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Epitaphs to Empire: On Abe Kōbō and the (Un)Making of the Repatriation Narrative

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> The danger of the dead is none other than the fearsomeness of actuality itself, wearing all the awful power of history.
>
> Abe Kōbō, "Shinin tōjō" (The entrance of the dead, 1955)

In the past decades, scholars from a variety of disciplines have increasingly called attention to transnational, intercultural formations of literary production. Whether highlighting colonial/postcolonial continuities, global flows of labor and capital, or diasporic subjectivity, studies on "texts in motion" have decisively proven the need to move beyond (and against) the nation-state as an analytical frame.[1] This does not mean, however, that the nation can be jettisoned entirely, particularly since transnationalism necessarily presupposes the nation on both a conceptual and methodological level. As Gayatri Spivak has argued, there is also a need to consider "the other to the question of diaspora"—namely, those individuals who *cannot* move or migrate, whether through incarceration, disenfranchisement, or other immobilizing forces produced through the collusion of global capitalism and the state.[2]

In response to Spivak's call, this article attempts to think out some of the dynamics of movement and non-movement in the context of East Asia, through what I am provisionally calling the repatriation narrative. By "repatriation narrative," I am referring not to all stories of repatriation but to a postwar Japanese form of testimonial interlocution which features a first-person returnee narrator/author who explicitly or implicitly addresses a national audience that does not share the experience of repatriation; and which temporalizes repatriation as a memory reconstructed in the present, marked on one end by the end of the war and on the other by the returnee's "homecoming" to Japan. Although repatriation narratives often rebuked

the state for neglecting the citizens it had mobilized to move to the colonies on behalf of that state, it is my contention that the persistent emphasis on war and not empire for interrogating the past ironically frustrated—rather than enabled—a full reckoning of imperial complicity.

This article will explicate the above point by reading Abe Kōbō's 1948 debut work *Owarishi michi no shirube ni* (The signpost at the end of the road) and 1957 novella *Kemonotachi wa kokyō o mezasu* (*Beasts Head for Home*, trans. 2017) in relation to Fujiwara Tei's 1949 paradigmatic repatriation narrative *Nagareru hoshi wa nagarete iru* (*The Shooting Stars are Alive*, trans. 2014), focusing in particular on the various literary and geopolitical displacements in all three texts. Abe Kōbō (1924–1993) was no stranger to displacement. Born in Tokyo to parents who were originally from Hokkaido, Abe moved with his family to Manchuria when he was just one year old. He spent the majority of his childhood in Manchuria but "returned" to mainland Japan to study first at Seijō Higher School and then at Tokyo Imperial University. Faced with worsening war conditions in Tokyo, he went back to Manchuria in 1944 and was living there upon the war's end. He and his mother repatriated to mainland Japan in 1946 (his father having died from typhus the year before), and his mother settled back in Hokkaido while Abe resumed his studies in Tokyo.

As someone whose place of birth (Tokyo), place of upbringing (Manchuria), and place of registered domicile (Hokkaido) all differed, Abe wrote often about the artificiality and restrictiveness of borders, both real and imagined. In a welcome trend, a number of recent academic works have emphasized the impact of Abe's various personal experiences in Manchuria on his literary writings and philosophy.[3] Meanwhile, scholars such as Narita Ryūichi, Pak Yuha, and Nicholas Lambrecht have investigated the complex discourses of return, homecoming, belonging/marginalization, and nationality in that category of writing referred to in Japan as *hikiage bungaku* (repatriation literature), tracing the historical conditions that informed such writings as well as exploring the more ambiguous contours of what Lambrecht terms *repatriativity*, or "the acknowledgment of repatriation as a productive possibility."[4]

While very much indebted to those scholars, in this article I wish to move away from a metonymic mapping of Abe's biography onto his literature and instead place emphasis on how Abe built his critique of Japanese imperialism into narrative form itself.[5] This is not to say that biography does not matter, but rather that biography is the *problem*: as my analysis below will show, texts like *Owarishi michi* and *Kemonotachi*

simultaneously foreground and fracture the relationship between the extradiegetic author and reader vis-à-vis the diegetic text, and in doing so demand an ethical engagement with an alterity beyond accommodation. To put it another way, both texts strenuously call attention to the dark other to the question of repatriation: the stories, bodies, and epitaphs of those who could not or would not go "home." For Abe, narrative form was not an expression of ideology or not simply that; it was the means by which to expose particular, contingent histories of domination and our own particular, contingent subject positions within them.

Hand in Hand with the Grave: *Owarishi michi no shirube ni*

The period between 1945 to 1948 was a time of unprecedented geopolitical change in Asia, as the redrawing of national borders following Japan's defeat to the Allied Powers triggered a mass movement of bodies "back" to the national spaces they were now said to belong to. This reordering of people to place was by no means a smooth or easy process. In Japan's former colonies, those who could not legally prove their Japanese citizenry due to the lack or loss of official documents found themselves stranded, along with those who were too young or too vulnerable to manage the journey to the repatriation centers. Japanese women who had married non-Japanese men found that they no longer counted as "Japanese citizens," as did former colonial subjects; some children were left behind or orphaned; and many individuals died due to the chaotic postwar conditions or as a result of their arduous travel.[6]

Abe Kōbō made his official debut as a literary writer with *Owarishi michi no shirube ni* in February 1948, in the midst of this time of flux and less than two years after his own repatriation to Japan. Composed of three "notebooks" and a postscript, *Owarishi michi* was first published in two parts, with the first part (what Abe would later call "the first notebook") appearing in the short-lived journal *Kosei* in February 1948, and the full text in novel form through the publisher Shinzenbisha in October 1948.[7] The first notebook, eponymously subtitled "Owarishi michi no shirube ni" (The signpost at the end of the road), is presented to us as the solipsistic writings of "I" (marked in the text as "T…" when in dialogue with others), who is being held captive in Manchuria by a group of bandits led by a man named Chin. In the second notebook, subtitled "Kakarezaru kotoba" (Words that cannot be written), the narrator reveals his suspicions that Chin has been secretly reading his notebook; he then shifts his mode of address to "you" (*omae*)—here understood to be a woman named Higai

Yoshiko, the narrator's erstwhile charge and love. The third notebook, subtitled "Shirarezaru kami" (The unknown god), returns to the form of a diary, wherein "I" details his conversations with the captured Chinese spy Kō. Finally, in an epilogue entitled "Jūsanmai no kami ni kakareta tsuiroku" (Postscript written on thirteen pages of paper), the narrator contemplates escape with Kō but decides instead to embrace death through an overdose of opium; in the final paragraph of the story, however, he defiantly declares that he will never die.

