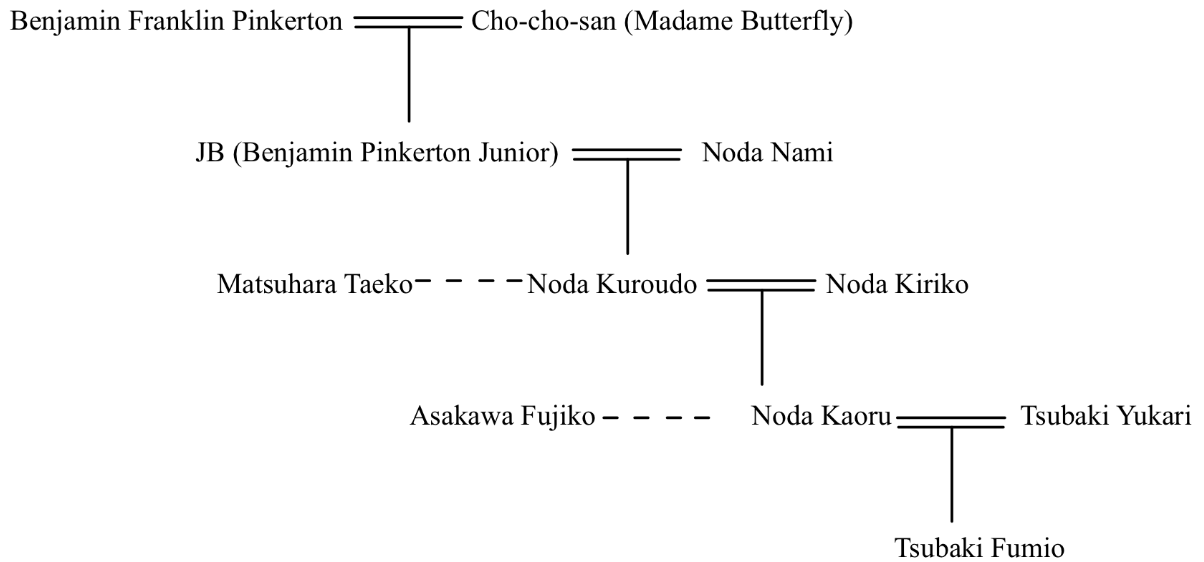
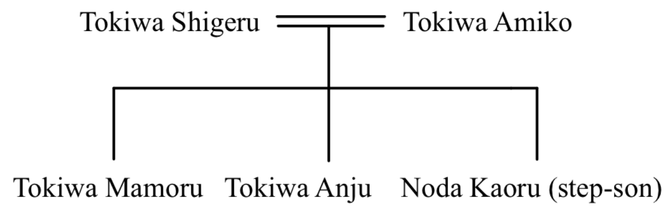
Family Genealogy in *Mugen Kanon*

The Genealogy of Noda Kaoru



The Genealogy of the Family Tokiwa



Introduction

This disseration is a literary and cultural analysis of *Mugen Kanon* trilogy [The Infinite Canon] (2000-2003) by contemporary Japanese writer Shimada Masahiko. *Mugen Kanon* is a family saga unfolded through three volumes— *Suisei no Jūnin* [Inhabitants of the Comet] (2000), *Utsukushī Tamashī* [Beautiful Soul] (2003), and *Etorofu no Koi* [Love in Iturup] (2003). This trilogy depicts the recurring love tragedies of a multiethnic family across four generations. Shimada portrays the family members' oscillation between Japan and the United States, and their inescapable fate of losing their beloved. The personal struggles are intertwined with the broader societal transformations in modern Japan. In the trilogy, Shimada rearticulates important historical events and societal shifts in Japan across the last century, such as World War II, the post-war occupation period, and the bubble period. In this sense, *Mugen Kanon* holds substantial academic value for both literary and cultural studies.

In this study, I focus on Shimada's reflections on Japan's socio-political challenges during the late twentieth-century, as well as his exploration of individual agency in face of these crises. Firstly, I interpret Shimada's literary imagination in *Mugen Kanon* as a self-reflexive response to the crisis and transformations that Japan faced in the 1990s, an era when the trilogy was conceived and written. This turbulent period, marked by economic and

socio-political instability after the bursting of the bubble economy and the collapse of the Cold War order. The upheavals of the era form the critical backdrop against which the trilogy unfolds. Secondly, I analyze the ways in which Shimada portrays a journey towards self-redemption of protagonist Noda Kaoru. I argue that Shimada offers a utopian alternative as a means for individuals to find solace in face of overwhelming external forces. In this project, I unveil how the trilogy serves as a critical literary response to the multifaceted crises faced by both Japan as a nation and its citizens on an individual level in the closing decades of the twentieth century.

Methodologically, I employ both intertextual and contextual approaches to analyze three perspectives that Shimada addresses within the trilogy: gender, ethnicity, and identity. Notably, I argue that Shimada explores these themes through two pivotal metaphors: Madame Butterfly and the Emperor of Japan. Therefore, an intertextual approach will be employed to contrast Shimada's engagements with their uses in literary works by other writers. I will also compare the trilogy with Shimada's earlier works from the 1980s to shed light on his evolving writing strategies. Additionally, a contextual approach will be adopted to investigate the interplay between the 1990s' socio-political challenges and Shimada's writing. Therefore, the literary texts will be situated within a broader cultural and historical framework in Japan in the late twentieth century.[1] I will also draw upon nonfiction resources

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[1] In Margaret Hillenbrand's 2007 contribution, *Literature, Modernity, and the Practice of Resistance: Japanese and Taiwanese Fiction, 1960-1990*, Hillenbrand argues that the dynamic and flexible domains of

and historical documents. Through intertextual and contextual analysis, I unravel the ways in which *Mugen Kanon* represents as a literary and cultural commentary on Japan's complex intertwining of gender, ethnicity, and individual identity in the face of historical and societal shifts.

In the following, I will first clarify my rationale for selecting the specific time frame of the late twentieth century, three thematic perspectives, and two metaphoric tropes for study, and present the core research questions. Next, I will illustrate the methodologies that I will employ in this project in a more in-depth manner. Finally, I will outline the structure of the dissertation. A more extensive context, including background details about Shimada and the trilogy, along with a comprehensive review of prior scholarly contributions and critiques, will be provided in the first main chapter of this dissertation.

1. Research Scope and Core Questions

In this section, I will articulate my choices regarding time frame, thematic focuses, and metaphoric tropes. Firstly, in terms of time frame, it is important to analyze and evaluate this trilogy within the historical context of the late twentieth century. *Mugen Kanon* was published in the early 2000s, with its conceptualization at the end of the century. The decades from the 1980s through the 2000s witnessed significant socio-economic shifts in Japan. The

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sociology, cultural studies, and film studies offer fresh and liberating perspectives on "literary spaces in East Asia" (15).

nation transitioned from a period of remarkable prosperity to a more subdued global presence following the burst of the economic bubble. Additionally, with the end of the Cold War, the US-led anti-Communist containment was rendered less necessary, prompting Japan to reposition itself in a post-Cold War global order. These multifaceted challenges mark what can be considered a "second defeat" for Japan in the postwar era. Concurrently, there was a transformation in the intellectual and political discourses. The discussions and controversies about Japan's history of war, defeat, and occupation; the enduring historical legacy, and the nation's relationship with the United States, play crucial roles in shaping the discourses of this period. These debates were not only central to political and scholarly circles but also deeply influenced the cultural and literary productions, including works like *Mugen Kanon*. Understanding the socio-political events and the prevailing discourses of the late twentieth century is essential for grasping the nuances of Shimada's work and the thematic choices he made in the trilogy. Particular attention will be placed to Shimada's portrayal of Japan's modern history in the trilogy. In the 1990s when Shimada was crafting this trilogy, Japan saw a resurgence of neo-nationalism and historical revisionism. Against this backdrop, I examine Shimada's reimagined narrative of Japan during World War II and the occupation period as a literary counteraction against the neo-nationalist historical discourse prevalent at that time.

Furthermore, an investigation of the historical shift from the 1980s to the 2000s allows

for a comparative analysis between the trilogy and Shimada's earlier works. Starting his writing career in 1983, Shimada quickly gained prominence as a leading postmodernist writer in Japan during the 1980s. In this project, I inquire whether the trilogy can still be contextualized within the frame of postmodernist literature. A key aspect of this inquiry is how Shimada's writing strategies and perspectives on themes such as individual identity have evolved or transformed from his earlier works in the 1980s to the later *Mugen Kanon*. By focusing on this specific time frame, I aim to evaluate the trilogy within Shimada's broader literary journey, offering insights into his artistic development in terms of both thematic focus and stylistic approach.

Secondly, the thematic dimensions of *Mugen Kanon* will be analyzed through three perspectives: gender, ethnicity, and identity. I posit that these three topics form the central concerns that Shimada addresses within the trilogy. Notably, these recurrent themes can be found in the literary works by writers such as John Luther-Long, Kojima Nobuo, Mishima Yukio, allowing for a rich foundation for a comparative analysis. Therefore, in this project, I will critically examine *Mugen Kanon* by juxtaposing it with the works of these aforementioned authors to highlight thematic continuities and divergences. In chapter one, a more detailed exploration of Shimada's engagement with these themes will be presented. By providing a review on his earlier works, I underscore the pivotal role that gender, ethnicity, and identity play in shaping the thematic fabric of Shimada's literary oeuvre.

Lastly, I will focus on two metaphoric tropes employed by Shimada in the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy: Madame Butterfly and the Emperor of Japan (*ten'nō*). In *Suisei no Jūnin*, the first volume of the trilogy, Shimada rewrites the Madame Butterfly narrative in the context of postwar Japan; while in *Utsukushī Tamashī*, the second volume, he depicts a forbidden love entwined with Japan's imperial family. I argue that these two tropes both play significant roles in addressing Shimada's critical concerns about gender, ethnicity, and identity in the context of postwar Japan. The Madame Butterfly metaphor represents the feminized Japanese subject, embodying both gender and ethnic dimensions. While the Japanese Emperor symbolizes the suppressed subjectivity of postwar Japan, suggesting the ambiguity and ambivalence of Japanese national identity. These two metaphors both serve as literary embodiments of Japan's masochistic subservience to a dominant foreign Other in the postwar era. By closely analyzing these two metaphors, I aim to uncover the intricate power dynamics at play. It is noteworthy that in most cases, Shimada predominantly focuses on the bilateral US-Japan relations when engaging with these two metaphors. I attribute this binary vision to the specific historical context of Japan in the 1990s. However, it is crucial to recognize that Shimada does not confine his narrative to this binary perspective. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I highlight how Shimada breaks from this pattern in the final volume *Etorofu no Koi*, introducing additional perspectives and voices from Russia and the Ainu to his narrative. By analyzing the metaphoric tropes of Madame Butterfly and the

Emperor of Japan, I will reveal his predominant focus on US-Japan relations, while underscoring his departure from the binary vision to include diverse perspectives in his narrative.

Given the specific timeframe, thematic focuses, and metaphorical symbols outlined in this study, the central research inquiries of this dissertation are delineated as below. Firstly, why does Shimada employ Madame Butterfly and the Japanese emperor in *Mugen Kanon*, a trilogy published at the turn of the 21st century? This question necessitates a critical assessment of Shimada's utilization of these metaphors and his perspective on individual identity. Second, how to evaluate *Mugen Kanon* within the broader socio-cultural, historical, and political context of Japan in the late twentieth century. This inquiry aims to unveil Shimada's response to the prevailing crises at the time. Finally, in what ways does the trilogy contrast with Shimada's earlier works. This comparison is crucial for discerning the transitions in Shimada's thematic focus, narrative strategies, and his perceptions of Japan's postwar era and individual identity. Through these three central questions, I aim to situate Shimada's literary stance within the wider discourses prevalent in Japan during the late twentieth century, while also tracing his developmental trajectory as a writer.

This dissertation is the first comprehensive academic analysis of all three volumes of Shimada Masahiko's *Mugen Kanon*. Despite Shimada being a figure of considerable renown and influence within the realm of contemporary Japanese literature, the scholarly

examination of his body of work remains notably limited. Predominantly, existing research concentrates on his literary outputs from the 1980s, with the majority of these studies available solely in Japanese. Notably, no major scholarly monograph dedicated to Shimada's works has yet appeared in English academia. Therefore, in this study, I aim to fill this void, enriching the pool of English-language research on Shimada, highlighting the necessity for his literary endeavors to be recognized on an international scale. Through this project, I strive to contribute to the global appreciation and understanding of Shimada's works.

2. Methodologies

Raymond Williams highlights that literary texts should not be viewed as isolated aesthetic objects, but rather as integral components of broader social-cultural contexts (94). Building upon Williams' emphasis on the interconnectedness of literature and larger cultural formations, I adopt a contextual approach that situates *Mugen Kanon* within the historical context of Japan in which it was conceived and written. Nonfiction materials, including Shimada's essays, dialogues, and interviews will be drawn upon in my analysis. In these resources, Shimada shares his personal viewpoints, sentimental experiences and artistic intentions. Particular attention will be placed on the connections between Shimada's personal encounters in the 1990s and the artistic choices he made in the trilogy. Additionally,

the documents of relevant historical events, political speeches, news and reports are considered as crucial materials for a comprehensive contextual analysis. In my view, these historical materials reveal the broader social-political context that shaped Shimada's literary imagination. Through the approach of utilizing nonfiction sources, I aim to interpret the aesthetic nuances in the literary texts, and examine the external factors and social-political conditions that might have influenced Shimada's creative process.

Secondly, the theoretical frameworks of modernism, postmodernism, postcolonial studies, gender studies, and psychoanalytic criticism will be employed in my literary and cultural analysis. For instance, concepts such as Sigmund Freud's idea of primary narcissism, Edward Said's orientalism, Homi Bhabha's notion of in-betweenness, Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity, Christina Klein's notion of sentimental education are drawn upon in this dissertation. Nonetheless, I approach these theories with caution to prevent hastiness and indiscriminate applications of these theories. While theories provide us with crucial insights for literary and cultural analysis, it is essential to approach them with a careful discernment, ensuring that we do not impose preconceived notions on the text or selectively choose excerpts to validate specific theories. In particular, I resist the temptation to prematurely label Shimada Masahiko as a postmodern author or to categorize the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy solely as an expression of a leftist ideology. Recognizing the intricate layers within Shimada's writings, I acknowledge the potential oversimplification that could arise

from such classifications. To foster a comprehensive analysis, I prioritize a thorough examination of the original texts, allowing the literary texts to guide my interpretations. Theoretical frameworks are employed only when they can effectively enhance, rather than overshadow, my interpretation of the nuanced aspects of Shimada's writing.

Thirdly, I approach this project with a careful consideration to avoid Western-centric perspectives. Shimada's *Mugen Kanon* is rich in intertextuality, especially evident in his re-contextualization of the Madame Butterfly narrative, which offers a reflective response to this Western canon. Through the process of reimagining and reinterpreting this narrative, Shimada engages in a critical dialogue with Western cultural formations, intellectual ideas, and literary resources. Nonetheless, I maintain a critical stance against simplifying Shimada's trilogy to merely a reaction or counteract to Euro-American formations. Although I draws upon seminal postcolonial ideas, I find it important to keep vigilant against the prevailing assumptions within English-language academies that position European literature as a normative benchmark, thereby creating a binary dynamic for Japanese literature to either align with or "writes back" (cf. Mwangi 5).[2] Therefore, I actively engage with literary works, theories, criticisms, and discourses from Japanese intellectuals in my project, ensuring they

[2] The postcolonial notion of "write back" refers to the postcolonial practice of rewriting European canonical texts to establish a counter-discourse to subvert the dominant Western discourses. Helen Tiffin developed this notion in her 1987 article, "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse," and it was expanded upon in the book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in 1989. These works examine how postcolonial texts engage in the practice of "writing back" as a means of subverting and interrogating the prevailing Western discursive field.

are given the attention they deserve and are not overshadowed by Western viewpoints.[3]

In this project, I emphasize that Shimada's trilogy is not solely a rewriting to Western literary and cultural formations; it also engages with the legacy of Japanese postwar literature. Consequently, it is crucial to conduct an intertextual examination of relevant Japanese literary texts, criticism, and scholarly discourse. The intertextuality within *Mugen Kanon* trilogy goes beyond its connection to the Madame Butterfly narrative; it extends to interactions with Shimada's own earlier works, as well as notable Japanese literary works such as Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji monogarati* [The Tale of Genji] and Mishima Yukio's *Haru no Yuki* [Spring Snow].[4] This intricate intertextual web not only demonstrates Shimada's profound engagement with the literary tradition in Japan but also underscores the necessity of consulting original resources written in Japanese. This approach is considered crucial when interpreting the work of a contemporary Japanese writer who evidently draws from the lineage of Japanese postwar literature.

Additionally, it is important to closely investigate the interaction between Shimada's contemporary literary vision and the legacy of Japanese postwar literature. This is particularly crucial for analyzing the issues such as nuanced and complex Japanese

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[3] This approach does not seek to underscore the dichotomy between "Western" and "Japanese" literature by oversimplifying them into rigid, inherent traits. Instead, it centers on exploring a diverse array of intertextual interactions, ensuring a comprehensive analysis that transcends the confines of singular Western or Japanese viewpoints. I will remain vigilant about the potential pitfalls of essentialism, exercising careful consideration to avoid such reductionist interpretations.

[4] For detailed analysis, see chapter four.

sentiments about Japan's independence and obedience to the United States, the Japanese perception of war trauma, and the portrayal of Japanese subjectivity in relation to the imperial system. These topics addressed by Shimada bear resemblance to the concerns of renowned postwar Japanese writers like Kojima Nobuo, Mishima Yukio, Ōe Kenzaburō. Thus, a comparative analysis between Shimada's perspectives and those of these esteemed postwar Japanese writers holds significant academic value.

3. Structure of Dissertation

In this section, I outline the structure of this dissertation, which comprises five chapters. The first chapter serves as an extended introductory chapter, while the following four chapters provide a detailed analysis of the trilogy. In *Mugen Kanon*, the transgenerational narrative of the multiethnic family occupies a central position. Therefore, chapter two to chapter five are structured to focus on *each generation* of the family respectively, following a chronological order. This organizational choice allows for a thorough analysis of every family member's individual journey. Furthermore, the specific dynamics, challenges, and societal transformations that marked each historical phase of modern Japan will be spotlighted in each chapter.

In chapter one, I overview Shimada Masahiko's literary career and his early works, with a particular emphasis on and Shimada's earlier engagement with the themes: gender,

ethnicity, and identity. Firstly, I will introduce the formative stage of Shimada's writing career, engaging with existing academic discussions and critiques of his literary output. Then, I will overview the plot of the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy, and critically review the existing interpretations while highlighting the potential for further analysis. Subsequently, given the significance of the Madame Butterfly narrative as a metaphorical trope for addressing themes of gender and ethnicity within Shimada's trilogy, I will briefly review the original story, its adaptations, and rewritings. Finally, I explore Shimada's depictions of Japanese national identity in his 1980s writings. Shimada's earlier perspectives establish the foundation for later investigations into individual identity representation in the trilogy. This chapter establishes a solid foundation for the subsequent chapters that conducts a close analysis of the trilogy.

In chapter two, I examine the first volume of the trilogy, *Suisei no Jūnin*. I focus on the ways in which Shimada Masahiko represents his idea of "in-between" [*aida*] through the fictional character JB. As the mixed-race child of an American father and a Japanese mother, JB straddles two races and therefore forges a hybrid, ambivalent identity. Shimada presents JB's sense of "in-between" from two opposing perspectives. On one hand, Shimada identifies in-betweenness as a force of enunciation that empowers the suppressed, marginalized subaltern and as a mediatory approach that promotes productive dialogues between two nations. On the other hand, Shimada takes prudential consideration of the

negative impacts of in-betweenness on individuals through JB's oscillation in the wake of World War II, when he becomes trapped between two hostile races. JB's dilemma of in-betweenness resembles similar liminal conditions of those in Shimada's generation who underwent the "lost decade" of the 1990s and found themselves trapped between Japan's past and present when recalling its abhorrent history of aggression. Shimada's contradictory stance of "in-between" not only contextualizes the postcolonial discourse of hybridity but also offers us a distinctive perspective to perceive Japan's in-betweenness in the context of its past and present.

In chapter three, I will discuss the ways in which Shimada Masahiko revisits the American occupational past of Japan and rewrites the narrative of "Madame Butterfly" through the tragic romance between Noda Kuroudo and Matsuhara Taeko in *Suisei no Jūnin*. Shimada depicts how Kuroudo, the son of JB and the grandson of Cho-cho-san, falls in love with "another butterfly in the occupation era." In the early 1990s, the social repercussions of the Gulf War caused Shimada's disillusionment with the idea of "permanent peace" and triggered his reflection on the legacies of the occupation. Re-contextualizing a Madame Butterfly story in this historical context, Shimada articulates the latent crises enveloping themes of identity, independent decision making, and multilateral diplomacy that were occurring in 1990s Japan. *Suisei no Jūnin* is the product of the contradictory stance of Shimada: he finds himself torn between the affirmation of American-led democratization in

Japan and the critique of America's rhetorical use of liberal values.

In chapter four, I delve into *Utsukushī Tamashī* [Beautiful Soul] (2003), the second volume of *Mugen Kanon*, analyzing the duality of the protagonist Noda Kaoru in terms of gender, heritage, and romantic relationships and Shimada's subtle yet powerful commentary on the symbolic emperor system of Japan. Kaoru is portrayed as a character of "androgyny" representing both masculinity and femininity, through whom Shimada challenges the social-cultural imbalance in gender constructs. Kaoru's mixed genes inherited from his great-grandparents predetermine his fate, as he dedicates himself to love, but ultimately loses his beloved due to his fickle nature. Kaoru therefore plays dual roles as both a victim and a victimizer in his romantic relationship with his beloved woman, Fujiko. *Utsukushī Tamashī* reveals how individuals with a will of their own eventually succumb to an internalized mechanism where the restrictions on freedom are invisible but nonetheless prevalent. Kaoru, who defies gender and societal expectations, ultimately conforms to this mechanism. The duality of Kaoru exposes therefore Shimada's ambivalent sentiments towards the modern symbolic emperor system of Japan and his profound sense of indignation and self-condemnation for compromising with the injustices he encountered in reality, as he had to temper his critique in the published version in order to survive in the internalized mechanism. Shimada's representation of Kaoru and his unrequited but immoral love, speaks to larger themes of humanism and individuality within the context of a highly structured and

hierarchical society.

In chapter five, I will focus on the third and final volume of the trilogy, *Etorofu no Koi* (2003), analyzing Noda Kaoru's journey on the remote island of Etorofu from the perspectives of loss, love, and redemption. This chapter begins with a psychoanalytic analysis of Kaoru's dual loss of his feminine singing voice and his male sexual function. I would argue that this dual loss unveils an internal crisis within Kaoru's psyche, caused by an incomplete separation between the genetic desire inherited from Cho-cho-san and Kaoru's own individual desire. The metaphorical significance of Etorofu as a multicultural borderland and sanctuary for the marginalized, renders it an ideal realm for Kaoru's introspective and self-transformative journey. In Shimada's narrative, love is not portrayed as a relentless pursuit of absolute dominion over the object of one's affection. Instead, it manifests as an acknowledgment and embrace of the inherent *powerlessness* and *lack of control* that come with the journey of love. Furthermore, Shimada's representation of "love that never dies" serves as a notable departure from the more commonly literary paradigm of "dying for love," a motif frequently found in classical romantic narratives. It offers an alternative way of representation—a love that assumes the role of safeguarding shared memories and sustaining life.

Chapter 1

Shimada Masahiko: Literary Journey and Thematic Concerns

Post-modernism becomes

either totally complicitous or totally critical,

either seriously compromised

or polemically oppositional.

(Linda Hutcheon 201)

In this chapter, I will overview Shimada Masahiko's literary oeuvre, focusing on his earlier works from the 1980s and his literary representations of gender, ethnicity, and identity. In the following, I first overview Shimada Masahiko's early career as a writer, examining previous commentaries and scholarly analyses of his works published before the trilogy. Secondly, a brief plot summary of *Mugen Kanon* will be provided, followed by a critical exploration of existing criticisms and commentaries on it. I will also address the potential for further study of this trilogy. In the third section, I will investigate Shimada's thematic concerns on gender and ethnicity, with an emphasis on his explicit employment of the metaphoric trope of Madame Butterfly. Finally, I will focus on the ways in which Shimada represents Japanese identity in his earlier writings from the 1980s. Through the analysis of

Shimada's early work and perspectives in this chapter, I aim to lay a groundwork for the subsequent investigations into Shimada's representation of individual identity in the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy.

1. Shimada Masahiko: Beyond a Postmodernist

Shimada Masahiko is a distinguished contemporary Japanese writer. Shimada was born in Tokyo in 1961 and debuted as a writer in 1983. According to Alfred Birnbaum, the chief editor of the 1991 anthology *Monkey Brain Sushi: New Tastes in Japanese Fiction*, Shimada is one of the representative Japanese writers of his generation. This anthology comprises English translations of Japanese fictions and short stories written in the 1980s by authors who are considered as representatives of the "new generation of Japanese" (1). Shimada Masahiko's 1983 short story "Kapuseru no naka no Momotaro" [Momotaro in a Capsule] is included, along with works by Murakami Haruki, Takahashi Gen'ichiro, Yamada Amy, Shimizu Yoshinori, and other Japaese writers who are of the same generation with Shimada. Among these writers, Shimada Masahiko is commented by Birnbaum as being "the most consciously 'literary' of the authors in this collection" (146). Notably, Birnbaum suggests that these writers bear little resemblance to their older counterparts, such as Kawabata Yasunari, Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, and Mishima Yukio. This is because, according to Birnbaum, the writers of the new generation "were born and raised in an Americanized postwar Japan"

and heavily influenced by mass media and the pervasive "consumption of images" (1-2). Although they manifest different political orientations and literary styles, Shimada shares similar life experiences with these writers. For example, they have never experienced the tumultuous period of Japan's defeat and have fewer firsthand memories of the occupation era. Instead, they have witnessed the rapid development of capitalism and consumerism in Japan, which has left an indelible mark on their perspectives and artistic expressions. These features are crucial when we situate and analyze Shimada's works in the frame of contemporary Japanese literature.

Shimada is often acknowledged to be a postmodernist writer. As Nina Cornyetz puts it, Shimada's writings encompass postmodern elements such as "fragmentation, pastiche, and polymorphous perversity" (586). Shimada's debut piece, "Yasashī sayoku no tame no kiyūkyoku" [A Divertimento for a Gentle Leftist], was published when he was still a student at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. This short story features extensive use of parody and playful language style. After that, Shimada maintained a steady and impressive output of literary works in the 1980s, including: "Bōmei ryokō-sha wa sakebi tsubuyaku" [Cries and Mutters of the Refugee Travelers] (1984), Boku wa mozō ningen [I Am an Artificial Man] (1985), "Mikakunin bikō buttai" [Unidentified Shadowing Object] (1987), *Yume tsukai* [Dream Messenger] (1989). In these works, Shimada prominently centers on the marginalized groups within contemporary Japanese society, portraying literary figures such

as schizophrenia, homeless people, AIDS, refugees, renting children, suburbs, non-patriots, transgenders, and homosexuals. Shimada's engagements in these motifs have solidified his classification as a postmodernist writer.

Shimada's writing strategy prominently features parody and playful literary experiments, the approaches present in his debut work and consistently applied in subsequent creations. Notably, his 1992 novel *Higan Sensei* [Master and Discipline] stands out as a brilliant parody of Natsume Sōseki's renowned work *Kokoro* (1914), earning Shimada the prestigious Izumi Kyōka Award.[5] Additionally, Shimada gained recognition for subverting established language norms, narrative structures, and character development conventions in a playful manner. This approach effectively infuses a sense of irony into Shimada's literary texts. In his own assessment, Shimada describes himself as a writer who has a "malicious attitude toward those images which are naturalized" (Gregory and McCaffery 159). Shimada views himself as a deconstructor of Japanese language, as he believes that "utilizing Japanese as if it were a foreign language serves as means of making Japanese a nonverbal way of expression" (Gregory and McCaffery 159). This approach addresses Shimada's remarkable flexibility and adaptability in his writing strategy, showing his dynamic stance towards various aspects of Japanese linguistic and cultural heritage.

[5] The English translation of the title *Higan Sensei* is cited from Gregory, Sinda, and Larry McCaffery's "Sophisticated Masochism: An Interview with Masahiko Shimada." *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2002, pp. 156–160.

Shimada's extensive use of parody and experimental writing strategies serves as the evidence to his embrace of postmodern style in his work of the 1980s and early 1990s.

In addition to the writing approach, Shimada is labeled as a postmodernist writer because of his contradictory stance. In a 1999 article "Dream Messenger, Rental Children, and the Infantile: Shimada Masahiko and the Possibilities of the Postmodern," Philip Gabriel suggests that Shimada's writings are "postmodern" for the paradoxical "doubled state" (238). According to Gabriel, Shimada's works do not conform entirely to "critical" viewpoints nor exhibit complete "complicity" (238). In this article, Gabriel examines Shimada's literary representations of postwar Japan in various works (228). In narratives like "Sei Akahito den" (1984) and *Rococo-chō* (1990), Shimada metaphorically implies that postwar Japan is a "nonsense zone" where adults regress into a childlike state, indulging in entertainment while forsaking critical thinking. Conversely, in *Yume tsukai* (1989), Shimada adopts a more positive stance, endorsing Japan as a "protected zone" where individuals are able to engage in relaxing activities (238). This contradictory vision of postwar Japan characterizes Shimada's works as postmodern.

To briefly sum up, Shimada is widely regarded as a representative of Japanese postmodernist writers during the early stages of his career because of his thematic preoccupation with marginalized groups, intentional utilization of parody, playful manipulation of language and ambivalent stance.

However, during the 1990s, when Shimada was already acknowledged as a prominent postmodernist writer, he began to venture into different literary genres that transcended the supposed frame of postmodernism. This stylistic shift became evident as he intentionally reduced the prevalent "ethic of parodic dearticulation" in his texts, which significantly enhances the readability and accessibility of his works (Cornyetz 605). Meanwhile, Shimada delved into various literary genres like science fiction, historical fiction, mystery fiction, and detective fiction. Thematically, Shimada's 1990s works can be broadly categorized into two main types. The first encompasses fantasy literature that sets in a parallel world or fictional space, exemplified by works like *Nairan no Yokan* [Premonition of internal disturbance] (1998). The second type centers on contemporary social issues, revealing the suppressed desires and struggles of Japanese individuals during the tumultuous "lost decade" [*ushinawareta jūnen*].[6] Works such as *Kodomo o Sukue* [Save the Child] (1998) and *Jiyū Shikei* [Free Death Penalty] (1999) belong to this category, shedding light on the societal context of the time.

Shimada's prominence in Japanese literary circles is evidenced by the publication of

[6] In *Japanization: What the World Can Learn from Japan's Lost Decades*, William Pesek identifies the 1990s as Japan's first lost decades (2-3). *Examining Japan's Lost Decades* edited by Yoichi Funabashi and Barak Kushner investigates five aspects that characterizes Japan's "lost decades." In David Leheny's 2018 book, *Empire of Hope: the Sentimental Politics of Japanese Decline*, he argues that the true loss experienced by Japan is not in terms of wealth, national pride, or national spirit, but rather the loss of the "expected future" (11-12). See also *Nihon no ushinawareta tōnen: Shippai no honshitsu fukkatsu e no senryaku* [Japan's Lost Decade : Strategies for Restoring the Essence of Failure] by Harada Yutaka.

special issues by Japanese literary journals [*Bungei-shi*]. Japanese literary magazine *Yuriika* [Eureka] issued *Shimada Masahiko: Bungaku no jioporitikusu* [Shimada Masahiko: Geopolitics of Literature] in June 1994. This special issue compiles various insightful materials, including Shimada's interviews, dialogue with Larry McCafferry on the topic of "Avant-pop," and conversation with Karatani Kōjin. These sources provide illuminating information on Shimada's thoughts and writing process. Furthermore, this special issue also provides commentaries and criticisms on Shimada's works from nineteen esteemed writers and critics. Notably, Japanese writer Nakagami Kenji sheds light on the relationship between Shimada's works and music, commending Shimada for his brisk and playful writing style (73-74). Equally noteworthy, Tawada Yōko describes Shimada as "a man who can solely debut as a writer in Japan, a writer who cannot be exported," emphasizing the distinct "Japaneseness" she observes in Shimada's works (117). The publication of this special issue marks a significant milestone, offering a comprehensive examination and interpretation of Shimada's works up until that point.

In July 1999, *Kokubungaku* [Japanese Literature], one of Japan's most esteemed literary magazines, published a special issue *Shimada Masahiko no poriti kku* [Politics of Masahiko Shimada]. This special edition comprises extensive reviews and scholarly interpretations of Shimada's eleven novels and six short stories, written by twenty-nine Japanese critics and scholars. Notably, critic Kawamura Takeshi designates Shimada as the

"successor to Ōe Kenzaburō's position as a representative of the literary zeitgeist," acknowledging Shimada's significant role in capturing the spirit of the times in literature (38). Watanabe Naomi notes that despite Shimada's self-proclaim as a 'fake writer' aspiring to be 'non-national,' Shimada remains a *nihon no* [Japanese] novelist, a *honmono* [real] writer" (44; emphasized by Watanabe). This issue features a more academic analysis of Shimada's works.

These two special issues not only provide profound interpretations of Shimada's works but also comprehensive nonfiction resources for interpreting Shimada's writings. Both special issues offer introductions to the plots of all Shimada's novels and short essays up to June 1994 (*Yuriika* 228-240) and July 1999 (*Kokubungaku* 173-194) respectively. The 1999 special issue in *Kokubungaku* includes a compilation of related academic papers and reviews on Shimada's works (*Kokubungaku* 195-196). Additionally, chronicles documenting Shimada's life events are included, further enhancing readers' understanding of the context in which his works were created (*Yuriika* 226-227, *Kokubungaku* 197-199). These two special issues demonstrate the recognition and critical appraisal Shimada has garnered within the Japanese literary landscape at the close of the twentieth century.

In addition to various literary magazines, significant insights into the interpretation of Shimada's works have been provided through monographs authored by Japanese scholars. One of these is Kobayashi Kōkichi's 2010 book *Shimada Masahiko: Koi Monogatari no*

tanjō [Shimada Masahiko: The Birth of Love Story]. Organized into three parts, the book is structured in a chronological order, and provides a review on Shimada's fictions published in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s respectively. Kobayashi's study features evocative and poetic overviews of the plots of Shimada's fictions, contextualizing them within their respective historical frameworks. However, despite the comprehensive analysis of Shimada's 1980s works, Kobayashi's study falls short in exploring Shimada's cosmopolitan perspective and his resistance to emerging neo-nationalism in his works from the 2000s onwards. This omission suggests Kobayashi's relatively limited engagement with non-Japanese literature and transnational studies. As a result, he fails to address the full significance of Shimada's works within a global context. Nevertheless, Kobayashi effectively underscores the ways in which social-cultural factors of each era shaped Shimada's literary vision, highlighting how Shimada's texts mirror and respond to the specific time periods in which they were written.

Another monograph is Japanese critics Yanagisawa Katsuo's *Murakami Haruki to Shimada Masahiko: Jidai to han jidai* [Murakami Haruki and Shimada Masahiko: Time and Anti-Time] (2016). Yanagisawa provides a comprehensive investigation of two esteemed contemporary Japanese writers. Structured chronologically, Yanagisawa's research provides a meticulous interpretation of the respective oeuvres of Murakami and Shimada. While the comparative analysis between Murakami and Shimada's writings being somewhat insufficient, Yanagisawa significantly contributes to shedding light on the styles, thematic

concerns and approaches of these two prominent Japanese writers.

The two monographs by Kobayashi and Yanagisawa both adopt a plot-based approach and utilize close text reading to analyze Shimada' works. These studies provide valuable insights into how Japanese scholarship reads and evaluates Shimada's works, and contribute to a deeper appreciation of Shimada's contributions within the realm of contemporary Japanese literature.

In this project, I will step back from the prevailing categorization of Shimada as a "postmodernist" writer. Any presumption runs the risk of imposing a Western theoretical framework and oversimplifying the intricate facets of Shimada's writing. Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, changes in style and motifs can be observed in Shimada's works since the 1990s. Thus, it is essential to move beyond such categorization when I interpret the Mugen *Kanon* trilogy.

I contend that Shimada skillfully explores the latent sentiments and psychological yearnings of contemporary Japanese generations. Unlike writers like Mizumura Minae and Tawada Yōko, who have international backgrounds, Shimada's perspective is firmly rooted in Japan.[7] Nevertheless, his mono-ethnic background does not prevent him from delving deeply into themes of crossing borders and transnationality. His portrayal of these themes primarily arises from his literary imagination rather than direct personal experiences. While

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[7] Shimada was born in Tokyo and completed his elementary, middle and high school education in Kawasaki city.

insights from firsthand transcultural encounters hold value, it's essential to recognize that many individuals in Japan share similar mono-ethnic experiences with Shimada. As a result, Shimada's significance lies in his depiction of Japanese society that resonates profoundly with his Japanese readers.

2. *Mugen Kanon*: Recurring Love Tragedies and Sequel to Madame Butterfly

In the late 1990s, Shimada began to conceive his first long series titled *Mugen Kanon* [The Infinite Canon], a transgenerational family saga. Comprising three volumes, the trilogy consists of: *Suisei no Jūnin* [Inhabitants of the Comet] (2000), *Utsukushī Tamashī* [Beautiful Soul] (2003), and *Etorofu no Koi* [Love in Iturup] (2003). Initially, *Mugen Kanon* was serialized in a Japanese literary magazine *Shinchō*, spanning the May 1999, January 2003, August 2003 issues. The trilogy was later published as paperback books. As there are minor variations across the magazine, *tankōbon* and *bunkobon* versions, in this dissertation, I would refer to the *tankōbon* version published by Shinchōsha as the original texts.[8] In the following, I will introduce the plot of the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy and then examine the existing scholarly contributions to this trilogy.

Drawing inspiration from John Luther-Long's canonical narrative "Madame Butterfly," *Mugen Kanon* explores the recurring love tragedies experienced by the descendants of

[8] *Tankōbon* refers to the paperback book that is published separately after being serialized in magazines or newspapers. *Bunkobon* is a small-format paperback book that sells at lower price.

American Lieutenant Benjamin Pinkerton and Japanese geisha Cho-cho-san.[9] Shimada is an opera enthusiast and an amateur opera singer who has a profound affinity for the creation, critique, and execution of operatic works.[10] Given the widely acclaimed fame of Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly*, it is unsurprising that Shimada is enraptured by the enchanting tale of Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton and makes a direct reference to it. Within the tapestry of the transgenerational saga, Shimada intricately weaves the lives of Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton's son, JB, their grandson, Noda Kuroudo, and their great-grandson, Noda Kaoru. Through their personal experiences, Shimada creates a vivid and immersive fictional chronicle of Japan that spans over a hundred years. The recurring love stories are endowed with a profound sense of historicity.

The story begins with Tsubaki Fumio, an eighteen year old girl, embarking on a journey to seek her long-lost father. Raised solely in California by her mother, Fumio has remained distant from her father, despite being aware of his existence. An unexpected turn of events occurs when she receives an invitation from Tokiwa Anju, a woman claiming to be her aunt. Anju extends an invitation to Fumio, encouraging her to visit Japan and unravel the mysteries surrounding her father, Noda Kaoru's, past. Consequently, Fumio undertakes her

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[9] John Luther-Long's "Madame Butterfly" was first published in the January 1898 issue of *Century Magazine*, pp. 374-393. It was later adapted into Giacomo Puccini's well-known opera, *Madame Butterfly* (1904).

[10] Shimada has written the libretto for numerous musical compositions, including *Yuraiumu* [Ulalium] (1988), *Runa rin'netenshō no monogatari* [Luna: The story of Reincarnation] (1990), *Chūshingura* (2002), *Jr. Batafurai* [Jr. Butterfly] (2004), *Sūpāenjeru* [Super Angels] (2021).

inaugural journey across the Pacific Ocean, setting foot on her parents' native soil for the first time.

During her time with Kaoru's adoptive family, the Tokiwa Family, Fumio encounters an unusual tombstone inscribed with her father's name. The discovery leaves her bewildered, especially when she notices a red graffiti inscription stating: "Kegaremono, eien ni damatte iro" [Stay silent here forever, you filthy thing] (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 14). Despite the implication of the grave, there is no body of Kaoru in the grave. Perplexed by this discovery, Fumio turns to Aunt Anju for answers. Aunt Anju tells Fumio that Kaoru is still alive but has been banished from Japan. Fumio asks Aunt Anju why her father receives such a vicious curse, prompting Anju to disclose that the banishment and curse are retributions for "loving someone who was forbidden" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 13-14). The narrator then switches to Anju as she recounts the tragic love stories of Noda Kaoru and his forebears, detailing their shared experience of losing their beloved ones.

