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Time for a Music Bath: Body, Sex, Control, and Subversion in Unno Jūza's Literary Dystopia

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> Under the sun, the earth faded into twilight.
> In the nation beneath that sunset land, the time signal at precisely eighteen o'clock solemnly shook the hearts of millions of residents.
> "Oh, it's eighteen o'clock already."
> "Time for the music bath at eighteen o'clock."
> "Come on everyone, hurry up and get seated!"[1]

Thus opens Unno Jūza's (海野十三, 1897–1949) story entitled "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" (十八時の音楽浴, "Music Bath at Eighteen o'clock," April 1937), published in the magazine *Modan Nippon*. Set in a post-apocalyptic world, people have moved underground and built an authoritarian regime named Miruki, eking out a living from limited space and resources. Each day at eighteen o'clock, everyone must drop their work, sit on a "spiral chair" (*rasen isu* 螺旋椅子), and listen to the national anthem for thirty minutes. This process is called a music bath, designed by the state scientist Dr. Kohaku for President Miruki to brainwash his subjects into loyal, healthy, emotionless working machines. Dr. Kohaku is also working on creating artificial humans (*jinzō ningen* 人造人間) to build the ultimate perfect army. The working class does not unanimously consent to this dehumanizing practice and finds ways to resist it, and at the same time, President Miruki's female cabinet minister Asari attempts a coup and manages to murder Dr. Kohaku. Asari then convinces President Miruki to administer the music bath once every hour, causing many to die. Suddenly, there appears to be a Martian attack, and Asari and President Miruki decide to send artificial humans to the battlefront. However, both end up getting killed in an explosion trying to open a door to Dr. Kohaku's

lab. At this juncture, Dr. Kohaku reappears, revealing that he had sent in his artificial body double to be killed by Asari. He regains control over his artificial human army, plays a new music bath that celebrates humanity, and continues to build his ideal "utopia" (ユートピア).[2]

"Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" envisions an alternative space where the use of science, utopian desires, and dystopian realities intertwine and inflict irreversible damage on humanity. Somewhat paradoxically, Unno, a rigorous supporter of Japan's military expansionism and the use of technology in wars, consistently produced such stories about how technology run amok can destroy humanity. This paper examines Unno's engagement with science in militarism and nationalism, the dystopia built in the name of utopian dreams in "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" and its efforts to control bodies and minds, and Unno's message on the use of technology and its ethicality. Written at the height of modern imperialism, Unno's dystopia adopts expansionist rhetorics and eventually reaches its own demise. It reflects imperialist trends and also comments on and critiques them. I argue that "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" cannot only be interpreted as a propagandist story advocating for scientific progress and its militaristic use; it is also a political satire modeled on 1930s Japan and a cautionary tale warning readers about utopian desires and the unchecked use of technology. By expanding existing trends of the unethical use of technology in his time into an alternative fictional space, the story shows us that utopian perfection can never be realized without the devastating loss in human lives, identity, and morality.

Utopias and Dystopias

Often isolated, unattainable, and yet irresistibly desirable, a literary utopia is an imaginary perfect society that is, in utopian literature scholar Tom Moylan's words, "rooted in unfulfilled needs and wants" of a unique historical context and offers a blueprint for a better future.[3] Dystopias in literature, on the other hand, are usually imagined to be immoral, insufferable places. Gregory Claeys writes that the term "dystopia" can be etymologically traced back to two Greek words, *dus* and *topos*, referring to a "diseased, bad, faulty, or unfavorable place."[4] Susan Napier similarly states that dystopias in modern Japanese literature "share their visions of an absurd quest, a problematization of history and technology, and bleak urban imagery with much postmodern and dystopian literature in the West."[5] Two major visions prevail in these literary dystopias: technology gone amok and totalitarian governments manipulating such technology.[6]

Additionally, Tom Moylan writes about "critical dystopia" that both gives voices to the dispossessed as well as contemplates on changes for social betterment that can constitute a utopian horizon.[7] Angela Yiu has also highlighted the reversibility between utopias and dystopias in modern Japanese literature.[8] Although utopias are typically understood to be the direct opposite to dystopias, I agree with Moylan and Yiu and argue that utopias and dystopias have a dynamic, fluid, and developing impact on each other, existing as different sides of the same coin. Therefore, in "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku," Miruki is a utopia of efficiency and productivity in the eyes of President Miruki and Dr. Kohaku, but also a dystopia of authoritarian control for the workers and artificial humans. Nonetheless, the ethical message remains clear: utopian urges and technology used at the expense of lives can bring about destructive effects, signaling Unno's critical stance on the excessive use and blind reliance on technology.

Unno Jūza and Science

Born Sano Shōichi (佐野昌一) in 1897, Unno Jūza mainly wrote detective fiction that features many mad scientists, criticizes blind trust and confidence in science, and implies, as Sari Kawana observes, a "possible incompatibility" between science and ethics in the early stage of his career.[9] Unno shared a fascination with science and technology with many of his contemporaries. In the late nineteenth century, scientific romances by Jules Verne (1828–1905) and H. G. Wells (1866–1946) were translated into Japanese and widely read in Japan. In a discussion of the history of modern Japanese science fiction, Tadashi Nagasawa notes that by the beginning of the twentieth century, science and technology came to be seen as a "practical means" for the nation's development and later the Empire's colonial efforts. From the 1920s to the 1930s, many stories and novels featuring future wars, advanced technology, and adventures in foreign lands were published in Japan, especially in juvenile magazines and books.[10] Science fiction (SF) novels (*kagaku shōsetsu* 科学小説) flourished during this period.[11]

