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## Owning It: Kuroi Senji's "Time" and the Struggle for Agency in Contemporary Japan

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In an article from 1978 critic Isoda Kōichi recalls how, at a point when he had been researching the influence of the American-led occupation on Japanese literature, he found himself “unable to control my various deep emotions” and “pour[ing] forth tears of compassion.”<sup>1</sup> “What I keenly felt,” he explains, “was the low stature of Japanese of that time in regard to the great authority of the occupying army.”<sup>2</sup> For this reason, two events that occurred three days after the occupation had ended were particularly moving to Isoda.<sup>3</sup> One was that on May 1, 1952, *Shinbun Akahata* (しんぶん赤旗), the communist periodical whose publication had been prohibited by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), resumed publication. The other was the so-called “Bloody May Day Incident,” which occurred on the same date. Some 400,000 people demonstrated under the aegis of Sōhyō (総評), the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan, in regard to a raft of issues. These included support for workers’ demands, opposition to Japan’s rearmament, opposition to a proposed anti-subversive activities law, opposition to U. S. military bases, and the United States’ continued occupation of Okinawa.<sup>4</sup>

Of the Marxian economics that had led so many Japanese to join the communist party and to demonstrate, Isoda observes that it “had the glittering appeal of a secret teaching.”<sup>5</sup> He recalls how, in overstepping the boundaries of the approved gathering place, Jingū Gaien, and “rampaging through” the “off-limits” Kōkyomae Plaza, the demonstrators committed an “illegal act” (不法行為 *fuho kōi*).<sup>6</sup> Among other of its repercussions, this “illegal act” effectively purified the demonstrators’ idealism, melding them into a “fated community” (運命共同体 *unmei kyōdōtai*).<sup>7</sup> And, for Japanese across the board—“whom MacArthur had said had the spiritual maturity of twelve year-olds”—it restored a measure of dignity.<sup>8</sup> In other



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words, Isoda's surge of emotion so many years after the fact suggests that the illegal acts committed by the demonstrators on Bloody May Day wrought effects that they could not have anticipated then, but which would reverberate through time.

Steeped in Marxian economics while a student at Tokyo University, writer Kuroi Senji (黒井千次 b. 1932) was among those who rampaged through Kōkyomae Plaza on that fateful day. Unlike many of his comrades, he managed to elude arrest and went on to join the ranks of corporate warriors on the other side of the ideological divide. From 1955 until 1970, he worked at Fuji Heavy Industries, a behemoth at the heart of Japan's postwar economic resurgence. Kuroi's decision to put down his placard in order to take up a briefcase took place at a moment when, as Isoda observes, "employment = *tenkō*." This was the conceit that, whereas entering into the purely academic life after graduation or engaging in work expressly for the "transformation of society" were both worthy endeavors, "improving one's social position through employment was felt by many to be a 'conversion' [転向 *tenkō*] whereby one abandoned oneself to vulgarity."<sup>9</sup> For Isoda, this phenomenon owed to the rise of a corporate mentality whereby all "latent desires" (*senzai-tekiganbō* 潜在的願望) are essentially rationalized out of existence through a relentlessly productivist sensibility.<sup>10</sup> Over time, this mentality would become normalized under the aegis of "managed society" (管理社会 *kanri shakai*).<sup>11</sup> Yet, that so much of Kuroi's writing—both essays and fiction—from this period is centered on the corporate milieu is of more than autobiographical interest. Revealing his Marxian education, many of those works demonstrate the truth of Kuroi's assertion that the corporation is where the contradictions of contemporary Japanese society are to be found in their most concentrated form.<sup>12</sup>

Nowhere are those contradictions revealed to greater effect than in Kuroi's "Jikan" (時間 Time, 1969). Shortlisted for the Akutagawa Prize, "Jikan" is regarded by critics as one of Kuroi Senji's major works produced over a career that spans the late 1940s to the present.<sup>13</sup> This patently autobiographical novella features a nameless protagonist who, during his university days, had studied under a Marxian economist and had participated in various leftist demonstrations, among them that of May Day, 1952. Some fifteen years later he is married, has a young son, and is on the fast track for promotion to section chief at a large corporation. Isoda implies that the protagonist has repressed his knowledge of having committed *tenkō* to his earlier ideals for the sake of becoming a salaryman.

Yet, the repressed returns in the guise of a mysterious figure—glimpsed always from the back such that its identity can never be discerned—the mere thought of which throws the protagonist into an increasingly obsessive turmoil, thus preventing him from inhabiting the present. At times the figure resembles the protagonist’s *doppelgänger* in the guise of himself from his university days. At others, it resembles a man named Miura who had been the protagonist’s classmate then and a fellow demonstrator. Unlike the protagonist, who had eluded the police on May Day 1952, Miura had been arrested and has been defending his case in the courts ever since, his life all the while essentially on hold.

Isoda reads Miura as the very incarnation of *hitenkō* (非転向 non-apostasy). He sees the protagonist of “Jikan” as obsessed by the ideals Miura embodies; this owes to “the determination of its author to go so far as to give birth to a distorted form of devotion to one’s ideals.”<sup>14</sup> In contrast, I argue that the betrayal haunting the protagonist is not that of a cause, but that of *himself*. His self-betrayal has taken the form of what, for Jacques Lacan, is the only true sin of psychoanalysis: the protagonist has “giv[en] ground relative to his desire.”<sup>15</sup> Trapped between a past of ideals with which we are given to suspect he never truly identified, and a present from which corporate life has siphoned off “latent desire,” the protagonist discovers that he must chart a course to reclaim that desire. Only by doing so can he exorcise the specter of his past so that time might once more flow on unhindered.

As I show, the protagonist’s choice of action amounts to an act in the Lacanian sense. Todd McGowan writes that such an act “effectuates a break from the symbolic coordinates in which it occurs. It entails setting aside the blandishments of identity that the world of representations offers. This act touches the real—the gap or point of failure within any symbolic structure—and leaves the subject without the network of support that sustains a sense of meaning.”<sup>16</sup> In other words (as Slavoj Žižek has pointed out), the act amounts to an embrace of freedom, a freedom born of subjective destitution, and therefore a terrifying freedom, but nonetheless a wiping clean of the slate such that one can reboot life’s possibilities.<sup>17</sup> In regard to what Isoda reads as the protagonist’s guilt over having committed ideological *tenkō*, such an act has political implications: not only does it mount a credible defense against Miura’s tacit judgments, it also sets the stage for a vital engagement with the repressive forces of the protagonist’s own present, those of the corporation. To understand what is truly at stake for the protagonist of “Jikan,” however, we must first

consider Kuroi Senji's attitude toward corporate work around the time the story was written.