In 1904, a U.S. naval lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton was dispatched to Nagasaki where he married a 15-year-old Japanese geisha named Cho-cho san and rented a house on a hill for her. Cho-cho-san, the poor girl who would later become known as Madame Butterfly, remains oblivious to the fact that her "husband" does all these not for love, but only for the sake of convenience. Pinkerton dismisses Cho-Cho-san's family as "troublesome" and forbids her from meeting them or engaging in ancestral duties (Shimada,

Suisei no Jūnin 169). After Pinkerton departs from Japan, Cho-Cho-san gives birth to their child, whom she names Trouble and patiently waits for his return. Despite Suzuki, her maid, growing increasingly skeptical, Cho-Cho-San remains steadfast in her belief that Pinkerton will eventually come back to her. When Pinkerton's long-awaited ship finally arrives, Cho-Cho-san adorns herself in her finest kimono, eagerly awaiting his arrival. To her profound disappointment, Pinkerton never comes to her. In *Suisei no Jūnin*, Cho-cho-san kills herself in despair after she realizes that Pinkerton only returns to take their child.[11]

Shimada extends his creative horizon beyond the confines of the original "Madame Butterfly" narrative, imagining the stories of Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton's progenies. Their son, JB, inherits a mixed ethnic heritage that places him in a complex position between the United States and Japan. In the 1930s, JB is detached to Japan as a spy for the United States, where he falls deeply in love with Noda Nami, a Japanese girl with a brother serving as a military officer. Despite the prevailing tensions and animosity between Japan and the United States during this era, JB and Nami choose to marry. Regrettably, their love story meets a traumatic end when Nami passes away in childbirth, leaving JB bereaved and their newborn son, Noda Kuroudo, motherless.

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[11] Shimada's re-narration diverges from the original story of Luther-Long in terms of Cho-Cho-san's ending. In the version of Long, Cho-cho-san attempts suicide, but interrupted by her maid Suzuki as she enters Cho-cho-san's bedroom with her baby. Long gives an open ending, leaving it uncertain whether Cho-Cho-san survives. In *Mugen Kanon*, Shimada takes inspiration from Giacomo Puccini's opera adaptation of "Madame Butterfly" and adopts the poignant tragic ending in which Cho-Cho-san commits suicide in deep despair and heartbreak.

JB's son, Kuroudo, spends his childhood in an internment facility in Yokohama until Japan's unconditional surrender, and he witnesses the profound transformations that undergoes in Japan as a consequence of the nation's defeat and subsequent occupation by foreign forces. Kuroudo becomes involved in an illicit affair with Matsuhara Taeko, a nationally famed Japanese film actress who is later revealed to be a secret lover of American General Douglas MacArthur. Their relationship ultimately concludes after an impulsive one-night-stand. Eventually, Kuroudo marries another Japanese woman named Kiriko, together they have a son named Noda Kaoru.

Noda Kaoru, the fictional character of the same generation as the author Shimada Masahiko, occupies a central role within the trilogy. While the first volume, *Suisei no Jūnin* unfolds the story of the first three generations, the second volume, *Utsukushī tamashī,* delves into the story of Noda Kaoru and his fervent yet unfulfilled love for Asakawa Fujiko. Fujiko, a young woman of remarkable beauty and talent, ultimately chooses to marry the heir to the Japan throne. The concluding volume, *Etorofu no Koi*, revolves around Kaoru's life in exile on the island of Etorofu after being expelled by his own nation due to his unwavering love for Fujiko.

Then, why do I select *Mugen Kanon* from Shimada's extensive oeuvre as my focal analysis? As Shimada's first and only trilogy, the narrative complexity and thematic richness of *Mugen Kanon* provide fertile ground for in-depth examination and interpretation.

Furthermore, the trilogy occupies a unique position in Shimada's literary production because of the profound personal significance it holds for the author. Shimada, a celebrated contemporary novelist in Japan, dedicated seven years—a substantial segment of his literary career—to conceiving and writing *Mugen Kanon*.[12] In the afterword to *Suisei no Jūnin*, Shimada, who had been writing novels for nearly two decades, envisioned *Mugen Kanon* as a unique and unparalleled literary endeavor. Shimada asserts that this trilogy is "a novel that no one else can write yet" (380). However, despite Shimada's personal investment in its creation, scholarly discourse and critical examinations of *Mugen Kanon* have been notably scarce and limited in their scope. The untapped research potential of this trilogy, as well as its unique place in Shimada's literary oeuvre, bolsters my commitment to dedicating my scholarly attention to *Mugen Kanon*.

In the following, I will critically review the existing academic contributions on *Mugen Kanon,* examining the themes and strategies that have garnered attention in scholarly discussions. One insightful study is Takashi Aso's 2010 article "Literature of the 'Blood' Mystique: Ethnicity, Nationality, Sexuality in Contemporary Japanese Novels." Aso offers an English-language analysis of the first volume of the trilogy, *Suisei no Jûnin.*[13] Aso

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[12] See the dialogue between Shimada Masahiko and Saitō Tamaki, "Utsukushī tamashī no senryaku: Mugen kanon san busaku o megutte" [The strategy of *Utsukushī tamashī*: about *Mugen Kanon* trilogy]. *Nami*, Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2003, vol. 37 (10), pp.12-17.

[13] The name order presented here follows the author's own preferences in the format of in the format of family name followed by given name followed by family name.

analyzes Shimada's portrayal of the purported purity of Japanese blood. According to Aso, this purity of blood has always been "contaminated, adulterated, corrupted" due to the suppressed "ex-centric desire for the foreign other" embedded within the Japanese unconsciousness (1-2). Aso interprets Cho-cho-san as a literary metaphor of Japanese "ex-centric desire for the foreign other," a representation that he describes as both "schizophrenic" and "masochistic" (11). Shimada employs this metaphor to effectively demystify the mystique of pure Japanese blood and deconstruct the homogeneous Japanese national identity. Furthermore, Aso explores Shimada's nuanced interrogation of the potential for individual subjectivity that can exist beyond the confines of ethnic and cultural purity, thriving instead in a diverse and "contaminated" environment. Aso's investigation sheds light on Shimada's conscious engagement with themes of "blood" and genetic lineage, drawing connections between the myth of blood and Shimada's preoccupation on postwar Japan's national subjectivity.

While Aso explores Shimada's depictions of ethnic and cultural identity in Japan, Dennitza Gabrakova reads this trilogy from a postcolonial perspective, focusing on Shimada's portrayal of marginalization, historical traumas, and power dynamics. In her 2018 book, *The Unnamable Archipelago: Wounds of the Postcolonial in Postwar Japanese Literature and Thought*, Gabrakova delves into the third volume *Etorofu no Koi*. In chaper three titled "Insular Hauntings: Trauma, Reproduction, and Island Doubles," Gabrakova

examines Shimada's *Etorofu no Koi* alongside Ōba Minako's novel *Funakuimushi* [Shipworms], Hino Keizō's *Yume no Shima* [The Isle of Dreams]. Gabrakova argues that these three works utilize the space of the island to symbolically represent "the uncanny ghostliness" and the fragmented subjectivity within Japan's historical context (95). Gabrakova evokes Homi Bhabha's idea of the colonial space of separation, and Japanese critic Imafuku Ryūta's notion of "*guntō*" [archipelago] in her reading of *Etorofu no Koi*, elucidating how the remote island of Etorofu embodies the periphery of Japanese identity, touching upon its very margins, while also highlighting the family as the site of "internal colonizing practices" (78, 94).[14] Gabrakova argues that Shimada's portrayal of the butterfly family's transgenerational storyline demonstrates a history of "exclusion and marginalization" and unveils the "rebellious, melancholic inherency" of individuals in the face of social power (86). Furthermore, Gabrakova contends that the unattainable yet sublime love of four generations is "simultaneously staged in sharp contrast with international and domestic politics, artificially but powerfully related to acts of transgression and 'fate'" (88). While I hold reservations regarding the interpretation of Shimada's position as solely confrontational, Gabrakova's postcolonial interpretation enriches the academic discourse surrounding *Etorofu no Koi*.[15] The scarcity of exploration of the intertextual connections between *Etorofu no Koi* and Shimada's earlier works, particularly those that

[14] For more, see Imafuku Ryūta's *Guntō: Sekairon* [Archipelago: a World].

[15] For my interpretation of Shimada's stance, see conclusion.

center around the theme of exile, underscores the untapped scholarly potential for further investigation.

A richer abundance of criticism and scholarly discussions on *Mugen Kanon* can be found in Japanese-language resources compared to its English-language counterparts. Within the realm of Japanese criticism, considerable attention is given to Shimada's reworking of Japan's modern historical narrative, with a particular focus on his portrayal of World War II and the immediate postwar era, as well as his reimagining of the "Madame Butterfly" narrative. In a 2003 article "Nagasaki kara itoruppu made" [From Nagasaki to Etorofu], Japanese critic Kanno Akimasa examines four literary strategies employed by Shimada in his trilogy. Firstly, fictional characters, such as Pinkerton and Cho-cho-san, are presented with an uncanny sense of realism and believability (222). Secondly, Cho-cho-san, a character imbued with exoticism, is romanticized and elevated as a symbol of "love" (223). Thirdly, Shimada explores the concept of genetic lineage, portraying the offspring who carry Madame Butterfly's blood as inheritors of her pursuit for pure and unrequited love (225). Finally, Shimada reimagines the history of the twentieth century, intertwining it with the lens of family genealogy (226). All these strategic choices, according to Kanno, serve as the means to symbolically represent the historical and cultural dynamics between Japan and the United States (227). The constraints of space or other factors may stop Kanno from deeper exploration of his argument, leaving room for additional scholarly inquiry. Despite that,

Kanno highlights the intricate balance Shimada strikes between individual agency and historical determinism, contributing to the understanding of Shimada's literary strategies in this trilogy.

Japanese scholar Shimada Naoya echoes Kanno's viewpoint, arguing that Shimada Masahiko represents history in forms of personal recollections, with a particular emphasis on the author's employment of narrators and pronouns. In his 2006 article, "Rekishi, monogatari, kioku" [History, Story, Memory], Naoya examines Masahiko's use of the second-person pronoun "*kimi*" [you] to address the first narrator, Fumio. Naoya contends that this deliberate choice of pronoun creates an "immersive atmosphere," conveying historical accounts in an emotional and empathetic manner (184). In his 2007 analysis of the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy, "Chōchōfujin no sōzō-ryoku" [Imagination of Madame Butterfly], Naoya focuses on Masahiko's engagement with the role of Madame Butterfly, suggests that Masahiko's portrayal of Kaoru waiting for the reunion with Fujiko on the island of Etorofu can be seen as a subversive rewriting of Cho-cho-san's anticipation for Pinkerton in the original story (68). Naoya posits that through this process of re-contextualizing the narrative regarding Japan and rearticulating Japan's own history, the very concept of "Japan" established by the Western discourse is "internalized in a Japanese manner" within Shimada's writing, allowing for a reconstruction of the national subjectivity that diverges from the Western perspective (77-78). However, Naoya gives a vague definition for what he

refers to as "Japanese manner" and how this way of narrating is distinct from the Western approach. This gap in Naoya's analysis presents an opportunity for further scholarly research to build upon his observations to elucidate the motivations behind Shimada's engagement with history and the internalization of Western discourse within his literary works.

In addition to Shimada's re-articulation of history, his preoccupation with the motif of "love" in the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy has also garnered significant scholarly attention. In the 2016 book *Murakami Haruki to Shimada Masahiko: Jidai to han jidai* [Murakami Haruki and Shimada Masahiko: Time and Anti-Time], Yanagisawa Katsuo identifies the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy as "a love story sealed and forced to be forgotten due to the power of the state, capital, and patriarchy" (143). Furthermore, Yanagisawa suggests that Shimada's treatment of love aligns with the literary pattern established by the Japanese classics such as *Genji monogarati* and the postwar fiction *Haru no Yuki* (143). Yanagisawa's analysis not only contributes to positioning and evaluating Shimada's works in the broader genealogy of Japanese literature, but also invites further research on the intertextuality between Shimada's texts and the Japanese literary traditions.

There have been critiques regarding the potential limitations of the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy. In a 2001 analysis of *Suisei no Jûnin*, "Bungaku to rekishi to buntai to" [Literature, History and Style], Yōrō Takeshi raises criticism on Shimada's treatment of the theme of *koi* [love], asserting that it is approached in an "abstract," superficial, and ungrounded manner

(283). According to Yōrō, although *Suisei no Jûnin* serves as a good historical fiction that displays Japan's modern history "objectively," it only offers a "*koi no sōsetsu*" [generalized overview of love] that lacks a detailed and specific exploration of love (284). It is important to note that Yōrō's criticism is centered on the first volume where Shimada briefly goes through the love stories of Cho-cho-san, JB, and Kuroudo. Thus, I would argue that the weakness addressed by Yōrō does not necessarily extend to the entire trilogy as Shimada successfully displays the complexities and nuances of love in the second volume, where Kaoru and Fujiko's story unfolds.

Fukuda Kazuya is another scholar who presents a critical perspective on the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy. In his 2003 article titled "Yukashī Ayamachi" [A Graceful Mistake], Fukuda contends that in the last two volumes, Shimada fails to continue the representation of the dynamics between Japan and the United States that was initially introduced in the story (156). According to Fukuda, even though the second volume introduces the relationship between the royal family and the general public, Shimada becomes overly obsessed with the central theme of "love," which hinders a more comprehensive exploration of socio-political dynamics, thus leading to a loss of tension (158-160).

Fukuda's critique sparks a significant debate surrounding the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy between the author and the critic. In response to Fukuda's criticism, Shimada defends himself and clarifies his artistic intentions in an essay, "Tokubetsu Kikō: Fukuda-kun to

Watashi" [Fukuda and I], published in the magazine *Shincho*. This exchange of opinions prompts Fukuda to further respond in another article titled "Harukana akogare: Shimada Masahiko-shi no bun ni mukete" [A Distant Aspiration: Response to Shimada's Essay]. This ongoing opinion exchange between Shimada and Fukuda ultimately culminated in a 2004 dialogue titled "Ten'nō, ren'ai, rekishi soshite bungaku" [Emperor, Love, History and Literature]. In this discussion, Shimada and Fukuda share their respective perspectives on various topics, including the Japanese emperor as a profession, Shimada's intention to portray primitive and instinctive love, and the tendencies of 21st century literature. The controversy and dialogue between Shimada and Fukuda provide insights into the analysis of the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy. Thus, I will conduct a more thorough examination of their debate in chapter four.

In this section, I answered the question why *Mugen Kanon* is chosen for focal analysis over other notable works by Shimada. Additionally, I overviewed the existing scholarly contributions surrounding this work and highlighted the potential for further analysis and investigation of the trilogy. In the next section, I will examine an important metaphorical trope that Shimada employs in the trilogy: Madame Butterfly.

3. Reimagining Madame Butterfly: A Gender and Ethnic Metaphoric Trope

Madame Butterfly serves as a crucial metaphor that Shimada explicitly utilizes to delve

into the theme of gender and ethnicity in *Mugen Kanon*. Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker assert in their 2005 work that "the imperatives of race, sexuality, gender" encompass "the distinctive mark" of contemporary literature (269). This reorientation sheds light on why writers, including Shimada, have turned their attention towards gender and ethnicity in their works of the late 1990s. Shimada's profound engagement with the Western canon of Madame Butterfly exemplifies this central concern. As a Japanese sequel to this orientalist fantasy, *Mugen Kanon* inevitably inherits the underlying implicit connotations present in the original narrative that approach gender relations as a representation for ethnic power dynamics. In my view, the narrative of Madame Butterfly functions as a critical metaphoric framework through which Shimada articulates his perspectives on gender and ethnicity motifs in Japan at the end of the twentieth century.

Although the three-act opera *Madame Butterfly* (1904) by Giacomo Puccini is considered the most renowned version of the butterfly narrative, its inspiration is believed to have originated from American lawyer and writer John Luther Long's short story "Madame Butterfly." Published in the January 1898 issue of *Century Magazine*, Long's short story is based on the purportedly historical affair drawn upon the recollections of Long's sister, Mrs. Carrell, during her stay in Japan. It is speculated that Thomas Blake Glover, a British entrepreneur who resided in Nagasaki and married a Japanese woman

named Tsuru Awajiya, served as a prototype for the fictional character Pinkerton.[16] Tsuru, affectionately referred to as "O Chō-san" because of her fondness for butterflies, has been suggested as a possible inspiration for the character Cho-cho-san. The presence of two statues commemorating Puccini and Miura Tamaki in Glover Gardens, formerly the residence of Glover, adds credibility to the association.[17] Another potential influence on Long's story is the French novel *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887) by Pierre Loti. This novel explores a similar motif, depicting a French naval officer's exotic and erotic adventure in Nagasaki, in particular his temporary relationship with a Japanese girl Chrysanthème [Kiku].[18]

Since its inception as a short story by John Luther Long, "Madame Butterfly" has served as a rich source of inspiration for a wide array of adaptations across different languages and artistic mediums. Notable contributors to this adaptation phenomenon include André Messager, Félix Régamey, David Belasco, Giacomo Puccini, David Henry Hwang, David

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[16] Thomas Glover was instrumental in founding a Japanese shipbuilding company, establishing Japan's first railroad, mint, mechanized coal mine, and brewery, and sending Japanese students to study abroad. He therefore became the first non-Japanese who was presented with the Order of the Rising Sun. For more, see McKay, Alexander. *Scottish Samurai: Thomas Blake Glover 1838-1911*. Canongate Press, 1993.

[17] Miura Tamaki (1884-1946) was a Japanese opera singer who is famed for performing as Cho-cho-san in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*.

[18] See Miskow, Catherine M. "The Chrysanthemum and the Butterfly: What, if anything, Remains of Pierre Loti in the Madame Butterfly Narrative." *Utah Foreign Language Review*, v19, 2011. p. 15-31. and Matsuda, Matt K. *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific*, Oxford University Press, 2005. See also the 2006 book, *A Vision of the Orient: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts of Madame Butterfly* edited by Jonathan Wisenthal, et al.

Cronenberg, Ken Russell, Alain Boublil, Robert Lepage and Ariyoshi Sawako.[19] The enduring appeal of "Madame Butterfly" can be attributed to the paradigmatic pattern it establishes, where Western men conquer, consume, and ultimately abandon Eastern women. The butterfly narrative parallels the power dynamics between the East and the West, the gender dynamics between men and women, employing the conquest of women by men as a metaphor for the West's dominance over the East. The prevalence of quasi-colonialist depictions of gender and ethnic stereotypes embedded within the original story aligns with Edward Said's theoretical framework of orientalism, in which Western society is portrayed as "developed, rational, flexible, and superior," while Eastern society as "static and undeveloped" (Said 12). Writers and artists who engage with the butterfly narrative have either reinforced or critically responded to this gender/ethnicity analogy, thereby contributing to the lasting allure of the butterfly narrative.

The artistic and cultural significance of Madame Butterfly and its numerous adaptations have invited a substantial body of scholarly contributions. For example, the 2001 book *Madame Butterfly: Japonisme, Puccini, & the Search for the Real Cho-Cho-San* by Jan van Rij, and the 2006 book *A Vision of the Orient: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts of Madame Butterfly* edited by Jonathan Wisenthal, et al provide extensive intertextual and contextual analysis, tracing the evolution of butterfly narratives. Additionally, Yoshihara Mari's 2003

[19] See Rij, Jan van. *Madame Butterfly: Japonisme, Puccini, & the Search for the Real Cho-Cho-San*. Stone Bridge Press, 2001. p. 87-88 for the chart listing the adaptations of the butterfly narrative.

publication *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* and Kawaguchi Yoko's 2010 contribution *Butterfly's Sisters: the Geisha in Western Culture* explore the broader cultural and social implications of Madame Butterfly, examining how it shapes the Western orientalist perceptions of Asians. Given the numerous existing researches on Madame Butterfly, the focus of this study is not on a literary analysis of the narrative itself, but rather on the symbolic meaning it carries. The research aims to investigate why Shimada employs the gender/ethnicity metaphor of Madame Butterfly and how he reimagines the butterfly story within the specific historical and cultural context of Japan at the turn of the twenty-first century. By examining Shimada's reinterpretation of the butterfly narrative, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between gender, ethnicity, and cultural identity in his literary works.

In this project, I argue that Shimada's re-articulation of the butterfly narrative in the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy serves a dual purpose: rectifying the enduring Western discourse of a feminized Japan and critically targeting Japan's own complicit, masochistic role in perpetuating its subordination. The butterfly narrative, as previously discussed, represents an orientalist Western discourse and a misogynistic gender perspective, wherein Japan is feminized and infantilized as "a country of childlike women" (Yamamoto 11). Positioning Japan in an obedient, submissive, powerless role allows the West to seamlessly transition between the roles of a reciprocator and a dominator (Yamamoto 23). Within this strategic

framework, the West can alternatively *idealize* Japan as an exquisite, pure, and enchanting "virgin," or conversely *vilify* it as a seductive, scheming, and manipulative "slut." "Madame Butterfly" exemplifies the portrayal of a feminized, non-masculine Japan, thus becoming a central resource of the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy. Shimada recognizes that the feminization of Japan persists as an ongoing discourse even at the turn of the twenty-first century, rather than being a relic of the past. For Shimada, this problematic discourse not only serves as an embodiment of Japan's national subject, whom Japan is projected to be, but also influences the construction of national identity of postwar Japan, whom Japan perceives itself to be. Through his re-articulation of the narrative, Shimada explores the complexities of Japan's self-perception and the power dynamics embedded within the Western discourse of feminization, ultimately seeking to redefine Japan's position in the global cultural and political landscape.

Shimada does not adopt a merely reactive stance that attributes all postwar Japanese identity crises solely to Western cultural hegemony. Instead, Shimada also takes a critical look at Japan's own complicit, masochistic state. According to Terry Caesar and Takashi Aso, the fact that Japan's feminization is deeply ingrained in its own "masochistic" condition where Japan has historically embraced a submissive role and suffered rather than asserting its own power (376). Japan's own masochistic state impedes its path towards empowerment and its potential to assert its own agency, as the nation becomes complicit in perpetuating

the status quo rather than actively pursuing the development of a self-defined and autonomous national identity. Marc Yamada further illustrates Shimada's identification of "Japan's masochistic legacy" as rooted in the "acceptance of subordination, shame, and humiliation" in relation to the US and the West (177). According to Yamada, Shimada's depiction of a masochistic Japan forms the very foundation of Japan's modern national subjectivity in his writings (177). For Shimada, postwar Japan is unable to overcome this masochistic state due to a lack of positive ways to retain its "manhood" and national pride in the face of its imperial past (Yamada 181). Therefore, Shimada's reimagining of the butterfly story within the specific context of Japan at the turn of the twenty-first century involves a critical engagement with the prevalent discourses of feminization imposed on Japan and Japan's complicity and masochism at play.

Shimada's preoccupation on the binary between Japan and the United States, as well as his "accomplice" to the orientalist, essentialist discourses, may invite criticism. However, it is worth considering Gayatri Spivak's concept of "strategic essentialism" to provide an alternative perspective. Strategic essentialism proposes temporarily adopting essentialist categories over universal discourse as a tactical move to advance the rights for the subaltern. Nevertheless, it is crucial for critical observers to remain vigilant about the predominant assumption that frames the act of rewriting a Western canon as a straightforward interaction

between two discrete and mutually exclusive nation-states or cultural entities.[20] Indeed, this perspective aligns with Shimada's own transition in stance. In the final volume of *Mugen Kanon*, Shimada undergoes a significant departure from the butterfly narrative and the binary framework that juxtaposes Japan against the United States. Instead, Shimada ventures into the deconstruction of the imagined homogenous identity of "Japan" by introducing the perspective of the Ainu and Russia.[21] This progressive shift underscores Shimada's movement away from the essentialist discourse and embraces a more nuanced exploration of identity. I will conduct a more in-depth exploration of Shimada's departure from the binary framework in the following chapters.

4. Shimada and Japanese Identity

In addition to Shimada's insightful exploration of ethnicity and gender in the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy, his unwavering dedication to examining the individual identity of Japanese is evident throughout his works. Margaret Hillenbrand aptly characterizes literature as a "privileged access to the national soul" and acknowledges its "complex debt to the national

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[20] See Elizabeth Grosz's "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution" [interview with Gayatri Spivak] in *Thesis Eleven* 10(11), 1984, pp. 175-187, and Elisabeth Eide's reading of Gayatri Spivak, "Strategic Essentialism" (2016) in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies* edited by Nancy A. Naples, in which Eide argues that Gayatri Spivak's strategic essentialism can be regarded as a temporary political strategy.

[21] Shimada majored in Russia at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, where he immersed himself in the works of notable figures such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Evgeny Ivanovich Zamyatin, and Mikhail Afanasyevich Bulgakov. This experience explains the numerous Russian elements in his writing. For details, see chapter four.

heritage" (15). Hillenbrand's recognition aligns closely with the essence of Shimada's writings, as his works frequently offer insights into the intricate dynamics between individual's identity and Japan's collective consciousness and historical legacy.

In this project, I distinguish the concept of "individual identity" from those of "national identity" and "ethnic identity." "Individual identity," as defined through the idea of Peter Weinreich, encompasses the totality of how a person perceives themselves, especially "how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future" (299). I define the "national identity" of individuals as their sense of affiliation, attachment or ownership to their nation, particularly regarding how they perceive themselves within the collective consciousness of the nation. It is crucial to distinguish "national identity" from "ethnic identity," as the notion of "national" is stemmed from the very concept of "nation-state." In this project, I adopt a modernist perspective rather than a primordialist method to approach the concept of "nation." Nation is considered as an invented, retrofitted and "imagined community" constructed during the process of modernization, rather than a predetermined, essentialist entity with collective historical givens (Anderson 6). Likewise, I regard "national identity" as a modern formation that is distinguished from "individual identity," as "national identity" is considered to be shaped and mediated by various social, cultural, political and historical factors.

Shimada has been at the forefront of the exploration of identity since he began writing fiction. His early works published in the 1980s are particularly noteworthy for challenging the notion of a fixed national identity constructed by Japanese political or cultural establishments, including language, norms and regimes. As Marc Yamada observes, "the construction of individual and national subjectivity" has always been a principal concern in Shimada's literary oeuvre (176). Therefore, a meticulous examination of Shimada's earlier writings, which delve into the Japanese national identity, serves as a valuable entry point for interpreting the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy.

Shimada's debut work, "Yasashī sayoku no tame no kiyūkyoku" [A divertimento for a gentle leftist] (1983) presents a vivid portrayal of college students who join a leftist student group and self-proclaim themselves as "belatedly political" aftermath the retreat of the political and social movement in Japan in the 1980s.[22] This debut work received high resonance and earned him a nomination for the Akutagawa Prize in 1983. Reflecting the prevalent political apathy among the Japanese youth in the 1980s, Shimada portrays their participation in the group as a mere form of childish play that lacks seriousness and depth:

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[22] The decline in popularity of political movements is attributed to both the increasing public attention on the economy and the widespread revulsion inspired by radical leftist movements. In the fall of 1960, Ikeda Hayato's government announced *Shotoku baizō* [The Income-doubling Plan], which distracted the public attention from political and military issues to the reconstruction of economy, material satisfaction, and entertainment. The *Anpo* Protest [Revising Japan-US Security Treaty] emerged in the 1950s and reached its climax in the 1960s. The subsequent *Zenkyōtō* [The All-Campus Joint Struggle Committees] protests have become increasingly radical. After a series of violent acts in which radical student groups injured or killed civilians, student movements lost the support of the public.

> They organized somber activities. Initially, the political movements are just like festive gatherings and performances, with participants appearing as bumbling performers and clumsy entertainers. There is a distinct absence of screaming, weeping, or resorting to violence. Instead, they slammed the door shut, sat at the table, and remained motionless. Their pursuits primarily involve translating Russian documents from underground publications, drafting petitions to improve the treatment of political prisoners addressed to party officials or shelter administrators, and engaging in discussions centered around Soviet-related journals, while maintaining poker faces. ("Yasashī sayoku" 30)

The mundane and bureaucratic activities of this student group signify a departure from the passionate and radical attribute that characterized previous political movements. Shimada takes a critical look at the ways in which student movements were transformed into a formalized and procedural endeavor in 1980s Japan.

In an era when the pursuit of "peace and enjoyment" has superseded that of "revolution and resistance," Shimada employs the literary device of parody to reimagine "student movement" into what he terms as "gentle resistance." I interpret Shimada's parody as a means of satirical critique, exemplified through the heroine's words when she attempts to console the protagonist, stating: "Well, it's useless to think no matter how much you think. Thinking itself is a kind of trouble. If thinking makes you feel anxious and painful, then to

stop thinking is better" ("Yasashī sayoku" 155). Shimada has referred to this statement as "a sentence that can redeem all mankind" ("Yasashī sayoku" 155), which I read as an ironic commentary on Japanese individuals' acceptance on the status quo, despite being trapped within a system of irresponsibility and deprived of subjective initiative [*shutaisei*]. According to Maruyama Masao, this "system of irresponsibility" [*musekinin-no-taikei*] allows and encourages "vague acts of avoiding clarification of the decision-making subject (responsibility affiliation)" (38). Drawing upon Maruyama's observation, Shimada's parodic utilization of "gentle resistance" poses a critical question: does the resignation of every Japanese individual who has "given up thinking" ultimately condone such irresponsibility?

Katō Norihiro asserts that Shimada portrays a sense of "deprivation of individual's internality" within the Japanese society in the 1980s in "Yasashī sayoku" (233). Through his texts, Shimada brings attention to the broader societal implications of this deprivation, questioning the extent to which individuals have relinquished their agency and tacitly accepted a system that promotes irresponsibility. I would further interpret Shimada's portrayal of "gentle resistance" as a reflection of his contradictory attitude: both a disillusionment with the previous radical student protests of the past, and an underlying sense of loss regarding the decline in resistance and genuine commitment exhibited by the

youth within the political landscape of the 1980s.[23]

In his 1983 short story "Kapuseru no naka no Momotaro" [Momotaro in a Capsule], Shimada has exhibited a growing willingness to call for the resistance of individuals against this oppressive system of irresponsibility. "Maybe revolution *should* be in the mind. As long as you can tell the system to fuck off, the whole thing would be turned on its head" (145).[24] While this declaration may appear as a premature slogan rather than a thoughtfully crafted resolution to the crisis of individual agency, it indicates Shimada's increasing readiness to challenge existing power dynamics that shape one's national identity.

In addition to Shimada's refusal to the constraining system that limits individual agency, Nina Cornyetz identifies the concept of "amorphous" as another significant element in interpreting Shimada's representation of national subjectivity in his 1980s works. In the 2001 essay "Amorphous Identities, Disavowed History: Shimada Masahiko and National Subjectivity," Cornyetz discusses the ways in which Shimada problematizes the postwar symbolic imperial system and the psychic "hybridity" of the Japanese young generation. Cornyetz argues that Shimada draws on the oppositional postwar scenarios of two profound

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[23] The Asama-Sanso incident (from February 19 to 28 in 1972), is one of the infamous extreme leftist student movement. It was a hostage crisis caused by an extremist group the United Red Army [Rengo Sekigun] at the "Asama-Sansou" in Nagano Prefecture. The live television broadcast of the police rescue continued for over 10 hours. The incident has contributed to a decline in popularity of leftist movements among Japanese public. For more details, see NHK. "Asama-Sanso Incident". 50 Years of NHK Television. NHK. Retrieved 2020-09-09. http://www.nhk.or.jp/digitalmuseum/nhk50years_en/history/p16/index.html.

[24] Translation by Terry Gallagher.

postwar writers: Mishima Yukio and Sakaguchi Ango, in his account of the issue of Japanese national subjectivity. Cornyetz explains that Shimada revitalizes Ango's idea of an "amorphous" and resilient Japanese subjectivity by depicting the post-occupational "American-Asian subjecthood" of contemporary youth, which generated due to the prevalence of capitalism and the enduring impact of American force (590). This depiction stands in contrast to Mishima's narcissist, essentialist representation of Japanese identity (Cornyetz 604).

Furthermore, Cornyetz discerns a notable ambivalence in Shimada's 1980s texts: Shimada does not align himself with either Ango or Mishima's positions, but rather deconstructs the binary framework they present. According to Cornyetz, Shimada portrays protagonists who desire to reclaim their agency by commodifying their erotic bodies. This desire serves as an alternative form of identity that breaks free from the dominant social and discursive constructs of Japanese identity (604-605). I would argue that Shimada exposes the paradoxical reality in the context of the commodified postmodern Japan, where the pursuit of perceived freedom is juxtaposed with the fluid, ambivalent, ambiguous individual subjectivity. This inclination is further developed into Shimada's representation of in-betweenness in the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy, which I will analyze in chapter one.

In addition to Cornyetz's contribution on Shimada's portrayal of amorphous identity, Marc Yamada identifies the masochistic postwar Japan as the foundational element shaping

Shimada's perception of Japanese national identity. In his 2020 essay "'Sophisticated Masochism' in the Work of Shimada Masahiko," Yamada sheds light on Japan's "cultural and political masochism" as articulated in Shimada's writings, which, according to Yamada, plays fundamental role in shaping Japanese individual and national subjectivity (177). Yamada argues that Japan's cultural masochism is observable in its literary aesthetics and industry, which adhere to the expectations of Western critics, scholarship, and readers (178). Furthermore, Yamada explores Japan's political masochism, which he illustrates as a consequence of both "Japan's symbolic castration" and the "double bind of nationalism" as identified by Shimada (178). The "symbolic castration" in Shimada's writing refers to the "symbolic order" imposed by occupational forces that "castrates" Japan by introducing a gap between Japan's self-perception and the way Japan is "projected to be" within the US-leading postwar order (179).[25] On the other hand, the "double bind of nationalism" pertains to Japan's patriotist actions since the 1990s, which have not only alienated Japan from its neighbor countries in East Asia but have also intensified Japan's military reliance on the United States. Yamada's analysis centers on the underlying power dynamics between Japan and the United States, the impact of historical and geopolitical factors that shape Japanese national identity.

[25] Jacques Lacan identifies "symbolic order" as the acceptance of the laws and restrictions that control one's desire. Yamada refers to Slavoj Žižek's reading of Lacan's idea, who argues that symbolic order gives the meaning and shape the identity of a subject (34). See Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan*, London: Granta, 2006.

In his earlier writings from the 1980s, as discussed in this section, Shimada articulates his perspectives on Japanese identity in a way that starkly criticizes the prevailing social mechanism and political system. His portrayals of resistant, amorphous, masochistic identity in postwar Japan constitute his artistic vision, which lay a groundwork for the subsequent investigations of his representation of individual identity in the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy.

Chapter 2

Sequel to Butterfly: Representing In-betweenness in Postwar Japan

> *JB did not want to forget the "cruel atom bombs" that exploded in his heart, nor did he want to be a handyman working for the occupier. JB did not want to stand with either the Japanese Emperor or MacArthur. Neither did he want to be an accomplice in the war, nor the minion of the US Command. Therefore, he had affinity with neither the U.S. military, nor the Japanese citizens who are now ceaselessly throwing smiles at Americans. (Shimada, Suisei no Jūnin 232)*

This chapter will examine *Suisei no Jūnin* [Inhabitants of the Comet] (2000), the first volume of Shimada Masahiko's trilogy, *Mugen Kanon*. In this chapter, I focus on the ways in which Shimada Masahiko represents his idea of "in-between" [*aida*] through the fictional character JB, the son of Cho-cho-san and Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton.[26] As the

[26] In a non-fictional sense, the British entrepreneur, Thomas Blake Glover (1838-1911), is wide considered as

child of an American father and a Japanese mother, JB inherits a mixed cultural heritage, which turns out to be both a blessing and a curse to him. As portrayed by Shimada, JB is "born in-between Japan and America, in-between geisha and naval lieutenant, and *yaoyorozu no kami* and Jesus Christ"[27] and "wanders around in *the space of 'in-between'* [*aida*] all his life" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 173, 303; my translation). Therefore, I would like to elucidate Shimada's conceptualization of "*aida*," which I translate and refer to as the state of being "in-between," as the key concept that Shimada deploys to characterise JB.[28] I would argue that Shimada's representation of "in-between" [*aida*] is remarkable, as it not only reflects upon the postcolonial insights and the Japanese postwar discourse of identifying Japan's hybridity, but also employs JB as a literary embodiment of Japan in the late 1990s. This representation portrays Japan as an in-between entity that endeavours to reclaim its marginalized voice and reconcile with its past, yet ultimately finds itself ensnared amidst the conflicting forces of its history and its present circumstances.

In this chapter, I analyze the ways in which Shimada represents his idea of "in-between" [*aida*] through JB from two opposing perspectives, referring to both Shimada's original texts and some critical discourses of in-betweenness and hybridism from other theorists and critics. I will first trace Homi Bhabha's innovative concept of "in-

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a historical prototype for Benjamin Pinkerton.

[27] *yaoyorozu no kami* refers to the myriads of gods and deities in Japanese Shintoism.

[28] All the English translations of Shimada Masahiko's texts and dialogues are mine unless otherwise stated.

betweenness” and then examine the discourses of Japanese intellectuals Katō Shūichi, Maruyama Masao, and Iwabuchi Koichi, who have discussed the issue of hybridism in the context of Japan. Second, I will analyze Shimada’s depiction of JB as a biracial character representing the “in-between” (*aida*) in the wake of World War II. I would argue that Shimada demonstrates both the strengths and the vulnerabilities of in-betweenness through this character, which should not be simply identified as another literary representation of postcolonial insights. Finally, I will argue that Shimada’s contradictory idea of the in-betweenness that JB embodies in *Suisei no Jūnin* can be interpreted in both spatial and temporal terms if we examine it in the historical context of Japan in the 1990s.

1. In-Betweenness in the Context of Postwar Japan

Suisei no Jūnin is designed to be a Japanese sequel to the well-known opera *Madame Butterfly* (1904) by Giacomo Puccini. The opera is based on John Luther-Long’s 1898 story, “Madame Butterfly,” which tells the tragic romance of the US naval lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton and Japanese geisha Cho-cho-san. Cho-cho-san devotes all her love to an American man, who ends up abandoning her and takes their son to America. The opera *Madame Butterfly* is impressive, especially because of the scene of Cho-cho-san’s suicide in which she gives her child a miniature American flag to wave and bids him farewell right before her death. This scene inspired Shimada to write a Japanese sequel to

Madame Butterfly.[29] Composer Saegusa Shigeaki recalled how Shimada developed the idea of JB's story in a conversation with him:

> After a couple of drinks, Mr. Shimada said: "In the opera *Madame Butterfly*, a character has caught my eye: the son of Pinkerton and Cho-cho-san. The opera does not tell us what happened to this little boy after he lost his mother. Inheriting the blood of both Japan and the United States, what kind of life will he lead in times of great change? This is the topic that has long drawn my attention." (Saegusa 2)[30]

Shimada is attracted to the sense of "in-between" embodied by this fictional character with a mixed heritage. In light of this, Shimada starts his story with a question: what happens to this biracial child after his father, Pinkerton, takes him from his mother Cho-cho-san? Born in an opaque territory between the United States and Japan, JB straddles two races and cultures and generates an ambivalent, fluid identity. It prompts readers to wonder what JB's life will be like, especially when he becomes trapped between two hostile nations

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[29] Shimada has demonstrated a keen inclination towards the creation, critique, and execution of operatic works, and he authored the libretto for numerous musical compositions. In light of Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly* being a widely acclaimed masterpiece, it is scarcely astonishing that this opera enthusiast is enraptured by the alluring tale of Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton.

[30] Cited from the preface to the script of *Jr. Butterfly* (2004). This opera was composed by Saegusa Shigeaki, and the libretto was written by Shimada Masahiko, who recasts his novel, *Suisei no Jūnin*, as an opera. Unlike *Suisei no Jūnin*, *Jr. Butterfly* is not a transgenerational story but merely centres on the story of JB.

after World War II.

The Japanese word "*aida,*" literally meaning "in-between," is a central concept that Shimada deploys to answer the previous question and summarize JB's life. In *Suisei no Jūnin*, Shimada takes us through the life of JB, who is located between two nations. Before JB dies, his last words to his son Kuroudo are: "you will be just like me, wander around in *the space of 'in-betweenness'* (*aida*) with my mother's phantom" (Shimada, *Suisei* 303).

Before examining how Shimada's notion of "in-betweenness" is demonstrated in his novel, I will explore the conceptualization and dissemination of the notion of 'in-betweenness' as articulated by a prominent postcolonial scholar, Homi Bhabha, during the 1990s. Additionally, I will investigate how Japanese intellectuals Katō Shūichi and Maruyama Masao had already identified Japan as a hybrid, in-between entity, receptive to both traditional Japanese and Western elements, in their writings during the 1950s and 1960s, predating Bhabha's work.

Bhabha occupies a unique place owing to his pioneering work, *The Location of Culture* (1994), in which he first introduces the notion of "in-betweenness". In his definition, Bhabha employs the tropes of the "stairwell" and the "passage" to illustrate how the putative cultural and national boundaries, as well as initial identities, are re-negotiated in what he terms "in-between" spaces: the "terrain" and the "interstices" that emerge from cultural contact:

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white….This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (Bhabha 5)

Bhabha represents the "in-between" as an oppositional space that resists essentialism, exclusivism and aspirations for the "purity" of ethnicity, culture and identity. Bhabha's notion of the "in-between" challenges Edward Said's seminal theory of Orientalism, in which Said pessimistically interprets West-East relations as a static, mutually exclusive dichotomy.[31] Bhabha takes this binary structure in a new direction by creating the conception of "hybridity," an approach that "entertains difference" to manoeuvre or play with cultures and to escape from the presumption of distinct cultural and national identities (5). Bhabha eulogizes in-betweenness as a powerful and creative force that liberates individuals from the "narcissistic myths" of purity, origin and "authentic" identity (40). Despite his affirmation of the productive, revisionary power of in-betweenness, Bhabha also notes that in-between space is indeterminable and it can

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[31] In Said's later works, such as *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), he points out some of the limitations of *Orientalism*.

generate something provocative, offensive or disruptive. Thus, it may bring the sense of disorientation or restlessness.