Although loosely tied together by a plot involving kidnappings, multiple forms of spying and double-crossings, the opium trade, and lost loves, *Owarishi michi* spends the majority of its time deep in the narrator's relentless quest to understand human existence in relation to "the symbolism of existence that one calls phenomenon."[8] In this way, the novel contains a number of elements that would reappear over and over throughout Abe's oeuvre, including an unnamed, male, first-person, solipsistic narrator; surrealist depictions of the narrator's state of mind; and existential meditations on life and death. Indeed, one of the most frequent phrases to appear in *Owarishi michi* is *kaku aru*—literally, "to be in this way" or "to exist thus"—as signposted (so to speak) in the opening sentences of the first notebook:

> Journeys must begin from the point where one has stopped walking. One must write about birth hand in hand with the grave. Why must humans exist in this way [*kaku araneba naranu no ka*]? … Ah, to all those who cannot say their name [*na o yobenu monotachi yo*]: let me dedicate these wanderings to you. (9, ellipses in original)

As many scholars have pointed out, Abe was a voracious reader of continental philosophy, and the influence of Heidegger and Nietzsche are particularly evident in *Owarishi michi*.[9] In this article, however, I am not concerned with Abe's engagement with continental philosophy as such but with his meditations on the metaphysics of writing and narrative form. To that end, let me begin with the very beginning of *Owarishi michi*—which is not, in fact, the passage quoted above but the following epigraph:

> To my deceased friend, Kaneyama Tokio:
>
> Why did you reject your homeland [*kokyō*] so obstinately?
> Would you reject even the fact that only I made it back?
> It may be that attempting to erect a monument to you, who died while so

obstinately rejecting being loved,
May itself be connected to the reason why you were killed….

In the original 1948 Shinzenbisha publication, this epigraph (which is simultaneously an epitaph) appears between the novel's title page and the table of contents, making it clear that it is a paratextual insertion that stands outside the diegetic narrative. Furthermore, given that the name Kaneyama Tokio never appears within the story, the reader is likely to assume that the epitaph comes from the author Abe Kōbō, for a friend who died in "real life"—a fact later confirmed by Abe himself, as well as in supplementary materials provided in subsequent reprintings of the novel.[10] At the same time, the use of the initial T in the text to refer to the narrator encourages us to make the connection between Kaneyama Tokio and the narrator "I," thereby turning Abe's fictional story into one long monument to the dead.

While this epigraph/epitaph has received almost no attention in academic scholarship on Abe thus far, I would argue that it is the most vital part of *Owarishi michi* because it anchors Abe's story of metaphysical wanderings to a real name, real experience, and real death, thus also anchoring it to the specific history of Japanese imperialism and the bodies left behind in its wake. It also reconfigures the relationship between author, narrator, and reader because the story can no longer be understood as one "based on" Abe's own life, or as a direct transmission from author to reader. Indeed, just as a signpost at the end rather than the beginning of a road is a semiotic paradox, the epitaph works to foregrounds the retrospective, constructed, and unreliable nature of narrative transmission—even as its *form* is bound by a historical reality that exceeds the singular self.

When recontextualized in relation to the epitaph, the three notebooks and postscript that comprise the narrative of *Owarishi michi* take on radical new meanings. Take, for example, the opening lines of the first notebook quoted earlier in this section. While I initially rendered the Japanese phrase *na o yobenu monotachi yo* 名を呼べぬ者達よ as "all those who cannot say their name," given the ambiguity of the sentence it could also be translated as "all those who cannot say *a* name," or even "all those who cannot say *my* name." Here we have a narrative that paradoxically emerges out of the inability to speak to an unnamed other who may also be the self, and one that insists that the act of writing is something born "hand in hand with the grave." Furthermore, the "I" in these opening lines is implied only through the grammatical structure of the sentence, made legible only in relation to "you." What "I" that exists is therefore already

inaccessible and yet necessarily contingent to the "you" who is the reader but also simultaneously the author who writes.

This preoccupation with the messy, unstable relationship between reading and writing, author and reader, text and form marks *Owarishi michi* at every turn. Two paragraphs later an explicit "I" (*watakushi*) finally makes its appearance, and with it a written style that seems at first to loosely follow the conventions of the first-person prose novel (*shōsetsu*), including the use of the plain past tense. Even the more experimental, stream-of-consciousness-like ramblings of the narrator could conceivably be understood in this mode, as a purportedly direct or transparent representation of the narrator's interiority. Towards the end of the chapter, however, the narrator reveals that the text being read by the reader is an explicitly *written* narrative, a "memoir" (*shuki*) composed by the narrator during his imprisonment. The memoir is necessarily open-ended and incomplete, as his future remains uncertain and thus also the meaning and value of his past; still, he proclaims that "this memoir exists for no other reason than this: for the sake of her photograph and the blue notebook [*aoi techō*] that disappeared in that smoke, abandoned by me somewhere in that vast city along with my tears" (70). A writing self who paradoxically cannot be anything but *written*; an incomplete memoir of an incomplete past; and a notebook that can never be recovered, but which yet generates the writing of another one. As even this brief summary of the first chapter suggests, *Owarishi michi* insists upon the inevitability of writing even as it also acknowledges its impossibility, or rather the impossibility of fixing meaning through writing.

The first notebook ends with the narrator's hope that "someday this memoir will surely reach the person I wish it to reach" (72). Who this person may be is a topic taken up in the second notebook. In it, the narrator tells us that he has retrospectively given the first notebook the title of "Owarishi michi no shirube ni"—creating a warped chain of signification wherein the first notebook is simultaneously framed and delimited by the second notebook, which is itself framed and delimited by the metatext that is the novel *Owarishi michi*. Linking this chain together is the perpetual reading of the past into the present, hand in hand with the writing of the present into the past: as the narrator attempts to recover the originary blue notebook, he finds that the very attempt to replicate it only reinforces instead its loss. At the same time, it is this aporia that produces and gives meaning to writing itself:

> In order for us to start, we must close the circle that begins with the representation of existence and ends with "existing thus." That is unity. It is the ultimate oblivion that can be expressed in words, in other words it is truth. But at the same time a new, uncompleted circle will begin to circumscribe it. Unity is simultaneously a departure and an eternal goal. And what I am trying to write now is the latter. (78)

Shortly after making this declaration, the narrator writes: "Within 'Signpost at the end of the road,' I revived that wretched temporary name of 'her' for you. And now, ah, I can finally call you the right and proper way, using the second-person pronoun" (80). This "you," we soon learn, is a young woman named Higai Yoshiko. For the remainder of the chapter, the narrator describes how twenty years ago he was involved in a love triangle involving himself, his childhood friend Shimon, and Yoshiko, whom the narrator ended up "adopting" as his younger sister after the death of Yoshiko's mother. Although Yoshiko gave the narrator a letter in which she hints at her feelings, the narrator never responded in kind; instead, it propelled him on his journey to a "foreign land" (138), and he never heard from either Yoshiko or Shimon again. The second notebook, then, is not simply an attempt to reconstruct lost writing but a material reply, born out of the hope that it might eventually reach its intended reader. The text then moves to yet another notebook, this one entitled "Shirarezaru kami."