### Work Versus Labor

In 1971, a year after he quit his job in order to write fulltime, Kuroi published “‘*Sararīman no genten*” (サラリーマンの原点 Origins of ‘salaryman’), an essay in which he translates the term *sararīman* (サラリーマン) into an idiom that is at once more domestic and estranging than the English loanword: *kyūryō seikatsusha*, ‘salaried livelihood-ist.’<sup>18</sup> Kuroi does so in order to denote what *sararīman* merely connotes: a man who, by means of being paid a salary, lives his life.<sup>19</sup> As Kuroi points out, this may not at first glance seem like such a bad way to make a living. But when contrasted with terms such as *nōmin* (farmer), *shōten keieisha* (shop manager), and *isha* (doctor), the problem with *sararīman* becomes apparent: each of the other terms connotes people who, in doing what their job titles indicate, move their bodies and work their brains. Although, like them, a salaryman is paid for his labor, it is precisely the notion of “labor” (労働 *rōdō*) that *sararīman* elides, which renders the term “truly barren owing to a focus solely on ‘remuneration.’”<sup>20</sup> What has been “banished” by the term *sararīman* is the “aspiration/desire” (熱望 *netsubō*) that comes from being absorbed in labor performed for a vital purpose, the production of things necessary for life and that, in pursuing, enables “becoming human.”<sup>21</sup> It is for such reasons, Kuroi maintains, that, whereas the term *rōdōsha* (laborer) evokes terms like “difficulty” and “solidarity,” and “doctor” connotes “good-hearted,” *sararīman* evokes “melancholy” (*aikan*) and “misery” (*hiai*).

Given such an alienating state of affairs, it is little wonder that thoughts of *sararīman* lead to thoughts of “*sararīman no fuan*” (anxiety of the salaryman). As Kuroi states, lurking behind this is

the commuter-packed train, the fear of being transferred, the hatred of unendingly monotonous work; the hatred and disdain toward uncomprehending superiors, the irritation of feeling like you’ve become a human being buried in a single mechanism in which you can’t decide anything for yourself, the longing for home ownership, for one’s own car. [In sum,] it’s an anxiety toward these contemporary days, is it not?<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, the industrialized nature of production makes it impossible for anyone “to see the totality of what we do.” Even though a whole (e. g., an automobile) is produced, one is concerned only with a small component

of that totality. One cannot feel a sense of ownership toward what one does or toward what is produced.<sup>23</sup> The “melancholy” and “misery” of the salaryman have much to do with the fact that, as the term suggests, in being reduced from “labor” in the Marxist humanist sense to “work” (仕事 *shigoto*) one’s livelihood is deprived of “burning desire,” of “aspiration.”

Philosopher Agnes Callard defines aspiration as “that form of agency in which one acts upon oneself to create a self with substantially new values. One does this by allowing oneself to be guided by the very self [that] one is bringing into being.”<sup>24</sup> Callard illustrates aspiration with the case of parenthood.<sup>25</sup> No matter how many times one reads *What to Expect When You’re Expecting*, one will not know what it is to be a parent until one actually becomes one. Even then, one learns that this “becoming” is an ongoing process that coincides with the growth and maturation of one’s child. In other words, to become a conscientious parent effectively means to become a later version of oneself. This version is different from the pre-parental self because that pre-parental self has had to abandon certain values for new values that align with being an effective parent. As with Lacan’s act (discussed in greater detail below), one can judge the success of one’s aspiration to become a parent only from the retrospective perspective of the parent one has become. As Kuroi reveals in his essay, meaningful work for him—labor—is a process that is similarly transformative of the subject. The *netsubō* one feels towards one’s labor is that “desire to desire” which grows as one works on something of vital importance to oneself.<sup>26</sup> As the work progresses and the goal of the finished task or product nears, not only does what one works on transform, one realizes one’s aspirations to more fully become what one does.

As Callard explains, the aspirant cannot have more than an inchoate idea as to what it is to actually *be* that which s/he aspires to become. In contrast to this, the person with *ambition* to become something has a much better grasp of what s/he will be when s/he reaches his/her goal:

[Her] pursuit is not, with respect to value, a learning experience: she is not, as she proceeds, coming to a better and better grasp of why she is doing what she is doing. An ambitious agent’s behavior is directed at a form of *success* whose value she is fully capable of grasping in advance of achieving it. Hence ambition is often directed at those goods—wealth, power, fame—that can well be appreciated even by those who do not have them.<sup>27</sup>

Callard’s distinction between aspiration and ambition is analogous to the distinction that Kuroi makes between labor (*rōdō*) and work (*shigoto*).<sup>28</sup>

Through *shigoto* one exercises one's ambitions for success. But, in the very fact that "success" is something understood and defined by the "big Other"—the law, the rules (written and unwritten) of comportment—one's subjectivity does not change in pursuing it. In pursuing success, agency follows a script that the big Other has in large part written; inasmuch as one pursues a goal based on ambition, one's actions are congruent with the values one has been conditioned by the big Other to regard as one's own.

### **Anxieties of a Salaryman**

"Success" as defined by Callard is analogous to Slavoj Žižek's notion of "happiness," which results when one attains what one has been led to believe one "officially desires."<sup>29</sup> True to Žižek's notion, despite all the trappings of success, the protagonist of "Jikan" evinces great ambivalence toward the life he has made. At one point he marvels at the changes that have come over his wife Mie since the time he has become a salaryman. Nowadays, she "would drag home a heavy *daikon* she'd bought at a distant supermarket because it was cheap," or she might "suddenly seem depressed only to return from a bargain sale with a newly bought handbag and ecstatically show it off."<sup>30</sup> He reasons that such changes have happened as a matter of course, as a function of her having lived his life with him, a salaryman: "In so far as it was materially supported by his salary their life had precisely that much weight to it. That meant that he, too, led a materialistic existence."<sup>31</sup> The will—the ambition—to enhance a materialistic life of consumption and status spurs the protagonist to take an exam for promotion to section chief. But he understands that even with a promotion the nature of his life will not fundamentally change since having been boiled down to the complementary spheres of corporate and family life. In another passage the protagonist muses again on his life with Mie and how, early in their marriage, they had attempted to read books in English together. With childbirth, however, that had ceased; in the intervening years he has come to believe that it is "no longer possible to start something new."<sup>32</sup>

Yet, at other points, the protagonist would appear to yearn for the shelter his banal routine provides. "Jikan" opens at a gathering held by Professor Terajima for former and current students of his economics seminar. Amidst what is revealed as a highly charged atmosphere, the protagonist muses, "[a]t some point, aren't we moved by an instinctual concern so as not to pierce the crusts that have congealed over our lives?"<sup>33</sup> In his ambivalence, the narrator conveys how attending the Terajima get-

togethers feels “like tearing himself away from his wavering self”<sup>34</sup> such that, whenever another gathering looms, he feels “certain trepidations” and harbors “masochistic expectations.”<sup>35</sup>