Even if Bhabha officially devises the term “in-between” for postcolonial discourse and gives it an academic definition, we should not overlook the broad applicability of this term as it has also been utilized in various fields beyond postcolonial studies, for example, in border region studies, diaspora studies and transgender studies. In some of these contributions, the notion of “in-between” is used not only in the sense of cultures but also in the sense of socio-political patterns, aesthetic styles or identities.[32] Among these studies, it is particularly helpful to examine the discourses of Japan’s in-betweenness, in which Japanese intellectuals had already identified post-World War II Japan as an in-between “*chūkan-teki*, *zasshu-teki*, *aimai-na*” [in-between, hybrid, ambiguous] entity decades before Bhabha.

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[32] For example, *The Space In-Between: Essays on Latin American Culture* (2002) translates articles by Silviano Santiago, a Brazilian critic who examines the strategic relations between the disciplines of dependency and universality. Ayla Oğuz’s “Ambivalence and In-betweenness in Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Doris Lessing’s *Victoria and the Staveneys*” (2013) offers a literary study of the ambivalent identities of characters with mixed heritage. *The Power of the In-between* (2018), edited by Sonya Petersson, Christer Johansson, Magdalena Holdar and Sara Callahan, focuses on the ways in which “in-betweenness” is deployed as an intermediary tool for aesthetic analysis and critical reflection. For more, see Fernando Ainsa’s “The Challenges of Postmodernity and Globalization: Multiple or Fragmented Identities?” (2002), Sonja Kmec’s “Petrol Stations as In-between Spaces: Practices and Narratives” (2016) and M. Reza Shirazi’s *Contemporary Architecture and Urbanism in Iran: Tradition, Modernity, and the Production of space-in-Between”* (2018).

The discussion of Japan's hybridity and in-betweenness can be traced back to as early as the nineteenth century when intellectuals such as Sakuman Shōzan and Fukuzawa Yukichi discussed the Western influences on Japan's cultural and ideological heritage.[33] In the 1950s, Japanese critic Katō Shūichi (1919–2008) proposed his "Hybrid Culture theory" [*zasshu bunka ron*] in his 1956 essay "Zasshu bunka-Nihon no chīsana kibō" [Hybrid Culture: Japanese Small Hope]. In this work, he suggests that Japan's history of cultural movements led by intellectuals since the Meiji era had been a vicious cycle of rotating purification movements from two opposing poles: *Nihon shugi* [Japanism] and *Seiyō shugi* [Westernism]. Katō remarks that any intention to imagine a pure, native and homogeneous Japanese culture is meaningless as Japanese culture has always been hybrid. In his 1955 article, "Japan as a Hybrid Culture," Katō contrasts "Japanese culture" and "English and French cultures":

> After returning to Japan, I began to think that in the case of Japan, unlike other Asian countries, I would have to seek things by beginning with recognition of the fact that <u>westernisation had already deeply penetrated the culture</u>. This does not mean that I had shifted my attention from traditional Japan to

33 Japan's cultural hybridity developed even *before* any intellectuals' discussions concerning this issue. Many religious, political, ethical and linguistic aspects of Japanese culture have been profoundly influenced by ancient China, in particular the Tang Dynasty. For example, Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and the use of *kanji* are present in Japanese culture.

> westernized Japan. Rather, I began to think that the real characteristic of Japanese culture lay in the way that these two elements were so deeply intertwined that it would be difficult to eliminate either one of them. That is, if we consider English and French cultures to be typical "purebred" cultures, then we must think of Japan as a typical "hybrid" culture. (Katō 16; emphasis mine)[34]

Compared with "English and French cultures," which Katō identifies as "purebred" cultures, Katō identifies Japan as an in-between, "hybrid" entity that is open to both traditional Japanese and Western elements. The antagonism of Japanism versus Westernism is neutralized in Katō's discourse, as he does not put much emphasis on what people should do to resolve the confrontation because, according to his observation, the opposition does not exist at all.

Instead, Katō offers a positive perception of Japan's in-betweenness. Standing in sharp contrast to the exclusivist and purist views that resist Western influences, Katō notes that the Japanese masses, in contrast to some Japanese intellectuals, have *already* embraced Japan's hybrid culture:

[34] Translated from Japanese into English by Yagi Kimiko and Rebecca Jennison.

> In Japan today, it is no longer possible to identify traditional Japanese culture as something untouched by Western influence. The people know this very well. Therefore, they accept this hybrid culture as it is, and have adopted quite interesting lifestyles without clinging to such unreasonable desires as wishing to rid the culture of hybrid elements. (Katō 17)

According to Katō, the in-between, hybrid quality of Japan is “quite interesting.” Even though Katō claims that he attributes “neither a positive nor a negative meaning to the words hybrid and purebred,” he affirms Japan’s hybrid culture as a powerful force that can generate new alternatives (16). Although Katō’s argument shares some similarities with Bhabha’s in terms of their refusal of binary logic and their celebration of the productive potential of “hybridity,” Katō does not define the concept of hybridity in the same way that Bhabha does, as Katō is constrained by a quasi-essentialist assumption in which cultures are perceived as “productions” of different nations and categorized into either “purebred culture” or “hybrid culture.”

In contrast to Katō’s positive evaluation of Japan’s *zasshusei* [hybridity], another eminent Japanese thinker, Maruyama Masao, developed a different position. In *Nihon no Shisō* [Japan’s Thought], Maruyama problematized Japan’s blind imitations of foreign cultural heritages with a lack of sufficient understanding of what should be accepted and what should be rejected, which simply reflects the absence of its “*shisō-teki zahyōjiku*”

[philosophical and ideological subjective axis] (5-9; my translation). In light of this, heterogeneous philosophies and cultures are not intermingled in a new culture but merely coexist in Japan in a spatial sense, which Maruyama terms as "*seishin-teki zakkyo*" [coexistence of philosophies] (16) distinct from Katō's claim of "Japan's *zasshusei*" [hybridity]. Despite their contradictory assessments of Japan's in-betweenness, Katō and Maruyama both re-conceptualize Japan as essentially hybrid and in-between, and they both seek to offer mediation between the oppositional binary discourses of Japanism and Westernism by arguing that Japan had *always* been situated in-between.

In the 1998 essay, "Pure Impurity: Japan's Genius for Hybridism," Iwabuchi Koichi pays attention to the distinction between Japan's "hybridity" and "hybridism." He defines "hybridity" as a "non-Western cultural mixing under Western influences" and "hybridism" as Japan's strategic and intentional practice of cultural assimilation (Iwabuchi 71). Iwabuchi also identifies hybridism as a "fluid essentialism" in which Japan's intrinsic capability for "absorbing foreign cultures without changing its essence" is imagined as "an essential aspect of Japan's nationhood" (72–3). This insight points out precisely the limitations of Katō's affirmation of Japan's hybrid culture, which risks what Iwabushi defines as "hybridism".

The idea of "in-between" is more than just a theoretical concern in postwar Japan. It has also been contextualized in many postwar Japanese literary works. For instance, in

the short story “Hoshi” (Stars, 1954), *Kojima* Nobuo portrays the character of Joji/George, a Japanese American who endured wartime humiliation owing to his racial in-betweenness, clearly manifested in his physical appearance. Another trope is the Japanese translator in 1958 short story “Fui no oshi” [Sudden Muteness] by Ōe Kenzaburo. This character acts as the only communication link between American troops and local Japanese villagers. Despite his Japanese ethnicity, the translator exhibits a sense of superiority over his compatriots. Simultaneously, the Japanese villagers perceive him as an accomplice of the Americans, engendering strong resentment towards this in-between figure. Compared to Kojima, Oe delves into a subtler, more concealed in-betweenness rooted in one’s psychological stance.

The tropes of in-between figures can also be found in contemporary Japanese literature. In *Beddotaimu Aizu* (Bedtime Eyes, 1985), Amy Yamada represents in-betwenness through her portrayals of the trans-ethnic sexual relationship between African-American men and a Japanese woman. Yamada’s heroine proactively positions herself psychologically in-between Japan and the United States. For the heroine, this in-between identity functions as means of self-empowerment in matters of sexuality, and a manifestation of individual agency. In *Shishōsetsu from Left to Right* (An I-novel, 1995), Mizumura Minae depicts a Japanese girl living in the United States, perpetually conscious of her liminal status as an Oriental. Mizumura not only situates her heroine in-between

Japan and the United States, but also represents a liminal literary space in-between the "real" Japan and an imagined Japan. The deployment of fictional "in-between" characters has developed into a literary paradigm in Japanese literature through whom Japanese writers engage in profound discussion about Japan's subjectivity and culture.

In view of the foregoing, when we read Shimada's *Suisei no Jūnin*, it is important to focus on one question: how can we evaluate Shimada's representation of in-betweenness when a number of Japanese intellectuals and writers have already foregrounded the issue and deployed the fictional characters displaying in-betweenness? Does Shimada introduce any new perspectives? In the following, I will closely read *Suisei no Jūnin* and examine how Shimada represents in-betweenness through the key character of JB.

2. Celebrating the Power of In-Betweenness

The postcolonial idea of "in-between" offers Shimada a new perspective to reinterpret the Madame Butterfly narrative, in which he manages to perceive it not simply as a colonialist narrative but also as an opening for contact between cultural differences. We should not neglect Shimada's theoretical reflections on post-colonialism, which serve as a supplement to his artistic production. In a 1997 symposium on "post-colonialism and

plays," Shimada claims that the so-called "post-colonialist" works are essentially the *variants* of "colonialist" writings that cater to the new emerging market needs (Kawamura et al 10; emphasis mine). Despite this assertion, Shimada identifies "in-betweenness" as the feature that distinguishes post-colonialist works from colonialist works: "The colonized cannot utterly replace their master, they remain trapped in a *neutral, in-between* position. If we can represent *this sense* of in-between through plays and fictions, only then can post-colonialism be considered as a different stance from colonialism" (Kawamura et al 10; emphasis mine). Shimada's particular emphasis on the notion of "in-between" explains why he identifies this conception as central to his rewriting of Madame Butterfly and represents it in a quite explicit manner in his design of the JB character.

In *Suisei no Jūnin*, the narrative of Madame Butterfly serves as the prologue of the multigenerational story and, more importantly, the onset of "in-betweenness." All the continuous tales in *Mugen Kanon* are developed from the interrelation between Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton. The colonialist tone in the original narrative is diminished, and the butterfly narrative is presented as a "cross-border" narrative that disrupts the geographic boundaries of the West and the East. A "passage" linking the West and the East is constructed when Pinkerton lands in Nagasaki. To use Bhabha's words, the encounter of Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton "opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity," and the birth of their child, JB, marks the construction of the "interstitial passage between fixed

identifications," that is, the West-East "in-between" space (5). "Madame Butterfly" has been unilaterally defined, presented and characterized by Western discourses with subtle and persistent Eurocentric stereotypes and prejudice. In approaching these fixed, essentialist stereotypes that identify West and East as distinctively different, Shimada offers a new vision in which he perceives these stereotypes as the prerequisites for the later hybridisation. The tension generated from "difference" activates the "in-between" space. To some extent, by inquiring what is going to happen to their biracial child, Shimada sheds light on the transformative potential of "in-betweenness" embodied in the butterfly narrative and revitalizes the vibrancy of this narrative that had been constrained by the Western hegemonic and colonial view.

In light of this, Shimada leaps over the details of the romance between Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton and begins with the birth of their son in *Suisei no Jūnin*. Born in Nagasaki in 1894, the little boy is called *Chame* [*toraburu*] by Cho-cho-san. While *Chame* means "mischievous but cute boy" in Japanese, it is read as "*toraburu*," which is the Japanese pronunciation of the English word "trouble." This name is a double entendre that implies Cho-cho-san's determination to forget the "trouble" that she has undergone after marrying Pinkerton and perceive it merely as "mischievousness" (Shimada, *Suisei* 173). Cho-cho-san later changes the baby's name to "Joy" when she hears that Pinkerton is coming back. Following the plot of "Madame Butterfly," little *Chame* is taken away from

Cho-cho-san by his father, Pinkerton, and Cho-cho-san kills herself in desperation. Pinkerton takes *Chame* across the Pacific Ocean and brings him to his new home: the United States. The original story of "Madame Butterfly" ends here, but it is where the story of JB begins.

The Japanese name *Chame* is no longer regarded as appropriate for the new life of this little boy. Mr. and Mrs. Pinkerton, therefore, give the baby a new American name: Benjamin Pinkerton Junior. Since then, people have called him "JB": J is the abbreviation of "Junior", and B suggests "Benjamin." "Of course," Shimada points out explicitly, "B is also the abbreviation of "Butterfly."" Shimada uses a pun here to indicate that JB can be interpreted as both "Junior Benjamin" and "Junior Butterfly" (*Suisei* 178).

Shimada uses a paradigmatic literary tactic when he deploys a character's name to symbolize one's identity and past memories. Similar literary devices can be found in Kojima Nobuo's short story, "Enkei Daigaku Butai" [Yanjing University Corps], in which Kojima portrays a Chinese prostitute. In addition to her original Chinese name, she also has names in Japanese and English: "Toshiko" and "Julia," which indicate her multiple identities (Kojima 84). The fact that she never addresses herself by her Chinese name suggests that her Chinese identity was repressed during World War II. Similarly, in Shimada's story, the forbidden and abandoned Japanese name "*Chame*" serves as a symbolic representation of JB's past recollections about his mother and about Japan: "here,

there are no mother's breasts and white rice, no nanny who sings beautiful songs for him, no tatami mats with grassy fragrance, no paper sliding doors that he had licked a hole in with his tongue. Here, a boy named *Chame* is non-existent" (Shimada, *Suisei* 179). The decision made by Mr. Pinkerton and Mrs. Pinkerton to forbid the name *Chame* betrays their strong desire to erase JB's past memories about Japan. Evidently, in this new family, JB is not allowed to identify himself as Japanese.

Pinkerton tells JB when the child first sets foot on American soil: "JB, now we are in the United States. From today you must swear loyalty to this country" (Shimada, *Suisei* 178). Through Pinkerton, Shimada indicates the prevalence of a problematic presumption: one's national identity is associated with one's loyalty to the nation. The relevance of the connection between identity and loyalty is presupposed to be self-evident that we can foresee that JB's hybrid identity will inevitably invite doubts about his loyalty. The moment at which JB sets foot in the United States does not represent his rebirth as an American citizen. Instead, it marks the emergence of an "in-between" subject characterized by "alterity, marginality, exclusion, decentralisation, and disorientation" (Ainsa 61).

While JB's body has travelled across the Pacific Ocean, his heart has not. JB's past in Nagasaki is a taboo that must be discarded in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Pinkerton. Despite this, JB does not totally forget his biological mother and Japan as they wish, and

he often finds himself feeling nostalgic for Japan. JB grows up and enters a high school in San Francisco. What he enjoys most is walking on the streets of Chinatown, where he finds delight in the familiar "Asian smells and lively atmosphere," a sensory experience that never fails to captivate his heart (Shimada, *Suisei* 181). One day, JB catches a few words spoken by an Asian woman which feel very familiar to him: "*ikagadesuka*."[35] At that moment, all of his memories about Japan that were buried beneath the dust revive, and he blurts out a few Japanese words: "*oishii, okki, chocho*…"[36] Named Suzuki, the woman is a student from Japan. "Suzuki" is the name of Cho-cho-san's maid. In the story of *Madame Butterfly*, maid Suzuki serves as the observer of Cho-cho-san's tragic life. She is the only person who constantly accompanies Cho-cho-san and patiently listens to her fears. Though maid Suzuki and Ms. Suzuki are different characters, Shimada uses the same name deliberately to indicate that "Ms. Suzuki" will play an important role in JB's life.

JB is very excited to meet Ms. Suzuki. He asks Suzuki whether she can teach him Japanese and everything that she knows about Japan. Through Ms. Suzuki, the severed bond between JB and Japan is reattached again. Ms. Suzuki guides JB to discover the positive dimensions and possibilities of his multiple identities rather than remind him of his marginal status in both countries. Ms. Suzuki illuminates that JB will be *needed* by both Japan and the US as he is located between two nations.

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[35] "How do you like it" in the Japanese language.

[36] "Delicious, big, butterfly" in the Japanese language.

> I believe that someday, you will go back to the other side of the Pacific again. Please learn about the culture and history of Japan, then Japan will need you. You are a child born "in-between", so you can only *survive* "in-between". I believe that you will grow into a person *who thinks and acts not merely for Japan or for the United States, but for the "future"*. (Shimada, *Suisei* 186; emphasis mine)

Ms. Suzuki is well aware of JB's "in-between" feature, and she never attempts to reinforce or impose a certain identity on him. Instead, Ms. Suzuki directs JB to accept his "in-betweenness" and reconcile with himself. More importantly, she encourages JB to discover the generative possibility that can be developed out of his in-betweenness that can lead to the "future" that is liberated from biological, territorial and cultural limitations.

JB eventually regains the repressed memories of his mother. In 1910, nineteen-year-old JB happens to read the short story, "Madame Butterfly," written by an American writer, John Luther-Long. He reads it three times overnight. At first, JB thinks that the story may well be fictional. After reading it three times, he comes to realize that this is precisely the real story of his father and his biological mother: the American protagonist who is also named "Pinkerton," the poor Japanese geisha who kills herself after being abandoned by Pinkerton and, most importantly, their little son who is named *Chame*. This is his lost name. The story, "Madame Butterfly," revives JB's memories of Japan and his

mother that had been suppressed by Mr. and Mrs. Pinkerton. Overwhelmed by this sudden realization, JB cries bitterly.

JB resolves to talk with his father. He gives the book "Madame Butterfly" to Mr. Pinkerton as a gift. Mr. Pinkerton, although deeply disturbed and distressed by JB's actions, eventually confesses everything to his son, including the fact that he abandoned Cho-cho-san and she killed herself in despair. JB is outraged at Pinkerton's sophistry and ruthlessness:

> "You should apologize to my mother because *you* killed her!"
>
> "She committed suicide herself. I didn't expect that."
>
> "If she had not committed suicide, would you have brought her to America with us?" "I couldn't have."
>
> (Shimada, *Suisei* 189)

Pinkerton shows no intention to repent for what he did to Cho-cho-san; rather, he attempts to persuade JB to forget the dead and face the future: "You are AMERICAN, from your body to your soul! Don't forget that you have pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and you have the obligation to fight for this nation" (Shimada, *Suisei* 189). Pinkerton's attitude reveals his underestimation of JB's hybridity. Because Pinkerton had expected JB to forgo his identity as Japanese thoroughly to become

a "pure" American, he gave JB a new American name and sent him to local schools. Although JB was born in Japan, he was brought up in the United States and received an American education. Pinkerton is so eager to impose an American national identity unilaterally on JB that he attempts to divest JB of his Japanese identity. However, Pinkerton's efforts to make JB a native American backfire. JB is instead constantly entangled between the United States and Japan.

Pinkerton and Ms. Suzuki are both aware of JB's in-betweenness. However, the ways in which they perceive in-betweenness are in distinct contrast. While Ms. Suzuki embraces JB's "in-between" feature and appreciates the generative possibilities that it may bring about, Pinkerton's repulsion towards JB's "in-between" identity only results in a growing estrangement and isolation. Through a comparison of the two characters, Shimada offers us an enlightening example of two opposing attitudes towards hybridity.

JB's subsequent response demonstrates that Pinkerton's repression of JB's Japanese identity and the accentuation of his American identity is in vain. With a surge of resentment, JB rebukes his father in the Japanese language: "*Anata ga haha wo uragitta. Watashi mo amerika wo uragitteyaru*" [You betrayed my mom, and I will betray America] (Shimada, *Suisei* 189; my translation). Shimada manifests JB's hybrid national identity through his exceptional linguistic ability. Just as Shimada uses a pun to indicate that "JB" means both "Junior Benjamin" and "Junior Butterfly," the language one speaks is another

literary tactic for addressing identity. JB's practice of secretly learning the Japanese language demonstrates his determination to embrace his in-between character and regain the repressed part of his Japanese identity. JB frustrates Pinkerton's expectations by mastering the Japanese language and ultimately confronting him in Japanese. As the son of Pinkerton and Cho-cho-san, born between the United States and Japan, JB refuses to live as a loyal American national but chooses to retain his hybrid identity.

Shimada articulates the power of "in-betweenness" through JB's action of shouting at Pinkerton in the Japanese language. This action serves as the flashpoint that finally awakens Pinkerton. For this to happen, Pinkerton has to accept that his attempt to transform JB into an American is doomed to fail: "Pinkerton has to admit that JB has grown up. From then on, they will drift apart, and JB will become 'the other' that he can't understand" (Shimada, *Suisei* 191). Through Pinkerton's failure, Shimada implies the obsolescence of Pinkerton's exclusivist, colonialist views. The "future" envisioned by Ms. Suzuki, in which differences can be negotiated, is expected to come.

It would be incomplete to read JB's challenge against his father simply as a metaphorical representation of Cho-cho-san's "revenge" on Pinkerton, as it also embodies JB's significant role as a mediator between his mother and father, between Japan and the United States. In Shimada's narrative, the "in-betweenness" of JB is presented in the ways in which he enables the repressed and muted Japan to regain its own voice. In this sense, I

would argue that Shimada's notion of "in-between" illustrated in his sequel to "Madame Butterfly" diverges from Bhabha's notion of "in-between." Instead, it aligns more closely with Said's idea of the force of "resistance" that rooted in "the rediscovery and repatriation of what had been suppressed by the processes of imperialism" in the past (210). In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said affirms "the newly empowered voice asking for their narratives to be heard," a sentiment echoed in Shimada's narrative through JB's assertive yell in Japanese (Intro xx). Though Cho-cho-san, the Japanese character portrayed in the Western canon, tragically ends her story without voicing her pain, Shimada's sequel brings forth her suppressed laments, now audible through JB. To some extent, Shimada's sequel to "Madame Butterfly" can be viewed as a manifestation of what Said calls a "work of resistance," as it presents this story from a Japanese perspective.

Another clue indicating that Shimada identifies JB as more than just an "avenger" is how Shimada creates a special arrangement through which father and son are eventually reconciled. After three years have passed since their quarrel, JB writes a letter to Pinkerton, inviting him to watch the opera *Madame Butterfly*: "Your Cho-Cho-san has reincarnated onto the opera stage. It is also the story about you, Adelaide, and the boy called "*Chame*," whom I used to be. Just for one time, I hope that you can come to see the opera to mourn her" (Shimada, *Suisei* 195). Without a doubt, this invitation is not for retribution but for reconciliation. Shimada does not intend to make the former colonizer

pay for the pain that he has caused. Instead, he resumes the dialogue about these traumatic memories to reconstruct the severed bonds of trust. Although initially replying with "a butterfly can never fly as long as Adelaide lives," Pinkerton ultimately accepts JB's invitation (Shimada, *Suisei* 195). Pinkerton crosses a whole continent to watch the opera, during which he cries and confesses in tears that he has often seen Cho-cho-san in his dreams over the years.

The reunion between Pinkerton and JB facilitates a reflection on the past and also catalyses a new start in the present. In this process, JB functions as both an emancipator and a mediator, which demonstrates Shimada's perception of in-betweenness. JB refuses to let a part of his identity remain in oblivion. His in-betweenness compels him to reveal the concealed and suppressed memories underneath the dominant narrative. In addition to its liberating potential, Shimada identifies the mediating power of "in-betweenness" as it generates possibilities to reconcile the binary oppositions so that both Japan and the United States can directly and squarely confront the past.

To return to the question raised at the beginning of this essay: how can we evaluate Shimada's notion of in-betweenness when a number of Japanese intellectuals and writers have already foregrounded the surrounding issues and deployed tropes of in-betweenness? Compared with Japanese intellectuals such as Katō and Maruyama, who have identified and presented Japan as "in-between" in their 1950s and 1960s texts, Shimada shows

greater affirmation of in-betweenness. In examining this difference, we should not overlook the major historical transformations that Japan experienced from the 1950s to the 1990s.

During the US occupation from 1945 to 1952, Japan experienced a passive hybridisation of both its political and ideological regimes. The Japan-US Security Treaty, revised in 1960, granting the United States the right to establish bases, essentially resulted in the United States" military and political control of Japan. Witnessing the nation's rupture caused by its defeat in World War II and the penetration of US power, some Japanese intellectuals attempted to resolve Japan's dilemma after the defeat by constructing a narrative to explain Japan's passive hybridisation. As critiqued by Igarashi Yoshikuni, thanks to the construction of the discourse of Japan's in-betweenness, postwar Japan was able to "leap over the historical disjuncture" of the defeat to "identify with American material culture" (105). Given this historical context, these Japanese intellectuals who considered Japan as having "always been hybrid" essentially managed to either relieve or draw attention to the political and ideological tensions and the binary opposition between Japan and the United States. By asserting that Japan has *always* had parts of it in common with others, they convinced the Japanese or even themselves that Japan would be able to be immune from the effects of the identity-based hierarchy

imposed on it by the United States, the "colonizer" in the historical context of immediate postwar period of Japan.

However, in the 1980s and early 1990s, Japan entered "a new stage of hybridisation of culture," which resulted in a shifting of Japanese perceptions of the United States and itself (McCormack 12). First, the Japanese masses perceived Japan's in-betweenness and its hybridisation in a more favourable light because of their changing attitudes towards the United States. One possible explanation for this is that the United States managed to transition its self-image as it strove to render a de-politicalized image of Japan. First, the word "America" gradually became distanced from "the bombs," "bases" and "GIs" and came to be divorced from the image of military and political hegemony. Second, the United States was re-imaged as a symbol of a developed economy and a utopia of a capitalist society with an advanced consumer life (cf. Yoshimi 258). To most Japanese individuals nowadays, "American" reminds them of "Coca-Cola, Disney, McDonald's," etc (Yoshimi 258). As a result, Japan's hybridisation, mostly the Americanisation of the 1980s and 1990s, did not simply proceed in terms of ideology: "it permeated Japanese people's everyday lives" (Toyosaki and Eguchi 7). Hip-hop music and Hollywood have a significant impact on Japanese popular culture; proficiency in English has become a superior skill. Most Japanese youths desire "to catch up with America and to obtain the American lifestyle" (Satsuka 78). The aforementioned observations illuminate

that the easing of tensions between Japan and the United States has led to a perceptual transformation concerning Japan's hybridization/Americanization at the turn of the twenty-first century. This shift, I contend, has redefined it from being perceived as a threat to its homogeneity to being recognized as an indication of societal progress.

The second transition is that Japan was forging more global connections and expanding market access to more countries, which liberated Japan from the binary opposition to the United States and allowed it to become more confident in absorbing foreign elements strategically and proactively. Iwabuchi Koichi's notion of "Japan's hybridism" introduced in the first section is one of the representative observations of this transition. According to Iwabuchi, Japan does not passively accept foreign influence under colonial pressure but strategically absorbs foreign cultures and produces "a particular image of the Japanese nation: Japan as a great assimilator" (71). Japan's in-between and hybrid "feature" is not regarded as inferior to those "purebred" ones, but rather as a remarkable capability that enables it to adapt better to the new global realities where postulated absolute national and cultural boundaries are dissolving. Consequently, Japan's in-betweenness has become perceived as "coolness," "evidence of Japan's successful engagement in transnational capitalist flows" and globalization (Takamori 106). Ōe Kenzaburō, in a 1990 speech, claims that Japan possesses "a view of the world richly shaped by both traditional and foreign cultural elements, and a will to work as a

cooperative member of the world community" (54). It is necessary to note that the discourse that celebrates Japan's in-betweenness as its distinct feature reinforces the sense of Japanese uniqueness and risks essentialisation. Despite that, to some extent, Japan has dispelled the inferiority complex in relation to its "in-betweenness" and transformed from a passive stance to a more active one in perceiving the process of hybridisation.

As discussed previously, changing historical contexts have resulted in a shifting assessment of Japan's in-betweenness, transitioning from a negative, self-defensive stance to a more positive and proactive outlook. This transformation in the perception of Japan's in-betweenness explains why Shimada's perspective, which leans towards a more favourable representation, in stark contrast to the ideas proposed by Maruyama in the 1960s.

In addition, Shimada adopts postcolonial perspectives in the postwar discussion of Japan's in-between character as he celebrates the non-essential potential of in-betweenness. He imagines a subject of in-betweenness who "thinks and acts not merely for Japan or for the United States, but for the 'future'" (Shimada, *Suisei* 186). The ways in which Shimada affirms in-betweenness as a force of resistance and mediation share more similarities with Said's (1993) ideas than with Bhabha's (1994) ideas, as Bhabha's emphasis on the generative, productive possibilities of in-betweenness are not adequately demonstrated in Shimada's depiction of JB.

However, the in-betweenness embodied by JB should not be simply understood as another literary representation of postcolonial insights. Instead, JB should be interpreted as the literary representation of how Shimada perceives "1990s Japan": an in-between entity that seeks to regain its marginalized voice and reconcile with its past. Shimada foregrounds the issue of in-betweenness in the context of 1990s Japan, where subjects of "ambivalence, doubleness and in-betweenness" are already "within Japan and not just 'out there'" (Iwabuchi 83). In this sense, the notion of "in-between" is not necessarily discussed within the binary relation between "the West" and "Japan" or between "the colonizer" and "colonized." Based on this observation, Shimada does not rewrite a story of *two* characters representing the West *and* Japan as David Henry Hwang does.[37] Shimada does not create another "Cho-cho-san" and "Pinkerton"; instead, he conceives *one* character of in-betweenness. JB should be read as the product of Shimada's literary imaginary of 1990s Japan, where hybrid, ambiguous cultures and identities have been substantially forged *within* Japan under the influence of globalization and hybridisation.

However, it is important to note that Shimada does not unilaterally celebrate the power of in-betweenness in his literary representation. Instead, he strives to explore both the *possibility* and *impossibility* of "in-betweenness." In the following section, I will analyze Shimada's representation of the vulnerabilities and limits of in-betweenness.

[37] David Henry Hwang's 1988 play, *M. Butterfly*, is one of the well-known postcolonial rewritings of "Madame Butterfly." It tells the story of a French diplomat and a Peking opera singer.

3. Trapped In-Between

Shimada's opposing evaluations of in-betweenness are addressed through what happens to JB in the wake of World War II: despite Shimada's celebration of the power of in-betweenness, he also addresses the negative perspectives of in-betweenness. JB is a hybrid in race, culture and language and has been located between Japan and the United States throughout his life. Shimada places JB in the special historical era of World War II when conflicts between various states have intensified, in which JB's in-betweenness is perceived more as a threat than a blessing. Shimada portrays JB's sense of dislocation, anxiety and hesitation generated by his hybrid and fluid self-identity, which results in his marginal position in both Japan and the United States. Moreover, Shimada also presents how JB endures suspicion, exclusion and hostility from the traditionally defined "pure" American and Japanese nationals. JB's irreducible predicament and emotional dilemma reflect Shimada's critical thinking about the negative impacts of in-betweenness.

A few years after JB and Pinkerton's reunion, JB accepts the job at the Consulate in Kobe to return to Japan, his mother's homeland that he longs to visit again. In 1930, JB is dispatched to Kobe as an analyst of the US army. His real task is to monitor the movements of Japanese military officers and to gather operational intelligence from them.

Even though JB has to follow the orders of the US military, he resolves not to betray either Japan or the United States.

Thirty-six years have passed since JB left Japan. In Kobe, JB meets Ms. Suzuki again, the Japanese lady who had secretly taught him the Japanese language. Ms. Suzuki becomes the principal of a local girls" school. Introduced by Suzuki, JB gets to know her student, Noda Nami. This Japanese girl reminds JB of his mother. They spend a relaxing and lovely two years together: writing letters, listening to classical music and travelling around. However, Nami's elder brother is a Japanese military officer who suspects that JB is a spy for the US military. Nami's brother is concerned about the increasing hostility between Japan and the US due to Japan's military actions in Asia, and he knows very clearly that the relationship between JB and Nami will inevitably bring them trouble. He tries to persuade JB to give up on Nami: "if you really love Nami, please bury your memory and go back to America quietly" (Shimada, *Suisei* 204). However, JB is not presented as another frivolous "Pinkerton," nor is Nami presented as another poor "Cho-cho-san". JB faithfully loves Nami, and they get married. Through the romance between JB and Nami, Shimada depicts an ideal love that can overpower the hostility between enemy states.[38]

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[38] It is speculated that Thomas Blake Glover, a British entrepreneur who resided in Nagasaki, and his love story with his Japanese wife named Tsuru Awajiya, served as a prototype for JB and Nami's love story. Thomas Glover was instrumental in founding a Japanese shipbuilding company, establishing Japan's first

As noted before, Shimada does not intend to rewrite the story of "Madame Butterfly" by simply telling another love story between an American man and a Japanese woman. Therefore, Shimada spares only a few pages on the romance between JB and Nami. Instead, Shimada focuses more on JB's individual experience of "in-betweenness" during the war. By having JB stranded between the US and Japan, in particular, in an era of World War II when the tension between the two nations was growing, Shimada indicates that the power of in-betweenness may not have an effective function in certain circumstances of social unrest and distrust. In such a case, an "in-between," hybrid identity will aggravate one's dilemma of moral judgment and generate senses of uncertainty and restlessness.

During the war, JB goes to China, where he becomes a first-hand witness to the atrocities of the Japanese army. As portrayed in Shimada's narrative, "Japanese troops invaded Shanghai and Nanjing, and massacred local people repeatedly" (Shimada, *Suisei* 211). The attitudes of ordinary Japanese people also make JB nauseous: "the Japanese people living in Harbin were extremely excited about this. They become thirsty for blood, and they treat the Russians and the Chinese as if the Japanese are their masters" (Shimada, *Suisei* 221). JB's revulsion serves as a poignant reflection of Shimada's postwar Japan

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railroad, mint, mechanized coalmine, and brewery, and sending Japanese students to study abroad. He therefore becomes the first non-Japanese who was presented with the Order of the Rising Sun.

critique of Imperial Japan, shedding light on the dark chapters of history and underscoring the societal attitudes prevalent during that era.

JB's observation in China reverses his perception of Japan. Because of the tragedy experienced by his mother and his happy childhood in Japan, JB felt a close affinity with Japan and regarded Japan as his mother country. He had sympathised with his mother, the poor Japanese woman who was mercilessly treated and abandoned by his own father. Recalling his past memories in Japan and learning the Japanese language brought immense solace to JB, because these recollections associated with his mother represented love, warmth, and bliss. However, the atrocities of the Japanese troops give JB a severe psychological shock. JB cannot assuage his sense of anxiety and hesitation, as he can neither identify himself as a member of the wartime Japanese community nor feel a sense of honor for the victory of Imperial Japan. Simultaneously, JB also finds it difficult to perceive Japan decisively as a hostile Other as an ordinary American does. Due to his hybrid and fluid identity, JB is trapped "in-between" anger and shame, feeling torn between two opposing feelings in his heart.

In 1945, the United States dropped two atomic bombs that resulted in Japan's surrender. However, the termination of World War II does not mark the end of JB's "in-betweenness" and the entanglements inherent in it. American troops enter Japan and start their subsequent domination over Japan. Though working for the US military, JB fails to

enjoy the victory of the US as a "normal" American national. Instead, he plunges into a deep depression for Japan's disastrous defeat and for the tragedies caused by the atomic bombs. Even though the world war is over, the war in JB's heart never seems to end:

> JB did not want to forget the "cruel atom bombs" that exploded in his heart, nor did he want to be a handyman working for the occupier. JB did not want to stand with either the Japanese Emperor or MacArthur. Neither did he want to be an accomplice in the war, nor the minion of the US Command. Therefore, he had affinity with neither the U.S. military, nor the Japanese citizens who are now ceaselessly throwing smiles at Americans. (Shimada, *Suisei* 232)

As long as JB is situated "in-between," he is incapable of attaining personal relief and freedom. Inhabiting the interstice of the United States and Japan, JB experiences a profound sense of dislocation, unable to find solace or connection among either his American "fellows" or the local Japanese community. It may seem that JB can choose to join either side. However, the reality is that JB is trapped in a marginalized status, ostracised by both sides. Essentially, JB is unable to stay at ease or gain a sense of belonging from either side.

Even though being bilingual in English and Japanese makes him qualified to work for General Douglas MacArthur as a regional advisor, his excessive sympathy for the

Japanese people is perceived as a drawback. JB never seems to find a way to become a "loyal American" as expected:

> JB stood in front of General MacArthur, the man who is now taking control of the fate of Japan. All JB wanted to do is to vent out his hatred roaring in his head, he thought, "You've dropped atomic bombs on my mother's hometown! Isn't it enough? How dare you even attempt to turn this country into a servant of the United States!" … Since then, JB had never stepped into General MacArthur's palace again. (Shimada, *Suisei* 234)

I would interpret the "you" in this citation as "the US military" rather than "General MacArthur" personally. Shimada depicts how JB suffers mentally as an American Japanese, as for him, his "father's country" is the one that uses bombs to attack his "mother's country." JB reproaches the US military not because he identifies as Japanese but because his feeling of powerlessness compels him to find someone to blame. JB's reaction should be interpreted as a result of the negative impact of his hybrid identities. On the other hand, JB's in-betweenness thwarts the fulfilment of absolute loyalty demanded by the era. As a result of his in-betweenness, JB finds himself marginalized and cast aside by both the United States and Japan.

It is important to explore why Shimada portrays JB's psychological and emotional dilemma of in-betweenness. Why does Shimada choose to highlight the detrimental aspects of this state by revisiting the traumas of World War II, especially at the turn of the 21st century, six decades after the war? Through Shimada's portrayal of JB's dilemma of in-betweenness, we are expected to revisit traumatic war memories and Japan's defeat, the past that postwar Japan is keen to forget. JB, as a fictional character, serves as a literary embodiment of wartime hybridity. The conflicts among different ethnicities, identities, and cultures are reflected through JB's inner crisis. The author's negative assessment of in-betweenness unveils his perception of Japan's haunting past, which exemplifies the broader postwar introspection concerning Japan's military past. JB's feelings of dislocation, alienation, and confusion—the adverse effects of in-betweenness—echo Shimada's own sentiments as a postwar Japanese individual contemplating Japan's turbulent military history. In this narrative framework, Shimada's position represents how "Japan in the 1990s," as an in-between entity, strives to reclaim its marginalized voice and reconcile with its colonialist past during World War II.

Therefore, it is necessary to interpret Shimada's deliberate choice to revisit Japan's colonialist past and his representation of in-betweenness in the context of Japan in the 1990s. The term "in-between" possesses dual dimensions—temporal and spatial. I would argue in the following that Shimada uses JB's dilemma of being trapped "in-between" the

United States and Japan (spatial) to recall that of the postwar generations living the 1990s who are trapped between the immediate postwar years and the 1990s (temporal). This intentional parallel underscore the nuanced interconnections between individual experiences and broader historical reflection in Shimada's narrative.

In the postscript of *Suisei no Jūnin*, the first volume of the series, Shimada, who has been writing novels for nearly twenty years, articulates his original intentions for writing *Mugen Kanon*, which may help us answer the question of why Shimada brings us back to Japan's colonialist and militarist past when addressing the negative impacts of in-betweenness.

> Over these years, I have been writing works that I assumed people would enjoy. Every six or seven years, I'd try to add something new into my writings. But one thing that has never been lost is *my righteous indignation towards history and society. I have always been driven by the fear of forgetting the past*, the force that pushes me to work harder. (Shimada, *Suisei* 380; emphasis mine)

So, what causes Shimada's "righteous indignation towards history and society" and "fear of forgetting the past" in 1990s Japan?

To start with the conclusion: the re-emergence of neo-nationalism in the 1990s is the direct cause of Shimada's "indignation" and "fear." Shimada's attitude resonates with the growing concerns of Japanese leftists about the ascent of ultranationalism and neo-conservatism during this period. With the conclusion of the Showa period in 1989, Japan experienced a remarkable social, political and economic change. With the Cold War order collapsing in the late 1980s, Japan had to adjust its international role and reconsider its diplomatic relations with the United States and other Asian countries. Japan developed closer connections with China, Korea and other Asian countries because of increasing economic cooperation and cultural communication. As a result, the Japanese public was acquiring more access to the voices of victims, the crimes and atrocities committed by Imperial Japan and severe criticism from victimized Asian countries.[39] This exacerbated the divergence of the Japanese public's opinions about the war responsibility and the reconfiguration of the post-war national identity.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe posed an ideological crisis for many leftist groups and leftist intellectuals in Japan. They had to reinvent new strategies in response to the discrediting of Marxism and changing global landscape. Amidst efforts for the promotion of economic equality, institutional and structural reforms, the ways in which Japan confronts the historical legacy

[39] For more, see Igarashi Yoshikuni's *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970,* Princeton University Press, 2000. ProQuest Ebook Central, p. 203–4.

of World War II serves a focal point. Some Japanese leftists were working actively to atone for war crimes, compensating the victimized countries and advocating anti-war ideals. Meanwhile, the conservative actions of publicly mourning those who died during the war and campaign for the revision of war-renouncing Article 9 to reinvigorate Japan's national pride intensified contradictions and caused growing tensions between these two camps. This is the historical context when the controversies over history textbooks arose.