Once again, however, we run into the problem of miscommunication: the notebook reaches not Yoshiko but first Chin (who reads it in an attempt to uncover secrets that the narrator in fact does not hold) and then fellow prisoner Kō (who interprets it in relation to very different ideas of homeland and belonging). Here again *Owarishi michi* emphasizes the dangerous ways that "I" and "you" can produce a proliferation of meanings and readings beyond an individual's control, a point underscored by the narrator's remark in the third notebook that "this notebook is truly a monument distanced from the sequence of naming" (153). In this light, it seems significant that much of the third notebook consists not of first-person soliloquy but of dialogue between Kō and the narrator. Over the course of their conversations, it becomes increasingly clear that Kō is a shadow double of the narrator in many ways: also involved in a love triangle, also alone in the world, and also a straddler of national borders. The fundamental difference between Kō and the narrator, however, is that the latter "never had a homeland [*kokyō*] to begin with. No place of return to doubt, let alone pray for" (159). This difference seems to be the main

reason why Kō is allowed not only the agency of speech in the text but also the agency of escape: it is he and not the narrator who manages to cross the "clay wall" (*nendobei*) of his prison and pass beyond the boundaries of narrative, leaving the narrator to ironically conclude his memoir of his wanderings while immobilized.

In the last chapter, the narrator once again grapples with the paradoxes of narrative. "It seems that I've begun to write again," he observes (225)—seems, that is, because the moment one puts words to the page, a "rupture" (*bunretsu*) emerges between the writing self and the written self, with the one never unified with the other. The postscript literalizes this conundrum by having the narrator imagine two different versions of himself, existing in the same space of the Manchurian village in which he's been confined. As Oh Mijung has astutely noted, "by 'writing' about 'the walking self' that had wandered for so long until now, 'I' finally meets his self as the other, as the third-person 'he.'"[11] This "he," however, also necessarily encompasses Kō and others who belong to the place of his wanderings in ways the narrator cannot, and whose identities have been configured within other complicated narratives of home and nation. In this way, *Owarishi michi* reinserts history (the ultimate metanarrative) back into the picture, reminding us of the unequal consequences of war and imperialism.

In the final few pages of the text, the narrator returns full circle to where he began:

> No, I won't die. I will not die. There's no way I can die until I speak that name. Until then, I expect that you, too, will fall after all. Wait in vain for all I care. I will never die. That name will never fall from my mouth.
>
> Ah, in the end the journey is for the sake of an end that does not end…. (236)

Again, for one final time, we have an invocation of "you" and a name that cannot be spoken. But to whom is the narrator speaking in these final moments, and what name is he referring to? These questions are ultimately impossible to answer within the context of *Owarishi michi*, precisely because the narrator's refusal to "speak that name" is itself the generative context out of which his narrative emerges. Still, I wish to point out that there is in fact one specific name we can consider, once we move outside the confines of the narrative: Kaneyama Tokio, the person evoked in the novel's epigraph—thus indeed ending at the beginning, and beginning with an end.

Kaneyama Tokio matters because he reminds us of the aporetic space at the heart of "postwar" Japan—in other words, the ways that it is

constituted just as much by the dead as by the living. As Saka Kenta has shown, the early writings of Abe Kōbō frequently featured ghosts and other "non-entities" (*hijitsuzaibutsu*).[12] For Abe, "the dead may not materially exist anymore, but they certainly continue to live in actuality (*genjitsu*). The actuality of the dead exists outside the realm of naturalist representation, beyond reality (*jitsuzaisei*)."[13] In *Owarishi michi*, Abe does not speak *for* the dead so much as speak *through* them—a dangerous and potentially traitorous act, as the epitaph itself acknowledges. But in his story of an "I" that is also a "you," Abe points to the absolute necessity of remembering—or rather, reconstructing—a past that contains within it a plurality of others who continue to challenge and fracture the borders of the present, with all the fearsomeness of the real.

Assimilating Empire into Nation: *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru*

The words "war" (*sensō*) and "defeat" (*haisen*) do not appear once in the 1948 publication of *Owarishi michi*, but contemporary readers would have had little trouble connecting Abe's story of homelessness, death, and loss to the extratextual reality of occupied Japan. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese were still being repatriated every year, with many more stranded or incarcerated abroad as political prisoners, and stories of their hardships circulated in newspapers, general-interests journals, and local newsletters well into the 1960s.[14] Within the country, literary writers and critics continued to grapple over questions of war responsibility in all the major media outlets of the day and expressed their hopes for a more democratic and liberated Japan—even as the infamous "reverse course" by the U.S.-Allied Occupation increasingly belied those hopes.[15] Starting in the 1950s, novelists such as Hotta Yoshie (1918–1998) joined Abe in critically examining the persistence of Japanese imperialism within the chronotope of the "postwar." Hotta's stories of repatriation, Seiji Lippit has argued, "narrate a postwar return to the nation that is perpetually deferred, disturbed by the spectral memory of empire that continues to permeate the space of the reconstituting state."[16]

The most popular repatriation stories, however, did not situate the "spectral memory of empire" in opposition to the postwar state so much as assimilate it into new discourses of national victimhood. A paradigmatic example is Fujiwara Tei's 1949 *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru*, which did more than any text to popularize and render legible what I am calling "the repatriation narrative"—that is, a form of testimonial literature typified by a first-person narrator/author who does not ask the reader to imagine

catastrophe so much as act as witness to the narrator/author's traumatic experience of it.[17] Fujiwara (1918–2016) moved to Manchuria with her husband, an employee of the Shinkyō (Changchun) Meteorological Observatory, in 1943. Upon hearing that the Soviets had entered the war on August 9, 1945, she and the other Japanese families associated with the observatory decided it would be safer to relocate to Korea, which was still a colony of Japan at the time; from there, they eventually managed to make their way to Pusan and finally to Japan, all the while navigating the many complications engendered by Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers and the establishment of the 38th parallel on the Korean peninsula. A few years later, Fujiwara would publish a loosely fictionalized account of her journey entitled *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru*.