As Japan intensified its imperial advances in the 1930s, Unno's writing became increasingly jingoistic and propagandistic.[12] According to Edogawa Ranpo (江戸川乱歩, 1894–1965), his then friend, Unno maintained strong ties with Japanese government and military authorities.[13] Unno also managed the research arm of the Communications Ministry's Electrical Experiments Division and employed his professional

expertise in many of his stories.[14] In the late 1930s and early 1940s, science fictions by writers like Unno were dominating young readers' bookshelves.[15] Indicative of the popularity of his writings, Unno's works were published in "collected works" series by major publishing houses and appeared in reprints multiple times.[16] Unno published multiple stories featuring Japan's victory in an imaginary war. Instead of logic and rationality, Hiromi Mizuno argues that the readers would find "wonder" (*kyōi* 驚異) and excitement—"the wonder of future weapons and the invincibility of Japan."[17] He became one of the most prolific and significant writers in that era, producing fantasy stories of militaries employing cutting-edge technology. His works were enthusiastically consumed by the public, especially young readers including Ōe Kenzaburō (大江健三郎, 1935–2023) and Tezuka Osamu (手塚治虫, 1928–1989), who then became the leading figures in modern Japanese literature and SF (science fiction) popular culture.[18]

Although the word "conversion" (*tenkō* 転向) never appeared in any of his writings, in the late 1930s, Unno wrote that he underwent a series of psychological and philosophical transformations. During the war, his actions showed his willingness to collaborate with the government.[19] Unno was sent to the South Pacific as a navy reporter in 1942. When he returned, he allegedly told his wife that Japanese science was inferior compared to that of the United States, but he continued to write. It is speculated that he wrote to appeal to the state and market, but also perhaps to promote "scientific patriotism" (*kagaku hōkoku* 科学報国)—a belief of serving the nation through learning and practicing science that was further motivated by his perception of Japan's scientific inferiority.[20] His passionate adoption of nationalistic rhetoric remained unchanged even after the war. Nonetheless, he was consistent in his message on the importance of technology, as observed by Kawana:

> His wartime stories again and again warned that Japan would lose the war because it underestimated the importance of science and technology in modern warfare—warnings that would have seemed critical or even subversive if not for his self-declared ideological stance.[21]

In this sense, Unno cannot be simply understood as a nationalistic writer who blindly supported all war efforts. Unlike his many other stories in which a patriotic ideal soldier utilizes science for the empire's colonial efforts, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" features a self-centered, apathetic scientist who uses science and technology to trick the dictator President

Miruki into destroying himself and the nation that he is supposed to be serving; he then establishes an artificial human nation for himself. Dr. Kohaku is far from being an ideal, loyal soldier that serves as a role model for Unno's readers and thus, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" cannot simply be understood as a case study of Unno's scientifically patriotic agenda. Kawana argues that Unno, writing behind a cooperative persona in order to continue publishing, truly intended to warn against the use of science without conscience. Unno's stories "give the impression of a veiled political critique of the wartime Japanese government, often in the form of contradictions, inconsistencies, and outlandish storylines" and Unno demonstrated his desire for the young readers of SF magazines in the interwar period to read between the lines.[22] To him, wars essentially meant competition for scientific dominance, even though his message would have contradicted with his political stance. Such a paradox is also recognized by Seth Jacobowitz, who points out that Unno's visions are imperialistic, and yet at the same time, "delighting" in the destructive power of excessive and unchecked use of science, and "resolutely dystopian." [23] This paper complements Kawana's and Jacobowitz's scholarship through unpacking Unno's story from a literary dystopian studies perspective to focus on its potential as a socio-political critique. I also bring in analyses of sex, gender, and the artificial body into the discourse on Unno that can further investigate the tension between the dystopian Miruki and its utopian elements.

"Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" is such a dystopian story that exposes the flaws in humanity—its thirst for power, excess, and extremes—and the unsupervised use of science. Resembling other important dystopian fiction from the 1920s and 1930s that often criticizes capitalism and its abuse of labor, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" indeed presents a hellish society where workers are brainwashed to work to death.[24] And yet, it also emphasizes educating the public about the use of science. In his "Notes from the Author" to the story's 1939 anthology (『十八時の音楽浴』の作者の言葉, *Jūhachiji no ongaku* no sakusha no kotoba), Unno criticizes the lack of scientific literacy among editors and publishers, which, to him, will inevitably create an "unscientific environment and discourse" (*hikagaku-tekina kankyō de hikagaku-tekina kaiwa* 非科学的な環境で非科学的な会話) and harm the future of the younger generation. Thus, his intentions to preach the crucial role of science are evident and justified. Specifically, he claims that he wrote the story "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" to teach scientific literacy and ethicality through the extrapolation of current trends

with the aim to evoke critical thinking on the influence of technology on free will and humanity:

> ("Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku") suggests that the day when the so-called "human free will" becomes regulated by scientific tools is nigh. Nowadays, technologies such as death rays that are developed by nations around the world in strict confidentiality may not be limited to killing people and stopping automobile and aircraft engines. They might furthermore turn our reality into the one in "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku."[25]

Unno's "Notes from the Author," is a way for him to directly address his readers. Therefore, the didacticism embedded in "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" is the most clear, straightforward, and intentionally crafted. His authorial intention appears effective and impactful, as Kawana discusses his readership, because "the creativity and independence of readers allowed propaganda literature to be something more than a tool of ideological and political conformity."[26] Unno's position is also unique: he is both a technocrat (engineers serving in the government) and a popular writer, and thus he defines the "unscientific" (*hikagakuteki* 非科学的) from both perspectives. Mizuno identifies the different definitions of the "unscientific" by various groups engaging in the discourse of science and technology:

> For technocrats, it was the law-bureaucrats, who did not know how to promote science and technology for the nation. For liberal science popular promoters, it was the lack of scientific knowledge among ordinary Japanese that resulted from the state school curriculum.[27]

Unno discovers a way to raise awareness of the importance of science through his state-sanctioned SF stories but not without caution. "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" emphasizes that scientific advancement is not necessarily the *deus ex machina* for Japan. If used with unchecked power, it will become uncontrollably destructive. He also recognizes the impact of science on human bodies and minds and exposes the myth of humans as "rational, autonomous beings" by placing them as the object of technological regulation and conditioning. As remarked by Jacobowitz, this is significant because at that time, "the possibilities of what defines human being were radically interrogated and reconfigured."[28] In this sense, Unno's "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" is a story that teaches not only the importance of technology, but also the ethicality of critically utilizing its

power.

How to Build a Dystopia

"Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" is a story about how the human body and mind are controlled and governed by technology. The music bath administered daily is a technological tool developed by Dr. Kohaku. Sitting on a special chair allows streams of electronic waves (*denpa* 電波) from the Center of Sound Production to travel through the body, "massage the brain cells," and keep the brain bathed for half an hour.[29] This process is not without side effects: as the music intensifies, the listeners sweat profusely and moan in pain. Thus, blasting the music bath all day is strictly forbidden by Dr. Kohaku, since too long an exposure leads to disorder in brain cell activity and eventual death.

While the music bath is evidently an instrument of brainwashing, its function and role in Miruki more clearly render it a metaphor for propaganda. The purposes of administering a music bath are twofold. Firstly, a reasonable amount of music bath would stimulate the human brain positively and evoke creativity. During the hour after the bath, everyone becomes a "great genius" (*daitensai* 大天才) and devotes themselves to important works such as designing shields for national defense, improving types of nourishment, or merging bacteria. What is more important is what happens to the residents after the music bath, where the music bath "drags" (*hikizuru* 引きずる) their next twenty-three hours towards a "healthy mentality of national citizens" (*kenzen-naru kokumin shisō* 健全なる国民思想) and makes everyone stay a "model human" (*mohan ningen* 模範人間) for the rest of the day. A model human, in President Miruki's words, ought to:

> get fired up by an identical notion of the nation (*kokka kannen* 国家観念), strive to fulfill their professional duties with the same enthusiasm…become what I want them to be, just like a machine human (*kikai ningen* 機械人間) …possessing ironlike minds and ironlike health. Every one of them is an ideal human being (*risō-tekina ningen* 理想的な人間).[30]

Secondly, readers are told that the model of an ideal human is called "Type No. 39 Standard Human" (*dai sanjūkyū gata hyōjun ningen* 第三十九型標準人間), which satisfies the roughly thirty-nine prerequisites for a perfect national citizen as designed by President Miruki. Examples include remaining unquestionably loyal to the President, being undaunted and

tenacious, not desiring alcohol or tobacco, staying healthy with four hours of sleep, and being able to recognize the President upon seeing his beard. Dr. Kohaku therefore designed the music bath in accordance with these conditions.[31]

In this sense, Miruki is explicitly depicted as a dystopia from the following perspectives. First, the President occupies the center of power and imposes a draconian rule as many other authoritarian figures do in dystopian fiction. Such centralization of power silences and represses individual choice and agency in the name of collective wellbeing. Second, a dystopian society is almost always "deliberately planned and arranged."[32] Miruki is built on the debris of an apocalypse; all of its limited resources, including food and water, are distributed through central regulation. Even the music bath is a planned thought-control device for conditioning and monitoring. Planning ensures the stability and manageability coveted by many dystopias. Third, violence and dehumanization are not unfamiliar tools of control for President Miruki and his government. Violence manifests particularly in the music bath, which breaches the individual's bodily boundary and molds their mind. The "dragging" (*hikizuru* 引きずる) of their leisure time towards obedience indicates a level of violence in coercion. In this sense, the government has total access to their citizens' bodies and minds, wiping out unhealthiness and any other normal emotions and reactions such as doubt and cowardice that could threaten the homogeneity and uniformity of workers with the means of technology. The Miruki Nation and its system thus showcase the clear-cut political landscape of a dystopia.[33]

Dystopias are a medium for writers to express societal anxieties and fears that are deeply rooted in their contemporary time. The allusions to a "nation" (*kuni* 国) led by an unchallenged head (the President) and its "national subjects" (*kokumin* 国民) resonate strongly with the socio-political environment of modern Japan. In addition to the allusion to the "nation" (*kuni* 国), a detail in the process of receiving the music bath demands attention. Everyone sitting on the chair, as they bathe in the anthem, must raise both of their arms and keep them up. This gesture is reminiscent of hailing the Emperor as in "hurrah" (*banzai* 万歳) especially prevalent in 1930s Japan. Since the music bath is essentially a control mechanism honoring and benefitting President Miruki, it can be inferred that he represents the ultimately powerful leader—in reality, the Emperor.