The protagonist’s anxiety stems from the realization that the gatherings immerse him in “two sorts of time”: “he could perceive his own past through the bearing of Professor Terajima, who seemed not to have changed [... and] he could also grasp the present through the attitudes of the professor’s current students. In other words, he could clearly see various aspects of his own present through the eyes of his past.”<sup>36</sup> Regarding his old friend Asai with this heightened acuity, the protagonist sees no signs of age. But when he inquires what Asai has been up to recently, the reply—“systems building”—induces a temporal disjunction: he says he cannot picture Asai with an “electronic computer.” Moving his eyes over the gathering, however, he senses “live, moving time creeping over [the men’s] faces.” Sizing them up, he realizes anew that these former leftists have similarly transformed into pillars of the corporate and bureaucratic establishment, and wonders whether the changes they’ve all undergone amount to “maturation” (成長 *seichō*) or “degeneration” (変質 *henshitsu*).<sup>37</sup>

The protagonist finds his attention drawn to the loud voice of Tachibana, who is quite clear about where he and his corporate cohorts stand: “There’s no way in hell to justify what we do. [...] Every single day we cheat the people. Just so we can get our hands on bigger and bigger profits, we screw the masses, forever kindling their desires.”<sup>38</sup> Having jettisoned all concern over the contradiction of his present corporate ethos with that of his earlier leftist self, Tachibana has repurposed his education for maximizing personal gain: “If there’s any significance to the work we do now, what I’ve come to understand is simply that capital depends on how much we develop the skills we’ve honed.”<sup>39</sup> The protagonist counters this by saying that the value of what they have learned can be determined only as each individual applies it to his own ends. Because such conceits are outmoded for an instrumentalist era, in response to the protagonist’s assertion that he has no intention of changing from how he thought as a student Tachibana tells him, “If so, then you’ll be nothing but an anachronism as section chief.” This triggers a reactionary thought, which the protagonist keeps to himself: “Tachibana, you’re stuck. Day by day, time flows on, but you don’t. You may think you’re flowing, but you’re not.”<sup>40</sup>

The contradiction between the values the men now hold and those they once espoused becomes mordantly apparent near the end of the party. The men rise from the *tatami* and, just as they had in their student days, link their arms around each other forming a circle to sing “The Internationale.”<sup>41</sup> As they do so the protagonist recalls the period when, as students, the song had played such a vital role in their solidarity. Flashing back to a particularly cold and rainy demonstration, he recalls with pride the staunch solidarity he and his comrades had shown. However, he also rubs up against the memory that he and his cohorts had been “nothing like” the laborers—whom he recalls as “fucking slack-offs,” a “hostile class with nothing to lose but [their] chains”—on whose behalf they had demonstrated.<sup>42</sup> Snapping back to the present, he finds himself a link in a ring of “fattened men” whose voices, once they’ve wobbled into unison, roll on “like a trolley . . . over rails laid down in an amusement park.”<sup>43</sup> He chokes with nausea from the “cloying flesh” of the man next to him; the arm that folds him into the circle of men is “clearly the arm of a stranger.”<sup>44</sup> The lyrics of “The Internationale”—which so stridently proclaim the will of workers to rise up and overthrow their bourgeois oppressors—could not be less pertinent to the sensibilities of these now “fattened men.” Yet, the nostalgia evidently evoked for most of them through singing it reinforces the feeling of belonging to a “fated community.” Utterly unable to partake of this sensibility, however, the narrator observes of them that “The Internationale” is “cheating” them just as they are “cheating” it.

Thus, we see from early in “Jikan” that time is out of joint. Tachibana’s remark about “screwing the masses” evokes both his disapproval of this fact and his de-facto support of it. Similarly, the men’s singing an anthem whose lyrics posit their likes as an enemy to be overthrown evokes the split nature of subjectivity, of how we demonstrate our conscious knowledge through language even as we operate according to an unconscious knowledge through our actions. For Žižek, both are symptomatic of the subject’s interpellation through ideology.<sup>45</sup> This process mimics what happens when an infant becomes socialized through the acquisition of language.<sup>46</sup> Entering the symbolic order amounts to a “forced choice” wherein the proto-subject separates itself from its primal object, the mother, who had conferred on her baby a sense of completeness. The nascent subject gains the world as it were by doing so, but is traumatized by what she or he now unconsciously realizes is the “loss” of that beloved object; this negativity is what Lacan terms “desire.”

Throughout its life the subject will attempt to re-attain its lost sense of plenitude through libidinal attachments to various “object causes” of desire.<sup>47</sup> Yet, because the subject will have entered the realm of language, all such attempts will of necessity be made through the signifying systems of the symbolic order. In essence, therefore, the subject is compelled to seek for what “completes” it in the realm of the Other, thereby effectively desiring “in the place of the Other.” The everyday actions performed throughout the subject’s life will thus in large part amount to a question it puts to its Others and the big Other: “What do you want of me?”<sup>48</sup> In this way, asserts Žižek, we identify with “the very gesture of identification,” precisely because in so doing we realize the satisfaction of having a stable sense of ourselves.<sup>49</sup> Žižek takes a dim view of this “stability,” however, because such gestures arise through the misperception that, in obeying the social order, we act out of free agency.

Our identifications with the social order amount to what Lacan termed “fantasy.” Fantasy, for Lacan, is not indulgence in some escapist never-never land but amounts to what the rest of us call “reality.” We escape *into* fantasy for the sake of avoiding subjective destitution: it is precisely such “fantasy” that grounds our being as such. The men’s fantasy of membership in a “fated community” enables them without a hint of irony to sing an anthem that stridently denounces the class whose values they now all embrace. Yet, the protagonist’s visceral alienation from this shared fantasy positions him to see that which must be foreclosed for such a fantasy to exist, the irreconcilable conflict between the men’s past ideals and their present allegiances. If we were to append a name to this, we might call it “class struggle,” which is precisely what the realm of *kanri shakai* must disavow in order to exist.<sup>50</sup> Under such conditions, the men’s singing “The Internationale” presents an uncanny spectacle of their ideological enjoyment in all its naked obscenity.