The novel was an immediate success. Even Japanese readers with no direct experience or interest in the colonies could commiserate with Fujiwara's struggles to survive and protect her three small children as they made their arduous journey "home."[18] Indeed, even though it was Japanese imperialism that had led to Fujiwara and her family moving to Manchuria in the first place, the history and consequences of that imperialism are not directly acknowledged in the narrative; questions of war responsibility and colonial complicity are displaced instead by an intensely personal, subjective tale of suffering. This displacement is emblemized by the geographical map of Manchuria and the Korean peninsula that was printed at the beginning of the paperback version of the book. The map prominently features the railway lines of the South Manchuria Railway but labels those lines as "the path I took (Shinkyō to Pusan)" (*watashi no tadotta michi (Shinkyō kara Pusan made*)), rather than as the material products of Japanese railway imperialism. Temporal dissonances are also evoked by Fujiwara's use of Japanese colonial place names—Shinkyō instead of Changchun, Keijō instead of Seoul, etc.—even after the formal end of Japanese colonialism.[19]

Another emblematic example lies with the title itself. In an early chapter of the book eponymously titled "Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru" (*The Shooting Stars Are Alive*), the narrator Fujiwara encounters a Korean policeman named Mr. Kim who takes a sympathetic interest in Fujiwara and her family. He teaches her "a song no one else knows," explaining it had been composed by some soldiers in his troop during the war.[20] The Japanese-language song, which ends with the line "The shooting stars are alive," deeply moves Fujiwara, and she and the other Japanese returnees all end up learning it by heart. The chapter concludes with the narrator's

comment that "Mr. Kim is someone I remember with nostalgia" (72). Although it receives no attention from the narrator, Kim's casual comment that he had learned the song while a soldier in the war strongly suggests that Kim had most likely been a volunteer soldier (*shiganhei*) who had fought or been coerced to fight on behalf of the Japanese military during the Asia-Pacific War. That experience, along with the Japanese fluency he had obtained through his colonial education, is what enables the fateful transmission of the song to Fujiwara, and yet this fact is never directly acknowledged by the text itself. Instead, the song and its history get assimilated into Fujiwara's individual journey; and despite the narrator's insistence that Kim remains in her memories, Kim is never mentioned again, even while the song itself is.

As I have detailed elsewhere, during the colonial period the borders of "Japan" were historically overdetermined, simultaneously standing in for the empire and for the nation. The postwar imagining of "Japan" as a nation-state consisting primarily of the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku was not a radical redefinition so much as the ascendency of a discourse that had always existed in some form.[21] It is therefore not surprising that repatriates such as Fujiwara Tei consistently framed their narratives through the lens of war and suffering (rather than through the broader lens of imperialism), particularly since doing so neatly dovetailed with U. S. Allied policy. Anxious to reconstruct Japan into a demilitarized and democratized nation-state that could serve as an important ally in East Asia, SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers) avoided tackling issues related to the legacies of Japanese imperialism, such as reparations and the political status of former colonial subjects in Japan, for fear that doing so might destabilize reconstruction efforts.[22] The question of the colonies was ultimately not suppressed so much as made irrelevant by postwar discourse on war and defeat, which privileged "Japan proper" as the object of investigation and retrospectively cast its history in the nation-state frame.

Reader responses to *Nagareru hoshi* consistently framed the novel through this binary of war and peace, often linking it to the form of personal testimony. In the initial preface to the book, for example, critic Osaragi Jirō noted the significance of the work towards promoting peace and praised it for its veracity, the way it seemed to provide a "record" (*kiroku*) of historical events at threat of being forgotten in a rapidly changing Japan.[23] This reading of *Nagareru hoshi* has persisted into the present day and beyond the borders of Japan, as evinced by the English-

language translation published in 2014 (notably subtitled "A Memoir of the End of War and Beginning of Peace"). In her translator's introduction, Nanako Mizushima uses the words "memoir," "document," and "testament" when describing the significance of the work, despite the fact that Fujiwara initially conceived of *Nagareru hoshi* as a fictional novel.[24]

It is with this context in mind that I turn now to Abe Kōbō's *Kemonotachi wa kokyō o mezasu*—a text that would address Japan's imperial presence and legacy in Manchuria much more explicitly than *Owarishi michi*, but out of a similar concern with the politics of remembering and forgetting the "non-entities" of empire (whether configured as the dead or as beasts). An exploration of repatriation gone terribly awry, *Kemonotachi* features a Japanese protagonist named Kuki Kyūzō who seeks to "return" from Manchuria to a homeland he has never actually known, and who is eventually joined in his journey by a mysterious man of purportedly mixed Korean, Japanese, and Chinese heritage. It is my contention that *Kemonotachi* can be most productively read in two ways: as an anti-repatriation narrative (a critique of the failure of repatriation) *and* as an anti-"repatriation narrative" narrative (a critique of the form and function of testimonial literature as popularized by Fujiwara Tei). Although the latter has not been fully addressed in scholarship to date, I argue that reading *Kemonotachi* in this way is crucial because it allows us to see how the novella foregrounds the responsibility of the reader to recognize (and repudiate) the violence of imperial/national subjection in the here-and-now.[25]

Documentary as Disruption: *Kemonotachi wa kokyō o mezasu*

Kemonotachi is something of an anomaly in Abe Kōbō's oeuvre; as Richard F. Calichman points out in the introduction to his English translation of the novel, "Abe's most famous works typically provide a bare minimum of proper nouns as indicators of people and place, as he seeks to present situations whose meaning, in its generality, goes beyond the limits of any particular context…. And yet *Kemonotachi ha kokyō wo mezasu* is inconceivable without the specificity of its references, for these mark the concrete place and time of postwar Manchuria."[26] The unusual specificity of *Kemonotachi* makes sense when understood as a response to the repatriation narratives that were circulating in the 1940s and 1950s.[27] Like those narratives, *Kemonotachi* moors the story of its protagonist's doomed travels to a specific geography and specific historical events. Unlike them, however, it eschews the first-person "I" in favor of a limited

third-person perspective that is constantly destabilized and relativized by the text's narrative form, as my analysis below will show.

Kemonotachi opens with a winter scene in an initially unnamed location, with dialogue between two army men:

> "It's finally been decided that a train going south will come tomorrow," said First Lieutenant Bear [*Kuma chūi*] as soon as he came into the room. The snow crystals stuck on his overcoat shrank and changed into water droplets.
>
> "Tomorrow, you say?" First Lieutenant Alexandroff raised his head only partially from the bowl of soup he was hunched over and looked suspiciously at his partner. "Then what happened to the Kuomintang army?"
>
> "I heard they disappeared."
>
> "Disappeared?"
>
> "They probably ran away . . . So, that's why it was decided the train will be leaving tomorrow at 9 am."
>
> (At last, my escape will be tonight.)—So thought Kuki Kyūzō as he stirred the ashes in the stove.[28]

Starting not with an introduction to Kuki Kyūzō but with dialogue between a man identified only as "First Lieutenant Bear" and his fellow soldier Alexandroff, *Kemonotachi* immediately introduces a number of dichotomies only to collapse them together: men and (/as) beasts, movement and stasis, disappearance and escape. That Kyūzō's internal monologue emerges only after these dichotomies have been established is significant. Although the text will later constitute Kyūzō as the protagonist of the story and early 1948 Manchuria as the setting, the dislocating force of the opening lines not only undercuts Kyūzō as a narrative agent but also thwarts the reader's attempts to identify with him.