As the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education deemed Japan a literal and metaphorical "national body" (*kokutai* 国体) and the Emperor as the

father figure of both the family and nation, the debate on how to build a collective nation continued into modern times.[34] Interestingly, *Cardinal Principles of the National Body* (*Kokutai no hongi* 国体の本義) published by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture in March 1937, one of the most important texts that dictated national policies in decades to come, preceded "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" by a month in publication. In this context, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" can be interpreted as a profound satire that builds itself on literary traditions in utopian fictions and notions of the nation as a body. Utopian fictions have long been analyzed to be political satires when they inevitably turn into dystopian nightmares. Robert Elliot, while unpacking utopia as a genre, elucidates the disillusionment and fear of utopias among writers across the twentieth century.[35] Many works satirize its desire to systematically eliminate social conflict that results in egregious oppression. Unno is no exception to this trend as someone living in an increasingly propagandist society striving to build a collective, manageable nation. While the 1890 Rescript argues that it is the unique and unbroken bloodline that unifies the Emperor and his subjects as a natural national body, the one in "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" is far from being natural and pedigree-based. The satire lies in the fact that the only way for a dictator like President Miruki to achieve an authentically harmonious and loyal relationship between the nation and his subjects is through state-administered technological brainwashing. It seems that the most efficient and effective way to build a collective national consciousness is not via natural, familial, and patrilineal bonding but through intrusive, violent, and dehumanizing scientific interference. Moreover, the music bath is already a physically unpleasant and mentally taxing experience. At the beginning of the story, Dr. Kohaku's assistants Pen and Bara are depicted as suffering while being bathed in the music, with their lips trembling, teeth grinding, and sweat pouring profusely.[36] As Dr. Kohaku reasonably warns the President, such brainwashing would end up killing its targets if used excessively. In this regard, the story not only presents itself as a dystopia modeled on political and ideological sentiments in 1930s Japan, but also a satirical work that ridicules the systematic zealousness and willingness to sacrifice anything for obedience and piety.[37]

Even though Miruki is oppressive and intolerant in many aspects, it would be unfair to claim that resistance is nonexistent. Rebellion mostly happens at the workers' level, particularly among Dr. Kohaku's assistants Bara and Pen, as well as Pen's friend Pōru. More specifically, Pōru spent

a year making a vibration attenuator from fiber that is placed at the bottom of his pants to weaken the effect of the music bath's signals when he sits on the chair and receives transmission from it. Further, driven by his homoerotic affections towards his friend Pen, Pōru also altered his sexual organs. Meanwhile, Pen's wife Bara, inspired by Pōru's self-inflicted surgery, decides to "escape biological restraints on sex" and becomes a man.[38] Bara then develops a sexual attraction towards the feminine artificial human Annette. Transgressive acts such as self-modification, sex change, and homoerotic attraction serve as a powerful statement of the reclamation of bodily autonomy and individuality in a dystopia that abuses bodies as national property and free labor.

Cutting Off the Sexual Binary

Sharalyn Orbaugh, while studying science fiction novels (*kagaku shōsetsu* 科学小説) of the 1920s and 1930s, recognizes a trend of experimentation, in which writers of science novels tend to create fantastical worlds that "frequently featured monstrous embodiments occurring through accident or design, or transgressive desires leading to self-mutilation" as well as existing science and technologies.[39] The body achieves transformations in multiple ways, and this section looks at its relation to sex, sexual activities, and physical changes of sexual organs. Since sexuality and love are often considered "destabilizing" phenomena in dystopian fiction, I argue that the anomalous and self-modified body in Unno's story challenges the stability-thirsty dystopian regime that strives to condition and control it.[40] Such bodily resistance also needs to be problematized, as its subversiveness often engenders pain and suffering, and rarely reaches a happy ending.

Among the three workers, two undergo bodily modifications. One of them is Pōru, a male shoemaker and a close friend of Pen's. In his debut scene, Pōru is seen immersed in a conversation with Pen in a private room. The first line he utters criticizes the music bath: "Isn't this totally absurd?"[41] Noticing Pen's apathy, Pōru gives further vent to his frustration and anger: "Our freedom is in shackles, our individuality disregarded! By nature, we humans want to smoke cigarettes. We want to drink alcohol. And Your Excellency Asshole demanded us to not smoke or drink. Then what is our purpose in life?"[42] He then reveals the secret of his vibration attenuator, designed to protect him against the "man-eating music" (*hitokui ongaku* 人喰い音楽).[43] Technology can be interpreted as an empowering tool through which Pōru, as an oppressed individual, rebels

against the totalitarian nation. Language also holds subversive power, for in Miruki, a society permeated with surveillance, to call President Miruki the Excellency Asshole (*kakka yarō* 閣下野郎) would be condemned as a major crime.[44] Therefore, it is not for no reason that Pen panics and demands that Pōru lower his voice.

The relationship between Pen and Pōru is worth analyzing for the homoerotic moments exhibited. Although it is not clearly stated in the story that Miruki is a nation established on heteronormative ideologies, all couples, including President and Madame Miruki, President Miruki and the female cabinet minister Asari, and Pen and Bara, are heterosexual couples. In an autocracy like Miruki, it is hard to imagine that the President would allow the existence of queerness. When Pen confesses that he intends to divorce Bara because he cannot bear her masculinist astuteness, he tells Pōru, perhaps facetiously, that he only wishes Pōru to be a female companion (*onnatomodachi* 女友達) of his, which implies the potential of Pōru becoming Pen's girlfriend. In response, Pōru is moved, takes off his clothes, and shows Pen his sexually modified body. Astonished, Pen exclaims that he suddenly finds Pōru detestable, possibly not because Pōru has violated the sacredness of his body as a national asset, but because he blurs the boundary between biological sexes, just as the rumors claimed.[45] Cutting off his penis symbolizes his renouncement of his manhood and male privileges in a patriarchal dictatorship, not for freedom but for love. Additionally, it demonstrates that in Pōru's mind, becoming a "woman" through castration is the only way to connect affectionately with Pen, a man. His mindset suggests that there is little room in Miruki for same-sex intimacy. A compelling decision motivated by unconforming sexuality, Pōru's sex transformation renders itself as a subversive act.