The historical revisionist textbook campaign of the 1990s is perceived as "an ominous sign of neo-nationalist resurgence" (Rose 131). In the 1990s, historical revisionist conservatives modified the depictions in one of the secondary education history textbooks to whitewash and euphemise the war crimes of the Empire of Japan during World War II. In late 1996, Fujioka Nobukatsu and Nishio Kanji established *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho o Tsukuru Kai* [The Society for History Textbook Reform] to promote a revisionist view of Japan's history. The new history textbook, *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho [The New History Textbook],* was compiled by members of this group and was submitted for authorisation in 2000. In *Kokumin no Yudan* [Carelessness of the People] (2000), the authors attacked the existing postwar history education and specifically its representation of Japan's wartime transgressions. Fujioka and Nishio asserted that the portrayals of the Nanjing Massacre and the comfort women issue in historical narratives exemplify a "*jigyakushikan*" (self-

flagellant historical view) and are detrimental to cultivating a sense of "pride in the history of our nation" (201; my translation).

Politicians and intellectuals were not the only ones involved in the debate over history textbooks: the neo-nationalist discourse became prevalent in newspapers, books, the internet and other mass forms of expression and made an astonishing social impact in Japan. From December 1995 to August 1998, Fujioka Nobukatsu's *Kyōkasho ga oshienai rekishi* [The History Not Taught in Textbooks] (1998) became a best-selling series and sold more than 1.2 million copies. Nishio Kanji's 1999 book *Kokumin no Rekishi* [The History of the People] sold 700,000 copies and became a bestseller in 2000.[40] The neo-nationalist narrative was astoundingly widespread among the Japanese public.

Despite the decline of leftist social movements in Japan since the 1980s, many leftist citizen groups and intellectuals still play active roles in resisting conservative attempts to erase Japan's militarist past. Multiple leftist groups, including the Japan Teachers Union [*Nihon kyōshokuin kumiai*], and Children and Textbooks Japan Network 21 [Kodomo to kyōkasho zenkoku netto 21] actively resisted conservative perspectives during the history textbook controversy. Noteworty among these is the Center for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility (*Nihonno Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Senta*)

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[40] For more, see Kohei Kurahashi. *Rekishi shūsei shugi to sabukaruchā : 90-Nendai hoshu gensetsu no media bunka*, Seikyusha, 2018.

established in April 1993. This group engages in rigorous research on Japan's colonialist history during the Second World War and advocates for postwar compensation. They submitted research materials concerning the issue of comfort women to the Japanese government in July 1993. Additionally, Japanese intellectuals such as Arai Shin'ichi and Tawara Yoshifumi also criticize the revisionist actions of creating a favourable and "beautiful" historical narrative in their respective publications.[41]

Shimada's stance on this issue aligns with the leftist groups and intellectuals.[42] The prevalence of the problematic neo-nationalist narrative and practice in 1990s Japan has evoked Shimada's "fear of forgetting the past." In his 2003 essay, "The Trauma of Defeat," Shimada articulates his anxiety about the crisis that he sensed in the 1990s explicitly: "Japan *used to be* a country that well knew what defeat meant. I used the past tense of 'used to be,' it does not mean that we all have amnesia, but it means that the war history has been *deliberately* forgotten in the nearly sixty years after the war" (Shimada,

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[41] For more, see Arai Shin'ichi's 1995 book *Sensō sekinin-ron* and Tawara Yoshifumi's *"Tsukurukai" bunretsu to rekishi gizō no shinsō.*

[42] Despite the limited influence of leftist movements in the late 1990s when Shimada wrote *Suisei no Jūnin*, he shared similar concerns with leftist groups regarding the revisionist attempts. However, categorizing Shimada as a strictly leftist writer necessitates more careful consideration. In his debut work, "Yasashī sayoku no tame no kiyūkyoku," Shimada portrays leftist movements among Japanese youth as a mere form of childish play that lacks seriousness or clear ideological goal. I would argue that Shimada's 1980s texts reflect his contradictory attitude towards Japanese leftist movements. Shimada is disillusioned with the radical student protests, while also feeling a sense of loss regarding the fading spirit of resistance in Japan. In this sense, despite his numerous portrayals of leftist social movements in his 1980s works, I would argue that Shimada's stance is more nuanced and ambivalent, rather than strictly aligned with any single ideology.

"Haisen Torauma" 201, emphasis mine). Similar to the endeavours of numerous left-wing groups, Shimada believes that forgetting and distorting history are not viable means to overcome the trauma.

Even with the long passage of time, Shimada believes that Japan's past in relation to World War II needs to be remembered, especially when the generation who has truly experienced the war is gradually passing away. Even in the 1990s, when Shimada began to conceive of *Suisei no Jūnin*, the generation of Japanese people born and raised in the peaceful and prosperous "postwar Japan," like Shimada and most of his readers, still faced the question of how to identify themselves in response to the international criticisms on the war responsibility. This question has become a "collective trauma" experienced by Japanese people that "damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality," which is well proven by the striking divergence between reformists and the conservatives in the 1990s (Caruth 187).

Controversies surrounding Japan's past never seem to have vanished in postwar Japan, which indicates that in many cases, "postwar Japan" is acknowledged by international communities outside Japan to be a continuous entity of "Imperial Japan."[43] However, influenced by the Japanese official narrative, many Japanese people today

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[43] For example, China and South Korea, at both the official and individual levels, have protested against Japanese politicians for their visits to Yasukuni Shrine. America's Associated Press criticized Abe Shinzō, a Prime Minister of postwar Japan, for his increasing attempts to "whitewash Japan's brutal past since taking office" (AP News, 2020, August 15).

perceive the war as a "closed book" (Segers 260). The end of the war is a watershed marking the construction of a new "Japan" that is distinctly different from "Imperial Japan." Postwar Japan is the peaceful, democratic modern country where the people of Shimada's generation are now located, while Imperial Japan is perceived as a radical "other." It is well accepted by most postwar generations that "postwar Japan" is a discontinuous entity from the past.

On the other hand, it is psychologically difficult for most postwar Japanese individuals to identify war participants, who might be their parents and grandparents, as "criminals." Japanese scholar Takashi Aso articulates his vision of how Japanese people perceive their past: "most Japanese people today assume that their fellow citizens are antimilitary and peace loving, and thus, they are reluctant to face the imperialist and military actions that Japan undertook in the past" ("Ethics" 15–6). Hence, some Japanese people are eager to redefine themselves by divorcing themselves from the "Imperial Japan" of the past and its atrocious war crimes. Aso illustrates that "the reality of war" has been converted into "images," which have been artificially disseminated and intensified as "memories" (*Little Saigon* 30). "History" has been reproduced once it is narrated in any form. In this sense, for Shimada's generation, who has no direct experience of war, how "history" is articulated as "historical narratives" and what "images" are artificially produced and left behind are even more of a concern (cf. *Little Saigon* 31). Japan has

constructed an official historical narrative concerning the war “from their side,” in which Japanese subjects were manipulated, “the instigators had been punished, reparations made, justice done” (Segers 260). Wrenching testimonies from atomic bomb victims and unsevered kinship bonds with the wartime generation are entangled with Japan’s “narrative” and largely prevent Shimada’s generation from taking an absolute opposing position to the war participants.

Escaping from the colonialist past, in this case, becomes a seemingly alluring resolution for some Japanese people. Igarashi Yoshikuni makes an even more negative assessment as he claims that “the process of forgetting was completed within postwar Japan” due to the United States” cover-ups under the Cold War political paradigm and the postwar Japanese revisionists” beatification of Japan’s history (200). Igarashi argues that Japan’s traumatic past lost its original impact over time despite its repeated re-articulation (210). In correlation to Aso’s claim mentioned above, what gets completely forgotten is “real history as such,” when only “narratives” and “images” are left over. Thus, at the social level, Japan’s past is inevitably dissipating. In this historical context, according to Igarashi, the desire of younger postwar Japanese generations to distance themselves from the colonialist past of “Imperial Japan” is becoming astonishingly stronger.

Have postwar Japan and its younger citizens totally forgotten Japan’s past? Shimada offers an alternative presentation of Japanese people’s perception of the war,

though it is highly based on his personal observations. Shimada vividly presents the conflicting and ambiguous sentiments of the Japanese living in the 1990s when they recall the wartime Japan, which he identifies as a dilemma of "in-betweenness." These Japanese people, according to Shimada, find themselves oscillating and trapped between Japan's past and present. They yearn for a decisive distinction between *wartime* and *postwar* Japan, yet face severe criticism by the international society for this aspiration. Shimada illustrates that the generations of 1990s never truly forgot the past despite the fact that they sought to ignore and leave behind Japan's fascist and militaristic past.

To Japanese generations living in the 1990s, the dilemma of "in-betweenness" remains unsolvable as long as the real "others" exist, who are either Asian nations previously victimized by Imperial Japan or Japan's former enemy, the United States. In victimized Asian countries where the suffering and humiliation as a result of the Japanese occupation are taught in meticulous detail, the collective memories of the War of Resistance against Japan are reinforced, and victims are still seeking apologies and reparations at both the official and individual levels. As long as victimized countries keep reminding Japan of its colonialist past, young Japanese generations will be forced to confront it. The perception gap concerning Japan's war history was intensified in the 1990s by the increasing impact of the previously victimized Asian countries, in particular,

China.[44] In contrast to postwar Japanese generations' complicated feelings towards the nation's past, victimized Asian countries, viewing Japan as the Other, criticize, condemn and disdain Japan's wartime inhumanity in a rather resolute and decisive way. No matter how eager younger Japanese generations seek to conceal and leave behind Japan's fascist and militaristic past, the real others ceaselessly remind them that they cannot be regarded as an exclusive part of the "Japanese community" as a whole. No matter how many years have elapsed, wartime and postwar Japanese history is perceived as continuous. Therefore, the postwar Japanese generations still have an ethical responsibility to face Japan's past and initiate the provision of compensation as long as they inherit same language, and same historical and cultural heritage as the wartime Japanese generations. The presence of real others functions as a reminder and an external power that prevents the postwar Japanese generations from distancing themselves from Japan's past. As a result, according to Shimada's assessment, the postwar Japanese generations are essentially stuck in the interstice between Japan's past and present.

In *Suisei no Jūnin*, Shimada portrays JB's interweaving feelings of anger and guilt to present Japanese people's mentality of "in-betweenness." Just as JB feels indignant and ashamed about the brutal war crimes undertaken by Imperial Japan, Shimada's generation

[44] Rien T. Segers suggests that the rise of China since the early 1990s has "consequences most severely for Japan in particular" (253). See "The Necessity for a Reinterpretation of a Changing Japan" in *A New Japan for the Twenty-First Century* (2008).

who experienced the 1990s find it difficult to empathise with the behaviors or mentalities of the war participants of Imperial Japan. On the other hand, it is difficult for JB to sever the bond between Japan and himself completely. JB takes the initiative to learn Japanese against his father's will, and he still perceives Japan as "my mother's hometown" after witnessing the atrocities committed by Japanese troops. Through JB's psychological and emotional dilemmas, Shimada illustrates the predicament of the Japanese people of his own generation: no matter how much they want to, they are unable to disconnect entirely from the blood of an emotional link with the wartime generation.

Shimada attempts to reconcile the past and the present by rousing the consciousness of the Japanese public. According to Shimada's assessment, Japanese individuals of his generation entrapped between the past and the present are enduring haunting after-effects of Japan's colonialist history and struggling due to their liminal mental state. Hence, some of them give up on critical reflections, subscribing to the official rhetoric of history, and adopt a numb, reluctant and evasive attitude toward Japan's past aggressions. However, Shimada believes that the young postwar generations should confront the trauma at its origin: only by knowing what had happened can Japan wholeheartedly face the issues of its responsibilities. Despite the feelings of depression and dislocation, Shimada acknowledges that the practice of distorting history and dissociating themselves from their nation's war memories is not a solution to ease the tension and

resolve disputes. He conveys to his readers the message that one must not give up even when in pain and exhaustion. JB's last words to his son Kuroudo adequately conclude his entire life and what Shimada intends to express: "you will be just like me, wander around in the space of "in-between" with my mother's phantom. I know it is tiring, but *don't give up, never*!" (Shimada, *Suisei* 303; emphasis mine). Just as being trapped in-between is a curse for JB and his son, being trapped between the history of collective violence and the present is a "curse" for Shimada's generation. Nonetheless, Shimada displays his courage by articulating his opinion on how to confront Japan's past and transcend it: one needs to *contemplate* and *accept* Japan's history of aggression and its consequences rather than *overlook* it or replace it with a deceptive narrative.

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In conclusion, Shimada presents JB's sense of in-betweenness from two opposing sides: Shimada not only echoes the postcolonial perspectives that celebrate the liberating and mediating power of in-betweenness but also takes prudential consideration of its possible negative impact on individuals. However, JB should not be understood simply as another literary representation of the postcolonial insights of Said or Bhabha. From the following three points, we can tell that Shimada's conception of "*aida*" (in-between) is not addressed in the same sense as Bhabha's notion of "in-between."

First, while Bhabha develops his discussion of in-betweenness more from the perspective of *cultures*, Shimada identifies "in-between" more as a *national identity-related* liminal position or mental state. Shimada's deployment of "in-between" can be interpreted in both spatial and temporal terms, as an analogy is drawn between JB's predicament and that of Shimada's generation. Ostensibly, in-betweenness refers to JB's liminal condition when trapped between the United States and Japan (spatial). However, placing Shimada's texts in the historical context of 1990s Japan, we can find the hidden meaning underneath: JB's liminal condition essentially represents a similar dilemma of the younger Japanese generation who are trapped between Japan's past and present (temporal) when recalling its abhorrent history of aggression.

Second, in Shimada's narrative, "in-betweenness" is not represented as a general or universal theoretical conception but as a reflection of the concrete particularity of Japanese discourse. This is because Shimada's notion of "in-between" is largely based on his observations of Japan, the place where he was born, raised and situated when writing *Suisei no Jūnin*. Therefore, in this fiction, we observe that JB does not take a neutral and impartial stand toward Japan and the United States; rather, he shows more emotional affirmation for Japan. Shimada is not a typical diasporic or cross-border writer like Kazuo Ishiguro, Ian Hideo Levy, or Mizumura Minae, who have real-life transnational experiences. This explains why Shimada's presentation of in-betweenness is largely based

on his literary imagination, and his critical concerns have always been closely associated with what he has observed and sensed in Japan. As a Japanese national who has spent most of his life domestically, Shimada has undergone Japan's postwar internationalisation and read cross-border writings but still finds himself trapped in the bind of a single nationality. I would argue that the in-betweenness embodied by JB is Shimada's grasp of his own conflicting psychology as he both fears and desires to have transnational experiences. However, this does not mean that Shimada's observation is less important, as he provides a perspective of an *insider* and illustrates that the issue of "in-betweenness" can also happen *within* Japan.

This is why we should not forget to trace the discourses of Japanese intellectuals on Japan's hybridity and hybridism in addition to the postcolonialist discourses of Said and Bhabha. Shimada appears sceptical of the Japanese discourses of the immediate postwar period that attempt to pre-empt the inferior and fragmentary status of postwar Japan by asserting that Japan has always been hybrid and thus partially similar to the colonized. Shimada also refuses to perceive Japan's hybridism as its unique strength. Distancing himself from ethnocentricity and exclusivism, Shimada puts more emphasis on the delicate feelings of Japanese individuals who are situated in the post-Cold War era. Therefore, Shimada's presentation of in-betweenness can be considered a response to and an update of postwar Japanese discourses. Shimada conceives the character of JB as a literary

representation of the "1990s Japan" that he perceives: an in-between entity that seeks to retrieve its marginalized voice and reconcile with its past but instead finds itself trapped in-between its past and present.

Third, Said and Bhabha place a relatively greater emphasis on the relationship between "the West" and its non-West "others" rather than the relationships *within* the non-West world when developing their discussion of the notion of in-betweenness. Shimada broadens this view by shedding light on Japan's dual condition of "in-betweenness" as Japan is both formerly semi-colonized by the West and a former colonizer of Asia. Shimada's portrayals of JB's observations of Japan's war crimes in Asia illustrate that he does not overshadow the presence of victimized Asia when engaging with the issue of Japan's in-betweenness. As mentioned above, the younger Japanese generation's dilemma of in-betweenness is closely related to the growing presence of Asia, which serves as a reminder of Japan's haunting past. Despite Shimada's portrayals of victimized Asian countries, in most instances, Shimada's exploration of the concept of in-betweenness does not deviate too far from the dichotomy of "Japan" and "America." This limitation could invite criticism. However, in the final volume of *Mugen Kanon*, Shimada undergoes a notable departure from the butterfly narrative and the binary framework that contrasts Japan with the United States. Instead, Shimada delves into the deconstruction of the imagined homogenous identity of "Japan" by introducing the perspectives of the Ainu and

Russia. This progressive shift transcends the rigid US-Japan binary framework and embraces a more nuanced exploration of identity, warranting further research in the future.

In light of these three points, I contend that Shimada's opposing presentations of "in-betweenness" expand postcolonial insights and revitalize the critical arguments of Japan's in-betweenness. They offer us a distinctive perspective with which to perceive Japan's in-betweenness in the context of its past and present.

Chapter 3

The Postwar Butterfly: Revisit the American Occupational Past of Japan

"The forgotten love will be turned into stories one by one by the blind narrators. Is history the grave of love? Otherwise, is it that history is narrated to erase love? However, war, politics, and conspiracy are all connected with love. The love of the 21st century begins when the love of the 20th century comes to an end." (Shimada Masahiko, Suisei no Jūnin 381)

In the preceding chapter, I focused on the story of the character JB, and Shimada Masahiko's conceptualization of "in-between" represented in *Suisei no Jūnin* (2000). In the present chapter, I delve into Shimada's portrayals of JB's son, Noda Kuroudo, whose story unfolds in American-occupied Japan in the immediate aftermath of World War II. This chapter centres on the ways in which Shimada makes transparent reference to and intertextual utilization of the short story written by John Luther Long, "Madame Butterfly," and recasts this butterfly narrative in the occupation period of Japan.

Noda Kuroudo, born in 1933, enters adolescence immediately after World War II and meets the love of his life, Matsuhara Taeko—a nationally famed Japanese film actress. Unfortunately, Taeko follows in the same footsteps as Cho-cho-san: she is trapped in a relationship with an American man. Assigned to seduce MacArthur, whom Shimada fictionalizes in this work, Taeko serves as his secret lover. Through Shimada's depiction of the interracial triangular relationship of Kuroudo, Taeko, and General MacArthur, he re-contextualizes the Madame Butterfly story in the historical context of Japan at the turn of the 21st century.

Compared with some of the 1950s and 1960s works of Japanese literature about the American occupation period,[45] *Suisei no Jūnin* is not based on Shimada's direct experience but on his literary imagination. At the same time, however, this is a trait shared among the postmodernist writers of Shimada's generation. As confessed by Nobel laureate Ishiguro Kazuo, the "Japan" that Ishiguro represents in his early "Japanese" novels is an imaginary construction of his own. Besides discussing the writings of those who lived through the American occupation period of Japan, it is also critical to explore how the later

[45] For studies on the fictions produced during the occupation and the post-occupation fictions written by witnesses, see Michael S. Molasky's *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory* (1999) and Sharalyn Orbaugh's *Japanese Fiction of the Allied Occupation: Vision, Embodiment, Identity* (2007).

generations recast Japan's past, contemplate the enduring legacies of the occupation, and strive to reconcile themselves with it.

In *Suisei no Jūnin,* Shimada draws a profound historical parallel between the American postwar occupation in Japan and the U.S.–Japan political power imbalance that remained entrenched in the late twentieth century. In the early 1990s, when Shimada started to conceive of *Suisei no Jūnin*, Japan received a poor evaluation from the U.S.-dominant international community for contributing only money but not troops to the attack in the Gulf War. Japan's Gulf War trauma caused Shimada's disillusionment with the idea of "permanent peace" and triggered his reflection on the legacies of the occupation. Therefore, in *Suisei no Jūnin*, Shimada depicts a story taking place in the American occupation period of Japan in which women were victimized in their relations with American officers posted in Japan. Re-contextualizing the Madame Butterfly story in this historical context, Shimada reveals how Japan's traumatic occupation memories and its vexing relations with the U.S. have long-lasting effects on its present. Shimada also articulates how the latent crisis of identity, independent decision-making, and multilateral diplomacy occurring in Japan in the 1990s was brought to the surface by the historical legacies of the American occupation. To some extent, Shimada's literary imagination not only reflects but also responds to the cultural-political discourses and social sentiments of Japan in the 1990s.

In the following, I will first turn to Shimada's representation of the "postwar butterfly" as the symbol of Japan's victimhood. Second, I will bring to the fore Shimada's disillusionment with and criticism of the American liberal rhetoric and its long-lasting consequences. Finally, I will examine why Shimada, at the end of the twentieth century, decided to revisit the American occupation period of Japan in his work.

1. The Butterfly of the Occupation Period: The Submissive National Metaphor

Suisei no Jūnin depicts how a young man gets involved in an interracial affair between the most beautiful Japanese film actress and General Douglas MacArthur. Noda Kuroudo is the son of JB and his Japanese wife, Nami. Kuroudo has the same fate as his father: they both lose their mother during infancy. Thus, Kuroudo spends his childhood in an alien detention facility in Yokohama with JB until the emperor of Japan announces Japan's unconditional surrender. As a teenager, he witnesses the great changes in Japan because of the nation's defeat and the foreign occupation. Displaying a talent for music, Kuroudo becomes a young pianist when he is only 17 years old.

As fate would have it, Noda Kuroudo is embroiled in a passionate affair with Matsuhara Taeko, the epitome of elegance and beauty in postwar Japan. Introduced by mutual acquaintance, the enigmatic film director Mr. O, Kuroudo gets a special offer to

play piano for Taeko at her luxurious house. As Kuroudo spends more time with Taeko, he finds himself irresistibly drawn to this attractive woman. However, he remains perplexed by the inexplicable melancholy in Taeko's smile, her admiration for his cycling adventure, and her frequent visits to the Imperial Hotel (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 260). Kuroudo remains oblivious to Taeko's secret identity, like other ordinary people. It is only when he notices his father, JB, who works as the translator of General Headquarters (GHQ), in a photo featuring Taeko at a cocktail party, that he begins to uncover the truth. In conversing with his father, Kuroudo learns that Taeko has been tasked by Japanese authorities to seduce General MacArthur. Despite Taeko's feelings for him, she tells Kuroudo that she has promised MacArthur that she will not marry anyone forever, so his love for her cannot be reciprocated. Due to her unofficial relationship with General MacArthur, Taeko has no choice but to reject Kuroudo's love in order to protect him and other relevant personnel. Kuroudo confesses to Taeko that he will not give up. However, Kuroudo's unwavering determination to win Taeko's heart ultimately earns her trust and affection. Their relationship takes a turn after an impulsive one-night-stand, which Taeko identifies as a big mistake. She resolves to keep away from Kuroudo by sending him a Dear John letter and refusing to see him again. Even after MacArthur's return to the U.S., Taeko keeps her promise and remains single until her death. Kuroudo never gets the chance to see Taeko again.

I would designate Matsuhara Taeko as the "butterfly" of the occupation period. On the one hand, Taeko adds to Cho-cho-san's misfortune of being trapped in a relationship with an American man and ultimately being abandoned. On the other hand, it is important to note the other meaning of the word "butterfly," especially in the occupation period. In *Embrace the Defeat*, scholar John Dower documents that during the occupation period, the word "butterfly" was frequently used to refer to "a prostitute who flitted indiscriminately from customer to customer" (134). From a broader sense, "butterfly" can also represent the prostitution and sexual subjugation of women in occupied Japan. Even though Matsuhara Taeko is "the most beautiful woman in Japan" and a nationally famed actress, she cannot avoid the inescapable misfortune of being a "butterfly" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 250).

Shimada makes the distinction between Taeko's interiority and her screen persona: "In these films, she always looks down, lowers her head, and replies shyly and softly, 'no, my father'" (*Suisei no Jūnin* 255). "Taeko" is only portrayed as a performative public persona, demonstrating a cinematic appearance that is carefully designed, produced, and performed. In contrast to the elegant, meek, and submissive image on the screen, Taeko is cheerful and sassy in real life: "On the screen, Matsuhara Taeko always behaves like *Yamato-nadeshiko*,[46] but this is merely the image performed in response to the director's request" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 256).

[46] The personification of an idealized Japanese woman.

Many of the plotlines indicate that the historical prototype of Taeko is Hara Setsuko (1920–2015), the Japanese actress who starred in many postwar films. Hara Setsuko was born in 1920, and her real name was Aida Masae. In *Suisei no Jūnin*, Taeko writes a farewell letter to Kuroudo. The letter is signed "M.A," the initials of Hara's real name (Shimada 307). Hara Setsuko was the lead in many films made by director Ozu Yasujiro. During the occupation, they collaborated in such films as *Late Spring* (1949) and *Early Summer* (1951), and *Tokyo Story* (1953). In Shimada's narrative, the director who introduces Kuroudo to Taeko is also called "Mr. O" and "Mr. Y Jirō san"[47] (*Suisei no Jūnin* 272). Taeko withdraws from the spotlight in 1962 and returns to being Aida Masae, living a secluded life in Kamakura until her death, which closely resembles the personal circumstances of Hara Setsuko. Taeko is a fictionalized reconstruction of a real person. In the depiction of Taeko, Shimada integrates a journalistic voice and a passionate, sensual fictional tone. As Hara was rumored to be the secret lover of General MacArthur, Shimada's narrative of Taeko's misfortunes and her fraternization with General MacArthur has a factual quality.

It is critical to discuss why Shimada chooses Hara Setsuko over other postwar Japanese actresses as the historical prototype for Taeko. My brief answer is that Shimada attempts to create the most distinctive gap between Taeko's glamorous persona on the

[47] "O 先生" and "Y 二郎さん" in Japanese original texts.

screen as the “eternal virgin” and her deplorable fortune as a “trophy” of the American occupier in reality. As Japanese scholar, Kitamura Kyōhei remarks, Hara Setsuko was famed for her public persona as the “eternal virgin” with a “pure body” (234). In other words, Hara Setsuko’s pure, proper, and chaste screen persona distanced her from sexual, erotic discourses and made her a “symbol of resistance to Americanism” (214). Kitamura uses the word “*risetsukan* [sense of disjunction]” to characterize Hara:

> Her unique *risetsukan* [sense of disjunction] eliminates the sexual power relationship between the United States and Japan. This is the major reason why she could reach the climax during the occupation period when the sexual discourses such as “*panpan* films” and “kissing scenes” were prevalent… Setsuko Hara’s body with *risetsukan* represents the confrontation/elimination of the subject of “occupation”- the United States. (233)

To understand the “uniqueness” of “Takeo”/ “Hara Setsuko,” it is essential to discuss the prevalence of what I would call the “postwar butterfly narrative,” a cultural discourse that reframes the U.S.–Japan relationship in a romanticized manner. This discourse was widespread during the occupation period in the forms of films, cartoons, and fictions.

During the US occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952, the United States extended its military, political, and cultural influence into Japan. At the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, cultural propaganda became a battleground between the two camps. When dealing with Japan, a pressing issue for the United States was to rebrand this former wartime enemy, alleviate the hatred and trauma of war, and bring Japan into its alliance against Communist states.[48] The US produced adaptations serve the two strategic aims of the United States during the Cold War. The first was to conform to the aspirations of Asian states for decolonization and modernization, and to reshape the relationship between the US and Asia, with the goal of enlisting them as US allies in the Cold War. The second was to affirm and reinforce the position of the US as the exemplar of progressive liberal values such as democracy, equality, and freedom.

In this historical context, a large number of U.S.-produced films starring Japanese actresses were released in the 1950s, such as *Japanese War Bride* (1952), *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956), and *Sayonara* (1957).[49] These films share similar plots that

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[48] For how the U.S. reimagined the Japanese from "enemy" to "ally" through postwar films, see Shibusawa, Naoko. *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*. Harvard University Press, 2006.

[49] *Japanese War Bride* (1952) depicts the struggles of an interracial couple as they face racism and prejudice from their American family and neighbours. *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956) portrays the process of Americanization of a village on Okinawa, with the love story of an American officer capturing the heart of a Japanese geisha serving as a metaphor for the American-led democratic revolution. *Sayonara* (1957), which won four Oscars and was adapted from James Michener's best-selling novel of the same name, portrays the romance between an American airman and a famous Japanese dancer.

depict the interracial romance between an American man and a Japanese woman, so I would like to designate them as "postwar butterfly films." The quasi-colonial undertones present in the original butterfly story has been disregarded, and the interracial couples develop genuine and authentic relationships, conveying the uplifting message that love can overcome boundaries, even in the midst of rivalry and conflict. In addition to the films that directly depict interracial romance, scholar Kitamura Kyohei points out that the encouragement of "kissing scenes" by GHQ in postwar Japan was an attempt to reaffirm the US's leading role in Japan's democratization by promoting the freedom of kissing" (Kitamura 213).

Another example of a postwar butterfly narrative is American Naval Reservist Bill Hume's cartoon collection, *Baby-san: A Private Look at the Japanese Occupation*.[50] This collection was popular in the 1950s and, to some extent, reflected the public sentiments of the era. *Baby-san* portrays the illicit relations between Japanese women and American men in a rather similar manner as the above-mentioned postwar butterfly films. Debbie A. Storrs suggests that *Baby-san* characterizes Japanese women "into two contrasting types," between which each of the women toggles: childlike and manipulative, while depicting American men as "naïve and good-natured" (24, 30). Unlike Cho-cho-san, Baby-san is not victimized but rather benefits from her relations with American men. Annarino articulates

[50] Commentary by John Annarino. Both Hume and Annarino served in the U.S. Navy.

the key message that he attempts to convey in the introduction of the collection: “as the members of the armed forces loved Baby-san, so did Baby-san love them.” Scholar Shibusawa Naoko identifies Baby-san as a “different sort of butterfly than Cho-cho-san” (38). As Baby-san “flitted from lover to lover, from one steady boyfriend to another as they rotated back to the States,” the connotation of her “butterfly” has an opposite sense to Cho-cho-san’s passivity and devotion (Shibusawa 39). Baby-san is representative of the “postwar butterfly narratives” that reconstructs the U.S.–Japan relations by rendering a romanticized idea of “US-Japan intimacy.”

The postwar butterfly narratives romanticize Japan–U.S. relations as seemingly equal and render the affiliation between Japan and the U.S. psychically satisfying. I would designate these postwar butterfly narratives as part of what Christina Klein calls “sentimental education.” In *Cold War Orientalism* (2003), Klein uses the term “sentimental education” to describe the U.S.’s operations of forging cultural and sentimental bonds with Japan in literary and artistic works. These works “brought alliances to life by translating them into personal terms and imbuing them with sentiment so that they became emotionally rich relationships” that both Japanese and Americans could “inhabit imaginatively in their everyday lives” (14). The postwar butterfly films romanticize and simplify the complex, fraught U.S.–Japan relationship into interracial, personal love stories. By rendering a bond of “love,” these works educate the Japanese

masses about or at least predispose them to consider their evolving relationships with the U.S. and invite their audiences to participate in the forging of an intimate and harmonious (though imagined) U.S.–Japan relationship (cf. Klein 14). Deliberately or not, these works have contributed to easing the tension between the U.S. and Japan and reframing the post-war U.S.–Japan relations in the minds of both American and Japanese audiences. To some extent, these postwar adaptations have served as effective cultural-diplomatic propaganda for the U.S. that help it to conceal, or at least downplay, the existing conflicts and resentments surrounding the presence of U.S. governance in Japan.

In contrast to the interracial relationships portrayed in the films as genuine and equal, where American men stand together with local Japanese women to confront racial prejudice and pursue freedom of love, or to the manipulative Japanese girls who dates with different American lovers, the reality for many "butterflies," as noted by Dower, was that they remained erotic amusements for American men. While the films depicted American men treating their Japanese wives with respect, in reality, many American men were clients who consumed the bodies of the "butterflies." Therefore, the interracial romantic stories portray a fictitious facade, obscuring the tragic reality of the "sex for money" exchange.

In the era when "postwar butterflies" were prevalent, Hara Setsuko was special for her public persona as the "eternal virgin" who was distanced from the control of the

foreign hegemony. Hara Setsuko served as the diametrical opposite of “butterflies” and reflected the nation’s collective consciousness, memory, and desire to confront the American occupation. By referring to Hara’s persona as the “eternal virgin” and her legendary life, Shimada attempts to figure “Taeko” as the “pure body” of Japan. Just like Hara, Taeko is not supposed to be one of the “postwar butterflies” who perform illusory fraternization between Japan and America.

Shimada selects Hara Setsuko as the historical prototype for Taeko to make a sharp contrast. Taeko, just like Hara Setsuko, should have served as the confrontation against the prevailing postwar rhetoric. However, tragically, Taeko is dispatched to serve the American General as his secret lover in the unknown corner: Taeko is the “real” butterfly. In Shimada’s narrative, Taeko is sacrificed by her Japanese compatriots for their private interests:

> This was completely a honey trap. The operators of the film company who employ Taeko and the officers of the Japanese government conspired to “sell” Taeko. They all agreed that Taeko is the only woman that suits the General....MacArthur not only controls the future of Japan but also the future of these capitalists and politicians. If these guys want to cover up the wartime scandals so that they can continue to run rampant after the war, they have to win the general’s favour at all costs. So, they offered Taeko to the General. (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 276–277)

Shimada explicitly points out that the “trading” of Taeko, who symbolized Japan, was not solely driven by the US, but also involved Japanese politicians also who adopted a submissive posture to the US for their own gains. Taeko firmly believed that her sacrifice was for the sake of the nation, which is indispensable and invaluable.

In this sense, Taeko’s image coincides with another fictional Japanese female character: Tōjin Okichi, who was also convinced by the rhetoric of national righteousness by Japanese politicians to sacrifice herself to foreign commanders.[51] Tōjin Okichi is a fictional figure that has appeared in Japanese folklore, literature, theatrical works dating back to the 1930s.[52] Okichi was forced to become the concubine of the first American consul in Japan during the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Townsend Harris, as a strategy to gain a better deal with the US government. However, after Harris returned to

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[51] The Japanese term “Tōjin” initially referred to “people from Tang soil,” specifically denoting “Chinese people.” However, the word’s semantic scope gradually expanded to encompass a broader range of foreigners in general. Okichi, who had served a foreigner, was often called as “foreigner Okichi” by the locals, a title laden with negative undertones of marginalization and derision. This designation evokes a sense of exclusion that is comparable to the English term “gringo.”

[52] There is ongoing debate among scholars on whether the character of Okichi actually existed in history. However, it is widely accepted that the prototype for the character was Saito Kichi, a maid of Townsend Harris. In 1857, she was sent to attend to Harris under the guise of nursing him at Shimoda Gakusenji Temple. However, Harris was soon sent back to the United States due to illness. In the social climate of the time, Ji was ostracized for having served foreigners and ultimately committed suicide due to her inability to be accepted by society. Even though Saito Kichi may have been the historical archetype of Okichi, the portrayal of Okichi may differ significantly from the actual historical facts after repeated rewritings and adaptations.

America, Okichi was ostracized and eventually committed suicide due to the deep-seated xenophobia of her community.

The early versions of Okichi's narrative emphasized her initial unwillingness and how her was deceived by local officials. In Yamamoto Yūzō's 1931 play *Geki-kyoku-shū nyonin aishi* [Collection of Women's Lamentations], for instance, a local official attempt to persuade Okichi to comply by invoking her sense of patriotism, stating that "it is ALL for our country! ... Although you are a woman, you should think about the grand righteousness for our country...To make our country stronger, women should join hands with men!" (Yamada 54). It is noteworthy to acknowledge that Yamamoto's position does not endorse ultra-nationalism views. Rather, his representation astutely captures how unscrupulous bureaucrats use patriotic sentiments to manipulate people. Okichi's unfortunate fate can be attributed to various factors, including the prevalent colonization during that era, the presence of foreign powers, the xenophobic social climate in Japan, and the unscrupulous conduct of Japanese officials.

Ironically, the tragic image of Okichi was later utilized by the government of occupied Japan, who protrayed her as a patriotic heroine who *willingly* sacrificed her body to a foreigner for the sake of her nation. As John Dower notes in *Embracing Defeat* (1999):

> Enlisting a small number of women to serve as a buffer protecting the chastity of the

> “good” women of Japan was well-established policy in dealing with Western barbarians. Special pleasure quarters had been set up for foreigners immediately after Commodore Perry forced the country to abolish its policy of seclusion… The procurers of 1945 appropriated her (*okichi*’s) sad, sensual image in defining their own task. The women they were assembling, they declared, would be *Showa no Tōjin Okichi*, “the Okichis of the present era”… By August 27, 1360 women in Tokyo had enlisted in what soon would become known in English as the R.A.A., short for Recreation and Amusement Association. (Dower 126-127)

Taeko is a figure akin to “Okichi” and these poor Japanese women truly existing in history, who was betrayed by her own compatriots and sold in a conspiratorial act that benefited both American and Japanese politicians.

> In public, Taeko is an actress; she can date and marry in the films. But she can only enjoy freedom in the movies. She can bring people happiness simply through a smile on the screen – she fulfils her obligation as the most beautiful actress. She makes MacArthur happy and brings profits to capitalists and politicians. Matsuhara Taeko is the only one who feels depressed. (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 277–278)

Nothing could be more absurd and pathetic than the scenario in which the “eternal virgin,” the “dream lady” of the Japanese people, is sent to the Imperial Hotel, where she kneels on the tatami to serve the 70-year-old U.S. occupying commander. The impact is maximized

through the plot by which the “purest body” embodying the resistance against Americanism is occupied by an American. The irony is that the Japanese masses know nothing about it. Though in a facile manner, the impactful plot dramatically deconstructs the romanticized imaginary bond constructed in the movies and reveals the subordinate nature of U.S.–Japan relations. Despite the frequent use of the female body as a national emblem in occupation and colonial writings, Shimada’s depiction of Taeko is indeed remarkable and impressive. Through the inconsistency between Taeko’s screen persona and her real circumstances, Shimada creates a sharp contrast: the “eternal virgin” who embodies the anti-American sentiments of Japan is precisely the secret lover of the American occupier.

Shimada Masahiko is not the only postwar Japanese writers who either rewrite or make direct reference to the narrative of Madame Butterfly. Therefore, it is worth of analysis whether Shimada’s rendition of the butterfly narrative diverges from other Japanese rewritings?

Ariyoshi Sawako’s *Shin-Cho-cho-hujin* [New Madame Butterfly], as one of the postwar reconfigurations of the butterfly narrative, has been serialized in *Kobe Shimbun* [Kobe Newspaper] since 1964. In *Shin-Cho-cho-hujin*, Ariyoshi sheds light on the issue of gender and ethnicity in intermarriages by splitting the figure of Cho-cho-san into two divergent characters: Chiyoko from an old aristocratic family, and Choko from the lower

class. Chiyoko marries a white upper-class man while Choko marries an African-American. The fate of two characters subverts what the readers might have expected: Chiyoko suffers from racial discriminations in her marriage and eventually divorces, while Choko lives a happy life despite being marginalized because of her marriage to a black man. By juxtaposing the fate of two characters, Ariyoshi forges an idiosyncratic trajectory for the butterfly narrative, inviting readers to contemplate the ubiquitous predicaments of racial and socioeconomic stratification in postwar Japan.

In contrast to postcolonial writers like David Henry Hwang, who sought to subversively deconstructs "Madame Butterfly" by unmasking, critiquing, and sabotaging the orientalist discourse of the West, Ariyoshi displays no explicit inclination to revise the problematic Western representations of perceptions of Japan.[53] Furthermore, Ariyoshi's rendition diverges from Shimada in that she does not devote considerable attention to the power dynamics between Japan and the United States. Rather, Ariyoshi foregrounds the transnational idea of social inclusivity and anti-discrimination, evincing a greater concern for the emergent challenges that postwar Japan may face with in the context of globalization. Instead of composing a spectacular reprisal of the West by the Orient,

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[53] See Grace, Sherrill. "Playing Butterfly with David Henry Hwang and Robert Lepage." *A Vision of the Orient : Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts of Madame Butterfly.* University of Toronto Press, 2006, pp.136-151.

Ariyoshi deploys this Western canon to interrogate Japan's local predicaments, and offers a literary perspective that transcends the dichotomy of East and West.

The 1999 play *Pandora no Kane* [The Bell of Pandora] is another work that makes directly reference to "Madame Butterfly." Japanese play writer Noda Hideki offers a non-essentialist response to the original story by entirely denying that the character Cho-Cho-san embodies the very essence of Japanese. Noda introduces a Japanese-American girl named Tamaki in his paly, who is the offspring of Pinkerton. Tamaki ridicules Cho-Cho-san provocatively: "Cho-Cho-san should not blame Pinkerton at all. Because it was *her own fault*! Waiting for such a man, is she a fool? Her practice of killing herself is even more foolish" (Noda 130; emphasis mine). Tamaki's vehement repudiation of Cho-Cho-san's futile sacrifice reveals Noda's defiance against the Western-constructed orientalist stereotype embodied in the original butterfly narrative. In this sense, the critique of Cho-cho-san should not be interpreted as an exercise of self-reflection, but rather as a refusal to the Japanese discourse of self-positioning as a victim. Noda echoes Catherine M. Miskow's critical argument: Cho-Cho-san should not be considered as either "truly representative of a Japanese woman" or "a metaphor for the nation," but rather "an American creation in the form of a Japanese woman" (27). Noda does not attempt to reconstruct the image of Madame Butterfly because he fundamentally rejects the orientalist stereotype imposed on Japan.

Both Ariyoshi and Noda are critical of the Western orientalist discourse, despite that their approaches are slightly different. Ariyoshi employs the butterfly narrative to scrutinize indigenous issues and to articulate her critique of racial discrimination, whereas Noda repudiates the victimized image of Cho-cho-san that is essentialized by both the West and Japan. Japanese writers who make reference to the butterfly narrative do not necessarily attempt to *fix* the Western-constructed discourse or "acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories," they provide transcultural, non-essential perspectives to reread the butterfly narrative (Said 218).