The significance of this first scene becomes clearer in section 6, which delves into Kyūzō's family background and the events that led to his current position with the Soviet troops. Both Kyūzō's parents, we learn, had "obscure origins" (27). His father had emigrated to Manchuria in order to find work; his mother followed him half a year later, and Kyūzō was born in Manchuria that winter. Although his father died soon after Kyūzō's birth, his mother decided to stay in Manchuria with Kyūzō because she "had no home to return to" (27) on mainland Japan. Kyūzō was stranded in Manchuria after a stray bullet struck and killed his mother in the chaos following the entry of the Soviet Union in the war. He was eventually found by a Russian squad headed by First Lieutenant Alexandroff, who decided to employ him in the kitchens. Kyūzō would stay with the

Russians for over two years, until the possibility of escape finally presented itself to him. Unlike the rigid teleological progression of "war's end, return home" found in repatriation narratives like *Nagareru hoshi*, then, *Kemonotachi* emphasizes a disjunctive, non-linear understanding of the past in relation to the present that presumes no inevitable end or return.

This disjunctive temporality is highlighted most dramatically towards the end of section 6: there, the narration abruptly breaks off to present a timeline of major international events between the years 1946 and 1948, beginning with the establishment of the Allied Council for Japan on April 5, 1946 and ending with the formation of the Ashida Cabinet on March 10, 1948. The appearance of the timeline is jarring, not only because it disrupts the diegetic order of the narrative but because it employs a dense, heavily sinified style more in keeping with newspaper headlines than with literary fiction. After a line break, the story picks up again with Kyūzō's perspective: "During these two years, there were a number of changes in Kyūzō as well. Without knowing it, things that had been alien became things that were familiar" (34).

It is useful to consider Abe's larger engagements with avant-garde documentary film and reportage in order to explicate the significance of this section. In May 1957, Abe Kōbō joined a number of other leftist writers to form the *Kiroku geijutsu no kai* (Documentary Arts Group), with the explicit purpose of seeking out a new "consciousness of method" (*hōhō ishiki*) to both grasp and give shape to the complexities of external reality.[29] As Margaret Key notes, Abe used the documentary form to find "an alternative epistemology that illuminates reality as conventionally perceived, revealing it to be merely a conditioned understanding of reality."[30] Rather than seeing fiction and non-fiction as opposites, he instead stressed how both depend upon a subjective narrative agent who simultaneously mediates and obscures the external world through the act of narration. In contrast to the writers and readers of the repatriation narrative, who invoked the word *kiroku* to refer to material records or eye-witness testimony, Abe and other members of the *Kiroku geijutsu no kai* were more concerned with the aesthetic and political problematics of the documentary form.[31]

Section 6 of *Kemonotachi* is where Abe's self-reflexive interest in the nature and limits of documentary can be most clearly seen, particularly in how the temporality of the reader is forcibly made to intersect with the temporality of the text. Like Kyūzō, what readers may have found shocking and alien at the time—the rise of the Chinese Communist Party,

the promulgation of the new Japanese constitution, the assassination of Gandhi, and so on—have been made prosaic and familiar with the passage of time. Once re-represented in a new context (in this case, the fictional story of Kuki Kyūzō), however, the seemingly natural progression of history is defamiliarized and made urgently topical. Because Kyūzō's past is now explicitly our own, readers are forced to consider how the world events of the timeline have shaped their own life trajectories. At the same time, the very arbitrariness of the recorded dates exposes how the construction of such a timeline is necessarily an ideological act, one that obfuscates multiple, multi-linear narratives of home and belonging that cannot be contained in the nation-state frame.

This experimentation with time and (non-)fictionality occurs throughout *Kemonotachi* at key junctures in the story. In the second installment serialized in *Gunzō*, for example, a hand-drawn map accompanies the text.[32] By this point Kyūzō has managed to board the train headed south, but his travels are abruptly interrupted when a clash between Nationalist and Communist troops causes the train to derail. Kyūzō decides to throw in his lot with a fellow passenger on the train, the mysterious Kō Sekitō, and the two set off on foot for Shenyang using a map Kyūzō had managed to steal from the Russians. That map, however, does not correspond to the pictorial map printed in *Gunzō*. While the latter does sketch out major landmarks and topographical features, its most distinguishing feature is a dotted route that wanders across the page, marked at intervals with different illustrations. One example is a brick structure (labeled "Crematorium Remains") paired with a crude drawing of a wolf (Figure 1). It is only in hindsight, after reading the entire installment, that the reader can understand that the illustration represents a key scene in the story, when Kyūzō and Kō attempt to seek shelter in the Manchurian wilderness.

Like the map found in Fujiwara Tei's *Nagareru hoshi*, the *Gunzō* artwork literally maps out the plot that constitutes the protagonist's journey onto and as a spatiotemporal landscape. At the same time, the deliberate misalignment of signifier and signified (the map described in the text versus the map placed against the text) not only puts ironic stress on the instability of borders in post-1945 Manchuria but also exposes the ways in which maps—like narratives themselves—attempt to fix meaning to ideologies of time and space but never with total success or absolute authority.