### The Specter

The protagonist’s fraught state of mind renders him susceptible to another uncanny viewing. As the party is breaking up, he glimpses the figure of a man just before it disappears behind a sliding screen. Seen from the back and “clad in an old, beat-up yellow raincoat”—the figure “scars” him “with the violence of red-hot iron pressed against skin.”<sup>51</sup> Sightings of and increasingly obsessive thoughts in regard to this figure—always glimpsed from the back, its face averted—dog the protagonist until he resolves it away by story’s end. Returning from lunch to the office with Shitakiuchi,

his *senpai* by one year at the corporation, he catches a glimpse of it as it disappears around the corner of his building. Trying to pull exactly who—or what—he has seen into focus the protagonist cannot attribute any positive qualities to it other than a man’s back “in sharp relief.” In contrast, what stands out are its negative qualities:

[I]t might have been clipped [from the protagonist’s] insides like a silhouette. The mysterious space in the shape of the man’s back grew still. In its silence it began to call out to him. Its inaudible appeals aimed for a dark, soft place inside him, silently tracking him down. To its encroaching pleas he replied, *I’m not calling you; I’m not invoking you*, and tried to dodge them with his body. Yet they kept coming. They radiated from the man’s back, dogging him relentlessly.<sup>52</sup>

In their singing “The Internationale,” the protagonist’s former classmates have shown him what they have had to disavow for the sake of perpetuating a “fated community” whose time has passed. As “Jikan” continues, though, it becomes apparent that the fleeting figure is a harbinger of what the protagonist has repressed for *his* reality—his fantasy of himself as “salaryman”—to exist as such. Indeed, the figure corresponds to Žižek’s concept of the “spectre” (*sic*). Far from being fearsome itself, the specter heralds something even more terrifying: freedom.<sup>53</sup> The appearance of the specter evokes the inherently fantasmatic nature of reality and the fact that, after all, the big Other does not exist. One is free to do as one chooses, and the only way to exorcise this harbinger of that fact is to act on one’s freedom, by owning that which one has repressed in order to exist as such.

The protagonist’s flashback to the rainy *demo* of his past reveals that, in demonstrating on behalf of those with whom he did not truly identify, he was ceding his desire to the big Other. In this case, that “big Other” would have been the values, slogans, notions and norms of behavior of *Zengakuren* demonstrators.<sup>54</sup> As the story continues, however, we discover that the protagonist’s *current* ambitions are also not in sync with his desire. The form the specter takes—as an absent presence—evokes Lacanian desire in all its negativity. That the protagonist begins to associate the specter with Miura reinforces this evocation: Miura’s longstanding, strident defense of his innocence retroactively sanctifies his long-ago deed as having been what Lacan termed “the act.”

For Lacan the archetypal example of the act is to be found in Sophocles’ *Antigone* (441 BCE). Antigone’s brother Polynices has died

fighting in a civil war then engulfing Thebes. Because Polynices participated on the rebels' side, Creon, king of Thebes decrees that he shall be denied burial rites. Antigone's gesture of covering Polynices' body violates this decree; accordingly, she is sentenced to be sealed alive in a cave. Later, when Creon has been informed by a prophet that his sentence will incur the wrath of the gods, he relents on the sentence passed down. He goes to unseal the cave, only to discover that Antigone has hanged herself.

Lacan regards Creon's edicts as the big Other that structures Antigone's world. In her life prior to the deed of covering Polynices' body, Antigone has found her being in and through this reality; she has been "subjectified" by it merely through identifying with the "Antigone" that has answered its calls. The death of Polynices is traumatic for her, however, and stresses her Imaginary and Symbolic identifications to the extent that their incommensurability becomes apparent through the surging forth of repressed desire. Antigone identifies with this desire precisely because she *cannot do other than* bury her brother. Because, in so doing, she goes "beyond the limit" of what Creon's order can tolerate, her act traverses the fantasy whereby Antigone beholds herself as "Antigone." Identifying with her unconscious desire, in other words, results in subjective destitution. Although "Antigone" *as such* thereby "dies," Lacan regards her insistence on burying her brother as the reenactment of the "forced choice" confronted by the infant on the verge of entering the symbolic order.<sup>55</sup> As Paul Allen Miller writes, "Antigone's choice, her desire, is pure precisely to the degree that it rejects the claims of the Other to dictate its objects or form."<sup>56</sup>

In performing such an act, observes Žižek, one acts "automatically," as if there had never been an alternative. It is only afterwards, in retrospect, that one achieves an understanding of the freedom one has exercised in committing the act: "the subject never 'is', it only 'will have been': we never *are* free, it is only afterwards that we discover how we *have been free*."<sup>57</sup> In other words, deed-as-act can be apprehended only inasmuch as the subjectivity of the agent is understood to have been changed by the action taken, and the reigning order itself has in some sense been affected by the deed, such that to some degree each is effectively "rewritten." Among those events that Žižek regards as acts is revolution, yet revolution is often not begun as "revolution": it is only in retrospect that a given action (or aggregate of actions) can be regarded as having been a "revolution." Much more frequently, an action comes "too late" or is (for

whatever reason) insufficiently effective. Such actions are regarded with ruefulness, disdain or, more often, simply forgotten by history.<sup>58</sup>

### **A Mentor in Aspiration**

Antigone's act began with an ordinary action, that of simply attempting to cover the remains of her brother. Similarly, the protagonist of "Jikan" undertakes a routine task which captures his desire to the point that he can do nothing other than defend the work of his own creation, even at the possible cost of his career from which the task stems. The task is to write a report just as he has done many times in the past.

But this report was somehow different from others he had written. As for why that was, he himself didn't know. When he had been planning how to go about it, he hadn't been all that inspired, and it wasn't as if he'd cared all that much about the topic. As the work progressed, though, he had found himself getting caught up in it. At one point he'd hit upon a hypothesis that caught his interest. And once that had happened it got so he couldn't tear himself away from it. Hypothesis begat hypothesis, and it grew. At such points he would acquire new material in order to support his argument, processing it and adding it to the project. There were many times when he'd stopped anxiously in the middle of it all. Ordinarily, he would consult with his section chief about how to take the next step. But this time he hadn't wanted to do that. It had less to do with the fear of heading off in an indicated direction than with his having been seized by the idea that he'd like to shove all the *noise* away from the hypothesis that had struck him and to try to nurture it on his own. Whatever the outcome, he'd wanted to give it a shot. As a result, his work had overstepped the boundaries of the topic he'd been assigned. He didn't know whether this was a good thing or not. For better or worse, though, the report now reeked of him. At the very least it was different from his previous reports. It also differed from most of the reports submitted to the division chief by his coworkers. What that was—now that the writing of the long report was finished—was that it exhilarated him; it satisfied him.<sup>59</sup>

I have cited the passage at length because it shows the increasing importance the report takes on in the protagonist's eyes as he works on it. As the passage reveals, lines of flight beget new lines of flight, taking the protagonist far beyond the boundaries of the assigned topic. Unable to "tear himself away" from the project, the protagonist finds himself in a situation where he is unable to do other than own his action. Having exceeded the parameters of the assignment, the protagonist crafts the

project into something that is truly of his own making to the point that it “reeks of him.” For apparently the first time in his salaried life, the protagonist has managed to transform *shigoto* into *rōdō*.

In other words, even though the protagonist started working on the report in concert with his ambitions, in capturing his desire the undertaking has taken on an aspirational quality; we might say that as he labors on it, it labors on him. His satisfaction upon finishing the report is an index of the self-creation that the report has engendered. Yet, the corporate world has little room for aspirations that do not accord with its agendas and will exert pressure to curtail everything that does not align with them. The greater the pressure exerted, however, the greater the protagonist’s resolve to push back in defense of what he has written. By the end of the story the protagonist has steeled his resolve such that it becomes his entire *raison d’être*.