Shimada Masahiko's narrative strategy differs significantly from Ariyoshi and Noda, as he perpetuates and even reinforces the orientalist discourse embodied in "Madame Butterfly," though in an ironic manner. Matsuhara Taeko, the postwar butterfly in Shimada's narrative, demonstrates an even more profound sense of self-sacrifice than Cho-cho-san, integrated with the patriotic sentiment of Okichi: a commitment not to love, but to her nation. "For the future of the Japanese, Taeko felt her responsibility and obligation, so she worked hard to fulfil her task" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 282). Taeko keeps her promise until her death. Her prolonged solitude is as pitiful as the tragic demise of Cho-cho-san.

Compared with Ariyoshi and Noda who display more interests in the fate of individuals, Shimada employs a narrative approach that interconnects individual

misfortune to the broader political struggles of a nation subjected to foreign domination. Shimada articulates the ambivalence present within in the discourse of "postwar butterfly," in which the subordinate and dominated victimhood of Japanese women is reduced to depictions of deep romantic and committed relationships with American men as portrayed in films and cultural productions. Through the character Matsuhara Taeko and her resemblance to Hara Setsuko represent the "eternal virgin" in the perspective of Japanese audience. Indeed, despite symbolizing the refutation to the prevalent butterfly discourse at face value, Taeko ultimately succumbs to the tragic fate of victimized "butterflies," who are "willingly" sacrifice their bodies to the foreign dominators. Taeko's profession as an actress precisely implies that her perceived role as a symbol resistance against Americanism does not accurately reflect her real predicament. Through the scene in which Taeko kneels on the tatami and smile at General MacArthur, Shimada suggests a recurring dynamic between Japan and the United States: Japan is still in the humiliating position of subservience to the United States even at the end of the twentieth-century. Taeko is deployed as the national metaphor of Japan: even though Japan has ostensibly regained its nominal sovereignty and become an important ally of the U.S., there is still a potential autonomy crisis under the illusion of a seemingly equal U.S.–Japan camaraderie.

2. The Illusion of Liberal Ideals: Confronting the Imaginary U.S.–Japan Fraternization

As discussed in the previous sections, Shimada recalls the occupation period and uses the conquered body of local women to imply the "neo-imperialist nature" of U.S. power in Japan (Hillenbrand 125). In this section, I analyze the ways in which Shimada introduces an interracial triangular relationship to his butterfly narrative of the occupation era. I would argue that Shimada devotes particular attention to the U.S. propaganda of liberal political ideals and the U.S.-leading postwar reconstruction of Japan during the occupation period, which, according to Shimada, had negative effects on the postwar Japanese identity reconstruction.

The depictions of interracial triangular relationships began inundating Japanese literature in the 1950s. Oe Kenzaburo's novella, *Warera no Jidai* [Our Era] (1959), depicts the triangular relationship of a nihilistic Japanese college student, a Japanese sex worker who only serves foreign guests, and an American soldier stationed in Japan. The triangular relationship in Kojima Nobuo's *Hōyō Kazoku* [Embracing Family] (1965) is developed between a Japanese translator, his wife, and an American soldier. American scholar Michael Molasky suggests that the deployment of the triangular relationship is popular for its capability to "encompass binary understandings of identity without reducing relationship to a single and fixed opposition between self and other" (79). In postwar

Japanese literature, the triangular relationship is frequently invoked to address the unevenness of the Japan–U.S. power relations, the trauma of defeat, and the loss of national identity.

In comparison to previous interracial triangular narratives, the triangular relationship portrayed in *Suisei no Jūnin* is boldly closer to the center of power. The protagonists in the stories of Oe or Kojima are ordinary people: Japanese college students, translators, prostitutes, and American soldiers. By contrast, Shimada orchestrates a fictional history using significant roles: Madame Butterfly's grandson Kuroudo, superstar film actress Taeko, and General MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces.

The erotic bond between Takeo and MacArthur is a highly stylized metaphor for postwar U.S.–Japan relations. In Shimada's narrative, "MacArthur" serves as a general metaphor for U.S. hegemony in the occupation period, and "Taeko," as noted above, serves as the national metaphor for the submissive and oppressed postwar Japan under the American order.[54] MacArthur's conquest of Taeko's body implies the neo-imperialist conquest by the U.S. The whole allegorical and metaphoric pattern is neither original nor representative.

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[54] If there is no additional note, the term "MacArthur" in this essay refers to the character created by Shimada in *Suisei no Jūnin.*

However, what is of much greater significance is that Shimada's target of criticism is not circumscribed to MacArthur or the GHQ; he specifically targets America's hypocritical political propaganda of liberal values in Japan. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, Shimada became acutely aware that the ideals of democracy and freedom are not a universal cure, but rather a mirage-like, if not fictitious, ideal for Japan. According to Shimada, under the U.S.-led postwar international order, Japan can never achieve true freedom and independence. Exposing the substantial subordination of Japan, Shimada portrays the ideal of freedom as a hypocritical "illusion" constructed through the secret machinations of the U.S.

In Shimada's narrative, MacArthur always preaches the American liberal values of "freedom and independence" to Taeko. Nevertheless, he essentially deprives her of the freedom to fall in love with anyone else for the rest of her life.

> [Taeko said] "General looked me in the face and told me: 'You Japanese must achieve independence, run your own factories, become competitive, and protect yourselves with your own army. We will spare no effort to help you.'" So, Taeko can also stop being the General's lover? Kuroudo thinks, "Then, if General MacArthur leaves Japan, will you be free? I'm gonna have the right to love you, right?"

> Taeko's face clouded over, "Little Kuro, I have to make it clear to you. Even if General MacArthur leaves Japan, I must abide by what I promised him…"
>
> "What have you promised?"
>
> Taeko sighed softly and took her eyes off Kuroudo, "Stay single until I die"
>
> (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 293–294).

As MacArthur's secret Japanese lover, or in fact, a tribute, Taeko can never dream of an equal relationship. The one-night stand between Taeko and Kuroudo is an act of resistance against the occupier. However, neither of them can escape from the lingering oppression, which symbolizes postwar Japan's long-lasting subordination to the U.S. Taeko has to keep the secret and reject Kuroudo—her true beloved—repeatedly. The "freedom and independence" preached by MacArthur seem to be a hypocritical "illusion" for Taeko. Taeko, being under "occupation" all her life, is the epitome of the U.S.'s control over Japan, which does not end with the termination of the occupation period.

> Even after the termination of the Japanese occupation era, Taeko was still occupied by General MacArthur. All who knew the secret had to hold their tongue… It was the most grievous choice, but Taeko had to give up on love for Kuroudo and anyone reluctantly. Only 30 years old, Taeko had already

> determined that she would never love anyone ever again. (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 310)

Despite the fact that Taeko plays the role of a victim who is deprived of her freedom and is occupied by an American man who is forty years older than her, she is not figured as a powerless, fragile, and unintelligent woman. By contrast, from the ways in which Taeko accepts and rejects Kuroudo, we can tell that she is a very brave and assertive woman who takes a dominant role. Shimada suggests that Taeko is "willing" to sacrifice herself for her country: "the epitome of Japan's future lies in the bed and sofa of the Imperial Hotel. For the future of the Japanese, Taeko felt her responsibility and obligation, so she worked hard to fulfill her task" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 282). Taeko is convinced by MacArthur's statement that he and his country will "spare no effort" to help Japan achieve real "freedom" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 293). By portraying the ways in which MacArthur deceives Taeko while depriving her of the freedom to love in the name of "Japan's freedom," Shimada fiercely criticizes the U.S. for deceiving Japan in the name of liberal ideals and depriving Japan of actual autonomy with the *Anpo* security treaty. Shimada critiques the concept of freedom as a misleading "illusion" that is propagated by the covert actions of the United States. According to Shimada, as long as Japan continues to be subject to the postwar international order led by the United States, the fulfilment of genuine freedom and independence is unattainable.

Taeko, as the occupied female subject, functions as the symbol of Japan's long-lasting subordination to the U.S. Kuroudo, as the male narrator, is used to reveal and impugn the rhetoric of liberal ideals advocated by the U.S. in an even more explicit way. In the internal monologue of Kuroudo, he mocks the paradoxical assertion of the U.S.: "How could a nation that is 'middle aged' in its development stage preach the ideas of freedom to a 'young' nation that is in early adolescence, but at the same time require the young nation to swear eternal loyalty? Take Miss Taeko as an example; has MacArthur ever given her freedom?" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 293). In this internal monologue, Shimada likens Japan to a teenager "in early adolescence," which reminds me of a notorious public comment made by MacArthur—the real historical figure—about Japan after his return to the U.S.: "The Japanese, however, despite their antiquity measured by time, were in a very tuitionary condition. Measured by the standards of modern civilization, they would be like *a boy of twelve* as compared with our development of 45 years" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin*; my emphasis).[55] MacArthur's absurd comment evidently reveals his honest opinion of Japan as a "child" snuggling up to the U.S. Although MacArthur encouraged Japan to achieve independence, the prerequisite was "acquiescing in America's overwhelming paternalistic authority" (Dower 551).

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[55] See U.S. Senate. "Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Foreign Relations", *Military Situation in the Far East*, May1951, part I, esp.p.312

Deliberately or not, Shimada invokes MacArthur's "boy of twelve" to uncover the logical flaw in the American rhetoric of freedom.

Shimada's treatment of liberal values is dialectical rather than readily censorious: he makes a distinction between liberal values *per se* and the *rhetorical use* of these values. According to Shimada, "freedom and independence" can be a double-edged sword that serves both as progressive values and as a propaganda tool based on a realistic political strategy. Even though Shimada has no intention to denounce the liberal value of "democracy and freedom" *per se*, he raises a problem: liberal values were re-defined as an affirmation of "American" values when introduced to Japan during the occupation period. In Shimada's narrative, the character MacArthur proclaims that "The United States will help Japan realize the ideal of democracy and freedom" (*Suisei no Jūnin* 293). Taeko is convinced by MacArthur and she believes that the ideal of independence and freedom is a precious legacy that the U.S. brings to the Japanese people: "War is evil but indispensable for the progress of human civilization. Although the sacrifices were heavy, this war has brought a property that Japan had never gained before—freedom. So, I am grateful to the General" (Shimada, *Suisei no Jūnin* 293). Obviously, Shimada is not ignorant of the positive effects of the U.S.-led democratization in postwar Japan. In *Suisei no Jūnin*, "the ideal of democracy and freedom" preached by the U.S. is presented as a historical legacy that is both *progressive* and *expansionist*. Shimada acknowledges that liberal values

function to counter wartime ultra-nationalism and fascism; meanwhile, he does not ignore the fact that these values have served as the U.S.'s hypocritical and rhetorical instrument for exercising power in Japan. Therefore, *Suisei no Jūnin* can be interpreted as the product of the contradictory stance of Shimada: he finds himself torn between the affirmation of American-led democratization in Japan and the critique of America's rhetorical use of liberal values.

The historicity provides us with clues that American policymakers indeed *strategically* used liberal values as a propaganda tool based on Cold War imperatives. The U.S.'s National Security directive, NSC-68, drafted in 1950, reveals the U.S.'s intention to utilize the philosophies of "democracy, freedom, independence" as the American cultural and ideological propaganda: "Practical and ideological considerations… both impel us to the conclusion that we have no choice but to *demonstrate the superiority of the idea of freedom by its constructive application*" (Saunders 97; my emphasis).[56] Such a strategy played a part in the U.S.'s general plan to win the ideological and cultural war against the Soviet Union. As opposed to the coerciveness of "totalitarianism" that reminded the public of the wartime fascistic ideology and war trauma, liberal values were more acceptable. Therefore, these values were quickly embraced by the Japanese public in the occupation period.

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[56] For more on the NSC-68, see Scott Lucas, "The Psychological Stagey Board", *International History Review*, bol.18/2, May 1996.

Japanese scholar Katō Norihiro identifies a problem of postwar Japan: after losing the war, the defeated nations also lost their ideologies (6). Katō Norihiro suggests that in post-war Japan, the Japanese masses dismissed the inherent Japanese ideology and ventured to find new ones. During the occupation period, the broad ideas of "democracy, freedom, independence" served as the touchstone for defining a modern, developed, and robust society. As a result, Katō argues, Japanese populations gradually embraced these ideas and incorporated them into their value system in postwar Japan (6). Meanwhile, American policymakers intentionally induced the Japanese masses to believe that as the most powerful democratic nation-state, the U.S. was authoritative in the interpretation of these liberal ideals. Liberal values came to be linked with the likeness or image of "the United States" in Japan's public mind. Japanese people gradually accepted the problematic mindset of "America = Democracy, Freedom, and Independence."

Despite the fact that the U.S. seemed to have produced an illusion of Japan's "independence," essentially speaking, Japan had to subordinate to the U.S. in domestic and foreign affairs in the postwar international order. This contradiction caused a sense of uncertainty. Shimada compares America to the father who makes the child feel uneasy and frightened during adolescence to articulate the negative impact of the presence of the U.S. ideological hegemony on postwar Japan: "The Japanese people continue to fall into an uneasiness about whether we have independence. 'Are we independent? Or not? I do not

know.' This feeling of ambiguity and uncertainty resembles how we feel in adolescence. Japan has been exposed to a trial for a long time: how to surmount the 'father,' which in the case of Japan is America, who is bearing down on 'the self'" (*Tanoshī Nashonarizumu* 182). According to Shimada, Japanese individuals are unable to extricate themselves from a pervasive sense of uncertainty and from the neo-imperialist social systems constructed to maintain Japan's subordinate to the U.S. As Gordon K. Lewis remarks: "it is true to say, in essence, that the central reality of independence is the need to convert the pattern set by those earlier social systems into an independent national society run primarily in the interests of its independent citizens" (387). In line with Lewis's argument, Shimada posits that the establishment of an autonomous national society hinges on the existence of independent citizens. To achieve this, Japanese individuals must develop "independent" identities that are freed of any hegemonic social formations.

3. The Past in the Present: Revisiting the American Occupation of Japan in Late-1990s Japan

In this chapter, I put a particular emphasis on the reasons why Shimada relocates the story of Madame Butterfly to *the occupation period*. Why does Shimada look back on the American occupation period of Japan from his vantage point of the end of the twentieth

century, a time when younger Japanese generations find themselves to be far from Japan's traumatic past?

The historical setting of Shimada's butterfly narrative, the occupation period, was not chosen at random. The Allied occupation of 1945–1952 is a special period with metaphorical values in postwar Japanese literature. Inoue Kota designates "the occupation" as one of the motifs in postwar Japanese fiction that specifically recall the issue of the unevenness of U.S.–Japan power relations.[57] In *Literature, Modernity, and Practice of Resistance* (2007), Margaret Hillenbrand further suggests that postwar Japanese writers often articulate "their anxieties about the loss of political autonomy, economic self-sufficiency, and cultural identity in the face of American domination" (106). Shimada's representation of the occupation period follows the literary tradition that associates the occupation period with the critical issue of the postwar U.S.–Japan relationship.

There are numerous literary accounts of the occupation period published by postwar Japanese writers. Tamura Taijiro's 1947 story, "Nikutai no mon" [The Gate of the Flesh], depicts prostitution in postwar Japan and the ways in which Japanese female characters reconcile with the traumatic war memories through sexual pleasure. During the 1950s and 1960s, the *Anpo* movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement created an

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[57] Inoue Kota concludes that the issue of equal U.S.–Japan power relations is specifically presented in three motifs in postwar Japanese fictions: occupation, Okinawa/U.S. military base, and atomic bombings. See "Postwar Japanese fiction and the legacy of unequal Japan–US relations", *Routledge handbook of modern Japanese literature*, p.154.

upsurge in occupation writings. Kojima Nobuo's 1954 story, "Amerikan sukūru" [The American School], explores the link between language and national identity. Oe Kenzaburo's 1958 story, "Ningen No hitsuji" [The Human Sheep], vividly portrays different responses of the Japanese people when experiencing or witnessing humiliation by the foreign occupiers. Though different in their thematic focuses, these writings have offered extensive and intensive reflections on the occupation.[58]

Given the special metaphorical meanings of the occupation, Shimada's depiction of the fraternization between a Japanese actress and an American general follows the tradition of postwar Japanese literature but also constructs a new version of the occupation narrative that addresses the issue of imbalanced U.S.–Japan relations. The special metaphorical meanings of the occupation further enhance the significance of Shimada's representation of it. As argued above, my focus is not on how Shimada represents the occupation period differently, but on why he revisits the occupation in the late 1990s. As described by Margaret Hillenbrand, "Japanese state and society in the 1990s bore little resemblance to either the political highhandedness critiqued in Oe Kenzaburo's *Ampo* era allegories, or the bubble satires of Murakami Haruki in which expense accounts are limitless and yet no-one picks up the final bill" (84). In this sense, Shimada's purposeful re-articulation of the occupation can be perceived as a mirror of Japan's contemporary

[58] For more analysis of occupation writings, see Molasky, Michael S. *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa : Literature and Memory*. Routledge, 1999.

society in the 1990s when the unequal U.S.–Japan relations continues to affect Japanese society.

Shimada engages with the occupation in an attempt to criticize the very crisis that Japan confronted in the 1990s. Therefore, the key point of my interpretation is the association between Shimada's occupation narrative and his sentimental experience in the 1990s. In a dialogue with Japanese critic Karatani Kōjin in 1999, Shimada talks about a change underwent in his mindset at the end of the twentieth century. Shimada states that in the late 1980s when he was writing *Yume tsukai* [Dream Messenger] (1989), he was dedicated to "cosmopolitanism," but he has now abandoned the ideal of cosmopolitanism that was articulated in *Yume tsukai* and is attempting to "start over again" (Shimada, "Toransukuritīku to shōsetsu" 21–22). In a 2004 dialogue, Shimada acknowledges that the transformation of his mindset is related to the historical changes that he witnessed in the 1990s: "I have made assumptions like 'global citizenship' before. International specialization progresses through the establishment of credit. With the credit guarantee, people can live everywhere in the world… However, in reality, 'cosmopolitanism' is dying" (Shimada, "Ten'nō, ren'ai, rekishi" 246). Shimada started to realize in the 1990s that what *Yume tsukai* lacks is *rekishisei* [historicity], which becomes the primary characteristic of *Suisei no Jūnin*. Shimada's particular stress on "historicity" explains why he revisits the "history" of the occupation: "I would engage with 'history' through the

'narratives' that I wrote" (Shimada, "Toransukuritīku to shōsetsu" 22). In other words, Shimada's re-articulation of the occupation narrative is closely associated with the historical context of the 1990s, which he was personally immersed in while writing *Suisei no Jûnin*.

To address this association, I examine the vital historical events that challenged the postwar U.S.–Japan intimacy and stimulated Shimada's critical reflection on the historical legacies of the American occupation. With Japan's economy booming, there was a growing distrust, and even animosity, towards Japan in the U.S. in the late 1980s. Japan was considered to be a threat that would outstrip the U.S. in a short time. Meanwhile, in response to the endemic sentiments of "Japan-bashing" in the U.S., many Japanese politicians and intellectuals claimed that Japan should take a more independent and uncompromising stance on international affairs. One example is Ishihara Shintarō and Morita Akio's 1989 essay, "*No to ieru Nihon*" [The Japan That Can Say No], in which they assert that Japan should end its reliance on the U.S. and become more conscious of its role as the next superpower. The renewed national confidence aroused the popular desire to reject Japan's subordinate position in the U.S.-led international order and to rehabilitate Japan's national identity. To some extent, the trade dispute and increasing nationalist sentiments destabilized the postwar U.S.–Japan intimacy.

In discussing the vital incidents that brought on a critical reflection on the U.S.–Japan relationship and the historical legacies of the American occupation, I will devote particular attention to the Gulf War.[59] For many Japanese intellectuals, the U.S.-led military action and Japan's subsequent involvement upon the request of the U.S. was a rude awakening: "the ideal of peace" preached by the U.S. was an illusion. The event also brought to light again Japan's actual position in the U.S.-led postwar international order: Japan was submissive to the U.S. despite Japan's economic takeoff.

It is necessary to discuss the Japanese government's actions and the social repercussions experienced by the Japanese people during the Gulf War. The Gulf War broke out in 1990 in August with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. In a prompt response to Iraq's invasion, the Japanese government at the time, led by Kaifu Toshiki, imposed economic sanctions against Iraq. It seems that the Japanese government did not expect that the Western powers would directly intervene in a regional conflict and wage a war. However, a U.S.-led coalition of forces against Iraq, consisting of troops from 39 countries, was formed. Japan was under pressure from the U.S., who requested the Japanese government to support the military action against Iraq. The military action of the coalition headed by the U.S. has sparked a huge public controversy in Japan. The fact that the U.S., which had

[59] The justness of a series of subsequent wars in Libya, Somalia, and Sudan waged by the U.S. in the 1990s and the purported "wars on terrorism" in the 2000s was also quite controversial and led to further debates in Japan. The Gulf War is closely examined here because it is one of the earliest incidents that ignited a surge of anti-American sentiments in Japan.

imposed a war-renouncing clause in Japan's postwar Constitution and proclaimed the objective of ensuring long-lasting world peace, waged war against Iraq caused a "disillusionment" among Japanese intellectuals.

In February 1991, a group of Japanese intellectuals issued two "Statements of literary figures against the Gulf War" [*Wangan sensō ni hantai suru bungakusha seimei*], publicly opposing any form of participation in the Gulf War. Forty-three intellectuals signed "Statement One," and sixteen intellectuals, including Shimada Masahiko, signed both "Statement One" and "Statement Two."

> Statement One: I oppose any form of the Japanese state's participation in the war.
>
> Statement Two: "War-renouncing" is a clause written in Japan's postwar Constitution. It is a voluntary choice made by the Japanese rather than through coercion by another country. It reflects the introspection of the Japanese, who believed that World War II would be the "final war," especially the penitence towards the victimized Asian countries. Moreover, we believe that this clause also reflects the shared vision of the Westerners after experiencing two world wars. Now that we are facing a significant turning point in world history, we believe that the ideas of the current Constitution reflect the most universal and radical spirit. We do not want Japan to participate in the war, either directly or

> indirectly. We believe that "renunciation of war" is the prerequisite for Japan to make any international contributions. We oppose Japan's participation in the Gulf War and all possible wars in the future.[60]

The expressions "World War II would be the final war" and "anti-war is the shared vision of the Westerners" in Statement Two expose the political naiveté and excessive idealism of these Japanese intellectuals. They had been seduced by the "ideals of peace" and were under the delusion that the U.S. and its Western allies would act as the guarantors of "peace." Their claim on the Japanese government has proven to be unrealistic, given that Japan could only take a passive and submissive stance in the postwar international order. The Japanese intellectuals were trapped in a vicious circle of powerlessness: they were fully aware that the "ideals of peace" had already been broken by the U.S. but could do nothing but pin their hopes on the purported peace principles. The act of making such a statement was destined to be in vain. However, it was difficult for Shimada and the Japanese intellectuals to turn a blind eye to the war breaking out in front of them.

The logically flawed expressions in Statement Two are good examples of what Christina Klein calls "winning the minds" of the Japanese, as they represent how the U.S.

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[60] For the other participants who signed this statement, see Kawamura Minato's "Wangan sengo no hihyō kūkan" [Criticism Space After the War of the Gulf Coast]. *Gunzō* vol.51(6) (1996): 296-315.

has reformed the sentiments and values of postwar Japanese intellectuals with the political rhetoric of the "ideals of peace" and the "global imaginary of integration" (27). In *Cold War Orientalism*, Klein discusses that the operation of convincing the intellectuals to believe in, defend, and pursue the "dreams of freedom and peace" narrated by the U.S. was a vital strategy of the U.S. A similar opinion is suggested by Frances Stonor Saunders. In *The Cultural Cold War*, Saunders points out that "many intellectuals had been animated by the dictates of American policy-makers rather than by independent standards of their own" (6). More or less, the Japanese intellectuals had been seduced by the propaganda of the U.S. However, the U.S.-led military action in the Gulf War destabilized the general belief in the "dreams of peace" constructed in postwar Japan and the purported postwar legacy.

More specifically, I would argue that the Gulf War trauma has caused two long-lasting social consequences in Japan. First, Japan's Gulf War trauma impinged on Japan's postwar political discourses of "world peace and non-violence," "international consensus and cooperation for peace," and "collective security." Disillusionment with the "dreams of peace" and "global imaginary of integration" circulated among the Japanese masses. The sense of distrust towards the U.S.-dominant Western world deepened and caused the subsequent sense of victimization in Japanese society. Watching the international coalition's military attack unfold in real time in front of their televisions, Japanese people

inevitably thought that the U.S. and its coalition members had established standards with which to judge Japan but did not apply these standards to themselves.

Second, the historical legacies of the American occupation—what many Japanese now see as the dubious "victor's justice"—had been hotly disputed in the 1990s. The Gulf War triggered the Japanese intellectuals and masses to re-examine how the U.S.'s military strategy has fundamentally shaped postwar Japan and the geopolitics of East Asia. From the postwar Japanese legitimization to the propaganda of "Japan as a newborn," the tensions echo well into the present, leading to severe and long-lasting consequences. Although Japan seemed to possess nominal sovereignty and full autonomy in diplomacy, it received international criticisms if it did not respond speedily to requests from the U.S. Referencing the legacy of Article 9 of the Constitution, the Japanese government ultimately did not dispatch troops. Instead, Japan contributed financial assistance to the coalition and deployed the Maritime Self-Defense Force (SDF) to the Persian Gulf for minesweeping missions.[61] These initiatives of the Japanese government disappointed the Japanese intellectuals and made the latter's statement of objection appear even more absurd and pathetic. On the other hand, Japan's refusal to make a military contribution did

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[61] For more on the activities of the Maritime SDF dispatched to the Persian Gulf, see Asagumo Shimbunsha Editorial Bureau, "Wangan no Yoake' Sakusen Zenkiroku—Kaijo Jieitai Perushawan Sokai Haken Butai no Hyaku-hachijuu-hachi-nichi" [Operation Gulf Dawn: The 188-Day Overseas Minesweeper Force Development], Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1991.

not satisfy the Western powers and cast a shadow over Japan's international reputation. The Kuwaiti government, liberated from Iraq, posted a Letter of Appreciation in a major U.S. newspaper. Despite Japan's material contributions, it was not among the list of countries that contributed to liberating Kuwait. According to Tokyo News, Kuwaiti diplomat Abdul Al-Sharikh admitted that this list was made by the U.S. Tokyo News criticized the U.S. for deliberately creating a deep sense of failure in Japan by indicating that "the world would not recognize Japan's contribution by only giving money" (Tokyo News). In other words, Tokyo News addressed that the Letter of Appreciation was essentially the U.S.'s strategy to impel Japan to dispatch the SDF.

John Dower's argument in *Embracing defeat: Japan in the wake of World War II* may help to explain why the Gulf War triggered Japanese intellectuals' introspection and retrospection of the postwar legacies.

> These elites also bequeathed to their successors the unresolved question of whether Japan can ever be taken seriously by other nations and peoples without possessing its own independent capacity to wreak horrible destruction on others. This is the "Article 9" legacy, the "separate peace" legacy, the "U.S.–Japan security treaty" legacy…. It is the legacy of subordinate independence under which the occupation was terminated and Japan regained its nominal sovereignty. Professing fidelity to the spirit of Article 9 invites

> international ridicule (as was made painfully apparent to the Japanese during the Gulf War in 1991 when Japan was derided for offering money but not troops for the attack on Iraq). ... Japan's peculiar dreams of peace have come to involve a gnawing sense of entrapment. (Dower 563)

Even if Japan "regained its nominal sovereignty" by accepting the American legacies and renouncing war, the Gulf War represents a rude awakening to Japan's weakness in independent decision-making in the U.S.-dominant international order. The Gulf War trauma not only aroused the historical resentments of the Japanese masses but also reminded them of a grim reality: the past was in the present. I have not yet mentioned the notorious 1995 Okinawa rape incident,[62] the presence of the American military base in Japan, and the fact that one-fourth of Okinawa is essentially controlled by the U.S. As remarked by Michael Molasky, "the postwar has yet to end…history and fiction enact each other in an ongoing dialectic…the events of the 1990s surely make it seem as though the

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[62] On September 4, 1995, three American servicemen stationed at Camp Hansen kidnapped, beat, and raped a 12-year-old Okinawa girl. The incident sparked a widespread public outcry and further discussions and criticisms about the presence of U.S. forces in Japan, particularly the privileges and legal protections afforded to U.S. military personnel in Okinawa. The U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement faced challenges, as this agreement grants U.S. service members a degree of extraterritoriality, exempting them from the jurisdiction of local laws. For more information, see Angst, Linda Isako. "The Sacrifice of a Schoolgirl: The 1995 Rape Case, Discourses of Power, and Women's Lives in Okinawa." Critical Asian Studies, vol. 33, no. 2, 2001, pp. 243–66, https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710122284. and Inoue, Masamichi. "The Community of Subjects, the Power, and the Public-Sphere of Citizens: A New Stage of the Theory and Discourse of Appropriation and the U.S. Base Problems in Okinawa." Japanese Journal of Ethnology, vol. 68, no. 4, 2004, pp. 534–54, https://doi.org/10.14890/minkennewseries.68.4_534.

era continues to this day, not just in works of literature or in other records of cultural memory, but in everyday life and death" (52).

For Shimada Masahiko, he has chosen to locate his imaginary tale in occupied Japan in response to an historical response by Japanese intellectuals over the ideological battle that ensued when Americans demanded the Japanese join with the other Allied forces during the Gulf war in the 1990s. Shimada has acknowledged a paradox: if the liberal values of "freedom and independence" are deployed as rhetorical and ideological devices to coopt Japan as the subordinate of the U.S., the real (not imagined) "freedom and independence" can never be achieved. Hence, in *Suisei no Jūnin,* Shimada revisits the occupation era, "a devastatingly formative experience" that is embedded so deeply in Japan's national memory, to articulate his anxiety about the crisis of sovereignty (Hillenbrand 110). By uncovering the American hypocritical rhetoric of freedom and its long-lasting consequences, Shimada suggests that the purported U.S.–Japan alliance is essentially a quasi-patriarchy involving dominance and subordination.

The lingering sense of injustice and resentment caused by the Gulf War trauma in Japanese society in the1990s has affected the way in which Shimada views the complex relationship between *kagaisha* [aggressors] and *higaisha* [victims]. Shimada adapts the butterfly narrative into a frequently used literary paradigm—the interracial triangular relationship—to acknowledge the victimhood of postwar Japan in the U.S.–Japan power

dynamics. In Shimada's occupation narrative, he uses the occupied female body to symbolize the subordination of the submissive nation, "Japan," and portrays Kuroudo's sense of marginalization to reflect the wounded masculinity of the local males. In addition, Shimada articulates his doubt concerning the purported "postwar global imaginary" constructed by the U.S. power through the "fraternization" between Taeko and General MacArthur. Through the misfortunes of Taeko, Shimada conveys the disillusionment and sense of powerlessness of Japan and exposes the hypocrisy of the U.S.'s political propaganda in Japan. Although Shimada clearly acknowledges Japan's colonial aggression toward Asian people as a *kagaisha* [aggressor] in his depiction of JB's war experience, he expresses his uneasiness and resentment towards the unequal U.S.–Japan relations constructed during the occupation.

It is also important to note that Shimada's disillusionment with the "permanent peace" preached by the U.S. and his critique of American rhetoric does not mean that Shimada is anti-American. I would argue that Shimada is aware of the positive effects of the U.S.-led reconstruction and democratization in postwar Japan, and he finds himself torn between the affirmation of liberal values and the critique of the hegemonic, neo-colonialist, and militarist "American Empire."[63] Therefore, *Suisei no Jūnin* should be

63 This conception is frequently used in the discussions of the overwhelming power of the U.S. in political, military, economic, and cultural fields. See Bacevich, Andrew J. *American Empire: the Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*. Harvard University Press, 2002, https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674020375.

considered as the product of the *contradictory* stance of Shimada rather than the product of anti-American sentiments.

In comparison with Shimada's earlier works, *Suisei no Jūnin* features a stark change in Shimada's position. Shimada's return to Japan's purported "loss" in history betrays his anxiety over Japan's long-lasting power subordination to the U.S. Shimada's depiction of Japan's victimhood, his particular attention to the fate of the nation-state, and his anxiety over the U.S.–Japan political power imbalance represented in *Suisei no Jūnin* are "unusual" for Shimada Masahiko, who is known as an iconoclastic leftist writer with liberalist and postmodernist gestures against fixed national identities and social constraints in his earlier works.[64] In most of his works published before *Suisei no Jūnin*, Shimada shows his mistrust of Japan's purported homogeneity, cultural heritages, and national identity.[65] In his earlier texts, Shimada demonstrates a commitment to the "individual" rather than to the "nation." Shimada is particularly known for parodying *hi-kokumin*,[66]

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[64] The book that records the conversation between conservative Japanese critic Fukuda Kazuya and Shimada Masahiko is titled: *Seikimatsu shin manzai — panku uyoku vs. Sayoku aonisai* 世紀末新マンザイ—パンク右翼 vs.サヨク青二才 [New *Manzai* at the End of the Century—Punk Rightist vs. Leftist Greenhorn]." (Bungeishunjū, 1998).

[65] See Cornyetz, Nina. "Amorphous Identities, Disavowed History: Shimada Masahiko and National Subjectivity." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2001, p. 585–609., doi:10.1215/10679847-9-3-585.

[66] Shimada parodies the term *hi-kokumin* from *kanji* "非国民" into *katakana* "ヒコクミン." *Hi-kokumin*, the literal meaning of which is "non-nationals," initially refers to people who behave in a way that is contrary to *kokuminsei* ("nationalness," the personality, virtue or character of the nationals of certain country). Instead of being applied to foreigners without Japanese nationality, it has been used as a

such that he portrays Japanese figures who are “liberated from all discursive and social constructs of Japanese identity” and have “attendant perceptual deviances from the norm in their relation to Japanese geography, language, and dominant culture” (Cornyetz 605, 587). However, *Suisei no Jūnin* is rife with political assertions. Even if Shimada attempts to convey these assertions in an allegorical manner, his disconsolation over the Japan–U.S. subordination relationship exposes his increasing concern for the situation and fate of “Japan,” the “nation-state.” Despite Shimada’s relentless effort to destabilize any national identities in his earlier works, his resentment towards the uneven Japan–U.S. relationship seems to confirm his identity as “Japanese” and betrays his repressed desire to reconstruct Japan’s nationhood.

There needs to be more consideration, however, before we describe Shimada’s sentiment and desire as simply nationalistic. It is important to note that in the context of postwar Japan, “nationalism” has already been commonly read as poisonous, inflammatory, and dangerous as it is closely bound to Japan’s militaristic and fascist past. In a 2002 interview with American writer Larry McCaffery, Shimada addressed “the challenges that Japan has faced in expressing a national identity at a time when displays of patriotism threaten its diplomatic ties with its Asian neighbours and with its strongest ally, the United States” (Shimada, “Sophisticated Masochism” 158). This explains why

derogatory term to criticize Japanese people who do not obey government policies or those with specific ideas and values, such as anti-government or anti-war ideas and values.

Shimada and some other Japanese intellectuals are extremely reluctant to be regarded as nationalistic. As a contemporary Japanese writer who has made the most eloquent expression of liberation from the Japanese identity, Shimada still seems to be entangled in the thorny issue of nationhood. Shimada's depiction of Japan's victimhood, his particular attention to the fate of the nation-state, and his resentment toward the uneven Japan–U.S. relationship embodied in *Suisei no Jūnin* are unique in his literary career. After addressing the parodic "de-Japanese" desire for so many years, in *Suisei no Jūnin*, Shimada finally seems to confront and reconcile with his repressed identity as "Japanese."

Chapter 4

The Duality of Noda Kaoru: Gender, Generic Heritage and Romantic Relations

To depict a man committing fully to a desperate love, the author must also make sacrifice. (Shimada Masahiko, Afterword to Utsukushī Tamashī)

The second and third chapter delve into the analysis of *Suisei no Jūnin*, the first volume of Shimada's trilogy which portrays the tragic love of Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton's offspring. It encompasses their son JB's interracial marriage with a Japanese girl Noda Nami, their grandson Noda Kuroudo's clandestine affair with General Douglas MacArthur's lover Matsumoto Taeko, and ultimately leads up to the poignant romantic narrative of their great-grandson Noda Kaoru. *Suisei no Jūnin* sets the stage for the most significant forbidden love narrative of the trilogy: Kaoru's romance with Asakawa Fujiko.

Moving forward, I shift the focus to the second volume of the trilogy, *Utsukushī Tamashī* [Beautiful Soul] (2003) in this chapter, a volume that serves as the central part of *Mugen Kanon*. I focus on Shimada's protryal of a forbidde love interwined with the royal family. Drawing on Shimada's debate with Japanese critic Fukuda Kazuya on motif of love, and his different ways of approaching forbidden love in comparison with Mishima Yukio's *Spring*

Snow, I will anaylze Shimada's contradictory perspective towards the Japanese Emperor and the symbolic Imperial system.

Utsukushī Tamashī portrays how Kaoru meets Asakawa Fujiko in his childhood, falls in love with her, but finally gives up on her to the crowned prince of Japan. The forbidden love between Noda Kaoru and Asakawa Fujiko occupies a central place in this trilogy. Kaoru is the son of Noda Kuroudo and Noda Kiriko, with Kuroudo passing when Kaoru is still a child. His mother Kiriko later becomes the secret lover of Tokiwa Shigeru, an old friend of Kuroudo and the head of a plutocratic family. Kaoru is adopted by Shigeru and he becomes a member of the Tokiwa family. At the age of eleven, Kaoru meets the love of his life, Asakawa Fujiko, who is two years older and a classmate of Kaoru's step-sister Tokiwa Anju. Kaoru has been secretly in love with Fujiko for two years before her impending departure for the United States with her family. The spatial distance does not stop Kaoru's love for Fujiko. They exchanged letters for seven years until Kaoru finally gets a chance to reunite with Fujiko in the United States. Soon after confessing his love to Fujiko, Kaoru is forced to return to Japan due to his step-grandmother's unexpected illness.

After graduation, Fujiko returns to Japan and works as a diplomat in the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Because of her profession, Fujiko meets Prince Kiyohito, the

eldest son of the crown prince.[67] Prince Kiyohito immediately becomes infatuated with Fujiko and considers her as a possible royal bride. Fujiko, however, is reluctant to a royal marriage and goes to New York to take shelter from the excessive public attention. In face of such a crisis, Kaoru appears extremely indecisive and hesitant, which disappoints Fujiko. On the other hand, Prince Kiyohito displays a resolute will to wait for Fujiko to change her mind. In such a circumstance, Kaoru's relationship with Fujiko is seen as detrimental to the nation, Kaoru gets threatened, battered, and even raped by gangsters. In the end, Fujiko agrees to marry Prince Kiyohito and bids farewell to Kaoru at the park where they first met. Kaoru is forced to leave Japan and never comes back.

In the following, I will focus on the duality of the protagonist Noda Kaoru, which is demonstrated in three aspects. Firstly, Kaoru represents both masculinity and femininity, through whom Shimada challenges the significant imbalance in social-cultural construction of gender. Secondly, Kaoru inherits a mixed heritage of his great-grandparents: Cho-cho-san's gene of "love" and Pinkerton's gene of "*kōshoku*" [amorous, libertine]. Finally, Kaoru plays dual roles in his romantic relations with Fujiko, as he is portrayed both as *higaisha* [victim] and *kagaisha* [victimizer]. Kōshoku

[67] When Prince Kiyohito is first noted in chapter four of *Utsukushī Tamashī*, his grandfather is the Emperor of Japan. Emperor died in chapter five, at which point Prince Kiyohito becomes the crown prince of Japan.

1. Gender Duality: Challenging Traditional Gender Constructs

As a young man with beautiful face and angelic voice, Noda Kaoru is given the role of "being beautiful and being loved" (Fiedler 519). Shimada depicts Kaoru's fatal attractiveness to both men and women. Two critical female characters, Fujiko and Anju, both regards Kaoru as their true love. Additionally, Mr. McCallum, a male playwright, also publicly confesses his love to Kaoru.

Shimada's portrayal of Noda Kaoru challenges the traditional notions of gender by experimenting with the concept of "androgyny". Although Kaoru is a heterosexual male, he displays both masculine and feminine traits. His angelic voice allows him to perform female roles on stage while he remains adamantly masculine in life. Being able to sing as high as a mezzo-soprano, Kaoru offers to learn how to sing as a countertenor. This challenging transformation brings him huge career success. Shimada's portrayal of how Kaoru performs female roles with his beautiful voice aligns with Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity, where gender is not a fixed or innate nature, but an "enactment" or "act" that has been "rehearsed" by individuals (526). Butler emphasizes that this theatrical sense of an "enactment" prompts us to question the assumption that gender is purely "individually-oriented" acts separated from social norms, expectations, and proscriptions (525). By portraying Kaoru as an actor who performs the opposite gender, Shimada contextualizes the idea of gender performativity. Moreover, Shimada also suggests that gender is not an

individual matter by depicting how Kaoru, as a male subject exhibiting feminine traits, is viewed with suspicion or hostility by people around him, and how his feminine beauty is misinterpreted as a sign of seduction or weakness.