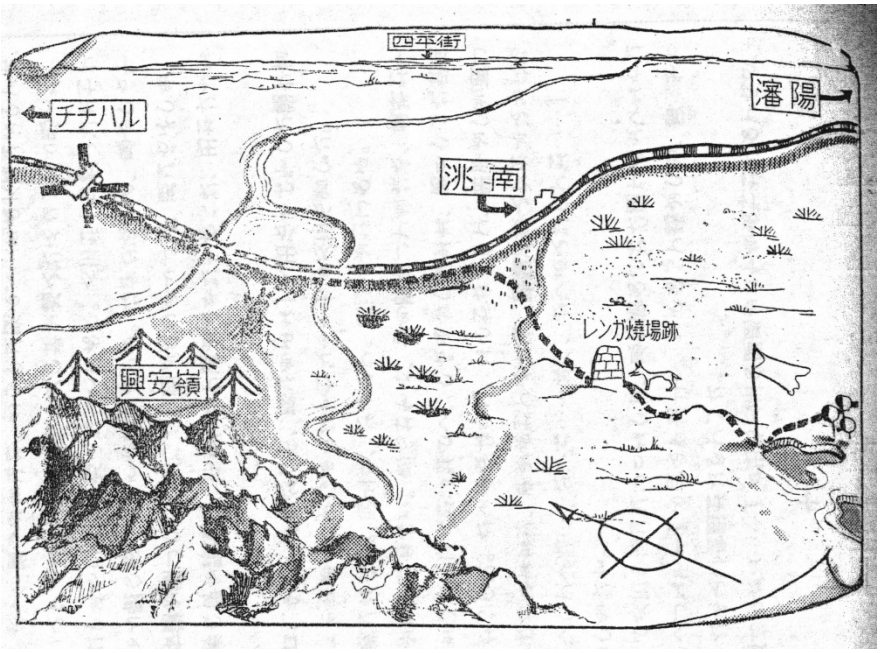

Figure 1: Map in second installment of *Kemonotachi*

One final interruption of the text occurs towards the end of the novella. After a long and arduous trek across Manchuria, Kyūzō finally manages to reach Shenyang, only to have his identification papers stolen by Kō. By coincidence Kyūzō runs into a fellow countryman, a smuggler named Ōkane, who invites Kyūzō to board his ship headed to Japan. It turns out that Kō is also on the ship, having passed himself off as Kyūzō. With the appearance of the "real" Kyūzō, however, Kō is locked up by the crew. The short penultimate chapter of the novella consists entirely of a page from the ship logbook, written in a clipped, formal style markedly different from the narration used in other chapters. The captain's report states that the crew will "dispose [*haichi*] him in an appropriate manner as a violent criminal.—The real Kuki Kyūzō recovered his health last night."[33] The captain concludes his report with a few notes on the ship's course, and it is there that the chapter ends.

Because it is made to stand outside the narrative frame of Kyūzō's subjectivity, the ship log extract seems at first glance to be an objective document meant to validate the "true" Kuki Kyūzō. But as previous examples have revealed, it may be more productive to think about the

penultimate chapter as an interrogation of the limits and epistemological practice of documentation itself. After all, Kyūzō's identification document was really nothing more than a sheet of paper that was signed by First Lieutenant Alexandroff on a whim; it has no materiality outside the chains of signification. The document is also immaterial in another way, as it is later revealed that the ship's crew had intended to use both passengers as forced labor all along, whether Kyūzō or Kō was "the real Kyūzō." This is not to argue that *Kemonotachi* represents identity as a postmodern abstraction that can be endlessly swapped and reconfigured; rather, it calls attention to both the historical arbitrariness of the state and the violent process through which certain forms of belonging are authorized (or dis-placed) over others.

This point is driven home in the final chapter, in which Kō descends into madness and Kyūzō becomes a "beast" (*kemono*) after he is prevented from leaving the ship. Just before his transformation to beast, Kyūzō wonders deliriously to himself, "It may be that this is all just a dream…. I may still be somewhere in that wasteland, half frostbitten, asleep…." (169, ellipses in original). For Kyūzō and Kō, both Japan and Manchuria are like phantasms in a way: one the persistent ghost of a vanquished empire, the other a fantasy of nationhood concocted out of the ashes of that empire.[34] Abandoned by the former, Kyūzō and Kō have no choice but to seek out a home in the latter. But, paradoxically, it is the very process of seeking—of having to "prove" a national identity that never existed—that renders them vulnerable to the whims of the international postwar order. Although Abe's story of failed repatriation may have struck some Japanese readers as out of place in 1957, this is perhaps precisely the point: out of place and out of synch with the myth of the homogeneous nation, *Kemonotachi* asks us to consider the ways the wastelands of the past continue to configure the privileges of place even today.[35]

Calcified Confessions

In 1965, seventeen years after first publishing *Owarishi michi* and eight years after publishing *Kemonotachi*, Abe Kōbō released a drastically revised version of *Owarishi michi* through the publisher Tōjusha. Some of the many changes made to the text include a much shorter epitaph dedicated only to "my deceased friend"; the excision of many of the narrator's more abstract philosophical musings; the inclusion of specific references to Japan's "defeat" (*haisen*) and subsequent occupation; and a much more nihilistic ending, where the narrator signals what awaits him

at the end of his narrative: "Now, to hell!"[36] Ultimately, the revised version is much more explicitly critical of the postwar Japanese state and much more ambivalent about the existence of any true "homeland" (*kokyō*).

While some critics expressed surprise at Abe's decision to revise and republish *Owarishi michi* seventeen years after the fact, the reappearance of his maiden work is entirely understandable when considered against Abe's sustained concern with borders and their limits.[37] Given that the myth of Japanese homogeneity had taken full root in Japan by 1965, the changes made to the second edition of *Owarishi michi* also make a certain kind of sense: Abe could no longer take for granted that readers would read his work as "literally about Japanese colonial Manchuria," or interpret it through the larger paratext of transnational East Asia.[38] The 1960s is also the period when Abe's literary canonization as a "cosmopolitan" writer began to develop, aided in part by the international success of his 1962 novel *Suna no onna* (*The Woman in the Dunes*, trans. 1964) and 1964 film adaptation. But as my readings of *Owarishi michi* and *Kemonotachi* have shown, Abe's attempts to de-familiarize the familiar were not a modernist experimentation with form in a universal sense, or not simply that; they were also concrete political interventions.

In effacing the history of imperialism that was the very condition of its narrativity, the repatriation narrative did not speak to others so much as reconfigure "the other" within a domestic order. The effects of this reconfiguration would persist long after 1945. In August 1971, for example, the general-interest journal *Ushio* published a special feature entitled "Nihonjin no shinryaku to hikiage taiken: shūdan jiketsu to zansatsu no kiroku" (Japanese aggression and repatriation experiences: a record of group self-determination and massacre). A number of public figures contributed to the special feature, including intellectual giants Takeuchi Yoshimi and Tsurumi Shunsuke, New Wave director Ōshima Nagisa, and best-selling writer Gomikawa Junpei. The majority of the special feature, however, was devoted to a seventy-nine page compilation of repatriation memories printed under the bolded headline "Hikiagesha 100-nin no kokuhaku" (The confessions of one hundred returnees). Each "confession" was presented in the same format: pithy title, full name, photograph, former location/profession and then current profession, repatriation story. Some were written reminiscences that had been solicited by the journal; others were oral interviews, conducted with the aid of a company called Creative Lab.

The majority of the one hundred returnees had been repatriated from

Manchuria, Taiwan, and Korea; many of them had been bureaucrats in the colonial apparatus, or related to them; almost all had tales of suffering to relate. Indeed, what is striking about "Kokuhaku" is its overall emphasis on victimhood—over and despite, for example, the injunction given by the *Ushio* editors themselves "to reflect from a position antipodal to victim mentality, in order to ensure that repatriation doesn't end in saccharine reminiscences" (90). Themes that were commonly invoked include arduous journeys on foot, hunger and malnutrition, dying children, vulnerable women, filthy and tattered clothing, the fear of retaliation from the formerly colonized, and the indifference or even cruelty of mainland Japanese residents that repatriates encountered upon returning "home." While some identified the cause of their travails as lying with the Japanese state, few directed any thought to their own position vis-à-vis the state as former colonizers.