While Pen finds Pōru's transitional deed detestable, Bara thinks it ground-breaking.[46] She gives a detailed account of Miruki's control of sex and reproduction, before declaring her pursuit of sexual liberty:

> Why, isn't it splendid? Pōru did a great job. He's too good for shoemaking. Now that you mention it, I've felt for a long time that this is the only path of escape for the oppressed like us. No, it's a rebellion against this government—that eighteen-o'clock music bath that seems to bind our souls with glue and the prohibition of tobacco and alcohol. What kind of freedom do we have left? Thanks to medical developments, we're guaranteed immortality and eternal youth. Death only occurs due to punishment or skillfully executed suicides on certain occasions. Unless specifically ordered by the government, we don't have to bear children, but outside those specific

> governmental orders...If one is sentenced to death, a woman picked by the government gets pregnant via artificial insemination and delivers the baby in the National Reproductive Hospital. In this way, that one spot is refilled. Long ago, sex was for reproduction; now we don't know anything else about sex other than sex for its own sake. In our Miruki, every single shred of freedom is taken away, but only sexual independence and liberty are given to us, but we didn't know how to fully enjoy that freedom till now. Pōru is very intelligent; he is the greatest hero of Miruki. He came up with ways to make sexual desires a sport to unleash humans into a free new world, to escape the restrictions of sex. Now, I feel that it's okay for me to not necessarily stay a woman forever. I can also become a man. Pen, what if I transform from a woman to a man, will you still go after me like you always did?[47]

Her narration provides readers with a closer look at Miruki's means of control, this time of health and sex. Firstly, prohibiting tobacco and alcohol is an efficient means of controlling bodily pleasure and health. As a substitute for such harmful products, everyone in Miruki is given a rubbing doll (*sasuri ningyō* さすり人形) that can be rubbed for entertainment.[48] This indicates that the body is seen as a state asset that can only be entertained in a state-regulated, safe way. Disease and ageing have also been eliminated, ensuring a healthy, forever energetic body that can be exploited continuously for labor. This power mechanism connects to the notion of biopolitics, a concept coined by Michel Foucault (1926-1984) in *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), where he writes that political power creeps into the body and turns it into a machine that can be disciplined through the regulation of births, family, and the population in order to contribute to bodily health and longevity. In essence, as Foucault writes, "It was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body."[49] In this way, Miruki keeps its subjects healthy, docile, and exploitable.

The control Miruki exerts over health and life also focuses heavily on sex and reproduction. Sexuality usually threatens the stability of a dystopia, and is thus either made so frequent and mechanical that it fails to generate love, or is suppressed by authorities through education and propaganda.[50] Miruki seemingly belongs to the first category, wherein sexual desire is allowed to roam free but with no (re)productivity resulting in love, children, or family. Sex is seen as an essentially embodied act, and hence the governing of sex signifies the governing of the body. Again, reproduction remains problematic and oppressive to women, who are still living under reproductive pressures and have no way to escape their fate

once selected by the government. This is precisely what makes Bara's decision significant. She wields the power of technology to transgress a sexual boundary so inflexible and policed by the state to finally break off the sexual binary and go beyond her state-issued reproductive duties. As the body is coopted by state power and valued as a national labor resource, bodily transformation becomes a violent and radical gesture of resistance.

Not Eating the Artificial Body

Japan in the 1920s witnessed a growing fascination with mechanical bodies.[51] Multiple images emerged during the vigorous debates and imaginations of artificial humans (*jinzō ningen* 人造人間) and robots—proletarian, modernist, and eugenicist, to name a few.[52] Their presence in fiction sparks anxiety and fear of the contamination of the biological body, but also opens doors to new perspectives on humanity and life. In Unno's story, Dr. Kohaku's ultimate plan is to replace human soldiers with artificial humans based on his design. Such replacement suggests the utopian desire to homogenize and the dystopian desire to dehumanize. As this section argues, Miruki is anything but a utopian space for artificial humans. Their bodies are created solely as dispensable objects and labor, and they are deemed inferior to the "real" humans.

In "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku," artificial humans, similar to human workers, are demanded to devote their bodies and labor to their designer and owner, this time Dr. Kohaku rather than President Miruki. What makes them advantageous compared to humans is that they do not need extensive care to stay healthy, for they are programmed perfectly. President Miruki pours tens of billions in this research project and calls them "precious research objects to this nation" (*kuni no tame kichō na kenkyūhin* 国のため貴重な研究品).[53] Consequently, their bodies are cherished for their efficiency and controllability. However, even to artificial humans, Miruki remains an unshakeable dystopia. One particular incident that stands out as an example of bodily oppression is in the form of turning the artificial body into food.

When Dr. Kohaku is caught on camera with Madame Miruki (who attempted to seduce him) and is sentenced to death, it is rather his artificial clone who was executed, unbeknownst to President Miruki and the cabinet minister Asari. The two are determined to invade his labs, and there, they find a young, beautiful artificial girl named Annette. Although Annette has skin that glows milky white and a face that is breathtakingly gorgeous, she lacks the ability to think and communicate and can only smile in silence.

President Miruki immediately becomes smitten, which triggers Asari's frenzy to kill Annette. As Bara fights to stop her, Asari screams, "Maybe it's wrong to kill living humans, but what's the problem with killing artificial humans made of machines?"[54] Her claim compels us to ponder the core identity of personhood and humanity: What constitutes a human being? Does the biological, homo sapiens body entitle us to basic human rights and the power to live?