In Shimada's narrative, Kaoru's active training of his feminine voice and his willingness to take on a feminine role as a countertenor represent a deviation from traditional gender roles, resulting in severe trouble and even persecution in a society dominated by conventional gender constructs. Despite there being no indications that Kaoru either takes on feminine identity or has sexual desire for men, he is imposed with a feminized, masochistic, homosocial identification by social forces. In a scene where Kaoru is kidnapped by two unknown men, Kaoru sings with his angelic voice to beg for mercy. Unfortunately, his women-like voice only evokes the kidnappers' wicked libido and Kaoru is raped by the two men. Through this episode, Shimada depicts the process of feminization of a male subject.

Shimada represents men's obsessive desire to feminize a male with feminine traits through another character, Inō Atsushi, who, as Kaoru's male friend, provides unstinting support to Kaoru in his pursuit of Fujiko. After hearing about Kaoru's mistreatment by gangsters, Atsushi does not only feel sympathy toward Kaoru, but he also can't help getting caught up in a homoerotic desire for Kaoru:

> For a moment, Inō images that he is holding Kaoru tightly. These young men took off

> Kaoru's clothes, tied him up, and heard him singing with his miraculous voice. Inō knows he is not one of those mobs who plugs as long as there is a hole, and he is not homosexual. However, if he was there, he might have the same feeling for Kaoru as those men did. So thinking, Inō is seized with a sense of hatred, 40% of which is out of jealousy, for these men. Kaoru's beauty shines most brightly when he is forced to the verge. Definitely, this man is inducted by Kaoru's beauty, which can spur animalistic desires. (*Utsukushī* 285)[68]

In Inō's pornographic fantasy, Kaoru is presented to be perversely erotic. In addition to Kaoru's magnetic and almost irresistible attractiveness to men, this hallucination reveals a compulsive feminization of male subjectivity. Though presented as a male subject, Kaoru exhibits his weakness, hopelessness, and fragility in a desperate situation, which Inō, finds irresistibly seductive. These attributes are opposite to what is socially considered "masculine," and conversely, are aligned with the sexuality implicit in female gender stereotypes. As noted by Catherine MacKinnon, "socially, femaleness means femininity, which means attractiveness to men, which means sexual attractiveness, which means sexual availability on male terms" (530-531). Kaoru, who evokes homoerotic desire and becomes an imagined subject of sexuality, is not socially perceived as a "man." Through Kaoru, Shimada indicates a possibility that a male subject could suffer an imagined feminization

[68] All translations of Shimada Masahiko's texts are mine unless additional noted.

not only for his profession and the feminine traits he exposes but also for the humiliation he suffers, his powerlessness, and his incapability in a predicament. In this light, Shimada echoes Judith Butler when she argues that "gender" does not necessarily reflect "a merely individual choice" but, to some extent, depends upon the social definition of what a man/woman is (Bulter 526).

If Inō's homosexual fantasy reveals his hidden homosexual desire for Kaoru, then Tokiwa Mamoru's aversion to Kaoru uncovers his irrational fear as he perceives Kaoru as an internal disruptor of the authenticity of masculinity and the patriarchal Japanese family system. Mamoru is Kaoru's stepbrother and the heir to the estate of the Tokiwa family. In Mamoru's account, Kaoru is undoubtedly a charismatic and talented man. Kaoru wins the heart of Fujiko whom Mamoru has a crush on. Anju, Mamoru's sister, also has strong romantic feelings toward Kaoru despite Kaoru does not feel the same way. The fact that a "un-manly" man successfully "seduces" so many women incites Mamoru.

It is important to note that Mamoru does not scorn Kaoru for his femininity, rather, Mamoru displays complex and mixed emotions about Kaoru and his behaviors that deviate from the socially idealized form of manhood. To Mamoru, Kaoru is perceived lack of obedience and compliance to Mamoru, despite Mamoru being the eldest son in a patriarchal family where such a position typically has the highest status among siblings. During their teenager years, Mamoru asserts to Kaoru, "You are my younger brother. Ten years later, you

will still be my younger brother," to which Kaoru nonchalantly responds, "Maybe" (Shimada, *Suisei* 109). Kaoru's response manifests his indifference towards the strict hierarchical structure within the Tokiwa family. Extremely dissatisfied with this answer, Mamoru punches Kaoru (Shimada, *Suisei* 110). Mamoru attempts to assert his status as the eldest son and emphasizes the promising future that awaits him:

> [Mamoru states:] "Ten years later, I am twenty-seven years old. After graduating from university, I will work as a secretary in a company run by my father's friend to learn how to become an enterprise operator. No matter what, I will inherit the business of the Tokiwa….I don't need bow to anyone except for the emperor…. I have only one enemy: boredom. Do you understand, Kaoru? Your role is to alleviate my boredom." (Shimada, *Suisei* 110-111)

Although he disparages Kaoru with his words, we can still tell Mamoru is enveloped in a sense of emptiness or insignificance. The rigid patriarchy entraps and distresses Mamoru, as it is solely through this system that Mamoru can justify his dominant position over Kaoru and assert his privileges.

Moreover, Mamoru holds admiration for Kaoru's extraordinary talent in singing, which enables Kaoru to liberate himself from the constraints of these normative social constructs. Even though Kaoru dismisses the hierarchic relations of dominance in the plutocratic family of Tokiwa, he is the one who possesses the ability to solve problems and safeguard this

family. Despite being the younger and adopted son of the Tokiwa family, Kaoru substantially plays out the "big-brother" role and takes on the task of cleaning up the messes made by other family members, including Mamoru.[69] Kaoru is a threat to his authenticity in this patriarchal family.

In contrast, Mamoru is given the name literally means "protect, guard" in Japanese language. This name carries a deliberate indication of Shimada Masahiko, implying that Mamoru was born with the oversized expectation from the family, a weight that he bears throughout his life. As the elder son and the heir of the family, Mamoru expects himself and is expected to be an outstanding entrepreneur, decision maker and go-getter. However, Mamoru is portrayed as mediocre and even inept, lacking enough business acumen to take on this responsibility. Shattered by the recognition of his own incapacity to protect his family members, Mamoru indulges himself in his insatiable sexual appetite. The conquest of numerous women can be read as a futile attempt of Mamoru to prove his masculinity: "the unfulfilled ambitions of men are packed in women's breasts" (Shimada, *Suisei* 337). In this sense, Kaoru does not only destabilize the patriarchal structure but also makes Mamoru aware of the vulnerability inherent in dependence solely on this system. Mamoru's irrational

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[69] When Mamoru's mother, Amiko, became entangled in an extramarital affair and faced the potential exposure of compromising nude photographs, it was Kaoru who stepped forward to address the situation. Additionally, Kaoru played a crucial role in resolving Mamoru's own emotional conflict with a model. With Kaoru's assistance, the issues at hand were effectively resolved, highlighting his ability to navigate complex situations and provide support to Mamoru in times of need.

jealousy and hatred for Kaoru does not stem from his repulsion towards Kaoru's femaleness, but his own senses of insecurity of losing his position of power within the patriarchal family structure.

Mamoru's resentment towards Kaoru leads him to make an impulsive and disastrous decision that not only harms Kaoru but also his own family business. Mamoru sells the distribution rights for Kaoru's albums to a rival company, which later proves to be a huge mistake. Mamoru loses "the most valuable asset of the Tokiwa family" and the last chance to save his company (Shimada, *Utsukushī* 335). Mamoru's regret turns to anger, so he publicly insults Kaoru on the internet and destroys Kaoru's career as a countertenor: "he sounds like he was castrated. Such a voice will certainly arouse the carnal desire of the women of our country" (Shimada, *Utsukushī* 336). For Mamoru, Kaoru's popularity among women and his career success is a threat to the "hegemonic masculinity," the social construct that privileges men who enacts strong masculinity over men with feminine attributes.[70] Mamoru's wrong decision due to his jealousy over Kaoru brought down his family business, which makes him feel he is no longer a "man". Mamoru's retaliation reveals his desire to correct all deviations even though Kaoru has fatally awakened him from the masculine and patriarchal myths. Ultimately, Mamoru leaves a suicide note before taking an overdose of

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[70] In other cases, hegemonic masculinity also justifies men's dominant position over women. For more, see "Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity" (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985) and "Hegemonic Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity" in *Gender and Power* (Connell, 1987).

sleeping pills: "Kaoru, don't come back to Japan, otherwise you'll be killed" (*Utsukushī* 337). This note can be read as both a warning and an exhortation, which uncovers Mamoru's conflicting feelings of resentment and admiration towards Kaoru. Mamoru's actions demonstrate how the success and popularity of someone who challenges traditional gender roles can be perceived as a threat to the status quo.

By comparing Mamoru and Kaoru, Shimada brings to the fore an updated notion of "masculinity," which goes beyond our traditional gender norms. Mamoru's destructive actions ultimately backfire and expose the fragility of his own masculinity, leading him to feel emasculated and unable to live up to the expectations placed upon him as the heir of the family business. In contrast, Kaoru willingly takes up the position of feminized man, firmly, confidently and even proudly exhibits his feminine features. Compared with Mamoru, Kaoru exudes a sense of self-assurance that Mamoru lacks, and manifests the attributes of courage and assertiveness, which are considered as the very criterion of maleness. In this sense, in Shimada's narrative, Kaoru is depicted as being more "masculine" even by traditional standards. While Mamoru strives to conform to the social defined masculinity, he becomes trapped in normative gender expectations for a "real man." In contrast, Kaoru transcends traditional binaries by embracing femininity and rejecting conventional masculinity. Kaoru's display of courage and firmness, ironically, aligns him with the traditional criterion of masculinity that Mamoru aspires to. Mamoru's animosity towards Kaoru precisely

illustrates his keen awareness and acknowledgement of the "masculinity" present in Kaoru.

The gender duality of Noda Kaoru is a literary experiment of Shimada through which Shimada challenges the traditional discourse of gender constructs.[71] This perspective is reminiscent of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's prominent work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), in which she sheds light on the significant imbalance in the conventional assertion of symmetry between genders:

> That symmetry will be factitious or distorted both because of the raw differences in the amount and kinds of male and female power, and because in the discourse of most cultures, beneath a rhetoric of "opposites" and "counterparts" and "complementarity," one gender is treated as a marginalized subset rather than as an equal alternative to the other. (Sedgwick, 77)

Being both seduced and seducing, passive and active, Noda Kaoru fairly and assertively displays and reconciles the femaleness and maleness in him. The gangsters, Inō Atsushi, Noda Mamoru represent various reactions to Kaoru's gender duality within a society where an imbalanced gender binary is prevalent. Kaoru faces misinterpretation and mistreatment because of his perceived femininity, while also arousing jealousy because of his perceived masculinity. This design serves not only as a gender experiment but also conveys the theme

[71] This is not Shimada's first experiment on the topic of gender construct. In his short story, *Supika, sen no kamen* [Spica, Thousand Masks] (1987), Shimada depicts a middle-aged male pianist who desires to become a teenage girl.

of *Utsukushī Tamashī,* which will be further explored in the following sections.

2. The Mixed Heritage: Gene of Love and Gene of *Kōshoku*

Building upon the exploration of gender and sexuality in *Utsukushī Tamashī*, Shimada also delves into the impact of genetic lineage in his portrayal of Noda Kaoru. According to the observation of Dennitza Gabrakova, Shimada views the concept of fate and destiny as a "big Other," a compulsive external authority that shapes his life, which is closely linked with Shimada's own idea of the "gene of love" (88).[72] Gabrakova suggests that the "gene of love" present in *Mugen Kanon* is "simultaneously staged in sharp contrast with international and domestic politics, artificially but powerfully related to acts of transgression and 'fate,' and aestheticized and spiritualized through connections to music and mystic power" (88). Interpreting Shimada's "gene of love" as a means of resistance to imbalanced power structures, Gabrakova highlights the fatalistic, supernatural approach Shimada employs when engaging with the concept of "gene of love."

To provide a complementary perspective, I would like to argue that Kaoru is of mixed heritage, stemming from the genetic inheritance of his great-grandparents, Cho-cho-san and

[72] Gabrakova makes direct reference to the term "big Other," as introduced by Rey Chow in her analysis of David Henry Hwang's M. Butterfly. Chow posits that "[i]t is possible to think of the operatic music as a kind of big Other, to which the human characters submit in such a manner as to create their 'fate'" and that "as much as the 'oriental woman,' the music is the agent that engenders the plot of the story." (Chow, 139). For more, see Chow, Rey. "The Dream of a Butterfly." Ed. Paul Bowman, *The Rey Chow Reader.* Columbia University Press, 2010. pp. 124-46. <https://doi.org/10.7312/bowm14994>.

Pinkerton. Notably, Cho-cho-san's gene of "love" and Pinkerton's gene of "*kōshoku*," a Japanese conception that literarily means "amorous, libertine," both play significant roles in shaping Kaoru's genetic composition and thus influencing his life.

The *Mugen Kanon* trilogy features a recurring thematic element, *koi no idenshi* [the gene of "love"]. This concept is utilized as a defining attribute of Cho-cho-san's descendants, portraying the curse of "love" as an unbreakable chain that has plagued the family for four generations. Shimada attributes the love tragedies of the family members, from JB, Kuroudo, to Kaoru, to the gene of "love" that they inherited from Cho-cho-san.

> The wars and revolutions that bear no relevance to you, the lingering remnants of colonization and devastation, the maids and soldiers, the forests of the imperial palace and the TM riverside – all of them surge through your body, the emotions, prayers, and desires of your forebears. Your father Kaoru, grandfather Kuroudo, great-grandfather JB and his mother Madame Butterfly…. each of them has endured the agony of love gone awry… Perhaps it is your fate to suffer a similar misfortune. (Shimada *Utsukushī Tamashī* 11)

In Shimada's narration, Cho-cho-san's gene of "love" is portrayed as a "misfortune" or even a "curse" to her offspring in a fatalistic and pessimistic way. In his article "Literature of the 'Blood' Mystique," scholar Takashi Aso argues that those who carry the blood of Cho-cho-san also inherit her "suppressed," "transgressive" and even "schizophrenic" "ex-centric

desire for the other" (7). Cho-cho-san's choice to marry an American man, abandon her own religious belief, and have a child of mixed heritage was radically "transgressive" in the context of Japanese social norms at the time (7). Thus, Cho-cho-san's *koi no idenshi* [the gene of "love"] can be interpreted as the representation of *a full commitment to desperate love*, akin to moths drawn to a flame.

The genetic predisposition for "love" in Cho-cho-san's descendants symbolizes a primal instinct that transcends rationality and social constructs. In a 2004 dialogue with Fukuda, Shimada discusses the concept of "love" that he attempted to depict in *Utsukushī Tamashī*: an "instinctive" desire deeply rooted in human genes since the hunter-gatherer era ("Ten'nō, ren'ai" 238). Shimada suggests that even in a civilized modern society, this primal instinct has the potential to erupt unexpectedly, although it sometimes manifests as masochistic, and self-destructive tendencies. It is this impulse that drives JB to marry a girl from a hostile country, and compels Kuroudo to pursue the lover of General MacArthur regardless of the perilous risk. Cho-cho-san's gene functions as a curse of love that the four generations of the family cannot be released from, as they get swayed by the tides of history. Although one may criticize Shimada for exaggerating a sense of fatalism in his portrayal of Cho-cho-san's offspring and their unfulfilled love, Shimada depicts them as more than just discarded ones in love but also as protesters fighting against social norms or authority.

Shimada's identification of love as an instinct embedded into the genes of human being,

along with his portrayal of love in a predeterministic manner, resonates with the profound Chinese classic *Dream of the Red Chamber* composed by Cao Xueqin in the 18th century.[73] *Dream of the Red Chamber* unfolds around the rise and decline of a Chinese family within the framework of traditional Chinese patriarchy. The love tragedy between Jia Bao-yu, a boy born with a piece of luminescent jade in his mouth, and his cousin, Lin Dai-yu, forms the main threads of this novel. Their love is portrayed as predestined, as Dai-yu's incarnation is a flower nurtured by Bao-yu's previous incarnation. Dai-yu mortal reincarnates in order to fulfil her karmic duty to repay Bao-yu through her tears. When Bao-yu meets Dai-yu for the first time, a strong sense of familiarity permeates their interaction, as evidenced by Bao-yu's resolute statement, "I have seen this sister before" (Cao 49). This seemingly childtalk statement suggests the predetermined connections between their souls since past lives.

While the love between Bao-yu and Dai-yu emerges from "a kind of half-recalled memories from the past lives," in Shimada's work, the love between Kaoru and Fujiko generates from the instinct engraved in Kaoru's genes (Li 204). Despite these different origins, both authors share a common treatment of love as an uncontrollable command and a result of karmic motion. [74] Both couples are guided by innate intuitions that transcend

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[73] Also known as *Honglou meng,* or *The Story of the Stone*, Cao's prose fiction is widely believed to be the most highly esteemed work in the Chinese tradition. See Levy, Dore. *Ideal and Actual in The Story of the Stone*. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.

[74] For Cao Xueqin's treatment of *ming* [fate, destiny] in *Dream of the Red Chamber*, see Ferrara, Mark S. "Patterns of Fate in 'Dream of the Red Chamber.'" *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2009, pp. 12–31, https://doi.org/10.2307/41210028.

rational judgments. Intertwined with a sense of fate and destiny, love serves as a transformative force beyond logical reasoning and a driving factor that propels the characters towards their predetermined paths.

While much scholarly attention has been predominantly focused on Cho-cho-san's genetic impact on her offspring, there has been relatively less emphasis on Pinkerton's genetic legacy. We should not neglect the fact that JB, Kuroudo, and Kaoru, are also the offspring of Pinkerton. Have they inherited any heritage from Pinkerton? How does Shimada illustrate the influence of Pinkerton's gene in his narrative? In the story of "Madame Butterfly," Pinkerton pressures Cho-cho-san into severing relations with her family and abandoning her original religious beliefs. His temporary relationship with Cho-cho-san does not stop him from marrying his wife in the United States. In this regard, it appears that Pinkerton never "truly" loved Cho-cho-san, but merely rather saw her as a trophy of "*kōshoku*" [amorousness] (cf. Ōsugi 316). The concept of "*kōshoku*" can be traced back to the famous literary character Prince Genji, the protagonist of the Japanese classic *Genji Monogatari* **[***The Tale of Genji***].** Prince Genji engages in romantic and sexual affairs with multiple women throughout his life. As a paradigm of Japanese literature, "*kōshoku*" is not limited to bold displays of sexuality, but rather an aesthetic taste that values individual love, desire, and pleasure. It is a form of rebellion that encourages the pursuit of passionate relationships and the expression of personal feelings even if they go against social

conventions and expectations. The love story between Kaoru and Fujiko deploys the theme of "challenging the royal authority" and "violating taboos," which is very reminiscent of the illicit affair between Prince Genji and his stepmother, Lady Fujitsuo in *Genji Monogatari*. In her analysis of *Utsukushī Tamashī*, scholar Dennitza Gabrakova also references *Genji Monogatari* by suggesting that Kaoru embodies "the mode of Prince Genji," highlighting the gene of *kōshoku* inherent in Kaoru (90).

Kaoru is similar to Prince Genji in terms of his romantic involvements with multiple female characters. Shimada portrays Kaoru as someone who also creates other romantic attachments to satisfy his innate desire for passion despite his apparent obsession with Fujiko. In addition to his step-sister Anju, Kaoru dates and has a sexual relationship with a model named Michiyo while Fujiko is abroad. Kaoru is also seduced by his vocal teacher Hosokawa Yoshino, who happens to be the lover of his adoptive father. Although these affairs are partly driven by his unresolved feelings for Fujiko and his grievance against his adoptive father, Kaoru's is troubled by a sense of guilt after his sexual involvements with Yoshino, which is sufficient to prove that he fully acknowledges that his affair with Yoshino is a betrayal to Fujiko. Using the mouth of a fortune teller, Shimada identifies Kaoru as a "*koi ōki otoko*" [amorous man] in the fiction (*Utsukushī* 243), indicating his predisposition towards passionate and intense relationships with multiple women.

Taking this into account, Kaoru not only inherits Cho-cho-san's gene that drives him to

an intense commitment to love, but also Pinkerton's gene of *kōshoku* which leaves Kaoru vulnerable to seduction and easily entangled in romantic relationships. According to scholar Ōsugi Shigeo, the fact that Kaoru also carries the gene of Pinkerton is critical but often neglected: "I believe that Shimada's texts do not give enough attention to the high possibility of Kaoru carrying the gene of Pinkerton…. The *Mugen Kanon* trilogy narrates the love stories of four generations across time, which not only succeeds the story of Cho-cho-san, but also that of Pinkerton….However, Kaoru is *only* aware of an illusion that *koi no idenshi* [the gene of "love"] is inherited from Cho-cho-san" (Ōsugi, 316; emphasis mine). Ōsugi indicates that although Kaoru obviously carries Pinkerton's blood, Shimada chooses to downplay the heritage that he gets from Pinkerton. The influence of Pinkerton's gene of "*kōshoku*" has been overshadowed by the focus on Cho-cho-san's gene of "love" in Shimada's trilogy and thus has been overlooked by readers.

Is Shimada, the author himself aware of the *kōshoku* tendencies in Kaoru and deliberately hiding the gene of Pinkerton? In contrary to Ōsugi's claim, I would interpret this design as a strategy with the author's self-conscious, which is evident in his decision to include the fortune teller's observation of Kaoru's amorous nature. This strategy is attributable to Shimada's commitment, if not obsession, with the motif of "pure love." In other word, Shimada may have intentionally downplayed Kaoru's *kōshoku* inheritance to underscore the purity and intensity of his love for Fujiko.

With this intention in mind, Shimada significantly decreases the amount of explicit sexual content that had been prevalent in his previous fictions. What is even more noteworthy is that Kaoru and Fujiko's relationship never becomes physically intimate, despite both confessing their love for each other. This unconsummated relationship is rather rare even in "pure love" stories, as in most cases, sexual intimacy signifies that the relationship is formally concluded. Except for the first night they spent in the Tokyo Imperial Hotel, when Kaoru is too nervous to fulfill their attempt at intimacy, he relinquishes another chance to advance their relationship before she leaves Japan. This choice to not engage in physical intimacy highlights the purity and emotional depth of their love, which transcends carnal desire and is distinct from Kaoru's sexual involvements with other women.

Shimada's emphasis on Cho-cho-san's transgenerational gene is a literary strategy that binds the three volumes together around the theme of "love". This strategy is necessary especially when the main concerns of these volumes are immensely disparate. The second volume deviates from the account of ethnic power dynamic, national hybridity, and Japan's struggles with its past, which were central to the first volume. In comparison to the story of Kuroudo, which can be read as a postwar version of "Madame Butterfly," the story of Kaoru falls short in succeeding to this structure as it does not perpetuate Japan-U.S. relations as its central concern (Aso, 23). Therefore, Shimada needs to situate "love" as the telos that drives the three volumes, as well as the stories of four generations. Shimada's attempt to keep

thematic correspondence explains why Cho-cho-san is portrayed as the "fountain" of tragic love. Kaoru, as her offspring, is predestined to lose his beloved.

However, according to scholar Dennitza Gabrakova, Shimada intended to portray "the immortality of love transcending time and space" but failed to forge a convincing "pure love story" in *Utsukushī Tamashī* due to the gene of *kōshoku* that Kaoru inherits from Pinkerton (90). This claim leads us to the next section where I would like to discuss the dual role that Kaoru plays in his relationship with Fujiko. Just as Kaoru inherits the mixed heritage of love and *kōshoku*, he plays a dual role as both a *higaisha* [victim] and a *kagaisha* [victimizer] in Shimada's narrative. Shimada's emphasis on Kaoru's *kōshoku* tendencies also subverts the traditional *higaisha* role, complicating the dynamics of victimhood and agency in the story. "Agency" refers to the ability to make decision, exert one's will, and take action to influence outcomes in their lives. In the next section, I would analyze the ways in which Shimada complicates the traditional victim-victimizer dynamic, suggesting that Kaoru is not simply a passive victim but also a victimizer due to his limited agency.

3. The Dual Role in a Romance Relationship: *Kagaisha* and *Higaisha*

As noted earlier, Shimada conveys a strong sense of fatalism in the narrative of Noda Kaoru, suggesting that one's fate is predetermined by the "genes" inherited from their family lineage. We may want to further consider how does Kaoru's family linage shapes his destiny

and what consequences arise from Pinkerton and Co-cho-san's genes? In this section, I would examine the impact of Kaoru's genetic inheritance from the perspective of victim-victimizer dynamic. In "Madame Butterfly," Cho-cho-san is portrayed as a *higaisha* [victim] who was abandoned, had her son taken away, and finally committed suicide in despair. Pinkerton, as a perfidious and heartless man, plays the role of *kagaisha* [victimizer]. As their offspring who inherits mixed heritages, does Noda Kaoru perpetuate both roles as *kagaisha* and *higaisha*?

Kaoru's role as *higaisha* [victim] in his relationship with Fujiko is relatively understandable and relatable to readers. Just like the love stories of other offspring of Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton, *Utsukushī Tamashī* has a tragic ending: Fujiko ultimately accepts the royal marriage and Kaoru is deported as an undesirable threat to Japan. As a result, Kaoru is presented as a disadvantaged and helpless character who loses his beloved and gets evicted from his own country.

What it also worth noting is the significant imbalance between the two male competitors, Noda Kaoru and Prince Kiyohito, in terms of their social and political status. This gap may have led the readers to view Kaoru as a weaker participant who lost his lover to a more powerful one. However, the interesting point is that Shimada does not portrays Noda Kaoru as an ideal *higaisha* [victim] robbed of his lover by a royal member. Kaoru's tragic ending is the result of both his disadvantaged position and his lack of agency, which makes Kaoru

a *kagaisha* [victimizer] in his relationship with Fujiko.

In order to illustrate Kaoru's role of *kagaisha*, I would first uncover the ways in which Shimada portrays Kaoru's negligence, which ultimately leads to tragic consequences, as he hesitates in his commitment and stands by idly as Fujiko faces intense public pressure for rejecting the royal marriage. Second, the absence of a crucial fictional character, Prince Kiyohito, is also significant in rendering Kaoru's role as a *kagaisha*. Prince Kiyohito should have served as a third party in the love triangle. Without Prince Kiyohito's presence, Kaoru becomes the sole source of conflict and tension in the relationship, and his role as a *kagaisha* is highlighted even more. Finally, I would argue that the portrayal of Kaoru's liability and the absence of an "intruder" provide us with a deeper understanding of how Shimada depicts Kaoru's dual role in his relationship with Fujiko, so as to express the author's own personal struggles and emotions.

To begin with, Kaoru cannot be considered a blameless victim due to his equivocal attitude towards Fujiko and his lack of resolution. His failure to provide Fujiko with a sense of security and his inaction demonstrate his lack of agency in the relationship. Despite having several opportunities to prevent Fujiko's marriage to Prince Kiyohito, Kaoru steps back. Kaoru does not lose Fujiko to Prince Kiyohito; instead, he gives up on her (cf. Ōsugi 317). Therefore, to a large extent, the tragedy of Kaoru is self-inflicted.

In their last rendezvous, Fujiko plaintively confesses to Kaoru: "I was so afraid. I was

afraid that you would soon get tired of me once I take the bait. If only you come to meet me one more time, the rift between us should have been overcome" (Shimada, *Utsukushī* 325). Fujiko's complaint indicates that she is not afraid of the social prohibition but of fleeting love. In the face of the unexpected royal marriage, Fujiko shows more boldness and courage than Kaoru. Even after learning of Prince Kiyohito's affection for her, Fujiko does not reject Kaoru's invitation and spends an intimate night with him. At a press conference, Fujiko publicly announces that she has no intention to marry into Royalty. However, Fujiko's commitment does not receive a timely response from Kaoru. Kaoru feels great pressure after learning that Prince Kiyohito is pursuing Fujiko. When asked by his friends whether he will marry Fujiko, Kaoru only gives evasive and ambiguous answers. He steps back when Fujiko hints at more intimate contacts, twice, which prevents their relationship from being fully consummated. During the few years when Fujiko fled to New York to avoid the Royal marriage, although Kaoru was in the same city, he did not show up to meet her even once. Fujiko is discouraged by Kaoru again and again as he makes no unequivocal commitment until it is too late:

> Kaoru does not realize his mistake until it is too late. Why didn't he make a date with her seven years ago, like he does today? Kaoru wasted seven years doing nothing, which caused Fujiko to lose faith in him. If only he had reached out to Fujiko- the fate of him- more than once, he would have had a chance with her. There were moments

> when Kaoru could have taken bold action, but he was so daunted and indecisive. As a result, he was deserted by the woman who was meant to be with him. (Shimada, *Utsukushī* 325)

Shimada explicitly reveals that Kaoru is liable for the failure of this relationship. Kaoru, but not Fujiko, is the person who gets intimidated by his competitor and loses the courage to trespass the taboo. In their tragic love, Kaoru does not merely play a static role of *higaisha* whose beloved woman finally leaves him, he is also a *kagaisha* who brings Fujiko a great sense of uncertainty and despair as he was unable to make a decisive move.

Shimada introduces another important character into his story, Tokiwa Anju, who represents a stark contrast to Kaoru in terms of their decisiveness to love. Tokiwa Anju is Kaoru's step-sister with no blood relation, and she is also a good friend of Fujiko. Out of her unrequited love for Kaoru, Anju becomes jealous of Fujiko and decides to drive a wedge between them. Anju tells Fujiko that she loves Kaoru and implies that Kaoru is an intriguing man who plays with different women, which causes Fujiko to distance herself from Kaoru. In order to forget Fujiko, Kaoru does not reject Anju's sexual request and even says "I love you" to Anju (Shimada, *Utsukushī* 237). However, Kaoru's unwise action leads Anju to have fanciful expectations. She therefore deliberately conceals Fujiko and Kaoru's relationship when Prince Kiyohito inquiries about it. Although Anju plays the role of an unscrupulous "villain" in the story, her deep infatuation with Kaoru and her reckless behavior are

undoubtedly impressive. Anju never gives up any chances to approach Kaoru despite all the objections from the Tokiwa Family and Kaoru's unfeeling manner. Compared to Anju, Kaoru's insistence on his "true love" for Fujiko inevitably appears implausible. Scholar Dennitza Gabrakova criticizes that Kaoru merely "*performatively* dedicates his love" to Fujiko (90; my emphasis). Ōsugi also points out that "Kaoru is a countertenor with the voice of a female, and he performs in women's dress. However, this is just mimicry. The truth is that Kaoru is repeating what Pinkerton did" (316). These comments acutely observe Kaoru's irresolution and his liability for his separation with Fujiko, which indicates Kaoru's role as *kagaisha*, the one who brings Fujiko uncertainty and helplessness.

It is difficult to attribute Kaoru's indecision to Shimada's distinctive definition of love because Shimada has manifested "love" that precisely conforms to the universal expectation of most readers in the story of Kaoru's forebears. In the first volume, *Suisei no Jūnin*, Shimada demonstrates fearless love that transcends the national hostility through the story of JB and Nami, as well as impulsive but brave love that challenges the authority of foreign power through the story of Kuroudo and Taeko. Compared to any of these representations of "love," Kaoru's supposed "genuine" and "true" love for Fujiko is in serious doubt.

Viewed in this light, Shimada cannot be unaware of Kaoru's role as *kagaisha*, as he encourages a critical reading of Kaoru's love. Shimada even quotes "The Ant and the Grasshopper" from *Aesop's Fables* to ridicule his protagonist, who "take things too easy

until the situation is irreversible" (Shimada, *Utsukushī* 240).[75] Shimada appears to be clearheaded about Kaoru's responsibility for this inconclusive relationship, and he has no intention to conceal it.

What confirms this speculation is the protagonist's name: "Kaoru" is shared with another fictional character in *Genji Monogatari*. Genji Kaoru, known as Prince Genji's son, is actually a result of an adulterous affair between Prince Genji's wife and his nephew. Although Genji Kaoru also has many love affairs, he appears more diffidence, prudent, and less assertive in his attitude towards love in comparison to Prince Genji. Similarly, "Kaoru" in Shimada's narrative is not portrayed as a defiant "rebel" who engages in carefree love affairs in disregard of all hierarchies, including imperial power and patriarchy. Kaoru is not even depicted as brave as his father Kuroudo, who cuckolds General MacArthur by having an erotic and risky involvement with MacArthur's lover Taeko. Noda Kaoru, does not substantially trespass the taboos, as he steps back as soon as he becomes aware of them. On the front flyleaf of *Utsukushī Tamashī*, Shimada quotes this entire paragraph from Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513):

I conclude, therefore, that, fortune being changeful and mankind steadfast in their

[75] The fable of "The Ant and the Grasshopper" tells the story of a hungry grasshopper who waste its time on singing in the summer and ends up having to beg an ant for food and shelter. But the ant, having witnessed the grasshopper's laziness, refuses to help him. This fable tells the lesson about seizing the opportunity when they arise, otherwise, we risk being left with regret and paying the price for our procrastination.

> ways, so long as the two are in agreement, men are successful, but unsuccessful when they fall out. For my part, I consider that it is better to be adventurous than cautious, because fortune is a woman, and if you wish to keep her under, it is necessary to beat and ill-use her, and it is seen that she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. She is, therefore, always, womanlike, a lover of young men because they are less cautious, more violent, and with more audacity command her. (Shimada, *Utsukushī* 133; my emphasis)

By citing Machiavelli's resemblance between Fortune and women directly in his text, Shimada indicates that Kaoru's failure to "keep" Fujiko and command his own fortune is due to his "cautious" and less "adventurous" nature. Thus, *Utsukushī Tamashī* cannot be seen as a hymn of rebellious, melancholic inherency in humans against social power; rather, it is a groan of dismay from a compromised man.

Ōsugi's observation about the generational change in the family of Kaoru is also noteworthy, as it offers an explanation for the decline of courage within the family. He asserts that the mixed heritage of *higaisha* and *kagaisha* is "getting diluted from generation to generation, as the blood of Japanese prevails and gains the upper hand.[76] Therefore, only the sense of *higaisha* is left" (316). While Ōsugi acutely observes Kaoru's liability for his relationship with Fujiko, he overstates the point that "only the sense of *higaisha* is left"

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[76] The son of Cho-cho-san and Pinkerton, JB, and their grandson, Kuroudo, both marry Japanese women. Therefore, the blood of Japanese gradually overwhelms the blood of American.

(Ōsugi, 316). In fact, Shimada cannot be unconscious of Kaoru's role of *kagaisha* in his relationship with Fujiko, in the contrary, Shimada deliberately emphasizes it. Nonetheless, it is true that as Cho-cho-san's bloodline is getting diluted, her gene of love that represents a complete devotion to desperate love has less impact on Kaoru than on previous generations. As a result, Kaoru is depicted as less adventurous than JB and Kuroudo.

Ōsugi's may overemphasize the sense of victimhood embodied by Japanese blood, but he is right in disclosing Shimada's intentional placement of Kaoru in the role of "Cho-cho-san" and the emphasis on her transgenerational, immoral "gene of love". This practice contributes to locating Kaoru in a victimized, oppressed, helpless position and highlighting his ultimate loss of perceived male power on both psychoanalytical and physical levels. By aligning Kaoru with the "situation" of Cho-cho-san, of womanhood and placing him in a sympathetic light, Shimada distracts readers' attention from Kaoru's inaction and obscures Kaoru's role as *kagaisha* in his relationship with Fujiko. However, as argued below, Kaoru's multiple romance involvements and indecisiveness are enough to establish his indisputable liability in this relationship. Noda Kaoru is not portrayed as an innocent victim threatened and expelled, but the person who causes his beloved unease and ultimately ruins the relationship.

In addition to Shimada's emphasis on Kaoru's own responsibility in his relationship with Fujiko, he also tries to minimize the appearance of Prince Kiyohito and his impact on

this relationship. Prince Kiyohito's position as the third member of the love triangle has been greatly downplayed, as he only appearances a few times in the novel. The only direct depiction of Prince Kiyohito is his meeting with Anju, where he asks, "does Fujiko have a beloved one?" Anju answers without any hesitation: "Fujiko has never fallen in love with anyone, neither now nor in the past" (*Utsukushī* 227). This suggests that Prince Kiyohito is unaware of the relationship between Kaoru and Fujiko as he is deceived by Anju throughout the novel.

It is therefore difficult to consider Prince Kiyohito as a victimizer who intervenes in Fujiko and Kaoru halfway. Shimada's portrayal of this triangular relationship is distanced from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's observation on "erotic triangle," which prioritizes the male bond over heterosexual romance. Sedgwick notes that in many literary accounts of triangular relationship, "the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the two rivals to the beloved" (48). In *Utsukushī Tamashī*, Shimada diminishes the intensity of the male bond to a large extent and centers primarily on the transcendental interaction of heterosexual romance.

In a 2003 article "Tokubetsu Kikō: Fukuda-kun to Watashi" [Fukuda and I], Shimada explicitly states his intention for creating *Utsukushī Tamashī*: "I wanted to keep Kaoru at a distance from either the US-Japan relations or the royal family, so that he could experience *pure love* with Fujiko. In other words, I aimed to explore the feasibility of pursuing

irokonomi [the passion of love, amorousness], without any regard for the influence of *historical* or *political* components" (281; emphasis mine). Shimada's focus on the transgenerational theme of "love" drives him to lessen the impact of external factors, such as a nefarious interloper or a powerful rival. As commented by Gabrakova, through the story of Kaoru, Shimada demonstrates "the structure of fluctuation or even hesitation in approaching the beloved" both in intention and execution (89). Successful or not, Shimada's primary goal was to emphasize love *itself* over other factors, including "taboos". Prince Kiyohito, who represents "imperil taboos," is therefore downplayed in Shimada's narration. It would be worthwhile to compare this approach to other works that explore the theme of "forbidden love".

Mishima Yukio's 1969 novel *Haru no Yuki* is particularly noteworthy for its prominence in postwar Japanese literature and the clear reference Shimada made to it in his *Mugen Kanon* trilogy. On the front flyleaf of the first volume of his trilogy, Shimada quotes the last words of Matsugae Kiyoaki, the protagonist of Mishima Yukio's 1969 novel *Haru no Yuki* [Spring Snow]: "Just now I had a dream. I'll see you again. I know it. Beneath the falls" (Mishima, 388). Besides this direct quote, in an interview with Professor Suzuki Kenji, Shimada discloses that he was inspired by *Haru no Yuki* when conceptualizing *Mugen Kanon* trilogy.

Initially, I had planned to write about the theme of "forbidden love" in two volumes:

> *Suisei no Jūnin* and *Utsukushī Tamashī*. Mishima's *Hōjō no Umi* also begins with a story of forbidden love in the first volume *Haru no Yuki.* It is a really stifling work, focusing more about *the forbidden* itself, rather than *love*, and those who are seduced by the forbidden ultimately meet their demise. Hence, I aim to write about *love* when I engage with the setting of "the forbidden love". ("*Utsukushī Tamashī*")

Utsukushī Tamashī and *Haru no Yuki* are thematically identical: they both tell the relationship between the protagonist and a girl who is later chosen to marry into the royal family. Therefore, it would be valuable to compare and contrast the two works in order to gain a deeper understanding of how each author approaches this theme and how their perspectives on love and taboo differ.

Haru no Yuki is the first volume of Mishima Yokio's tetralogy *Hōjō no Umi* [The Sea of Fertility] (1969-1970), which is considered to be one of the crowning achievements of postwar Japanese fiction. *Haru no Yuki* tells the love story between an eighteen-year-old young man Matsugae Kiyoaki and Ayakura Satoko, the daughter of a Count who is later chosen as the bride for a prince of Japan. Kiyoaki's love for Satoko is passionless until he is informed that Satoko is promised to the prince. Kiyoaki's reaction is odd, as he generates bizarre emotions when he hears this news:

> His heart was beating with a *strange excitement*, and he was feverishly hot. The solemn words "imperial sanction" seemed suspended before his eyes…He was now

> shaken by a violent passion that bore no trace of the melancholy that had been such a part of its feeble precursors.
>
> But what emotion now had him in its grip? It must be called *delight*. But it was a delight so irrational, so passionate, that it was almost unearthly. If one were to ask what was its cause, the only possible answer would be that it sprang from an impossibility, a sheer impossibility.
>
> (Mishima, 176-177; emphasis mine)

Kiyoaki's reaction to the news is noteworthy because he does not feel upset or desperate like one would typically expect. Rather, he experiences excitement and delight at the thought of "the impossibility of fulfilling that love" (Mishima, 178). Kiyoaki has never been so convinced that he loves Satoko as he does when she becomes "inviolate" and "unavailable" to him. What Kiyoaki truly hungers for is not Satoko herself, but rather a perfect realization of elegance that disregards prohibitions. This desire becomes a powerful impulse that "elevates physical sexuality to a spiritual ecstasy" (Miyoshi, 160).

Despite that *Utsukushī Tamashī* shares a similar motif of "forbidden love" with *Haru no Yuki*, Shimada approach it differently. While Mishima stresses on the "unattainableness" and "the proscribed," Shimada places more emphasis, at least he initially intends to, on "love" itself. In *Utsukushī Tamashī*, Kaoru has strong affection for Fujiko since he meets her first time at the age of fourteen. He genuinely loves Fujiko and never stops thinking of her during

their separation. After hearing that his beloved one is chosen to be a potential royal bride, "Kaoru is frowning, it seems that he is enduring extreme pain that emerged from the emptiness of his heart," which is in contrast to Kiyoaki's irrational ecstasy (*Utsukushī* 174). Mishima depicts the defiance of the perilous taboo in *Haru no Yuki*, where "love" seems to be an excuse for making his characters die young and beautiful. In contrast, Shimada attempts to eulogize the love that is powerful enough to outlast death. Unlike other love tragedies such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame, Wuthering Heights*, "Madame Butterfly" and *Haru no Yuki*, the story of Kaoru and Fujiko does not end with one's death. Shimada seems to be experimenting with whether immortal love that outlasts death can have identical aesthetic impact.