The protagonist submits his report to his immediate superior, Section Chief Yokochi. Yokochi leafs through it, his eyes zeroing in on a provocative graph with startling alacrity. Patronizingly, Yokochi advises the protagonist to “get rid of the extraneous parts and the conclusion will shape up nicely.”<sup>60</sup> The parts of the protagonist’s report that Yokochi calls “extraneous” are those he fears may stir up controversy between his own division and Sales. To the protagonist, those parts are the essence of his report. He importunes Yokochi to read the report in its entirety before making redactions. To this Yokochi replies, “That line [on your graph] is dangerous.” The protagonist retorts, “Don’t you think that reports that aren’t dangerous have no meaning?”<sup>61</sup> Compelled to agree with this point, Yokochi nonetheless reminds the protagonist of the sales division chief’s volatility, essentially telling him thereby that “danger” is to be avoided at all costs. A big part of *shigoto* is not rocking the boat.

True to Yokochi’s warnings, once the report has wended its way up the chain of command, the sales division chief becomes alarmed over its implications. The chief calls all of his subordinates—including Shitakiuchi, the protagonist’s *senpai*—into his office. The protagonist and Section Chief Yokochi are summoned to the division chief’s office, where they see that the “dangerous” data has been massaged to make Sales look better. The protagonist and Yokochi are reprimanded for the apparent presumptuousness of the report’s assertions and conclusions. As Shitakiuchi tries to make his body inconspicuous in the corner of the room and Yokochi squirms with discomfort, the protagonist goes head to head with the apoplectic sales division chief, defending his report’s contents

(which are never made clear to the reader). Warned in no uncertain terms that his reasoned defense is no way for a section chief candidate to talk to a superior, the unrepentant protagonist and his cringing supervisor are then unceremoniously ejected from the office.

Later, when the protagonist encounters Shitakiuchi, his *senpai* berates him for his attitude in the sales division chief's office. Shitakiuchi tells him that, by writing his report in such a way, he's "done something awful." Evidently fearful of the ramifications the report has for his own career, Shitakiuchi says, "There's gonna be a shit storm. There are people's names in that report!"<sup>62</sup> In response to Shitakiuchi's protest, the protagonist feels only greater satisfaction: the narrator relates, "He felt the bullet he'd fired had hit its target with a resounding thump."<sup>63</sup> Considered in light of his recollections of Section Chief Yokochi's dismay regarding the report's assertions and the sales division chief's fervid antipathy toward them, the protagonist feels "that, finally, his report had taken on a life of its own and was beginning to squirm."<sup>64</sup>

Yet, that which impels the protagonist to defend his report "beyond the limit" is the specter. As the report wends its way through the corporation, the protagonist becomes increasingly obsessed by the apparition. To his chagrin, he mistakes the back of an actual person for it, he thinks about it when sitting on the sofa at home with his wife Mie at night, and such is the strength of his obsession that at one point he goes in pursuit of it down the hallways of his company only to realize that what he thought he had seen may well have been a "hallucination."<sup>65</sup> In the midst of all this, while he sits at home one Sunday, the protagonist's wife drops a letter in his lap from Miura. It is an invitation to attend—"as a friend"—Miura's closing statements as a defendant in his trial over his arrest on May Day, 1952, for "leading reinforcements and obstructing the police."<sup>66</sup> We are told that Miura and the protagonist had never actually been all that close. The protagonist recalls his sense of Miura during their university days in unflattering terms: he remembers Miura's fingernails as always having been "black with dirt," his "strangely long, frail neck ... sticky with grime ... There had been a child-like awkwardness to Miura's way of speaking. There'd been a weakness to his thin body that made it seem extremely fragile. Miura's high-pitched laugh would lurch as if he were hiccupping."<sup>67</sup>

When the protagonist goes to the courthouse and encounters Miura outside the courtroom, he still regards him as unprepossessing: his "long neck still had the expected scaly appearance."<sup>68</sup> In all the intervening years,

Miura would appear not to have changed. Yet, when he takes the stand, speaking with calm resolve in regard to the time the trial has stolen from his life and of how, for a defendant convinced of the righteousness of his cause “change is impermissible,” Miura reveals to the protagonist that he has indeed undergone a transformation.<sup>69</sup> The transformation has occurred precisely because Miura has unflinchingly asserted his innocence in a trial that has dragged on for years. In so doing, he has changed from a young man raucously espousing his ideals to a mature man who lives his life in accordance with those ideals. Miura has become a man of integrity.

Struck by the transformation, the protagonist nonetheless realizes that, in his present guise as an ambitious salaryman in the employ of a major corporation, he “sat in the chair of industry, as it were;” vis-à-vis Miura’s defendant’s chair, this was the chair of a “plaintiff.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the protagonist would appear to have no sympathy for the *content* of Miura’s defense. He resents what he calls “Miura’s time,” the time Miura has spent defending his case. The protagonist imagines Miura’s time badgering him and his colleagues with questions regarding how they deal with the past, with how they link their student activist past to their corporate present, with how they envision the future. The protagonist then imagines his “friends from the past ... now working away in the gigantic buildings in the business district of Marunouchi or in the government offices of Kasumigaseki.”<sup>71</sup> Sitting in his “plaintiff’s chair,” he indulges in a silent diatribe against the defendant and in support of all those, like himself, who occupy the seat of industry:

Like all of his classmates, [the protagonist] too had passed those fifteen years rewardingly. Collectively, they had amassed all sorts of experiences and skills within that period. And then there was this still-new courthouse in one of the area’s skyscrapers; there were the cars continually plying the streets, luxurious consumer goods, landscaping, improvements in national revenue and expenditures, all the assistance to underdeveloped nations. However insignificantly, somehow or other, each of their activities had doubtless figured into it all. Yet, here and now, this lone skinny man who had resolutely not participated in all that was thrusting before them his consistent past of fifteen years. *Miura! That time of yours, isn’t it a little too ethical? Within his own narrow purview, he could rephrase the question in any number of ways: Are you not wearing clothes? When you go out on the town, do you not ride in a car? Do you not sit in the coffee shop of this building and drink coffee? Without all of our work, how would all this affluence ever have come into being? Can people produce things ethically? Isn’t that sharp, thin time of yours just a bit too ethical——?*<sup>72</sup>

His tacit shouting having come to an end, the protagonist comes back to himself in the here and now and realizes the real reason for his having attended Miura's closing statements. Far from a desire to show his support for Miura, it had been to ascertain something about himself. Aware that he and Miura occupy very different ideological positions, the protagonist has been nonetheless deeply affected by the transformation he perceives Miura as having undergone. Of Miura's assertion, "[i]n fifteen years, I have not changed," the protagonist realizes that, far from being "a confirmation that there are people who don't change, those words were a starting point for establishing how people *do* change. They revealed a desire for acquiring an objective means for changing further."<sup>73</sup>