As I noted in previous sections, the most popular repatriation narratives took the form of the testimonial even when "fictional," as was the case with Fujiwara Tei's *Nagareru hoshi*. As such, the transnational history and effects of Japanese imperialism were *necessarily*—not incidentally—eclipsed. By narrating one's social experience in the colonies as an individual story of repatriation, one necessarily creates a story of rupture and movement rather than continuity; a story in which diverse places of origin are understood only in relation to a singular place of return: Japan. Although repatriation cannot be explained apart from imperialism, the temporal constraints imposed by the word "repatriation" (a story that begins with empire's end) create a curious aporia in which imperialism is structurally present and yet erased within the narrative itself. In "Kokuhaku," this point is emblemized by the way each returnee's name is accompanied in parentheses by his or her former position, both spatial (former place of residence) and occupational (the reason that led to that person's place of residence). This paratextual positioning contextualizes the content that follows, but is rarely mentioned within the content itself—another structural aporia, as the story of repatriation is predicated upon the loss of position, spatial and otherwise.

While the majority of those interviewed identified their arrival in Japan as the natural and welcome conclusion of repatriation, some also acknowledged the fate of those Japanese who were ultimately unable to be repatriated. In other words, even repatriation narratives that celebrated the idea of return were unable to fully banish or overcome the colonial past, due to the memory of those who had been left behind. Responding perhaps

to these temporal complexities of repatriation, many of the returnees conceptualized their experiences using the word "nightmare" (*akumu*). Nitta Jirō, the husband of Fujiwara Tei, wrote the following comment in an entry entitled "Akumu": "As long as special issues on memories of repatriation continue to be tolerated, we cannot say that the war has truly ended. Even having written just this much, I know that tonight I'll most likely suffer from bad dreams about that time again" (114). Thinking of his child who died in the process of repatriation, author Shimahara Kiyoyuki professed, "I cannot think of repatriation as anything other than a nightmare" (141). Bureaucrat Shiomi Shigeo put it even more bluntly: "What can Japan do for the many people who died desperately dreaming of the day they could return to their native land? There is nothing it can do. Because the dead don't speak" (136).

The dead don't speak, no—but they can still affect and change the present, through the awful power of history. To return to a final time to Abe's *Kemonotachi*, it can be argued that because the novella is primarily told from the viewpoint of Kyūzō, the story can be potentially read as a rebuke to the Japanese government (and U. S. Allied Forces) for abandoning its Japanese citizens in Manchuria after repatriation efforts officially ended in 1948. At the same time, focusing only on Kyūzō or reading the novella only through the lens of Abe's own biography runs the risk of reifying the national borders that the text seeks to call into question. As a mixed-race double agent who eventually descends into madness, believing himself not only to be a Japanese man named "Kuki Kyūzō" but also the president of the puppet state of Manchukuo, Kō too is a product (and abject) of the Japanese empire. The various displacements suffered by both characters in *Kemonotachi* following the dissolution of that empire reveal how easily the same discursive and political mechanisms that could produce you as a subject could be mobilized to unmake you, through nothing more than an accident of place and time.

Although the Japanese empire theoretically disappeared off the map in 1945 following Japan's defeat to the Allied Powers, the competing narratives of place and belonging that had been engendered by Japanese imperialism were not so easily erased; instead, as *Owarishi michi* and *Kemonotachi* reveal, they would continue to configure and *dis*-figure physical, human, and cultural geographies, precisely through (and not despite) Japan's new self-fashioning from a multiethnic empire to a defeated nation-state. Taken together, the works of Abe Kōbō argue that any critique of national narratives must entail not only an investigation of

the forms those narratives take but also a reflexive awareness of one's own subject position in relation to those who speak other stories, other possibilities of belonging. What is necessary, in other words, is not a re-presentation of the past, but an ethical reckoning with it.

NOTES

[1] I am borrowing the term "texts in motion" from Karen Laura Thornber, *Empire of Texts in Motion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[2] Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 402.

[3] Oh Mijung's *Abe Kōbō no "sengo*," for example, was one of the first major literary studies since the 1970s to seriously examine Abe's experiences in Manchuria, thereby providing an important intervention in critical receptions of Abe as a "cosmopolitan" writer. Oh Mijung, *Abe Kōbō no "sengo*": *shokuminchi keiken to shoki tekusuto o megutte* (Tokyo: Kurein, 2009). See also Saka Kenta, *Abe Kōbō to "Nihon": Shokuminchi/senryō keiken to nashonarizumu* (Tokyo: Izumi shoin, 2016) and Miya Qiong Xie, *Territorializing Manchuria: The Transnational Frontier and Literatures of East Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2023).

[4] Nicholas Lambrecht, "New Arrivals: Returnee Identity and the Memory of Repatriation in Japanese Literature" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago), 94. See also Narita Ryūichi, *Sensō no keiken o tou: "Sensō keiken" no sengoshi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2010) and Pak Yuha, *Hikiage bungakuron josetsu: Arata-na posutokoroniaru e* (Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 2016).

[5] Here, I am indebted to Suzanne Keen's definition of narrative form as "how readers come to know what happens as they read a text." This definition is particularly useful in how it accommodates related questions of genre (or what Hans Robert Jauss famously called "the horizon of expectations" in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 1982) and narratology without necessarily confining itself to one or the other. If narrative is about meaning-making through temporal ordering and semiotic practices, then narrative form can be understood as the textual apparatus (the *how*) that constitutes it. Suzanne Keen, *Narrative Form* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 4.

[6] For more information see Wakatsuki Yasuo, *Sengo hikiage no kiroku* (Tokyo: Jiji tsūshinsha, 1991); Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009); Imaizumi Yoshiko et al, eds. *Nihon teikoku hōkaiki hikiage no hikaku kenkyū* (Tokyo: Nihon keizai hyōronsha, 2016); and Katō Kiyofumi, *Kaigai*

hikiage no kenkyū (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2020).

[7] Abe would significantly revise *Owarishi michi* throughout his career. For information on the textual revisions, see Tani Shinsuke, "Sakka annai: Abe Kōbō" in Abe Kōbō, *Owarishi michi no shirube ni (Shinzenbisha-ban)* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), 240–261; and Oh Mijing, *Abe Kōbō no "sengo,"* particularly chapter 1. Page citations of *Owarishi michi* are from the 1948 Shinzenbisha book version, unless otherwise indicated. All translations in this article are also my own, unless otherwise indicated.

[8] Abe, *Owarishi michi no shirube ni* (Tokyo: Shinzenbisha, 1948), 15.

[9] Scholarship I have found particularly useful for understanding this influence include Yamada Hiromitsu, "*Owarishi michi no shirube ni*," *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kanshō* 36.1 (January 1971): 76–80; Timothy Iles, *Abe Kôbô: an Exploration of his Prose, Drama and Theatre* (Fucecchio, Italy: European Press Academic Publishing, 2002); and Gotō Aya, "Abe Kōbō kenkyū: 'mono' to 'hito' no honshitsu o megutte," *Nihon bungaku nōto* 48 (July 2013): 69–96.