> "The love that never dies" is the most dangerous kind of love… The bond between Kaoru and Fujiko never broke...Even though they put their love on hold for now, a day may come in the future when their love rekindles. This is the most dangerous thing because forbidden love truly becomes a taboo when the love between them is revived. That's why it's essential for these two people to remain alive… I intended to depict the perpetuity of love between Kaoru and Fujiko without violating any superficial taboos. By preserving their bond, the taboo is surpassed. This is the message I wanted to convey through *Utsukushī Tamashī*. (Shimada, "Fukuda-kun" 285)

Shimada delves into the prospect of eternalizing love through renunciation. According to Shimada, "love" is purified and sublimated when all the components such as taboo, royal family and class are overcome in his narrative, and their love will never disappear as long as they remain alive.

If we consider the practical reasons behind, we may recognize Shimada's resignation in this assertion. I would argue that the elimination of "violating the taboo" and the absence of Prince Kiyoaki are the results of Shimada's unwilling compromise. In *Utsukushī Tamashī*, the heroine Fujiko is portrayed as an accomplished woman who studied at Harvard and later became a diplomat, whose experience is considered to be very similar to that of Japanese Empress Masako.[77] As a result, *Utsukushī Tamashī* was suspected of being an insinuation and disrespect to the royal family. The manuscript of this volume was completed in September 2001 and was initially scheduled to be published in November of that year. However, because of the sensitivity of the period, as Crown Princess Masako was pregnant and due to give birth to a royal baby soon, the publication was delayed. In a 2002 article "Mikan no ji *Utsukushī Tamashī* ha nemuru" [Unpublished Words: *Beautiful Soul* Falls Asleep], Shimada revealed that he was forced to revise his manuscript due to fear of possible backlash from right-wing groups. "I don't know what to write to avoid being attacked. Neither I know are they acting after actually reading my book. Or are they instigated by

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[77] Empress Masako was the crown princess of Japan in 2001.

someone? But I am pretty sure that I was caught up in a wave of inadvertent and unreasonable violence" (110). *Utsukushī Tamashī* was finally published in 2003, two years after the completion of the first draft. While Shimada voices his dissatisfaction and woe in this article, unfortunately, the published version of *Utsukushī Tamashī* is a result of self-censorship.

Despite the fact that we may not be aware of every single revision Shimada made to his draft, it is assumed that he made changes to his account with the royal family. In particular, the portrayals of Fujiko and Prince Kiyohito underwent "harmless treatment". Japanese critic Fukuda Kazuya suggests that Shimada's emphasis on *koumaisa* [nobleness] of Prince Kiyohito deprives this work of the tension between the Royal and the public (156-157). However, Fukuda attributes this fatal flaw to the real-life crisis that Shimada faced, which he describes as "skating on thin ice," and cautions that "any critics should not underestimate its impact" (157). Gabrakova agrees with Fukuda's comment and interprets "the physical violence and expulsion that Kaoru suffers within the plot as punishment for trespassing the taboo" as the trace of the "extra-narrative dimension of potential threats directed at Shimada due to the sensitive subject matter" (90). For example, faced with the pressure, Kaoru seeks solace from his friends and even visits a fortune teller, which mirrors the author's experience in reality (*Utsukushī* 242).[78] Kaoru's fear and anger depicted in the narrative can also be

[78] In the article "Mikan no ji *Utsukushī Tamashī* ha nemuru" (2022), Shimada reveals that when *Mugen Kanon* was suspected to be an insinuation to the royal family and he was forced to revise the draft of

read as a portrayal of the author's mental experiences in real life, blending reality and fiction in a satirical way.

One notable scene is the intimate encounter between Kaoru and Fujiko before her departure to the United States, which takes place in the face of public scrutiny. Despite their deep affection for each other, they silently relinquish the opportunity to consummate their relationship.

> [Kaoru] was unable to find a way to entreat her, and to express his desire for her body. Fujiko, who was hugged tightly, stepped back and leaned against the wall. At that moment, his arms that suppressed her resistance suddenly loosened… The room fell silent again. Fujiko, gave up on refusal or resistance, staring blankly at the ceiling….
>
> "Kaoru," Fujiko was the first to break the silence. She got up, looked at Kaoru, who looked as if he had experienced a nightmare, and stroked his hair, "What you felt just now was my fear. You could have done anything to me, but you didn't."
>
> Have I just been tested? Kaoru was confused. In response, Fujiko traced his pale outline gently with her fingertips, as if to soothe him.
>
> (Shimada, *Utsukushī* 190).

The shocked silence and the invisible fear that passes between the two lovers belied their

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Utsukushī Tamashī, he got help from one of his friends who introduces him to a fortune teller. Accepting the suggestion from the fortune teller, Shimada decides to put off the publication of *Utsukushī Tamashī* for two years.

mutual love. Despite their feelings for each other, they both knew that the public expectation of the royal marriage makes it impossible for them to continue their relationship. Fujiko's soft stroking of Kaoru's hair seems to reassure him that he has done the right thing. This complicated feeling can be read as the reflection of Shimada's sentiment when he had to revise the draft and postpone its publication due to the potential threat of right-wing retaliation. The fear and the pressure from the public, as well as the difficult choice between personal desire and public expectation, are also themes that resonate throughout this novel.

In *Utsukushī Tamashī*, Prince Kiyohito is portrayed as a morally perfect character who genuinely loves Fujiko like any other men. During his rendezvous with Anju, Shimada depicts how he removes the rigid smile from his face and exposes his true emotions and true desires in front of her, in order to gather more information about Fujiko. Prince Kiyohito has absolutely no idea about the relationship between Kaoru and Fujiko, which immunes him from the role of a third party stepping in between the couple. In fact, Kaoru has no direct contact with Prince Kiyohito through a rivalry for Fujiko. They never compete with or even express jealousy over each other, despite both being in love with her. This is probably because that any forms of rivalries between men inevitable reveals a hierarchical structure, an issue that Shimada is less willing to touch. Instead, the rivalry between the two men is portrayed as mere "shadow-boxing" with one participate being invisible.

More or less, this setting erases the tension in the triangular relationship and weakens

the fatal attractiveness of Fujiko's *utsukushī tamashī* [beautiful soul], which Shimada intended to eulogize in this fiction. On the other hand, however, Fujiko is immune from the symbolic role of being the object or property of sexual transactions between men. Shimada highlights the inherent value in Fujiko's *utsukushī tamashī*, rather than treating her as a "currency" that circulates among men. Whether successful or not, Shimada's attempt to celebrate Fujiko's beautiful soul is clear.

Shimada's representation of Prince Kiyohito and Fujiko also reveals his perception of the royal the symbolic imperial system [*shōchō ten'nōsei*] of Japan.[79] Through the mouth of character Inō, Shimada comments: "As long as the reign of emperor lasts, Japan will always be Japan. The emperor is the symbol of Japan's immutability, or 'unchangeableness'" (*Utsukushī* 198). Shimada's perception of symbolic imperial system echoes that of the scholar Masao Miyoshi, who asserts that the emperor [*ten'nō*] demonstrates the "homogeneous" and "changeless essence" of Japanese culture (172). Miyoshi further argues that the symbolic imperial system is accountable for "a formula for the elimination of difference inside Japan," where dissident views and criticisms are given little space (172). The obsessive quest for a unified voice sometimes leads to intolerance to different voices.

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[79] After World War II, Japan was under control of the General Headquarters the Allied Powers, who decided to preserve *Tenno* [the emperor of Japan]. Under Article 1 of the Japanese Constitution, "The Emperor shall be the symbol of the State and of the unity of the People, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power". This postwar constitutional system is defined as symbolic system of Japan [*shōchō ten'nōsei*].

In this formula, Shimada's representation of the royal members is seen as "an affront" that needs to be corrected.

It is worth noting that Shimada believes that the symbolic imperial system, as a mechanism, and the emperor, as an individual, should be distinguished (cf. "Ten'nō kōgō" 141). He argues that the Japanese emperor, despite being widely regarded as an emblem of the modern imperial system, is essentially a victim of it. In his 1989 essay "Ichi-sai Toshiue no Kare" [The Man who is One-year Older than Me][80], Shimada asserts that "it is impossible for any Japanese to escape the influence of the imperial system, even if they go abroad, as it has been internalized" (14). This could potentially explain why Shimada does not criticize the emperor or other royal members directly, but instead targets the *internalized* imperial system, which operates quietly within Japanese society as a "spontaneous" mechanism that eliminates the alterity, generates fear, and motivates self-restraint. The emperor, according to Shimada, is not a god, nor the mechanism itself, but an individual trapped within the mechanism. In his fiction, Shimada writes: "The emperor and the crown prince are also human beings with their own desires. But they are not allowed to express themselves"

[80] Naruhito is the emperor of Japan, who acceded to the Chrysanthemum Throne on 1 May 2019. Naruhito was born in 1960, one year older than Shimada Masahiko (born in 1961). Therefore, the title "The Man who is One-year Older than Me" refers to Naruhito. Naruhito's grandfather died in 1989, and his father Akihito became the emperor. Naruhito, therefore, became the crown prince with the title *Hiro-no-Miya* [Crown Prince Hiro] in 1991. Nahuhito married Owada Masako, who was educated at Harvard and worked as a diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A similar plot in *Utsukushī Tamashī* raises questions about whether Naruhito (*Hiro-no-Miya*) is the prototype of the crown prince in Shimada's narrative.

(*Utsukushī Tamashī* 264). The emperor, though always perceived as "the symbol" of this mechanism, is essentially one of the "muted" individuals. In other words, to Shimada, the emperor is not the culprit of Japan's collective "aphasia," but one of the fellow "patients".

The ambiguous sentiments towards the internalized emperor system and the emperor as individual ultimately lead to a complex and nuanced portrayal of characters like Prince Kiyohito, who is both an ordinary man who has confusions when falling in love, and the symbol of a larger cultural structure. According to Japanese scholar Yanagisawa Katsuo, Shimada's practice of picturing the future emperor as an ordinary individual reflects Shimada's "liberalist thinking that corresponds to the modern symbolic emperor system, and humanism that contemplates the distress of the emperor, who is considered as a normal human being" (151). Shimada's depictions of Prince Kiyohito, along with Yanagisawa's subsequent interpretation, which compels both the authors and the critics to navigate ways to acclimatize to this internalized formula in order to avoid being utterly silenced.

What further uncovers Shimada's ambivalence toward the Royals is his idealistic expectation for the Japanese royal couple. In a 2003 article "Tokubetsu Kikō: Fukuda-kun to Watashi," Shimada expresses his hope that "*Hiro-no-Miya* could reject patrimonial principles and maintain his thinking of cosmopolitanism that transcends nation-states" (282). In *Utsukushī Tamashī*, Shimada designates the crown princess as the one to change the status quo of Japan, especially the role of the Japanese imperial family within society: "the future

of the imperial family is in the hands of the crown princess because the current Empress has played a big role in the reform of the royal family" (198). Shimada suggests that the crown princess has the potential to pave the way for a new, and more cosmopolitan future for the imperial family, and further effect change in Japanese society. Did his expectations come to fruition?

In 2020, seventeen years after the publication of the third volume of *Mugen Kanon*, Shimada released the sequel to this trilogy, *Sunōdoroppu* [Snow Drop], in which he depicts how the fictional character, Empress Fujiko, breaks conventional constraints to actively participate in the international political scene. In the parallel world created by Shimada, Emperor Kiyohito and Empress Fujiko no longer remain apolitical and simply serve as "puppets" of the government; instead, they promote the transformation of Japan. It would be a huge misinterpretation of Shimada if we read his portrayal of a wise, sage, and assertive leader monarch in *Sunōdoroppu* as a royalist, rightist position. On the contrary, Shimada's radical imagination represented in *Sunōdoroppu* serves as an expression of his disillusionment with a "Japan" he perceives as "unchangeable" (*Utsukushī* 198). Seventeen years passed, Shimada finally realized that his unfulfilled hopes for the royal couple and for Japan could only be realized in a parallel world created through his literary imagination.

* * *

In *Utsukushī Tamashī*, the protagonist Noda Kaoru represents duality in terms of gender, generic heritage, and romantic relationship. Kaoru's emotions, desires, and romantic inclinations are depicted as deeply ingrained aspects of the generic heritage that he inherits from his family. While Kaoru's disadvantaged social-political position and his compulsive genetic inheritance position him as a *higaisha* [victim], his negligence and lace of agency make him a *kagaisha* [victimizer] in his relationship with Fujiko.

The duality embodied by Kaoru uncovers Shimada's sense of resentment and self-reproach for compromising with the injustices he faced in reality. It is unfortunate that we do not have access to the original manuscript of *Utsukushī Tamashī,* which would have provided a clearer insight into the author's free will and intentions without being affected by any practical factors. Despite that, *Utsukushī Tamashī* has its value as a work that showcases how individuals with a will of their own eventually succumb to an internalized mechanism in which the restrictions on freedom are invisible but solidly existing. Kaoru, the counter tenor who defies conventional gender discrimination, and steadfastly performs female roles, becomes indecisive and gives up on his beloved. Fujiko, the assertive, promising diplomat who rejects the royal marriage in front of the nationwide medias, ends up stepping into the Imperial Palace. In order to survive in this mechanism, Shimada had to tone down his criticism of external factors in the published version. Shimada chooses to downplay the impact of Prince Kiyohito, which creates a vacuum in the narrative that

Shimada fills with Kaoru's indecisiveness and lack of agency. Kaoru fails to exert his will and ultimately suffers the tragic consequence. In this sense, the revised version of *Utsukushī Tamashī* reflects Shimada's resentment at the compromised self, as well as his conflicted feelings towards the Japanese Imperial system, albeit expressed implicitly.

In a 2004 dialogue with Fukuda, Shimada was asked whether he presupposes the existence of a certain noble and beautiful soul ("Ten'nō, ren'ai" 234). In response, Shimada draws upon the examples of characters with beautiful souls found in the works of Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky: such as Sonya from the 1866 novel *Crime and Punishment*, a self-sacrificial, gracious girl; as well as Alyosha from the 1880 novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, a young man characterized by his unwavering faith in God, goodness and compassion (Shimada "Ten'nō, ren'ai" 234-235). Corresponding to these Russian characters in the context of Japan, Shimada identifies the emperor as the embodiment of *Yamatodamashī* [Yamato spirit], the "unpretentious, beautiful soul" of the Japanese (235).

The true meaning of *utsukushī tamashī* [beautiful soul] and the spiritual core of this novel can be found in Fujiko's words: "I long for freedom as much as you do. Because of this, I will stand with the country and work hard so that everyone can enjoy a little more happiness. I am not doing this to make a contribution to the country, but to make people less oppressed by the country" (*Utsukushī Tamashī* 265). Despite its idealistic sentiment, this may be the best way to redeem oneself from self-reproaching. Shimada's representation of

Kaoru, Fujiko, and their unrequited but immoral love, speaks to larger themes of humanism and individuality within the context of a highly structured and hierarchical society.

Chapter 5

Journey to the Island of Etorofu: Loss, Love, and Redemption

As long as we live, our promise persists.

Love never dies.

Just as destiny wove our paths together that first time,

so too shall it reunite us once more, inescapably and inevitably.

(Shimada Masahiko, Etorofu no Koi 196)

The third and final volume of the trilogy, *Etorofu no Koi* (2003), unfolds its narrative on the remote island of Etorofu (Iturup in Russian) and explores the multifaceted motifs of loss, love, and redemption.[81] The readers are introduced to a journey of self-discovery and redemption undertaken by the central protagonist, Noda Kaoru. Kaoru's voyage to the enigmatic island of Etorofu is triggered by a profound dual loss of his feminine singing voice and his male sexual function. Etorofu, as depicted in the narrative, emerges as a frigid, desolate, and melancholic place, existing amidst the contentious territorial disputes between

[81] The primary aim and focus of my study is not to examine the debate on Japan-USSR/Russia territorial dispute over the islands of Etorofu/Iturup from political and international relation aspects. Therefore, in line with the focus on the literary work of a Japanese writer, the island in question will be consistently referred to as "Etorofu" in accordance with the Japanese spelling.

Russia and Japan. This geographical liminality mirrors Kaoru's own marginalized position as a "*yō-zumi no otoko*" [disposed man]. During his journey, Kaoru encounters Nina, a Russian girl who is regarded as a "jinx" due to the successive deaths of her former boyfriends. Nina introduces Kaoru to her young brother, Kostya, and their mother, Maria Grigoryevna, who possess the shamanistic abilities to prophesy and communicate with the spirits and interpret the flow of fate. Kostya and Maria reside in close proximity to a mysterious forest on the island, which is believed to be a sanctuary for the sprites and souls. Accompanied by Kostya, Kaoru ventures into this enigmatic forest, where he experiences a cathartic and healing reunion with what he perceives to be Fujiko's spirit. Through this rendezvous, Kaoru confronts his deepest inner conflicts and fulfills his long-suppressed desire. Ultimately, Kaoru reclaims his lost angelic voice and overcomes his sexual dysfunction. Departing from the broader political issues such as the US-Japan power dynamic and Japan's historical traumas, Kaoru's journey represents Shimada's return to the theme of the *self-redemption* of an individual. In *Etorofu no Koi*, Shimada depicts how a marginalized individual reshapes his recognition of love and loss, thereby embracing his authentic desire and overcoming his internal conflict.

This chapter will focus on three aspects. Firstly, to establish continuity with the preceding chapter, I will illuminate the trigger and underlying motivations that drive Kaoru's journey to the island of Etorofu. Employing a psychoanalytic framework, I will analyze

Kaoru's simultaneous loss of his feminine singing voice and male sexual function after his long separation from his beloved, Fujiko. Drawing upon Sigmund Freud's concept of "primary narcissism," I would argue that this dual loss unveils an internal crisis within Kaoru's psyche. Secondly, I will posit two metaphoric roles that the island of Etorofu plays in *Etorofu no Koi*. Etorofu is depicted both as a multicultural and multiethnic borderland with a crossing potential and a shelter for the marginal, rendering it an ideal terrain for Kaoru's introspective and self-transformative journey. Lastly, I will analyze the ways in which "love" functions as an important antidote to Kaoru's inner conflict. Through the portrayal of Kaoru's redemption of his dual loss, Shimada articulates his perspective on "love that never dies." This perception of love represents a notable departure from the prevailing literary paradigm of "dying for love," and sheds light on how love, as depicted by Shimada, endures and evolves beyond conventional narratives of sacrifice and tragedy.

1. Trapped in Primary Narcissism: A Psychoanalytic Analysis of Kaoru's Dual Loss

Prior to the analysis of Kaoru's voyage to the island of Etorofu, I would like to start by investigating the catalysts that prompted his departure. At the end of the second volume, *Utsukushī Tamashī*, Kaoru's beloved, Asakawa Fujiko, makes the difficult choice to marry the crown prince of Japan. A sequence of distressing events befell the Tokiwa family:

Kaoru's adoptive parents both pass away, his adoptive brother Mamoru grapples with paralysis after a suicide attempt, and his adoptive sister Anju is afflicted with blindness. In this circumstance, Kaoru makes the decision to leave Japan and relocate to New York, where he encounters his future spouse, Tsubaki Yukari. Settling in California, they become parents to a daughter named Fumio. However, this juncture does not mark the conclusion of Kaoru's narrative but rather its continuation. Due to the unexpected dual loss of his angelic, feminine singing voice and his male sexual potency, Kaoru makes the poignant decision to separate from his wife and daughter. Approaching the age of fifty, he embarks on a solitary voyage to the secluded island of Etorofu. To comprehensively understand Kaoru's subsequent journey of relief and recovery, it is essential to analyze the losses endured by Kaoru, and conduct a psychoanalytic inquiry into the underlying inner conflict within Kaoru behind these apparent symptoms.

Sigmund Freud's concept of "primary narcissism" offers a psychoanalytic framework for examining the inner crisis within Kaoru's psyche. The notion of "primary narcissism" refers to an early developmental phase in which the infant perceives itself as an extension of the maternal figure.[82] This concept assumes a fusion of desires and identities between the infant and the maternal figure in the primary phase. Therefore, the process of separation becomes crucial in shaping individual identity and desire. In the case of Kaoru, his sense of

[82] For more, see Sigmund Freud's 1914 essay, "On Narcissism: an Introduction."

self is deeply intertwined with the genetic and emotional legacy inherited from Cho-cho-san, who embodies the role of the "maternal figure." Cho-cho-san's gene is depicted as a potent force that exerts a strong influence on her offspring across generations. This genetic lineage embodies a dual nature: an unconditional commitment to her lover, as well as an inclination toward self-destruction. In circumstances where she cannot command exclusive possession of her beloved, Cho-cho-san displays a readiness to embrace self-annihilation rather than endure the absence of love. Drawing upon the concept of primary narcissism, I would like to elucidate the inner conflict within Kaoru resulting from an ongoing fusion of his individual yearnings and Cho-cho-san's genetic influence.

I would argue that the process of the separation remains incomplete within Kaoru's psychological development, as evidenced by a notable scene in *Etorofu no Koi*. Kostya, a boy with shamanic ability to see spirits, identifies the presence of a woman on Kaoru's back. This woman wears a kimono and holds a sword in her hand. Kaoru questions her identity: "who did Kostya see? Is this my *haigorei* [guarding soul]? Could it be, Cho-cho-san?" (*Etorofu no Koi* 178). The presence of Cho-cho-san's spirit implies her enduring genetic influence on Kaoru's psyche. Under this influence, the demarcation between Kaoru's self-derived desires and those inherited from Cho-cho-san's lineage is manifested as a state of ambiguity. Kaoru falls in love with Fujiko at first sight, and his entire teenage years are accompanied by a deep longing for her. He worked hard to train to become a famous opera

singer for her, but because of his love for this girl residing in the United States. Kaoru goes to the United States to meet her, and he dedicates himself to becoming a famous opera singer to win her over. His love for her eventually led to his rejection by his country, resulting in his expulsion. However, Kaoru's love for Fujiko, as analyzed in the last chapter, appears passionate yet at times performative. He seems to give up on her too easily, almost making his previous declarations of love seem insincere. This, I would argue, can be attributed to the fact that, as Cho-cho-san's offspring, Kaoru's acts of obligatory self-sacrifice in the name of love manifest as projections of maternal desires inherited from Cho-cho-san. He behaves more like a programmed robot responding to the dictates of maternal desire as if obeying an internal mandate. Kaoru's vacillation and capitulation calls for a discernment of whether his affection for Fujiko is a reflection of his authentic desires or is shaped primarily by dominance of maternal desire.

At the end of *Utsukushī Tamashī*, Kaoru deviates from the expected narrative script of being a sacrificial lover. The genetic impulse that typically compels one toward self-annihilation for the sake of the beloved encounters resistance within Kaoru: his own will to persevere. Kaoru chooses to live on rather than follow in Cho-cho-san's footsteps by putting an end to his life for his beloved. Nonetheless, this choice renders him, in his own estimation, as ineligible for the customary heritage of his family lineage. Consequently, this self-perceived disqualification results in two notable losses for Kaoru.

The first consequence is the loss of Kaoru's angelic, feminine singing voice. Correspondingly, Kaoru is deprived of the capacity to perform as a tenor opera singer. At the end of *Utsukushī Tamashī*, Kaoru is kidnapped by two thugs. In this precarious predicament, he begs for mercy through song. Paradoxically, his angelic voice serves to provoke not compassion, but rather, inflames their libidinal inclinations. Moreover, beyond the evident physical and spiritual violence that Kaoru has suffered, I argue that the loss of his distinctive voice is also a consequence of his self-imposed sense of debasement. Central to this premise is Kaoru's personal perception of his singing voice as a generational bequest passed down from Cho-cho-san. Kaoru's father, Kuroudo, is a talented pianist. Kaoru has always believed that his outstanding musical talent is inherited from his father. This recognition leads to a profound acknowledgment of his deviance from the most fundamental familial tenet: an unconditional dedication to their beloved. This deviation, in Kaoru's reckoning, renders him unsuitable to carry this family legacy. Consequently, a perception of unworthiness takes root, contributing to the volitional surrender of his distinctive voice.

Simultaneously, an additional consequence befalls Kaoru as he loses his male sexual potency. This sexual dysfunction assumes a psychological emasculation, marking an intricate psychological interplay between the cognitive perception of masculinity and his sexual capacity. The primary contributing factor to this synonym is the loss of Kaoru's distinctive voice. The linkage between this vocal transformation and his perceived loss of

manliness is articulated in Kaoru's own verbal expressions:

> Once, I possessed the capacity to sing within an exceptionally high-pitched range. People even called me a superman because of it. But now, I'm just like any ordinary guy. A poignant irony pervades my circumstances. When I lost my ability to sing like a woman, it feels like I also lost some of my manliness. This, I suppose, is because there is a potential interdependence between the two facets. (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 175).

Obviously, Kaoru perceives the loss of his distinctive vocal capability not solely as a devastating blow to his career but also as an undermining of his own sense of manhood.

A secondary factor contributing to Kaoru's male dysfunction is the elimination of his position as a subject within the realm of love. This shift emerges through Fujiko's conclusive decision, wherein she elects to marry the crowned prince of Japan. Kaoru is forced to grapple with an inescapable awareness of the unattainability of his love for Fujiko. In the aftermath of this development, Kaoru experiences physical violence, prompting Kaoru to ultimately depart from Japan. A close analysis in the preceding chapter underscores that Kaoru's separation from Fujiko is not solely due to the crown prince's intervention but rather a consequence of Kaoru's own vacillation. Conventionally, a man is presupposed to be a resolute and assertive participant within the realm of romantic relationships. It is within this traditional context that the internal conflict with Kaoru reaches its apex, as he relinquishes

his role as a proactive participant in his romantic relationship with Fujiko. The intricate interplay between Kaoru's feelings of guilt, his self-perceived disqualification, and his eventual detachment from a position of agency in love collectively form the backdrop against which his psychological "emasculating" occurs. Hence, I would underscore that Kaoru's twofold loss of his singing voice and his sexual potency is a result of his self-imposed degradation, which unveils the incomplete separation between the genetic desire and individual desire.

Without destruction, there can be no reconstruction. Kaoru's profound loss serves as the catalyst for a new beginning. The loss drives him towards a journey to the island of Etorofu in search of a desire liberated by the confines of familial lineage and mundane pursuits. In *Etorofu no Koi*, the concluding volume of the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy, Shimada shifts the narrative's setting from Tokyo, the very center of Japan, to the distant and secluded island of Etorofu. In the following two sections, I will analyze Shimada's portrayal of the island of Etorofu, with a particular focus on its two symbolic roles within the story: first, as a literary embodiment of marginalization and the refuge for the societal outcasts, and second, as a multiethnic and multicultural borderland with the potential to transcend established boundaries. I would argue that these two symbolic meanings cast the island of Etorofu as an important backdrop for the introspective and self-transformative journey of the protagonist, Noda Kaoru.

2. Potential of Crossing the Border

In a broader historical-political context, the island of Etorofu serves as more than just a contested borderland fraught with geopolitical disputes between Russia and Japan; it also holds a distinct historical significance, serving as a witness to past power dynamics between the United States and Japan. Located within the Kuril Archipelago, the island of Etorofu is officially claimed to be the northernmost point of Japan.[83] During World War II, the island of Etorofu functioned as a military base from which the Japanese navy sailed for their infamous attack on the US base at Pearl Harbor. This historical backdrop imbues the island with a profound significance, prompting an exploration of Japan's collective memory of war, loss, and its sense of disconnectedness. Therefore, the island of Etorofu is rendered as "the key that links Japan's past and future" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 190). Notably, Dennitza Gabrakova's 2018 book *The Unnamable Archipelago: Wounds of the Postcolonial in*

[83] The specific territorial claims regarding the island of Etorofu and the other Northern Territories were first officially articulated in the post-World War II period. This claim was included in a petition written by the citizens of Nemuro in the 1946, which called for the return of the four northern islands to Japan. For more, see Iwashita Akihiro's *Japan's Border Issues Pitfalls and Prospects*, Routledge, 2016, pp. 30. It was until 2005 when Member of Parliament Muneo Suzuki publicly questioned the Koizumi Junichiro government about the definition of "inherent territory," the Japanese government indirectly established the official definition of "inherent territory" by answering the query in the government's response document. See "Naikaku shū-shitsu Ichi roku san dai san kyū-gō• Shūgiin giin suzuki muneo-kun teishutsu minamikarafuto, Chishima rettō no kokusai hōteki chii na to ni kansuru shitsumon ni taisuru tōben-sho" 内閣衆質一六三第三九号·衆議院議員鈴木宗男君提出南樺太、千島列島の国際法的地位などに関する質問に対する答弁書. 2005.11. 4. http://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb_shitsumon.nsf/html/shitsumon/b163039. htm.

Postwar Japanese Literature and Thought explores Shimada's utilization of the island of Etorofu as a reminder of the "traumatic failure of the power reversal" between Japan and the United States (91). Gabrakova's analysis offers a postcolonial insight into the island of Etorofu's role as a realm that evokes "prehistorical anti-state vision," articulating its profound symbolic value in a political-historical sense(91).

Against the aforementioned study, my analysis will focus primarily on the individual level, exploring the ways in which Shimada fictionalizes the island of Etorofu into a borderland with the potential for transcending boundaries. In the following, I would first analyze the ways in which Shimada portrays the island of Etorofu as the multiethnic and multicultural borderland that challenges the established boundaries of ethnicity, culture, and identity, thereby celebrating a perspective of plurality. Secondly, I will investigate how the island of Etorofu is portrayed as a mysterious zone where the demarcations between "life" and "death" blurr, offering a refuge for Kaoru to exile from the imposed discourse and societal norms prevalent in Japanese society.

In *Etorofu no Koi*, Shimada embarks on a historical exploration of the island's trajectory, emphasizing its attributes of multiethnicity and multiculturalism that have roots dating back to ancient eras. In his narrative, Shimada articulates his perspective, contending that the island of Etorofu "belongs to neither Japanese nor Russian. It was where the Ainu people lived" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 46). Shimada goes on to provide a more detailed

historical account:

> The Ainu people are the main indigenous community on the island. Subsequently, the island witnessed migrations of various tribes from the Korean Peninsula and mainland China… During the fourteenth century, emigrants from Honshu ventured to this land, expropriating territories and subjecting the Ainu inhabitants to servitude…. Before the seventeenth century, this island did not belong to any country, and various ethnic groups coexisted here. (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 89-90; emphasis mine).

Shimada's recounting of historical complexities highlights the island's inclusive, multiethnic, and multicultural heritage.

Meanwhile, Shimada's portrayal of the island of Etorofu and Ainu history challenges the discourse that attempts to assimilate Etorofu into the monocultural framework of an ethnically and culturally homogeneous Japan. Notably, Shimada's perspective aligns with some academic perspectives. For instance, Japanese scholar Iwashita Akihiro emphasizes that the island of Etorofu was originally inhabited by the Ainu people and existed independently from Japan's central governance. Iwashita further argues that Japan's contemporary assertion of Etorofu as its "inherent territory" is a relatively modern construction (30). Both Iwashita's perspective and Shimada's representation of the island of Etorofu disrupt the prevailing discourse that seeks to establish a unified and homogeneous

concept of "Japan." Both of them express concerns regarding the narrative that marginalizes the cultures and histories of indigenous groups like the Ainu, considering them of little significance. Even more problematic is the emergence of neo-nationalist discourse that asserts a shared origin between the Ainu and the Yamato, with the aim of absolving the Yamato of the responsibility for the sufferings endured by the Ainu due to the colonialist "exploitation" of the Yamato during the nineteenth-century.[84] Amidst this backdrop, the multiethnic and multicultural attribute of Etorofu is at times dismissed as an inconsequential murmur that diverts focus from the prevailing push towards a unified national identity. In response, Shimada draws insights from academic historical research to interrogate attempts to promote and reinforce Japan's cultural and ethnic homogeneity.

In contrast to this discourse of homogeneity, Shimada paints a vivid picture of the island of Etorofu as an ethnically and culturally diverse space in his *Etorofu no Koi*. This is particularly exemplified through his skillful depiction of languages spoken by the characters, which serves as a literary embodiment of their individual ethnic and cultural identities. When Kaoru first arrives on the island, he encounters an elderly woman who speaks broken Japanese. Her linguistic expression evolves into a blend of Russian and Japanese, with

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[84] For further information, please refer to Bukh, Alexaneder. "Ainu, Russia and Japan 's quest for 'Northern Territories'." *Japan's National Identity and Foreign Policy: Russia as Japan's "Other"*. Routledge, 2010. Also see Hagino, Tōshō. "Umehara Takeshi-shi no nihongo ainukotoba dōkei-ron e no gimon." 梅原猛氏の日本語・アイヌ語同系論への疑問 [Questioning the "same origins" theory of Umehara Takeshi] 1983, *Chūō kōron* 中央公論, 98(4), pp. 195-203.

Shimada capturing this linguistic mixture through katakana characters: “ダー、ヤポンスキー、ムカシ、ナラッタヨ” [Dā, yaponsukī, mukashi, narattayo] (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 6). According to the pronunciation, this sentence is “Да, Япония 好き. 昔、習ったよ” [Yes, I like Japan. I learn (Japanese) before]. Through this linguistic play, Shimada emphasizes the fluidity of language and the potential for multi-ethnicity within the island’s inhabitants.[85] Despite the territory claimed by Japan, the inhabitants are not confined by a singular language or culture. During the boat journey to the island, Kaoru encounters a melange of linguistic voices, including Russian, Beijing dialect, Korean, and various Japanese dialects like those from Kyoto, Akita, and Hakata (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 19). Furthermore, Grandpa Ermu, an Etorofu local with Ainu heritage, teaches Kaoru the Ainu dialect. For example, Grandpa Ermu tells Kaoru that “salmon” is called “cep” on the island (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 46). In the Ainu language, “cep” means “staple food” because salmon is a daily dietary staple for the island’s inhabitants. Through multiple languages spoken on the island, Shimada underscores the profound cultural and linguistic interweaving within this multi-ethnic zone.

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[85] One example of multiple identities is Fazil Abdulovich Iskander, a writer born in the Soviet Union with an Iranian father and Abkhazian mother. In an interview, Iskander was asked about his primary identity, whether he considers himself Russian or Abkhazian. His response was that the language an author uses determines their identity. When he writes in Russian, he identifies himself as a Russian writer, but he can also voice for Abkhazian without any conflict. This example highlights the fluid nature of identity and the way language can play a significant role in shaping and expressing one's sense of self and affiliation. For more, see his interview in the magazine *Russkaya Mysl’*, September 11, 1992, pp.8.

Shimada's depiction of Etorofu fictionalizes it as an ideal realm where the prevailing discourse of ethnic and cultural *homogeneity/oneness* is replaced by a general embrace of *diversity/plurality*. This dichotomy between "oneness" and "plurality," reflects a fundamental philosophical and existential dilemma concerning individual identity, as outlined by Japanese scholar Numano Mitsuyoshi ("Todomaru chikara" 56). Numano defines "oneness" as a perspective that considers only oneself as real and significant, often excluding or negating the existence and experiences of others. Conversely, "plurality" signifies an openness to coexisting with multiple Others ("Todomaru chikara" 56).[86] In resonance with Numano's conceptual framework, the island of Etorofu is portrayed as a place where one may immerse in plural Others without denying or invalidating their existence ("Todomaru chikara" 56).

This celebration of plurality is prominently reflected through Etorofu's capacity to transcend established boundaries of ethnicity and culture, vividly expressed through the interactions of the characters within the narrative. For example, Grandpa Ermu, while teaching Kaoru the daily practices of raising salmon, conveys the customs, history, and norms of the Ainu people. Kaoru and Nina, the Russian girl born on Etorofu, engage in a

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[86] For more, see Numano Mitsuyoshi's article "'Ichi' to 'ta' no ma de: gai no kyōkai to uchinaru kyōkai gendai Roshia bungaku to eiga no rei ni motodzuite" [Between "Oneness" and "Plurality": External Border and Internal Border: On the Basis of Some Works of Contemporary Russian Literature and Cinema]. *Russian and East European Studies*, vol. 2013, no. 42 (2013): 3–16. In this article, Numano argues that the opposition between the positions of "oneness" and that of "plurality" represents the conflict between "oneness-oriented nationalism" and "pluralistic liberalism" (3).

conversation about exchanging their ethnicities, contemplating how their lives would be different if they were born in each other's respective homelands. Nina remarks, "You must be speaking Russian and looking for the home of your soul. Maybe you will meet a poet one day, that would be me" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 99). Despite their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, these daily interactions lead to deep connections that transcend the ostensibly demarcated distinctions of ethnicity, culture, and identity. As Kaoru puts it, on the island, individuals "associate with people who have the same thoughts, the same misfortunes, and the same hobbies" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 100). Consequently, the island of Etorofu serves as a potential space where diverse individuals forge relationships that traverse conventional divisions, thereby embodying the dynamics of identity and coexistence.

The island of Etorofu manifests its potential for "transcending," challenging not only the boundaries of ethnicity and culture, but also the demarcation between life and death. As previously noted, Kaoru's journey to the island of Etorofu is an *exile* from his homeland, as he openly confesses to Nami: "I am a fugitive. Some people wish to erase my existence, compelling me to flee. Thus, I embarked on my second life on the island of Etorofu, like a used car from Japan" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 13). Drawing upon Japanese critic Kawamura Minato's interpretation of "exile" [bōmei, 亡命], Kaoru, as an individual exiled from his homeland, is a *half dead*. Kawamura suggests that the Kanji "亡" can be read as "亡れる" [*nogareru*, pass away], implying that "亡命" conveys the idea of "living in

seclusion as a dead one" (163). Accordingly, Kaoru, as an individual exiled from his nation, is akin to living as if he were dead.[87]

In *Etorofu no Koi*, Kaoru's distinctive condition as a living dead is represented through various depictions. While Kaoru physically resides on the island of Etorofu, there is a gravestone bearing the inscription of his name, "Tokiwa Kaoru," standing in the cemetery of the Tokiwa family, adorned with insulting words from those who despise him. An illuminating moment that reveals Kaoru's state as a living dead unfolds when Kaoru gazes upon his own grave through the mystical power of the forest. Kaoru comes to a stark realization: "Here lies my grave, a testament to my burial. As a defiled corpse, there is no place for me left in this country" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 186). Kaoru grapples with a profound sense of disassociation, despite his continued physical presence. Consequently, when Kaoru sees his stepsister, Anju, who pays a visit to his grave, Kaoru refrains from

[87] Despite that Kawamura's definition of "亡命" offers an insight to interpret Shimada's writing, his claim on the Chinese original meaning of this term is inaccurate. Based on the interpretations of ancient Chinese intellectuals, "亡命者" initially refers to "nameless people" who have been removed from the household registration due to their fleeing, which is slightly different from Murakami's interpretation of "living dead." Chinese term "亡命" originates from a chapter of the Western Han dynasty historian Sima Qian's historical text *Shiji,* which describes the escape of Zhang Er and Chen Yu from their homeland and their subsequent exile. According to the ancient Chinese intellectual Jin Zhuo, "命" means "名" [name], so "亡命" refers to the action of leaving the official registry and escaping. Cui Hao, a Chinese scholar and politician of Jin dynasty also suggests that " '亡'means'无'[nothingness], '命' means '名' [name]. If an individual flees and conceals themselves, their name would be eradicated from the registry, thus denoting the action of 'fleeing' as '亡命'" (2581). One's name serves as the evidence of one's existence. Namelessness entails the negation of one's presence. If one's name is erased, even though one is still alive, one's presence is not recognized or acknowledged by others. Therefore, they become unnamable and silenced beings.

engaging in a conversation with her and departs directly: "The tombstone standing here indicates that I have been buried. The deceased have no business visiting her" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 186). Kaoru is acutely aware of the unconventional nature of his "half-dead" status, which impels him to maintain a palpable distance from other individuals who are leading what society perceives as "normally" lives.

The island of Etorofu challenges this prevailing societal perception of death, as it is portrayed as a semi-mythical realm where coexistence and communication between the living and the deceased are not only possible but even celebrated. During his journey to the island of Etorofu, while resting in the cabin of the boat, Kaoru becomes aware of the presence of the deceased and the missing people within his dream: "it seems that there is a regular route between the realm of dreams and the underworld, where the departed people frequently traverse" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 21). On the island of Etorofu, distinctions between the living and the dead are rendered ambiguous, creating an environment where Kaoru's condition as the "living dead" does not make him outcast, but rather considered normative.

This perspective is exemplified by the outlook of Grandpa Ermu, a long-standing island resident. Grandpa Ermu tells Kaoru: "I am not afraid of death. Everything in existence ebbs and flows. Life finds its rebirth through the passage of death. Just as dead trees can yield new shoots, so too can new life emerge from the shadow of death" (Shimada, *Etorofu no*

Koi 65). Grandpa Ermu's outlook illuminates the interconnectedness of life and death, offering Kaoru a sense of reassurance in the face of life's inevitable loss and transition. "If what he said is true, if I can believe this, maybe I can rediscover a home for my soul on this island, despite the fact that I was deprived of it in the past" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 65). Nina's mother, Maria, is another resident who offers Kaoru a profound insight into the mystical nature of the island. She says: "this island is a paradise for the departed souls. Because countless spirits of the deceased can find their abode within the depths of the forest. You, too, have journeyed to this island in search of communion with the dead ones, haven't you? ...In due time, you shall find your way back to your rightful place" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 74-5). Maria's words hint at Kaoru's own quest for reconciliation with the departed, implying that his sojourn on the island is a part of a larger spiritual journey, one that will ultimately lead him to a sense of belonging and closure. As observed by Gabrakova, Shimada renders the island as an "ideal place for the roaming spirits of the dead," endowed with mysterious power for healing wandering souls (87). The island of Etorofu manifests the remarkable capacity to normalize what might be considered "abnormal" in the broader societal context.