This passage reveals that the protagonist has come to realize an existential necessity for owning his desire. He now understands that this can be achieved solely through steadfastly defending the report he has written. The protagonist regards his own impending "metamorphosis" (変貌 *henbō*) into an agent who refuses to cede his desire as an "ugliness."<sup>74</sup> This is because of the selfish willfulness his colleagues will doubtless come to associate with his steadfast adherence to standing behind a product of his own labor. Just as significant, his epiphany also lends him the courage necessary to face a painful fact of his own past. Once the court has adjourned, we discover that in contrast to his memory of Miura during the May Day melee who, "in the fine white mist and the tear gas screaming, 'Don't retreat! Don't retreat!' [that] stayed with him even now, like an image on some poster ... there was the image he had of himself, like a wild ox in the middle of a stampeding herd."<sup>75</sup> In this passage, we clearly see what is only hinted at early in the story: the protagonist had not been a committed activist; his lack of commitment has made itself apparent in his cowardly behavior. However belatedly, the protagonist finally accepts his comportment on that day for what it had been. Instead of standing and fighting for his professed values, he had cut and run. Yet, in the here and now, the protagonist has come to understand that it is "precisely because [the two images are] still connected that [he has] to re-envision [himself] now."<sup>76</sup>

The difference between the protagonist's and Miura's behavior on that day enabled the protagonist to exercise options that arraignment and trial have foreclosed for Miura. Yet, through witnessing Miura's final statements and engaging in a tacit argument with Miura—as a "plaintiff"—the protagonist has inadvertently found in Miura a *mentor in aspiration*, a model for self-re-creation. In regard to the figure that haunts

him, the experience of witnessing Miura's closing statements also transforms him "from wanting to scream masochistically as he threw himself before the man toward a desire for confrontation."<sup>77</sup>

It is in this spirit that the protagonist attends a second Terajima gathering. It has been some time, apparently, since he had attended the gathering with which the story opens for, as he sits beside his old friend Asai, the two comment on the changed atmosphere from such gatherings in the past. The newest cohort of students to attend the gatherings includes a number of women, which transforms them from what the protagonist now realizes was an "austere, even bizarre air" into something much more lively.<sup>78</sup> Presumably in contrast to the protagonist's own student days, when they would have discussed Marxian theory or matters concerning demonstrations, the current students are heatedly engaged in discussions about Japan's current incomes and expenditures. A young man with a stack of business cards in his hands accosts the protagonist and Asai and, to their disgust, asks them for their cards in an effort to build up his store of business contacts. Straining "his eyes with the effort of finding a shadow like that of young leaves trembling upon [the current students'] cheeks," to no avail, the protagonist realizes that the parties have devolved into a mere "market of the present."<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, over in the corner, Tachibana is engaged in a heated argument over whether his company or that of his interlocutor produces superior goods.

The protagonist's old friend Asai sums up the situation: "They've aged, so have you and I," and declares that the gatherings now simply partake of a wider phenomenon; they are a "*gesellschaft*" with all the coldly contractual implications the term connotes.<sup>80</sup> In his cups, Asai mumbles that it seems like they are "behind the times."<sup>81</sup> Along with a "note of self-reproach," the protagonist senses "a warped sense of superiority" in Asai's pronouncement, and he wonders if that is how he sounds, as well. When Asai says that—much as he would like to be able to envision a future for the likes of themselves—it is beyond his capabilities, the protagonist detects behind this "strain of earnest desire" "an echo of self-satisfied laziness."<sup>82</sup> He realizes that, having been accosted by the *meishi*-wielding young man and sitting next to the disconsolate Asai, he is effectively sandwiched between a "ghost of the 'present'" and a "ghost of the 'past.'" Just then, Professor Terajima rises from the tatami and implores, "The Japanese archipelago. Ladies and Gentlemen, I beg you for it!"<sup>83</sup> At this crass outburst, the protagonist rises to leave the party with the profound sense "that [it] had become a place where he no longer needed to be."<sup>84</sup>

From behind the other side of the door he has closed behind him in his leave-taking, he hears “voices eerily rising in song, like the first stirrings of some beast.”<sup>85</sup> It would seem that those gathered together are preparing to indulge in what has become a nostalgic ritual, the singing of “The Internationale.”

The protagonist leaves what he now realizes is an epicenter of inauthenticity. Walking the rain-lashed evening streets, he encounters Miura walking toward him en route to the site he has just left. The figure of Miura corresponds precisely to that of the spectral figure that has haunted his days and nights; yet “it no longer mattered whether the figure he’d repeatedly chanced upon had been Miura or not.”<sup>86</sup> The two have a brief, friendly conversation and head off in opposite directions. “Now the anxiously anticipated figure was fusing serenely and warmly with Miura as he walked into the distance.”<sup>87</sup> Having exorcised his demon, the protagonist vows that the next time he encounters Miura, it will be “face to face,” at a point by which, rather than attempting to acquit himself of “oppressive questions arising from my own problems concerning past and present,” he will have “attained satisfaction through my own labor; I’ll have broken through the present.”<sup>88</sup> Ironically, this will entail regarding promotion to section chief as a means toward the end of defending his report, “no matter what.” Realizing that his “transformation might be mean and ugly, ... a wasted, stupid, misunderstood effort,” he nonetheless understands it is only by treading “this dangerous path,” by “sticking to the winding road I’ve been walking,” that he has been able to chart a course whereby the future might open up to him unhindered by the past.<sup>89</sup>

“Jikan” ends shortly after these musings as the protagonist walks through his alma mater’s open gate: “The university campus at night was simply vast; there were no human figures.”<sup>90</sup> Yet, at this point, for the protagonist to tread the grounds of his baggage-laden past amounts to his setting foot onto a *tabula rasa*: having rewritten himself, he is poised to attempt to rewrite the situation that had necessitated his act in the first place. There are no guarantees of success in this regard: he may well end his days as a member of the *madogiwazoku* (窓際族), employees effectively rendered *homo sacer* in the eyes of their corporate colleagues.<sup>91</sup> Only time will tell.

### **Conclusion: Painful Insights, Renewed Possibilities**

During Japan’s high-growth period, Kuroi Senji regarded Japan’s contemporary condition as the object of his critical gaze, both in his essays and in his fiction. Against prevailing historicist narratives of “miraculous

economic growth,” Kuroi posited what he called “my history” which was comprised of how his lived time inscribed itself on his body.<sup>92</sup> One of the more painful of these inscriptions was incurred during the Bloody May Day of 1952. Of that experience, Kuroi has merely reiterated what he wrote in his diary that day: “Terrifying. Utterly terrifying.”<sup>93</sup> This stark prose reveals that much of what he experienced that day lay beyond his ability to represent it or perhaps ever to recuperate it into the symbolic fiction that is his life as he has conceived of it.