Asari's ideological stance ostensibly sides with biological determinism. Her hostility towards Annette may have stemmed from jealousy or a grander ambition—she needs President Miruki to stay focused on national scientific and economic developments. The next morning after her altercation with Bara, Asari greets President Miruki and offers his pet parrot a piece of raw meat. Impersonating the parrot, Asari claims that the meat is unsavory because it comes from an artificial human. Shocked, President Miruki finds Annette's dismembered mechanical body and her face still smiling. Asari confronts the furious President by condemning his inappropriate and ill-timed infatuation with Annette at a crucial time for the nation.

The act of turning Annette's body into meat for consumption for animals is an act of complete domination over her body and identity. Her flesh is kept in a metal basin placed beside Asari's feet, a position suggesting that to Asari, Annette and all artificial humans are beneath humans, not qualified to be consumed by them. To scholars like Nick Fiddes, eating implies vulnerability as a result of "breaching normal bodily boundaries."[55] However, eating in "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" does not even happen since the parrot drops the flesh immediately. Here, Annette's body is not only controlled and violated in terms of boundary-breaching but also degraded and demeaned. Her flesh *not* being consumed by a bird is a statement of power suggesting that it does not even qualify as edible food for humans and animals and ensuring that she could never enjoy the same rights as humans do. Throughout the story, not a single artificial person is given a channel to voice their opinions or the ability to articulate their feelings through language.[56] Kept silent, they are designed solely to provide labor. The total eradication of voice points to the removal of resistance, this time in a totalitarian manner.

Despite the fact that artificial humans are severely oppressed in every aspect, their existence frees humans—especially women—from reproductive pressures, a perhaps unintended and subversive outcome. Historically speaking, women's reproductivity has been both revered and

exploited as one of the crucial elements in building a pure and strong nation state in the modern era. Both the 1930 *Minzoku eisei hō* (民族衛生法) and the 1940 *Kokumin yūsei hō* (国民優生法) solidified the ideological goal of ensuring a "racially conscious (re)productive continuity."[57] In the late 1930s, the political slogan "Reproduce! Multiply! Children of Science!" (*umeyo fuyaseyo, kagaku no ko* 産めよ増やせよ科学の子) became normalized, reinforcing the government's procreative ideologies. Around the same time, "the childbearing corps" (*kodakara butai* 子宝部隊) referred to women's bodies as a battalion that could produce more soldiers for the empire.[58] Noriko Horiguchi notes:

> By bearing and rearing children, the mother's body transmitted the spirit that descended from the ancestors to the emperor and then to the soldiers. Thus the maternal body functioned as a medium to connect the body of the emperor and the bodies of his people/subjects. The notion of Japanese women as the bodily resource of the empire ultimately led to the explicit concept of Japanese women as the universal womb of the community of human beings.[59]

In Miruki, women and their bodies are responsible and exploited for bearing workers and soldiers, whereas men are liberated from reproductive duties. The hereditary imperial spirit might be already lost as women are fertilized via artificial insemination. However, since selecting and coercing women is completely enforced by the government, it can be argued that each pregnancy carries President Miruki's will and passes it to the next generation. On the other hand, while racial continuity and purity are not as explicitly and heavily emphasized in the story compared to Japan in the 1930s, "standardized humans" (*hyōjun ningen* 標準人間)—born or programmed—are composed of entirely homogeneous, identical, uniform humans. Such fixation on identicality suggests a desire for humans of the same race and blood, mechanically if not biologically. Thus, although Dr. Kohaku's creation of artificial humans potentially frees women from reproductive pressures, it intrinsically inherits elements and ideologies of eugenics from modern Japan, thus satirizing the utopian impulse to create a stable, homogeneous, pure nation under one leader.

Dr. Kohaku is not a stand-alone character in Unno's fictional writings, as Unno is known for perpetuating the trope of mad scientists experimenting with technology on bodies. In his many other stories such as the 1937 *Hae otoko* (蠅男), Unno underlines the "fascist obsession" of harnessing scientific power to create the ultimate perfect human and how problematic it could be.[60] Writer and critic Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke (平

林初之輔, 1892–1931), Unno's contemporary, similarly created such a mad scientist character who is obsessed with artificial reproduction in his 1928 story "*Jinzō ningen*" (人造人間), in which the scientist raises creatures in his lab and causes great sensations and controversies. He has an affair with his female assistant and ends up kidnapping their child only to present him as an ersatz artificial baby at a seminar. In the end, the scientist kills himself out of guilt of lying and kidnapping the child.[61] Although Unno's artificial humans are a hybrid of lab-grown flesh and machine and Hirabayashi's creatures are born via assisted reproductive technology, they share the anxiety about the intrusive and transformative power of technology on biological bodies and natural procreation. The government led by technocrats can now manipulate the natural order at will with the help of technology. This tendency to experiment with such power on bodies, though originating in a utopian desire for a future that can be calculated and controlled by humans and their intelligence, often results in dystopian disasters.