The island of Etorofu embodies the capacity to transcend as both a multiethnic and multicultural borderland challenging conventional boundaries of ethnicity, culture, and identity, and a mystical realm where distinctions between "life" and "death" blur, offering

Kaoru an idyllic refuge from prevailing discourse and societal constraints.

3. Shelter for the Marginal

In addition to its role as a border-crossing realm, I would argue that the island of Etorofu also serves as a sanctuary for individuals marginalized by the society, making it an idyllic realm for Noda Kaoru to overcome his enduring loss. In contemporary Japanese fiction and literary criticism, the literary metaphor of "island" holds significance as Japan is often referred to as an "island-nation" [*shimaguni*].[88] The motif of "island" therefore is frequently employed to represent the state of "isolation (insularity), marginality, and distance" (Gabrakova 62). In her study, Gabrakova draws upon Ōba Minako's notion of "the island of the island-country" [*Shima no kuni no shima*][89] to dissect how the trope of "island" offers a medium for introspection on issues of "nation and identity" in Japanese literature and serves as a self-reflective microcosm that embodies Japan's experience of isolation (62). Japanese critic Imafuku Ryūta offers a postcolonial interpretation of the "island" motif in his seminal word *Guntō: Sekai-ron* [Archipelago: a World Theory] (2008). Imafuku argues that the

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[88] This is because Japan is geographically composed of four main islands—Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku—along with numerous smaller islands. There are perspectives asserting that the geographical reality that Japan is surrounded by water and is not connected to any other landmasses also shapes Japan's culture, history, and national character. See Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword : Patterns of Japanese Culture*. Vt: C.E. Tuttle, 1954. Print.

[89] Cited from the title of Japanese writer Ōba Minako's 1982 collection of essays in which she recounts her journeys to some secluded Japanese islands.

"island" not only represents the isolation and separation in a geographical sense, but also symbolizes marginalized communities located "on the fringes of the nation" (81). These insightful perspectives on the island motif resonate with Shimada's narrative construction in *Etorofu no Koi*, in which the island of Etorofu serves as a literary representation of marginalization.

In *Etorofu no Koi*, the island of Etorofu embodies the state of marginalization, subordination and peripheralization primarily through its extreme desolation and remoteness. As a peripheral and desolate island, the island of Etorofu is distanced from Japan's sociocultural center. Within the narrative, Etorofu is depicted as a realm marked by inhospitable terrain and unyielding climatic conditions with relics of abandonment and decay. Rust-encrusted derelict vessels, charred and contorted cargo containers, and small houses on the verge of collapse underscore the marginal state of this island (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 29). Even in its central area, the conspicuous absence of "human habitation or even garbage" serves as a testament to its peripheralized existence (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 38). In a letter penned by Kaoru to Fujiko, he describes the island as a melancholy place devoid of color: "I have the illusion that I have become color blind. There is no color in everything that catches the eye, only thick or light, black and white. It seems as if my fingers and arms are all made of stone" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 28). The profound remoteness and desolate scarcity of human habitation on the island of Etorofu explicitly represents the

theme of peripheralization in this narrative.

In addition to the isolation and inaccessibility of the island of Etorofu, Shimada emphasizes that the environment and lifestyle of the island of Etorofu contrasts that of Japanese people, making it unfamiliar to them. Despite the Japanese official territorial assertion, in *Etorofu no Koi*, the island of Etorofu is portrayed as a space that remains largely untouched by Japanese occupation. The island presents an environment that appears foreign to Kaoru, who identifies as Japanese. Upon his arrival, Kaoru's initial impression of the island is "desolation" and "coldness," prompting his reflection: "Is it really September now? I didn't know September could be like this" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 28). Obviously, the island starkly contrasts with the bustling metropolis that Kaoru has inhabited for nearly half a century. Engaging in conversation with the Mayor of the island, Kaoru conveys his awareness of the limited understanding most Japanese people possess regarding the island's realities. His inquiries delve into the island's sustenance, livelihoods, and sources of amusement: "What do the people on the island eat? What do they do for a living? What kind of entertainment do they have? I want to convey these insights to Japanese citizens" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 48). Kaoru's intention to investigate "whether Japanese can live on the island of Iturup" underscores the vulnerability of Japan's territorial assertion to its sovereignty over this island (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 12). In this way, the island of Etorofu becomes emblematic of the cultural and environmental disparities that challenge the

conventional Japanese perspective of this disputed territory.

Shimada's acute awareness of the disparity between the official statements and the actual circumstances on the island can be attributed to his personal experience of visiting the island of Etorofu. In an interview by Professor Suzuki Kenji, Shimada shares the challenges he confronted during his visit to the island:

> Eleven years ago, I spent about a week on Etorofu. It was an arduous journey. Despite the Ministry of Foreign Affairs advising visa-free travel because of the island's inclusion within Japan's territorial boundaries on the map, gaining entry without a passport proved to be very difficult. One had to charter a boat and negotiate in advance to smooth the immigration process—a domain beyond the purview of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is more practical to take the Peace Boat or participate in a grave visit group, but in my particular case, as a solitary traveler, I obtained a Russian visa and flew from Niigata to Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk via Khabarovsk, and waited there for permission to enter the island, and finally made the crossing on a day with good weather. From the moment of my departure from Tokyo, it took an additional three days until I could set foot on the island. ("*Utsukushī Tamashī*")

Shimada documents his personal experience of traveling to the island Etorofu, which unveils a disjunction between Japan's official territorial assertion and the experiential reality he encountered. His firsthand experience adds credibility to his portrayals of the island of

Etorofu.

Returning to the theme of marginalization in *Etorofu no Koi*, I would argue that the island of Etorofu represents individuals who have been ostracized by society due to their relevance to the socially tabooed condition: such as death and crime, uncleanliness and unhealthiness. Kaoru is one of the very literary tropes of the marginal, evident by the direct reference to Kaoru as "*jamamono*" [nuisance] to his nation (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 14). Furthermore, the dilapidated scene on the island: cars abandoned by Japan, drifting in the sea, and tabloids with scandals from Japan in the drifting bottles, also serve as metaphors that imply Kaoru's state as an outcast and marginalized individual (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 97).

Situated as an insular entity within the broader expanse of the island nation of Japan, Etorofu embodies a nuanced spatial relationship with the main islands of Japan, which mirrors Kaoru's ambivalent sentiment towards the very community that has expelled him. The island of Etorofu exists within Japan's perceptual realm yet maintains a distinct spatial separation from the main islands. This close yet disconnected proximity underscores a spatial intricacy, mirroring Kaoru's paradoxical sentiment toward Japan. He finds himself ostracized by the Japanese community, while simultaneously feeling drawn to the very societal collective that has cast him aside. During his life on the island of Etorofu, Kaoru's daily ritual involves searching the shoreline for drifting bottles and salvaging newspapers

from Japan. His longing for the taste of Japanese rice, conspicuously absent on the island, further reveals his inner yearning. Notably, Kaoru has been writing to his distant beloved, Fujiko, who resides within the Imperial Palace in Tokyo: "I am waiting for the typhoon that may carry your voice. If this typhoon that swept across Tokyo can bring your message to me, I shall stand amid the tumultuous storm and heed your whispered words" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 46). This unbreakable sentimental bond that Kaoru maintains with Japan encapsulates an ambivalent sentimental state of simultaneous distancing from and yearning towards the community. Through the spatial relationship between the island of Etorofu and the main islands of Japan, Shimada indicates that Kaoru has not fully disentangled himself from "Japan" that haunts him.

Kaoru's ambivalent emotions initially lead to feelings of alienation, solitude, and homelessness. However, his life on the deserted island becomes a transformative opportunity, liberating him from the constraints of urban life and prevailing social orders, and allowing him to contemplate the meaning of existence and life itself. Embracing a mode of living reminiscent of the most primitive phases of human existence, Kaoru adopts an unconventional lifestyle that diverges from established norms of urban life. On the island of Etorofu, Kaoru relies on salmon as a staple food, ventures into the forest to pick mushrooms, coexists with bears, cultivates potatoes in the yard, feeds pigs with feces, gathers coastal kelp, uses wood to make fire, and attains necessities through the drift (Shimada, *Etorofu no*

Koi 63). The new way of life liberates him from the conventions that governed his previous urban life and uncovers a newfound sense of freedom.

Another source of solace for Kaoru comes from the residents on the island of Etorofu, many of whom also find themselves marginalized within the confines of a homogeneous and conformist community. The hostess who provides Kaoru with accommodation warmly tells him: "Just treat this place as your own home. Just let us know if there is any place you want to go: forests, hot springs, salmon farms" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 35). This generous invitation manifests the hospitality and inclusivity of residents on this island. In the evenings, Kaoru frequents the only bar on the island for a drink—a nameless refuge simply referred to as a "bar." This bar serves as a sanctuary where "patrons can relinquish their personal melancholy, finding solace amidst desolation (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 44). It is a place imbued "with temperature and color," juxtaposed against the backdrop of solitude (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 44). Kaoru experiences a profound sense of connect that transcends time and individuality:

> Over time, I gradually developed a sense of intimacy with the people on the island. deeply sense a shared emotional resonance between us. The people on the island are very good at dealing with melancholy. Although there is nothing here that can heal a worn heart, there is the air that compels one to persist in face of pain. This air, emanating from the slumbering forest, had also been breathed by the indigenous

inhabitants of the island. (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 92)

As Kaoru observes, the inhabitants on the island are "as free as drifters. Following the current, and traveling in the sea, we will eventually meet the ones we are destined to meet, and find the 'self' through 'the Other'" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 100). The island stands as a testament to the power of liberation and relief, providing a haven for those who seek to escape from the confines of normalized society.

Kaoru's path towards self-discovery begins with his interactions with "the other," most notably exemplified in his encounter with Nina. While Kaoru suffers from a sense of ineligibility in inheriting his family's legacy due to his indecisiveness in matters of love, Nina shares a similar struggle of self-loathing. Nina, a native of the island of Etorofu, carries the heavy burden of inexplicable and successive deaths of the men whom she has ever loved. Her father's tragic suicide when Nina was just fifteen years old marks the start of a recurring pattern—three of her subsequent boyfriends meet untimely deaths in a span of four years. Her first love, an Olympic swimmer, mysteriously drowns in a lake; the second, devastated by a failed investment, takes his own life; the third freezes to death on a park bench following a night of inebriation. Convinced that an ominous curse plagues her and those she loves, Nina constructs an emotional barrier that withholds herself from pursuing romantic relationships. Her fear stems from the self-perception that any man she loves will inevitably meet the same tragic fate. As a result, Nina removes herself from being the subject of love

and denies her qualification to love anyone. This shared condition of self-derogation resonates deeply with Kaoru, who believes that his vacillation in his relationship with Fujiko renders him ineligible to inheriting his family legacy.

I would not interpret the relationship between Kaoru and Nina as a conventional romantic affection, as it evolves into a non-sexual and profoundly spiritual interchange. As Kaoru eloquently articulates, his bond with Nina transcends mere affection; rather, it represents an elemental need for her companionship: "[for Nina,] it's more about needing her than loving her, because I can feel the same current coursing through our hearts" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 118). This "same current" alludes to a shared state of profound suffering resulting from the loss of their respective beloveds. Moreover, this current signifies a parallel internal struggle, wherein they both grapple with self-rejection. Among the island's residents who face marginalization in society, Nina, much like Kaoru, is someone who marginalizes herself. Trapped in an ominous and inescapable fate, both Nina and Kaoru cannot accept and forgive themselves, so they both grapple with profound self-blame. Afflicted by their romantic misfortunes, the interactions between Nina and Kaoru primarily revolve around those who are absent— recalling their lost loved ones with a strong sense of nostalgia—rather than about each other. Within this context, these two individuals find solace in each other and share their respective emotional scars.

In one of their most intimate interactions, Kaoru and Nina lie together on a shared bed,

where Nina requests Kaoru to write the names of every woman he has ever loved on her bare back. This uncommon act holds a ritualistic significance for Nina, as she sees it as a means to protect Kaoru from the curse that she carries. Nina expresses the hope that these women whom Kaoru has loved can serve as guardians against her ominous fate. Initially taken aback by this unusual request, Kaoru eventually complies and starts to list the names on Nina's back, including his mother, adoptive mother, foster sister, wife, daughter, and lovers. However, Kaoru hesitates when it comes to writing the name of the most significant woman in his life, Asakawa Fujiko.

> It's not that I forgot to write "Fujiko." Her name came to my mind simultaneously with my mother's. But I refrained from inscribing it on Nina's back because I couldn't shake off the guilt of writing Fujiko's name on the back of a girl now lying right beside me. However, if I can establish a connection with these women again through Nina's lips and back, there is no need to shy away from Fujiko's name. Instead, it's better to reserve a special place for her. (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 114)

To Kaoru, Nina's naked back becomes a symbolic "mirror" that reflects Kaoru's unspoken grief, dormant yearnings, and lingering sentiments.

This act of writing down these names also bestowed upon him the courage to confront and openly discuss these losses, leading to the most transformative moment when Kaoru summons the courage to confide to Nina about his male sexual dysfunction— a deeply

entrenched shame that he had previously deemed unspeakable and had kept hidden from everyone. This disclosure by Kaoru symbolizes his acknowledgment of the loss he had denied and his acceptance of *himself* as one that is imperfect but worthy of being loved. It marks the beginning of his process of re-embracing the "self" without regard for societal or social norms. However, this interaction with Nami serves as only the initial step in Kaoru's path of self-discovery, rather than its ultimate culmination. Despite the acknowledgment of his losses, there remains a sense of emptiness that cannot be filled, as evidenced by the fact that Nina's love and solace do not possess the power to remedy Kaoru's sexual impotence. The final redemption, as I will analyze in the last section, will be achieved through Kaoru's reunion with Fujiko, his true beloved.

To summarize the metaphoric roles of the island of Etorofu discussed in these two sections, I argue that Shimada, through his artistic portrayal, underscores this island as a borderland characterized by a potential for transcending social and existential confines, and as a haven for societal outcasts. Within this island, Kaoru's quest for self-discovery and liberation from the enduring loss finds an idealized place. The first reason is that Etorofu Island beckons Kaoru to engage in a profound reevaluation of the demarcations between different ethnicities and cultures, between "life" and "death." Secondly, the spatial and cultural distinctiveness of Etorofu, particularly its marginalization, allows Kaoru to escape from the constraining discourse and societal norms that are imposed upon him by the rigid

framework of Japanese society. In the upcoming section, I will focus on the process in which Kaoru reconfigures his understanding of Cho-cho-san's genetic desire and of the concept of "love." Through this transformative process of comprehension, Kaoru finally overcomes the inner obstacles that have long haunted his psyche and ultimately regains his loss of singing voice and sexual potency.

4. Love Never Dies: Self-Redemption and Reinvention of Love

As highlighted in the first section, the primary cause of Kaoru's inner crisis is the ongoing fusion of Kaoru's individual yearnings with the genetic desire he inherited from Cho-cho-san. As a result, Kaoru's path toward psychological liberation necessitates two critical steps: firstly, a profound reckoning with this overbearing generic desire, and secondly, an exploration of his own authentic desire.

Primarily, I would argue that Kaoru can only empower himself to embrace the complexity of his own desires and aspirations through the confrontation and, ultimately, transcendence of Cho-cho-san's genetic desires that have long held sway over his perception of love and selfhood. At the core of Cho-cho-san's genetic desires lies a relentless and overwhelming obsession—the unyielding pursuit of absolute possession over the object of affection within the context of a relational dynamic. Pinkerton, "the other" within this relationship, is idealized as an absolutely loyal and wholehearted object. In *Etorofu no Koi*,

Cho-cho-san's genetic desire can be aptly characterized as a manifestation of narcissistic love—a love that fixates on absolute possession and self-deception. This narcissistic form of love, as exhibited by Cho-cho-san, blinds her from seeing "the other." Thus, in Kaoru's journey of awakening his own authentic desire, the transcendence of narcissistic love and the reconsideration of the concept of love are of great significance.

In portraying this process of reshaping Kaoru's perception of love, Shimada aims to illustrate his own perspective on "love," which stands in stark contrast to Cho-cho-san's narcissistic form of love. Shimada believes that this profound insight on love constitutes the key to free Kaoru from the influence of Cho-cho-san's narcissistic perspective on love. This critical perspective centers on the acceptance of the incontrovertible fact that love remains impervious to the exertion of individual agency or conscious initiative. Shimada's viewpoint bears a striking resonance with the philosophical outlook of scholar Han Byung-Chul, who characterizes love as a relationship with "the other" that transcends the paradigms of achievement, performance, and the domain of "Can" (Han 11). Divergent from the prevailing perspectives that construe love as an *achievement*, Shimada's artistic representations of love are intricately woven into the fabric of *failure*. Within this framework, "the other" is perceived as an autonomous subject possessing an independent will, resolute in its resistance to being possessed or comprehensively grasped (Levinas 90). Embracing the uncontrollability of love stands as a vital step toward surmounting the impact of Cho-

cho-san's genetic desire. In this sense, *Etorofu no Koi* not only unveils the inherent dangers of succumbing to a narcissistic fixation on possessiveness within the realm of romantic relationships, but also demonstrates the process through which one comprehends the complexity of love.

Throughout the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy, Shimada's view of love is presented through the compelling romantic stories of JB and Nami, and Kuroudo and Taeko, alongside Kaoru's earnest pursuit of Fujiko's affections. Despite the characters' fervent efforts, these love stories are ultimately concluded with loss, melancholy, and grievances. JB and Nami's narrative, remarkable for transcending the antagonism between their respective nations, is tragically truncated by the untimely demise of Nami during childbirth. Likewise, Kuroudo has overcome his fear of MacArthur and exhibited remarkable courage by confessing his affections for Taeko. Regrettably, his fervent declaration of love fails to vacillate Taeko's steadfast commitment to contributing her life to the betterment of her nation. Kaoru, though initially appearing hesitant, summons his utmost resolve to win back Fujiko's affections. Nonetheless, his endeavors ultimately proved insufficient to alter her resolute decision. Throughout these narratives, the recurring theme of the unpredictability and uncontrollability of love serves to underscore the complexity of love.

In Shimada's narrative, love is not portrayed as a relentless pursuit of absolute dominion over the object of one's affection. Instead, it manifests as an acknowledgment and

embrace of the inherent *powerlessness* and *lackness of control* that come with the journey of love. This perspective on love finds profound resonance in the insights of Georg Hegel who eloquently posits that the “true essence of love consists in giving up the consciousness of oneself, forgetting oneself in another self” (539). Only by distancing oneself from narcissism can one truly encounter the other in love. Han Byung-Chul emphasizes that it is through our capacity of “not to be able” [Nicht-Können-Können] that brings “the Other” into our consciousness (Han 11). In Shimada’s representation, love serves as a potent antidote to the narcissistic tendencies that often pervade human relationships, fostering an appreciation of the agency and individuality of “the other.”

Returning to the narrative within *Etorofu no Koi*, a rendezvous occurs between Kaoru and Fujiko’s soul within the enchanting confines of a mystical forest on the island of Etorofu. This mystical experience occurs as Kaoru accompanies Nina’s younger brother, Kostya, in his shamanic training. Together, they enter the forest—a mystical and otherworldly realm where he meets the important people in his life: his ancestors, relatives and old friends. On the final day of this spiritual journey, Kaoru experiences a cathartic and healing reunion with what he perceives to be Fujiko’s soul. However, it should be noted that in the narrative, Fujiko is not deceased; she is living safe and sound in the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. Shimada leaves some ambiguity regarding the nature of this encounter. It is not explicitly clarified whether Kaoru genuinely interacts with Fujiko’s disembodied spirit with the assistance of

the mysterious forest, or whether the entirety of the experience derives from Kaoru's subjective hallucination and dream. Nevertheless, it is evident that Kaoru's meeting with Fujiko represents a spiritual or metaphysical encounter of some kind, rather than a physical reunion.

During this reunion, Kaoru is afforded a profound opportunity to confront his deepest regret and actualize his suppressed desire. After a long separation, Kaoru finally seizes the occasion to articulate a deep sense of regret that has persistently weighed upon him. He tells Fujiko: "Countless regrets intertwine within me. Why did I not ardently capture your attention during our days of unfettered freedom? Why did I not seize you with unwavering determination? Now that you have been taken from this world, regardless of my fervor, you have gone far" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 195). Fujiko's response to Kaoru's introspective lament triggers a profound transformation within Kaoru. She enlightens him, "Yet, you are not killed by love" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 195). Kaoru responds with a resolute affirmation, "Indeed. The lingering affection for you keeps me alive. Despite the seeming loss of all that is known, perhaps we shall reunite" (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 195). This spiritual exchange signifies a transformative and empowering process. Significantly, it symbolizes Kaoru's capacity to genuinely respect Fujiko's subjective choices and to safeguard her independent will. In embracing the profound recognition that love can persist beyond temporal domination and that it encompasses dimensions beyond possession, Kaoru

ultimately liberates himself from the onerous burden of self-blame that had hitherto encumbered him due to his perceived failure to redeem their relationship. This moment marks his transcendence of the self-imposed disqualification and the genetic influence that had previously hindered his path to self-discovery and personal redemption.

Furthermore, Kaoru's words also demonstrate his second awakening, the recognition of his own authentic desire: the desire to *live* and *love*. This profound desire remains undiminished, even in the face of his dual losses—his singing voice and sexual potency.

> The singer with an ethereal female voice is dead, the playboy who made other men jealous is dead. As a man, I'm already useless. I still have desires — to become useful to others, to reunite with that person, to return to my wife and daughter—these desires persist within me. Even if I give up my desire for fame and lust, I can't let go of these desires. Rather, my withdrawal from the realm of vanity has awakened a newfound sense of pure affection to others. I still have attachment to this world. (Shimada, *Etorofu no Koi* 176)

Kaoru's dual loss has driven him away from two conventional human obsessions: the ceaseless pursuit of professional success and the yearning for carnal desires. He acknowledges his perceived inadequacy as a man, recognizing himself as "useless" in traditional terms. Despite that, he discerns that his core desires persist, rooted in the yearning to live and love once more. As expressed in Shimada's narration: "Kaoru's love doesn't die,

it turns into a desire to change the future" (Shimada, *Utsukushī Tamashī* 346). Shimada's perspective reframes love as a force that endures and evolves, which helps Kaoru firm the determination to shape the future rather than being immersed into the past. This transformation reflects a profound reimagining of the potential of love, as it can inspire a personal redemption.

Notably, Shimada's articulation presents a compelling reinvention of the literary paradigm of "love," which diverges from the conventional portrayal of love as synonymous with acts of sacrifice and self-destruction. Instead, it offers an alternative way of representation—a love that assumes the role of safeguarding shared memories and sustaining life. Shimada's representation of "love that never dies" serves as a notable departure from the more commonly literary paradigm of "dying for love," a motif frequently found in classical romantic narratives. In works like "Romeo and Juliet," the titular characters meet a tragic end together, their deaths elevated to a form of exquisite martyrdom. Similarly, Cho-cho-san "honorably dies"[90] on the stage in despair, representing the theme of self-sacrifice for love. Kiyoaki in Mishima Yukio's *Spring Snow* dies in the snow while waiting for his lover in sickness, representing an aesthetic ideal of death, if not a narcissistic display, that are prevalent in Mishima's works. Even in philosophical discourse, there has been articulation of the close relationship between love and death, as Georges Bataille

[90] In Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly*, the last song that Cho-cho-san sings before her suicide at Act Two Part Two is "Con onor muore" [honorably die].

asserts, "if love exists at all it is…*like death*… within us" (239). However, Shimada's representation of love raises a query: does death truly manifest as an indispensable embodiment of love, or how to distinguish genuine love from narcissistic displays of affection? Shimada's query invites us to contemplate the complex interplay between love and mortality, and to explore the potential for a form of "love" that transcends the established narratives of sacrifice and tragedy.

In contrast to the couples depicted in the classic love stories mentioned above, the narrative of Kaoru and Fujiko does not culminate in a form of their physical demise. Instead, the narrative leaves room for the possibility of a rekindling of their love. As noted before, the encounter with Nina only transfers the ambiguity of Kaoru's desire into a lucid articulation, but it is Kaoru's rendezvous with Fujiko in the mystical forest that stimulates the revival of Kaoru's singing voice and sexual impotence. "Love" serves as the most vital antidote to the suffering fusion of Kaoru's individual yearnings and Cho-cho-san's genetic influence. In the mysterious forest, Kaoru and Fujiko find themselves transported back to that fateful night in the Tokyo Imperial Hotel, where the intimacy they yearned for previously ultimately can be achieved. Kaoru reflects, "The shame, regret and hatred that weighed down my memory were cleansed away. I can feel the resurgence of longing and enthusiasm. ..I became unwaveringly convinced that I am deeply loved by Fujiko. Like a river's gentle current, it guided me into Fujiko's tender embrace and returned me to a place

I had long yearned for…This forest woke me up from a long nightmare made by my sense of regret and resentment for so long” (*Etorofu no Koi* 198-99). Kaoru reclaims his singing voice and sexual function, which signifies an imperturbable reconciliation with his past, desires, and identity.

More significantly, Kaoru has been fully restored to his role as a subject of love. The fact that Kaoru can ultimately sense the presence of his wife and daughter, who are still missing him and loving him, stands as a testament to this reclamation. Initially, Kaoru’s conviction had been fixated on Fujiko as the sole object of his affections. This fixation acted as an obsession that prevented him from recognizing the love that others held for him. However, he has now rekindled the capacity to extend his love to others and reestablished himself as a subject of love once more. Kaoru has genuinely become himself, an individual capable of expressing his desires and partaking in love, no longer imprisoned by family heritages nor by narcissistic love.

Etorofu no Koi, as well as the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy reach their ends as Kaoru awaits the reunion with his daughter, Fumio, on the island of Etorofu, marking the conclusion of the dramatic family saga that originated with Pinkerton and Cho-cho-san. This closing scene echoes the opening of the trilogy, where Fumio embarks on her singular journey to find her father Kaoru. In this sense, this ending intertwines a sense of closure with the anticipation of new beginnings. When queried by Saitō Tamaki about whether the term “*mugen*” in the

title of the trilogy suggests "the possibility to continue," Shimada responds firmly, "No. The trilogy is completed" (12). *Mugen Kanon* has come to an end. Despite the continuation of Pinkerton and Cho-cho-san's bloodline, there is substantial reason to believe that the tragic story of this family has reached its conclusion. Kaoru's emanipation from the family, attained through his transformative journey of self-redemption, signifies a profound closure of the narrative of *Mugen Kanon.*

Conclusion

In this project, I uncover three key findings. Firstly, Shimada perceives Japan's postwar subservience to the United States as a catalyst for its socio-political crisis in the late twentieth century. Notably, Shimada adopts an ambivalent stance between "conspiracy with" and "confrontation against" the powerful Other. Secondly, the trilogy reflects Shimada's disillusionment with pacifist ideals and acknowledges the individual's powerlessness in political matters, mirroring Japan's own socio-political dilemma in the late twentieth century. Thirdly, in the trilogy, Shimada transitions from explicit societal critiques to an introspective exploration of individual identity, providing an alternative perspective for affirming individual agency in the face of daunting external challenges. The following sections will delve deeper into each of these viewpoints.

1. Japan's Postwar Subservience to the United States and Shimada's Ambivalent Stance

In the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy, Shimada Masahiko employs Madame Butterfly and the Emperor of Japan as metaphorical tropes to represent the complex crises faced by both Japan as a nation and its citizens on an individual level, as they grapple with the overwhelming influence of a powerful foreign Other in the late twentieth century. Within the trilogy, both

metaphors embody Japan's postwar submissive relationship to the United States. While Madame Butterfly represents the feminized Japanese subject, the Japanese emperor serves as the symbol of Japan's suppressed subjectivity. In my view, Shimada perceives this submissive dynamic as a harmful external force that erodes Japanese individual identity and deprives personal agency in Japanese postwar society. In this sense, Madame Butterfly and the Emperor of Japan reveal both the national struggle for autonomy in the shadow of foreign influence in the late twentieth century, and the internal crisis on individual's formation of identity within this socio-political context.

In comparison to works that delve into similar themes, Shimada adopts a notably ambivalent stance toward submissive relationships, characterized by a delicate balance between *conspiracy with* and *confrontation against* the powerful Other. For example, unlike David Henry Hwang's 1988 play *M. Butterfly,* which offers a subversive counter-narrative to orientalist discourse, Shimada opts for a subtler, seemingly paradoxical stance in his rewriting of the butterfly narrative in *Mugen Kanon*. Shimada adopts, and at times, reinforces the orientalist and essentialist nuances present in the original butterfly story. This strategy is particularly evident in Shimada's portrayal of Matsuhara Taeko, a Japanese actress depicted as a "postwar butterfly" who is "occupied" by General McArthur. Shimada blends the Western canon with elements from Japanese indigenous narratives and recasts it in the context of postwar Japan. His depiction of Taeko draws from a diverse array of sources,

including Cho-cho-san, the fictional Japanese character Tōjin Okichi, and the historical figure Hara Setsuko. [91]Another example is the character of JB, through whom Shimada re-envisions the butterfly narrative, not as a direct refutation, but as a tool to explore themes of national identity and "in-betweenness." A father-son reconciliation between JB and Pinkerton challenges any simplistic interpretation of Shimada's trilogy as mere orientalist critique.

Shimada's contradictory stance is further evident in his depiction of the Japanese royal family, where he navigates a complex interplay of critique and empathy. As detailed in chapter four, Shimada simultaneously criticizes the symbolic imperial system offering a compassionate portrayal of the crown prince's struggles as an individual. This duality highlights the deprivation of individual agency within the confines of the system. Drawing on Philip Gabriel's insights regarding Shimada's works from the 1980s, we can identify a consistent thematic thread in Shimada's writing style, which is "neither totally critical nor totally complicitous" (238). This nuanced approach is carried forward into the trilogy, where Shimada deliberately avoids a simplistic dichotomy.

Shimada's ambivalent narrative approach serves dual purposes: it draws attention to Japan's socio-political crisis while simultaneously articulating Shimada's perspective on Japanese identity. Being aware of Japan's submissive postwar position and its detrimental

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[91] For details, see chapter three.

impact on Japan's selfhood, Shimada employs an ambiguous approach to offend and unsettle his Japanese readers. His recontextualization of the orientalist fantasy within the occupation period serves to highlight the enduring socio-political tensions between Japan and the United States. Shimada delves deep into this masochistic relationship, demonstrating how its roots extend far beyond the immediate postwar period, persisting into the post-Cold War and post-bubble era. Meanwhile, I posit that Shimada's narrative ambivalence reflects his own contemplations on Japanese identity in the late twentieth century. Japan's response to its identity crisis is portrayed as ambivalent; it is a dance of resistance and surrender, critique and capitulation. Through the trilogy, Shimada holds up a mirror to Japanese society, revealing the intricate, often contradictory ways in which the nation grapples with its past and its future. In my view, Shimada's narrative ambiguity in *Mugen Kanon* serves as a compelling literary device that offers insights into Japan's socio-political challenges and the identity crisis in a time of profound transformation.

2. Postwar Predicament Futile Commitment to Peace and Individual Powerlessness

Building upon his ambivalent stance in the trilogy, Shimada captures the widespread disillusionment with liberal ideals experienced by Japanese intellectuals during the 1990s, particularly in face of their inability to prevent Japan's participation in the Gulf War. This

period marked a critical reevaluation and subsequent disenchantment with the liberal ideals that had once been held in high regard. Shimada's sentiment of disenchantment is particularly evident in his portrayal of the relationship between Matsuhara Taeko and Doglas MacArthur. Taeko, in a poignant act of self-sacrifice, relinquishes her genuine love, choosing instead to serve as MacArthur's secret lover, a decision she believes serves the greater good of her nation. MacArthur, on one hand, pledges to transform Japan into a country of freedom, while on the other hand, he exacts from Taeko a lifelong commitment to remain unmarried. I interpret Taeko's personal sacrifice as a metaphor for Japan's national compromise, while MacArthur's promise of freedom as a poignant commentary on the illusory nature of the liberal ideals that Japan is encouraged to embrace. In my view, *Mugen Kanon* reflects Shimada's disillusionment about liberal ideals, suggesting that they may be a tool of political rhetoric employed by the United States to maintain its military and ideological hold over Japan.

Moreover, Shimada uses the recurring love tragedies to represent the recurring patterns of Japan's entanglement in conflict, illustrating how, time and again—from the Korean War to the Vietnam War—Japan found itself in a position of complicity, acting as an accomplice in wars to secure U.S. military protection.[92] Shimada observes Japan's reluctant submission

[92] In this context, it is necessary to note that my intention is not to comment on the justice or injustice of the wars mentioned. I fully acknowledge the controversies and intricacies surrounding these conflicts. Consequently, the justification for these wars is not the central focus of my discussion. As previously noted, Shimada's desire for "permanent peace" was undeniably idealistic, a fact acknowledged by Shimada himself.

to U.S. demands, despite their misalignment with Japan's commitment to peace. Shimada's portrayal highlights a stark dichotomy between Japan's aspirational commitment to "permanent peace" and its pragmatic dependence on U.S. military support—a dichotomy rooted in the historical legacies of the Occupation period. In my view, Shimada possesses a keen awareness of the overly idealistic nature of striving for "permanent peace" in the complex arena of global politics. Therefore, Shiamda employs the *Mugen Kanon* narrative to draw parallels with the tragic "canon" that Japan was playing in the late twentieth century. The term "canon," with its implication of "repetitive melody" in the field of music, echoes the relentless cycle of tragedy befalling the Butterfly family. This ongoing tragic saga of the Butterfly family, I posit, mirrors Japan's postwar predicament, haunted by the historical legacies of World War II and the occupation period. The trilogy title reflects Shimada's creative endeavor, where the recurrence of family tragedy foreshadows the nation's haunting social-political dilemma, and the literary texts intersect with contemporary concerns.

Meanwhile, *Mugen Kanon* reflects Shimada's growing awareness of the powerlessness of individuals in the realm of grand socio-political affairs, a realization that can be attributed to two pivotal events in his life at the close of the twentieth century. The first incident involves Shimada's engagement, alongside other Japanese intellectuals, in a futile campaign against Japan's involvement in the Gulf War. Their public statement proved to be insufficient

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The disillusionment stemming from this idealism underpins his ambivalence, intricately shaping his nuanced perspective on Japan-U.S. relations.

to alter the government's decision.[93] The second incident, as detailed in chapter four, is the severe backlash that Shimada faced due to interpretations of *Suisei no Jūnin* as being offensive to the royal family. This controversy forced Shimada to make significant revisions to the already completed manuscript of the second volume, reflecting the external pressures even an established author faces in Japanese society. The personal encounters with resistance and censorship led Shimada to shift his narrative focus. In the concluding volume of the trilogy, rather than grappling with broad socio-political themes, he delves into an intricate exploration of individual identity on a more intimate level. This shift in focus not only marks a change in thematic exploration but also reflects Shimada's own reckoning with the limitations of individual agency in the face of larger societal forces.

3. From Explicit Societal Critiques to Introspective Journey of Self-Redemption

Another core question that I aim to answer in this project is that: in what ways does the *Mugen Kanon* trilogy diverge from Shimada's earlier works? First, I argue that the trilogy deviates from the postmodernist style that characterizes Shimada's earlier works, instead aligning more closely with modernist fashion. Whereas his 1980s texts are marked by marginal themes, parodic undertones, fragmented narrative structures, and an innovative engagement with linguistic and literary conventions, *Mugen Kanon* adheres to a more

[93] For details, see chapter three.

cohesive and traditional storytelling approach. Notably, the trilogy meticulously chronicles the multigenerational saga of the butterfly family, adhering to a linear temporal progression. On a thematic level, the trilogy engages with motifs commonly aligned with modernist literature, addressing the motifs of love, loss, fate, societal transformation, and the influence of historical events on individual lives.These thematic pursuits distinctly differentiate *Mugen Kanon* from Shimada's previous forays into postmodernist themes, such as his portrayal of *hi-kokumin* and rental children. The transformation from postmodern fashion to a more modern style marks *Mugen Kanon* a significant transitional work in Shimada's career as a writer.

In my analysis, particular emphasis is placed on the changing strategies in which Shimada approaches socio-political issues within his narratives. In the trilogy, broad social and political themes serve only as the backdrop to personal experiences, allowing the readers to focus on the internal struggles of his characters. This strategy stands in stark contrast to his works from the 1980s, where Shimada's protagonists either explicitly express provocative or even offensive views, or directly make critical comments on prevailing social and political issues. For example, in Shimada's 1983 debut work "Yasashī sayoku no tame no kiyūkyoku" [A Divertimento for a Gentle Leftist], college students exchange their ideas on the return of the northern territories, " 'We don't need the Northern Territory. Just give us fishes'... 'But if the northern territories can be returned, it will add energy to Japan's

leftist movement'" (Shimada 39-40). In the 1984 short story, "Bōmei ryokō-sha wa sakebi tsubuyaku" [The Cries and Murmurs of Defecting Travelers], the protagonist Watashi claims that "Being a Japanese is, in other words, being a prisoner" (Shimada 114).[94] Shimada renders Japanese national identity imposed by state-fostered discourse as a hindrance to individual agency. Obviously, in these 1980s works, Shimada provides his characters with a platform to openly discuss issues surrounding national identity, social movements, and ideological conflicts. This demonstrates his commitment to advocating for individual agency and his resistance against any power discourse or societal system that undermines it.

Mugen Kanon, however, marks a departure from overt socio-political commentary, adopting a more nuanced and introspective approach through which to explore the intricate journey of characters. Unlike his earlier works, Shimada refrains from positioning Kaoru as a mouthpiece for direct political commentary on contentious issues such as the northern territories. Instead, Shimada employs the northern territory as the narrative stage, intricately weaving Kaoru's personal journey of self-redemption into the fabric of the broader political landscape. The trilogy delicately unpacks Kaoru's internal struggles, placing a pronounced emphasis on his quest for authentic self-discovery, unfettered by societal and familial constraints. While broader political themes such as the US-Japan power dynamics serve as backdrops for Kaoru's personal narrative in the first two volumes, they are not the primary

[94] For more, see chapter one.

focus of the trilogy. Instead, Shimada opts to delve into the complex interplay between societal expectations and individual identity. He explores motifs of gender and ethnicity as constitutive elements of societal constraints, underscoring their pervasive influence on the individual's sense of self and agency. In terms of narrative approach, Shimada shifts the focus from macroscopic societal contexts to the microscopic intricacies of individual identity, prompting reflection on the profound impact of societal constructs on individual agency and self-realization.

In *Mugen Kanon*, Noda Kaoru is portrayed as a character ensnared by various external forces that shape and constrain his identity. Among these influences are the legacy of Madame Butterfly, a familial curse that dooms him to a predetermined fate, and the feminine singing voices which makes him marginalized by a society that prioritizes and rewards masculine traits. Kaoru internalizes a sense of predetermined tragedy in his own romantic relationships and identity, as if his fate of sacrificing for the beloved is sealed from the start. Compelled by these external pressures, Kaoru engages in self-censorship and self-punishment, as he attempts to conform to the "role" imposed upon him. This internal conflict leaves him disconnected from his authentic self, as he grapples with his true desires and identity. In the end of the trilogy, Kaoru reclaims his singing voice and sexual function, which symbolizes his liberation from the burdens of societal expectations and the oppressive

legacy of his family.[95] Kaoru's emancipation stands as the evidence of his newfound ability to accept himself unconditionally. Kaoru comes to a place of self-acceptance, recognizing and valuing his genuine desires to love and connect with others, and to live a life that is true to himself. This ending addresses Shimada's fundamental concern: the emancipation of individual identity from the external constraints, including gender, ethnicity, and family heritage.

In my view, from *Suisei no Jūnin* to *Etorofu no Koi*, the trilogy exhibits a clear transformation from reflecting on Japan's socio-political issues to portraying individual self-redemption. *Suisei no Jūnin*, the first volume, stands as a compelling literary response to the dilemmas Japan faced at the close of the twentieth century, in which Shimada rearticulates Japan's war history and critically reflects on the legacy of the occupation period. However, the question needs to be asked is whether the exploration of Japan's historical and socio-political context is the sole means through which the identity crisis of Japanese individuals can be aptly depicted? Are there any alternative literary strategies to represent and comprehend contemporary Japanese identity?

In the trilogy's concluding volume *Etorofu no Koi*, Shimada responds to these questions by depicting a transformative journey of Noda Kaoru, one that leads to self-redemption. Shimada portrays an exile that transcends the limitations imposed by gender,

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[95] For details, see chapter five.

ethnicity, familial legacy, and socio-political turbulence. The forest on Etorofu Island is depicted as a mystical and idyllic realm, where diverse souls find harmony and coexistence. In this utopian sphere, both the postwar legacy and the "American other" lose their significance, allowing individuals to authentically engage with their desires, unhindered from societal confines. This sanctuary embodies Shimada's utopia yet steadfast belief in the power of individual agency, even in the face of the challenges in the late twentieth-century. Though idealized, Shimada's literary vision offers an invaluable alternative perspective for affirming and safeguarding individual identity. His work stands as a reminder that, even in the face of daunting external challenges, the preservation of individual identity remains a vital and achievable endeavor.

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