[10] See Abe Kōbō, "Hakobune wa hasshin sezu" in *Abe Kōbō zenshū* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2000), 39–58; and Abe Neri, "Chosha ni kawatte dokusha e: naki Kaneyama Tokio ni" in *Owarishi michi no shirube ni (Shinzenbisha-ban)*, 221–226.

[11] Oh, *Abe Kōbō no "sengo*," 29.

[12] Saka Kenta, *Abe Kōbō to "Nihon,"* 58.

[13] Ibid., 64.

[14] For more information see Narita Ryūichi, "'Hikiage' ni kansuru joshō," *Shisō* 955 (November 2003): 149–174; and *"Sensō keiken" no sengoshi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2020).

[15] The "reverse course" refers to a change in U. S. policy towards Japan, in which emphasis was shifted from democratization and social reform to integration into U. S. anti-communist containment policy.

[16] Seiji Lippit, "Spaces of Occupation in the Postwar Fiction of Hotta Yoshie," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 36.2 (Summer 2010): 294.

[17] Fujiwara Tei, *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru* (Tokyo: Hibiya shuppansha, 1949). Page numbers refer to the original 1949 version. Fujiwara would later edit and add to the work in subsequent republications, as Suematsu Tomohiro has detailed in his article "Fujiwara Tei *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru / Haiiro no oka* o meguru 'hikiage' no kioku," *Chiba daigaku daigakuin jinbun kōkyōgaku gakufu kenkyū purojekuto hōkokusho* 330 (February 2018): 20–42. An English translation by Nanako V. Mizushima was published under the title *Tei: A*

Memoir of the End of War and the Beginning of Peace (Boulder: Tonnbo Books, 2014).

[18] The protagonist and her family were given the same names as the real-life Fujiwaras. Although Fujiwara Tei stressed in the afterword to *Nagareru hoshi* that the novel was a fictionalized account, this deliberate linking of author to protagonist would lead readers and critics to read the novel as a non-fiction memoir.

[19] Fujiwara, *Nagareru hoshi wa ikite iru* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1976), 10. Different versions of this map began to appear alongside Fujiwara's text as early as 1953, for example in the excerpted version printed in the collection *Hiroku daitōa senshi* (Tokyo: Fuji shoen, 1953). For more information on the history of Japanese railway imperialism and its persistence into the present, see Yukiko Koga, *Inheritance of Loss: China, Japan, and the Political Economy of Redemption after Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

[20] Fujiwara, *Nagareru hoshi* (1949), 70.

[21] Christina Yi, *Colonizing Language: Cultural Production and Language Politics in Modern Japan and Korea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

[22] See Takemae Eiji, *Inside GHQ,* trans. Robert Ricketts and Sebastian Swann (New York: Continuum, 2002).

[23] Osaragi, "Jo," in *Nagareru hoshi* (1949), 1.

[24] Mizushima, *Tei*, ii–ix. For evidence of Fujiwara's initial conceptualization of her work, see her author's afterword in *Nagareru hoshi* (1949), 318.

[25] One notable exception is a recent article by Jiajun Liang, who also pays attention to the ways that *Kemonotachi* challenges "the genre of autobiographical narratives of repatriation (*hikiage-mono*) as well as the teleology of the return to postwar Japan that such narratives tended uncritically to imply" (329). Liang's incisive close reading of *Kemonotachi* is very much in agreement with my own, although my article focuses more on questions of form in relation to Abe's larger literary output. Jiajun Liang, "Impossible to Return: Abe Kōbō, Repatriation, and Postwar Japan," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 48.2 (Summer 2022): 327–353.

[26] Calichman, "Introduction," in *Beasts Head for Home: A Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), vii.

[27] Also important to keep in mind is the fact that the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration, which normalized diplomatic relations between Japan and the U.S.S.R., was signed the previous year in October 1956. One of Japan's major stipulations was the repatriation of remaining Japanese POWs from Soviet

territory. See Saka, *Abe Kōbō to "Nihon*" (particularly chapter 5) for more information on the influence of the Joint Declaration in *Kemonotachi*.

[28] *Kemonotachi*, in *Gunzō* 12.1 (January 1957): 14. All subsequent citations refer to the *Gunzō* version unless otherwise stated. An excellent translation by Richard Calichman is available through Columbia University Press (2017, previously cited); for the purposes of the close readings I do in this article, however, the translations featured here are my own.

[29] Toba Kōji, *Undōtai, Abe Kōbō* (Tokyo: Ichiyōsha, 2007), 57.

[30] Key, *Truth from a Lie: Documentary, Detection, and Self-Reflexivity in Abe Kōbō's Realist Project* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2011), 168. Toba Kōji writes extensively about Abe Kōbō's "documentary impulse" in his monographs *Abe Kōbō—media no ekkyōsha* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2013) and *1950 nendai—kiroku no jidai* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 2010).

[31] Of course, this attention to the subjectivity in (and of) documentary is not confined to the 1950s. For example, Satō Izumi traces the link between the 1950s and the 1930s proletarian *tsuzurikata* (written composition) movement, wherein it was thought a politicized proletarian subjectivity could be produced through the dialectics of private record-keeping and public (communal) recitation. Satō, "50nendai dokyumentarii undō: seikatsu o tsuzuru," *Shōwa bungaku kenkyū* 44 (March 2003): 13–26.

[32] *Kemonotachi*, in *Gunzō* 12.2 (February 1957): 55. Illustrator of the image unknown.

[33] *Kemonotachi*, in *Gunzō* 12.4 (April 1957): 165.

[34] Seino Hiroshi's observation that the word *kokyō* never once appears within the text itself is particularly notable in this light, as is his argument that "unlike Kyūzō, Kō is able to speak of 'Japan' as a proper noun…. But Kyūzō is unable to give any concreteness to 'Japan.'" Seino Hiroshi, "Genmetsu sareru kokyō: Abe Kōbō *Kemonotachi wa kokyō o mezasu* ron," *Kokubungku* 17 (March 2001): 42–55.

[35] Oguma Eiji thoroughly dismantles the myth of mono-ethnicity in postwar Japan in his monograph *Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1995). An English translation has been published under the title *A Genealogy of "Japanese" Self-Images,* trans. David Ashew (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002).

[36] Abe, *Abe Kōbō zenshū* 19 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1999), 475.

[37] Xie Fang provides a detailed analysis of the academic reception of *Owarishi* and its revision in "Abe Kōbō *Owarishi michi no shirube ni ron*: tekusuto no kaitei to 'hikiage' o megutte," *Nihongo, Nihon bungaku kenkyū* 11: 77–94.

[38] Xie, *Territorializing Manchuria*, 251. For another incisive study of the transnational politics of memory in relation to repatriation, see Nadeschda Bachem, "Ambivalent Encounters: Colonial Memory in the Literature of Two Japanese Returnees from Korea," *Japan Forum* 34.4: 469–492.