As for the protagonist of “Jikan,” we have seen that the traumatic memory of having quailed during the May Day melee has prevented him from being able to regard that past with nostalgia. He thus inhabits a relationship to time that is markedly different from those of his contemporaries, his former classmates, who have synergistically cobbled together a symbolic fiction that posits them as the heroes—“corporate warriors”—of their own lives. This distinction—one between the historicism implicit to any reigning narrative and the historicity of “my history”—is central to “Jikan.” As the story’s protagonist notes of the Terajima get-togethers, by attending them he sees his own past in juxtaposition to the present, as shown “through the attitudes of [Professor Terajima’s] current students.” In regard to the students of the protagonist’s own generation, Isoda Kōichi observed that, in their left-wing nationalism, the demonstrators of Bloody May Day bore a “supplementary relationship to the nationalism of the high-speed growth period that turned Japan into a ‘major economic country.’”<sup>94</sup> In contrast, the “current students” of the narrative present long for—and are seemingly capable of envisioning nothing more than—becoming successful salaried employees.

If there is an upside to Kuroi’s protagonist’s insights into his past, it lies in the fact that the trauma he experienced has saved him from being blinded to the realities of his own time by being all too subsumed by it. Such is a virtue, according to Giorgio Agamben: the very quality of being out of step with one’s own time, of being unable to contort oneself to fit its requirements, is the precondition for insight into the nature of that time; this is precisely what makes for a critic of the “contemporary.”<sup>95</sup> For Kuroi’s protagonist, this condition has presented him with the opportunity to own his desire, thereby to chart a course of authentic agency. By story’s end—as instantiated by Tachibana, with his strident cynicism or Asai, with his self-satisfied laziness—the nature of the transformations that time has wrought is obvious. But by sticking to the course he has set for himself,

the protagonist of “Jikan” may one day be able to view time’s ravages with a measure of pride, finding in them the marks of maturation.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Isoda Kōichi, “Jikan no hen’yō: Kuroi Senji ron,” *Shinchō* 75.5 (1978): 147.

<sup>2</sup> Isoda, 147.

<sup>3</sup> The American-led allied occupation of Japan began on the heels of Japan’s surrender, on August 28, 1945. It continued until April 28, 1952, with the exception of Okinawa Prefecture, which was not relinquished to Japanese sovereignty until 1972.

<sup>4</sup> For a vivid account of this tumultuous event, see John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1999), 554. For those who were involved, both on the part of protestors and the police, this was a traumatic event: violence broke out when several thousand protestors overwhelmed a police cordon and headed to the Imperial Palace moat. The police responded with tear gas and firearms, hitting twenty-two people with bullets, two of them fatally. In all some eight hundred policemen and roughly double that number of protestors sustained injuries.

<sup>5</sup> Isoda, “Jikan no hen’yō,” 151.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>9</sup> Isoda Kōichi, “Nihon rettō no yume to genjitsu: Kuroi Senji ‘Jikan’ kara gunsei e,” *Sayoku ga sayoku ni naru toki: aru jidai no seishinshi* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1986), 98. As Patricia G. Steinhoff has pointed out, by the 1960s the meaning of “tenkō” (in use since the 1930s) had expanded to include those who had made the about-face “from student radicalism to company conformity made by many post-war youths in the 1960s.” Patricia G. Steinhoff, *Tenkō: Ideology and Societal Integration in Prewar Japan* (New York: Garland, 1991), 6–7.

<sup>10</sup> Isoda, “Jikan no hen’yō,” 148–149.

<sup>11</sup> Observing in a 1973 article that *kanri shakai* is a translation from the English “management society,” which originated in American business circles, Kitazawa Masakuni thereby connotes the widespread nature of the phenomenon by that time throughout the developed world. He says it “generally refers to a

society administered through highly sophisticated mechanisms for forecasting, planning and control” for optimizing “that society’s well-being.” The upshot of which is that “[on] the broadest level, the entire body politic has come to resemble an industrial organization. The nation’s formal decision-making organs, the Diet and the regional assemblies, have little access to the quantitative information used in technical management. Much like the general stockholders’ meeting in a modern corporation, legislative bodies exert only a restraining influence on the decision-making process. The out-of-power parties have about as much pull as the holder of one share in Mitsubishi Heavy Industries or Chisso.” Kitazawa Masakuni, “Militarism in the Management Society,” trans. James L. Huffman, in J. Victor Koschmann, ed., *Authority and the Individual in Japan: Citizen Protest in Historical Perspective* (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1978), 202.

- <sup>12</sup> Kuroi, “Jiko jitsugen e no nōto.” *Kakō to nichijō* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1971), 31. In addition to “Jikan,” discussed in this article, such works include, but are not limited to, 冷たい工場 (Tsumetai kōjō, “Cold factory,” 1961), 聖産業週間 (Seisangyō shūkan, “Holy production week,” 1968), 穴と空 (Ana to sora, “Hole and sky,” 1968), and 赤い樹木 (Akai jumoku, “Red tree,” 1970).
- <sup>13</sup> Some of those more recent works have appeared in English. These are 群像 (Gunzō, 1984, translated by Philip Gabriel under the title *Life in the Cul-de-Sac* [Berkeley, Calif.: Stone Bridge Press, 2001]) and 一日の夢の柵 (Ichinichi no yume no saku, 2006, translated by Giles Murray under the title *A Day in the Life* [London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2013]).
- <sup>14</sup> Isoda, 148.
- <sup>15</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*. ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 319.
- <sup>16</sup> Todd McGowan, “Subject of the Event, Subject of the Act: The Difference Between Badiou’s and Žižek’s Systems of Philosophy,” *Subjectivity* 3.1 (2010): 10.
- <sup>17</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “The Spectre of Ideology,” in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 1997), 27.
- <sup>18</sup> Kuroi Senji, “Saraīman no genten,” *Kakō to nichijō*, 160. The *kanji* for the term Kuroi coins is 給料生活者.

- <sup>19</sup> True to the term *sararīman*'s masculine gendering, similarly salaried women were all but unheard of in Japan of the early 1970s. Although Japan ratified the UN Convention for the Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1985, and the following year enacted the Equal Employment Opportunity Law—followed by other measures for childcare leave and elder care—the actual condition of women vis-à-vis men in Japan remains quite low in regard to pay and job status.
- <sup>20</sup> Kuroi Senji, “Sararīman no genten,” *Kakō to nichijō*, 161–162.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 163, 165.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.
- <sup>24</sup> Agnes Callard, *Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 183.
- <sup>25</sup> Callard, 262–278.
- <sup>26</sup> For a discussion as to how the “desire to desire” is desire, see Slavoj Žižek, “Between Symbolic Fiction and Fantasmatic Spectre: Towards a Lacanian Theory of Ideology.” *Analysis* 5.10 (1994): 56.
- <sup>27</sup> Callard, 229.
- <sup>28</sup> Kuroi Senji, “Insaïdo no shiten,” *Kakō to nichijō*, 16.
- <sup>29</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (New York: Verso, 2012), 75.
- <sup>30</sup> Kuroi Senji, “Jikan,” *Kuroi Senji shū* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1972), 99; Kuroi Senji, “Time,” in *Engaging Banality: Stories of the Salaried Life*, trans. Peter Tillack (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 69.
- <sup>31</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 99; Kuroi, “Time,” 69.
- <sup>32</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 93; Kuroi, “Time,” 63.
- <sup>33</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 89; Kuroi, “Time,” 58.
- <sup>34</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 87; Kuroi, “Time,” 56. The phrase in Japanese reads, *tamerau jibun kara mizukara o hikihagasu yō ni* (ためらう自分から自らをひきはがすように)
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