Conclusion: The Very Utopian Impulse of the Machine

Machines do not have utopian impulses. It is the people—often the scientists—who abuse machines' capacities to change and destroy in order to achieve their utopian dreams. At the end of the story, Dr. Kohaku calmly emerges upon heaps of carcasses after a mass music bath overdose administered by President Miruki and Asari. Standing in front of his new army composed of approximately five hundred artificial humans, he directs them to take control over the machines and weaponry. The previous Miruki music bath is abolished and replaced by a new song that celebrates humanity. The nameless narrator ponders whether the new music is played for dead Mirukians, or to transplant human souls into artificial minds, but concludes that it is an elegy for the only survivor—Kohaku the "autocrat" (*sensei* 専制). It would be easy for him to revive the Mirukians, and yet he does not intend to because "after all, a scientist was someone quite indifferent."[62]

What is alarming is that Dr. Kohaku is on his way to becoming the next President Miruki, and Unno makes sure that his readers catch the word "autocrat." Under his new autocracy, artificial humans will remain perfect, disposable soldiers and entirely dependent on him for their survival. They are entirely emotionless, deprived of power and agency, and would never rebel against him. Moreover, compared to the imperfect Mirukians with their anomalies and individualistic subversions, artificial

humans are reduced to be mere numbers, standing in complete unity and homogeneity. Erasure of emotion, sense of belonging, and community ensures their obedience, for there is no singularity without connection.

This vision of a utopia realized via science and technology is fundamentally posthuman in the sense that it reconfigures the meaning of embodiment and humanity. Katharine Hayles details what the posthuman view stands for:

> The posthuman view configures the human beings so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals.[63]

As the boundary between body and the machine blurs, organic bodies are now replaced by an uncanny, controlled merging of artificial meat and machinery. Humanity now denotes perfection, efficiency, and identicality, but also apathy, programming, and conformity—the ultimate incapability to feel and think. Power is exerted on artificial humans at a new level of intensity under the unquestionable iron fist of Dr. Kohaku. This new design begs the critical question: can we call ourselves humans if we eliminate our inefficiency, imperfection, singularity, diversity—the essential elements that made us human in the first place?

In conclusion, Dr. Kohaku's utopia is a mixture of technofetishism and technophobia, which re-evokes the question of ethicality in science without conscience. Again, technology itself remains neutral; it is those who wield its power excessively and unethically that will bring the world to an end. The blanket erasure of biological embodiment and social connections might have opened new doors to the definition of humanity, but it also wipes out what humanity values—diversity and uniqueness, bonds and collective consciousness, imperfections and hopes for a better future. In the context of Japan in the 1930s, Unno continues to write as a supporter of the war and military expansionism while envisioning a future where technological advancement wins wars. "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" could be interpreted as a social blueprint permeated with utopian desires for the perfect society. Ironically, perfection comes at a price. Ramifications of ignoring ethical complexities and the destructiveness of technology are simply too great to bear. They function as a warning sign from Unno to his contemporary society, urging people to be wary of the

tendency to establish a new dystopia in the name of utopian dreams.

NOTES

[1] All translations are mine unless specified. Unno Jūza 海野十三, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku" 十八時の音楽浴, in *Unno Jūza zenshū: daiyonkan jūhachiji no ongakuyoku* 海野十三全集：第四巻 十八時の音楽浴, ed. Komatsu Sakyō 小松左京, and Kida Junichirō 紀田順一郎 (Tokyo: San'ichi shobō, 1989), 196.

[2] Ibid., 226. Unno specifically used the word ユートピア (utopia), explicitly signaling Dr. Kohaku's utopian urges and gesturing towards other critical utopias in literature.

[3] Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and Utopian Imagination* (Methuen, Inc., 1986), 1.

[4] Gregory Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History: A Study of Modern Despotism, Its Antecedents, and Its Literary Diffractions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5.

[5] Susan Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature: The Subversion of Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 182.

[6] Ibid., 183.

[7] Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 189.

[8] Angela Yiu, "A New Map of Hell: Satō Haruo's Dystopian Fiction," *Japan Forum* 21.1 (2009): 17–18.

[9] Sari Kawana, "Mad Scientists and Their Prey: Bioethics, Murder, and Fiction in Interwar Japan," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 31.1 (2005): 90.

[10] Tadashi Nagasawa, "From Infiltration to Diversification: A Brief History of Japanese Science Fiction and Its Asian Context," *Mechademia* 14.1 (2021): 153.

[11] Sharalyn Orbaugh, "The Genealogy of the Cyborg in Japanese Popular Culture" in *World Weavers: Globalization, Science Fiction, and the Cybernetic Revolution*, ed. Kin Yuen Wong, et al. (Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 64.

[12] Sari Kawana, "Science Without Conscience: Unno Jūza and *Tenkō* of Convenience" in *Converting Cultures: Religion, Ideology, and Transformations of Modernity*, ed. Dennis Washburn and A. Kevin Reinhart (Brill, 2007), 184.

[13] Nagasawa, "From Infiltration to Diversification," 153–154.

[14] Orbaugh, "The Genealogy of the Cyborg in Japanese Popular Culture," 65.

[15] Hiromi Mizuno, *Science for the Empire: Scientific Nationalism in Modern Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 157–158.

[16] Ibid., 10.

[17] Ibid., 160.

[18] See Nagasawa, "From Infiltration to Diversification," 153, and Kawana, "Science Without Conscience," 206.

[19] For more on *tenkō*, see Yoshimoto Takaaki's "On *Tenkō*, or Ideological Conversion," trans. Hisaaki Wake, *The Culture of Transition in Modern Japan* 20 (2008): 99-119. *Tenkō* refers to the ideological conversion that many modern writers went through during the 1930s, pressured by the increasingly nationalistic state, to abandon their political beliefs that were not in accordance with the state.

[20] See Mizuno, *Science for the Empire*, 164 and 181.

[21] Kawana, "Science Without Conscience," 183.

[22] Sari Kawana, *The Uses of Literature in Modern Japan: Histories and Cultures of the Book* (London: Bloomsbury Academic), 54–64.

[23] Seth Jacobowitz, "Unno Jūza and the Uses of Science in Prewar Japanese Popular Fiction," in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: Genre, Distribution, Reproduction*, ed. Ken Gelder (Springer, 2016), 159.