- <sup>37</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 86; Kuroi, “Time,” 54.
- <sup>38</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 86; Kuroi, “Time,” 55.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> “The Internationale” is an anthem voicing the desires of laborers to unite to overthrow their capitalist oppressors. The song was adopted in the late nineteenth century by the Second Internationale, a coalition of left-wing laborers from some twenty countries to proclaim their unity of purpose.
- <sup>42</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 90, Kuroi, “Time,” 59. In an essay from 1954 Kuroi describes the efforts (in response to the occupation’s “reverse course”) of demonstrators like himself to forestall “the retrogression of Japanese history.” “Students went out to investigate farming and fishing villages, assisted in factory strikes, and participated in attacks against the military bases.” However, “in the midst of participating along with the laborers, the farmers, the fishermen in their attacks, we discovered that most of us were members of the petite bourgeoisie.” “Haisen o jūdai hajime de mukaeta bokura ni tsuite,” *Kakō to nichijō*, 111.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>45</sup> Žižek, “Spectre of ideology,” 4.
- <sup>46</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 1–7.
- <sup>47</sup> For a (relatively) succinct overview of this dynamic, see Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1998), 43–48.
- <sup>48</sup> Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 87–124.
- <sup>49</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (New York: Verso, 1996), 142.
- <sup>50</sup> The notion of “class struggle” as that which is of necessity foreclosed by any liberal democratic regime for such a regime to exist as liberal democracy is one that Žižek returns to repeatedly. See, for example, “The Spectre of Ideology,” 28–29.
- <sup>51</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 90; Kuroi, “Time,” 60.
- <sup>52</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 91; Kuroi, “Time,” 61.

<sup>53</sup> Žižek, “Spectre,” 27.

<sup>54</sup> *Zengakuren* (全学連) is an abbreviation of *Zen Nihon gakusei jichikai sōrengō* (全日本学生自治会総連合), All-Japan Federation of Student Self-Governing Association. The organization was founded in 1948 by university students to protect themselves against fascist holdovers of the wartime regime in Japanese universities. Membership was automatic upon matriculation at almost every university across Japan. Throughout the organization’s existence, *Zengakuren* students participated in various left-wing demonstrations and protest movements. In addition to their involvement in the “Bloody May Day” of 1952, they protested against re-ratification of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty (*Anpo*), against U. S. military bases in Japan, against Japan’s de facto support of the U. S. in the Vietnam War, and throughout the 1970s and 1980s, against the construction of Narita Airport, to name just several of their many engagements.

<sup>55</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960*, 270–283.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Allen Miller, “Lacan’s Antigone: The Sublime Object and the Ethics of Interpretation,” *Phoenix* 61.1–2 (Spring-Summer, 2007): 1.

<sup>57</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (New York: Verso, 2002), 222. Žižek’s emphasis.

<sup>58</sup> See the afterword by Žižek in *V. I. Lenin, Revolution at the Gates: A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 93–94; Kuroi, “Time,” 63.

<sup>60</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 94; Kuroi, “Time,” 64.

<sup>61</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 95; Kuroi, “Time,” 65.

<sup>62</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 113; Kuroi, “Time,” 83.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 99; Kuroi, “Time,” 68.

<sup>66</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 101; Kuroi, “Time,” 70.

<sup>67</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 100; Kuroi, “Time,” 70.

<sup>68</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 102; Kuroi, “Time,” 72.

<sup>69</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 103; Kuroi, “Time,” 73.

- <sup>70</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 106; Kuroi, “Time,” 76.
- <sup>71</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 104; Kuroi, “Time,” 73.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.
- <sup>73</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 104–105; Kuroi, “Time,” 74.
- <sup>74</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 105; Kuroi, “Time,” 74.
- <sup>75</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 105; Kuroi, “Time,” 75.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 117; Kuroi, “Time,” 87.
- <sup>78</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 121; Kuroi, “Time,” 91
- <sup>79</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 122; Kuroi, “Time,” 93. The phrase I translate as “market of the present” appears as <現在>のマーケット.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid. Asai implicitly compares “gesellschaft” (society) with its opposite, “gemeinschaft” (community), then claims that, even in their own student days, the bonds between all of them had not really been those of “gemeinschaft.” The German term *Gesellschaft* appears in the Japanese text as ゲゼルシャフト, and *Gemeinschaft* as ゲマインシャフト.
- <sup>81</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 121; Kuroi, “Time,” 93.
- <sup>82</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 123; Kuroi, “Time,” 94.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>86</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 124; Kuroi, “Time,” 95.
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>88</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>89</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>90</sup> Kuroi, “Jikan,” 125; Kuroi, “Time,” 96.
- <sup>91</sup> *Madogiwazoku* (window-ledge tribe) refers to corporate employees who—for reasons of lack of motivation, an inability to keep up with new ways of doing things, or for somehow not fitting in with the culture of the corporation—would

be given “busy work” (often literally by the windows of an office), away from the flow of productive activity. *Homo sacer*, which Giorgio Agamben identifies as “an obscure figure of archaic Roman law,” denotes one who, for reasons of having committed certain crimes, has had his rights as a citizen revoked and may be killed by anyone without being regarded as having been murdered. See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller Roazen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 8. Agamben says *Homo sacer* denotes an instance whereby “human life is included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)” (Agamben, 8). In this sense, *Homo sacer* is analogous to the “window sitter” who—in showing up for work and continuing to receive a salary—still belongs to the corporation even as the corporation excludes him, with all the implications for his quality of life that the stress of ostracism entails. In regard to “Jikan,” one might ironically surmise that such an unfortunate person experiences the corporate version of the life that Miura has led during his many years as a “defendant.” For an overview of the premature deaths suffered by a disproportionate number of such defendants, see Kuroi Senji, “Hikoku no jikan—mēdē saiban,” in *Kakō to nichijō*, 131–132.

<sup>92</sup> Kuroi Senji, “Kanōsei to genjitsusei—aru sōsaku hōhōron,” in *Kakō to nichijō*, 55.

<sup>93</sup> Kuroi Senji, “Hikoku no jikan—mēdē saiban,” in *Kakō to nichijō*, 130.

<sup>94</sup> Isoda, “Jikan no hen’yō,” 148.

<sup>95</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 40.