[24] Two dystopian works of importance in modern Japanese literature that have attracted attention from scholars writing in English firstly include the Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927) novel *Kappa* (河童, 1927), which is credited by Susan Napier to be the first dystopian novel in modern Japanese literature. See Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 188. The second one is Satō Haruo's 1929 "Nonsharan no kiroku" (のんしゃらんの記録, translated as "A Record of Nonchalant" by Angela Yiu), a story intended to be "an inversion of utopia" betraying the trend of "erotic, grotesque nonsense" (*ero guro nansensu* エログロナンセンス) that dominated the literary landscape in the 1920s. See Yiu, "A New Map of Hell," 54–55.

[25] Unno Jūza 海野十三, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku no sakusha no kotoba" (『十八時の音楽浴』の作者の言葉), in *Unno Jūza zenshū bekkan 1 hyōron nonfikushion* (「海野十三全集　別巻 1　評論・ノンフィクション」), ed. Komatsu Sakyō 小松左京, and Kida Junichirō 紀田順一郎 (Tokyo: San'ichi shobō, 1991). *Aozora Bunko*, https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000160/files/43665_18745.html. Accessed November 11, 2022.

[26] Kawana, *The Uses of Literature in Modern Japan*, 56.

[27] Mizuno, *Science for the Empire*, 11.

[28] Jacobowitz, "Unno Jūza and the Uses of Science," 159.

[29] Unno, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku," 199.

[30] Ibid., 198.

[31] Ibid., 199.

[32] Margaret Atwood, "*The Handmaid's Tale*: A Feminist Dystopia?" (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016), 13.

[33] For more information on dystopian fiction, see Yue Wang, "Bearing the Children of Humankind: Sex and Reproduction in Japanese Women Writers' Dystopian Fiction." (Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2021). https://dx.doi.org/10.14288/1.0396879.

[34] "Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo" (教育ニ関スル勅語), Monbu kagakushō 文部科学省, https://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/others/detail/1317936.htm. Accessed November 11, 2022.

[35] Robert Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

[36] Unno, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku," 197.

[37] Ibid., 201. As Dr. Kohaku's assistant Pen contemplates, "The more excessive and oppressive political rule is, the more powerful and extreme resistance becomes behind the curtains."

[38] Ibid., 208–209.

[39] Orbaugh, "The Genealogy of the Cyborg in Japanese Popular Culture," 64.

[40] Eric Rabkin, "Atavism and Utopia," in *No Place Else: Explorations in Utopian and Dystopian fiction*, ed. Eric S. Rabkin, Martin H. Greenberg, and Joseph D. Olander (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 3.

[41] Unno, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku," 200.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., 201.

[44] Miruki is a heavily surveilled nation. Even by just talking with Pōru, Pen feels complicit as part of the resistance because someone might be listening. There is even surveillance in President Miruki's private bedroom, where his wife Madame Miruki attempts to seduce Dr. Kohaku. The incident is captured live on television and broadcasted throughout Miruki.

[45] After all, Pen does not exhibit much disgust when Pōru allows him to touch his bottom where the vibration attenuator is and tells him it serves as a tool of resisting the music bath.

[46] After observing how Bara protects the feminine artificial human Annette, Pen draws the conclusion that Bara has developed feelings for Annette. Pen remembers Pōru and tells himself, "My buddy the shoemaker Pōru changed his body to a female one, and he must have done that because he wanted to be with me." See Unno, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku," 215. Pen then leaves to have a serious conversation with Pōru. His decision embraces the heteronormative ideology that a man can only be intimate with a "woman," but it also suggests queer possibilities of sexual transitions and fluidity.

[47] Ibid., 208–209.

[48] Ibid., 207.

[49] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley (Pantheon Books, 1978), 143.

[50] Rabkin, "Atavism and Utopia," 3-5. For instance, Madame Miruki uses her body to seduce Dr. Kohaku and invites him to join her to usurp the presidency. Her body and sexuality are objectified with the intention to overthrow the regime. In the end, the body double of Dr. Kohaku seems unmoved, and her plan fails.

[51] Miri Nakamura, *Monstrous Bodies: The Rise of the Uncanny in Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 104.

[52] Ibid., 112.

[53] Unno, "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku," 215.

[54] Ibid., 214.

[55] Nick Fiddes, *Meat: A Natural Symbol* (London: Routledge, 1991), 144.

[56] Language is often used as a tool to silence certain groups in dystopian fiction, as the center controls what type of words can be uttered and written and what cannot. On the other hand, it can also be a liberating vehicle for resistance. Many protagonists keep secret diaries (such as in George Orwell's *1984*, published in 1949) that become the envelope of subversive thoughts. In "Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku," even the most human-like artificial human Annette cannot communicate but only smile seductively and blank-mindedly.

[57] Kazue Harada, *Sexuality, Maternity, and (Re)productive Futures: Women's Speculative Fiction in Contemporary Japan* (Brill, 2022), 5.

[58] Noriko Horiguchi, *Women Adrift: The Literature of Japan's Imperial Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 25.

[59] Ibid., 26.

[60] Kawana, “Mad Scientists and Their Prey,” 91.

[61] Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke 平林初之輔, “Jinzō ningen” (人造人間), *Sekai SF zenshū 34 Nihon no SF (Tanpenshū) Kotenhen* (「世界 SF 全集 34 日本の SF（短篇集）古典篇」), (Tokyo: Hayakawa shobō, 1971).

[62] Unno, “Jūhachiji no ongakuyoku,” 226.

[63] Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3.