

Like Dust in the Wind: A Critical Introduction to Takagi Kyōzō's Manchurian Literature

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What would it mean for the politically-dominant parties in a colonial or semi-colonial context to produce a minor literature? Is it even possible? This article seeks to address these questions in the context of Japanese-language literature in Manchuria and Manchukuo by introducing and analyzing the Manchuria-period writing of Takagi Kyōzō (1903–1987), focusing on his short story *Fūjin* (Dust in the wind), and by bringing to light the literary and political complexities associated with his self-perceived “minority.” The article provides essential background to both Takagi as an individual and the Japanese-language Manchurian literary community in general, including a variety of earlier approaches to Japanese-language Manchurian literature. After establishing Takagi’s literary upbringing by Fukushi Kōjirō (1889–1946) and the regionalism (*chihōshugi*) and “dialect poetry” (*hōgenshi*) movements of the 1920s and 30s, the article uses close reading of his literary and autobiographical work to argue that—despite his position of privilege on the continent as an ethnic Japanese national—Takagi both lacked agency as a historical subject and was well aware of his resulting complicated status in Manchuria. He demonstrated this understanding through the deployment of plant, animal, and other natural images, often literally de-humanizing his Japanese protagonists by reforming them into aspects of the continental landscape. The article concludes by gesturing toward resonances between Takagi’s writing and the place of his Japanese contemporaries in Manchuria, as well as his representation of non-Japanese subjects in his writing.

Keywords: Minor literature, Takagi Kyōzō, regional literature, Manchuria, Manchukuo, Japanese imperialism, place, Japanese literature, settler-colonial literature

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Literature of place is sometimes described in Japanese as *dochaku* 土着 (attached to the land) or *tsuchi kusai* 土臭い (stinking of the earth). This equivalency between the literal, physical dirt of a geographic *space* and the sociocultural elements informing lived *place* is thematized throughout the works of Takagi Kyōzō 高木恭造 (1903–1987) and features prominently in the title of his most critically successful short story, *Fūjin* 風塵 (Dust in the wind, 1940). Set in Manchuria 満洲 (Jp. Manshū), it features the heavily autobiographical protagonist Saruwatari Heisuke 猿渡平助 being tossed about by the winds of historical circumstance, lifted from his provincial home in northeastern Honshu and ultimately deposited within the quasi-colonial state of Manchukuo 満洲国 (Jp. Manshūkoku), reversing the trajectory of the yellow loess seasonally blown from northeastern China all the way to the Japanese archipelago.

Takagi's story is not about grand historical narrative and the formation of the Japanese puppet state in northeastern China, but rather about the formation of himself as a subject of imperial Japan. This perspective is crystallized through Saruwatari's reaction to an embarrassing encounter with the local police concerning his son's truancy and social delinquency. In defense of his failures as a parent, Saruwatari declares that, "It's the environment where we live [that has malformed my son], and we can't change it," before reflecting more honestly that, "I suppose this environment has had an effect on me, too."¹ This effect derives from the specificity of Takagi's experiences of continental Asia: in a sense, the Japanese Takagi lived in "Manshū," whereas a Chinese migrant laborer might be better described as a resident of "Manzhou," which would differ from a Western perspective on "Manchuria." It is essential to remain cognizant that this article leans heavily on the perspective of the Japanese settler-colonist. Place can be experienced in vastly different ways depending on the intersectionality of one's identity, and the language of place—such as place names—can be used to reflect those differences.²

Takagi's literature thus offers us an opportunity to explore the reciprocal relation between writer and place in a semi-colonial context—a critical approach which has been lacking in Takagi studies despite the clear importance of the theme of place throughout his career. In the following pages, I argue that Takagi was not up to the literary task of exceeding his circumstances, that he fundamentally viewed himself as lacking historical agency, that he occupied the ranks of so many so-called "minor writers"—and, crucially, that his minority sprang in a large part from the land that he so precariously occupied. His writing offers an important and complicated perspective on Japanese settler-colonialism more broadly as well: that of the settler-colonist himself.³ In her seminal study of settler-colonists in Korea, Jun Uchida describes such people as "liminal," as existing in an "in-between space from the perspective of the colonizer . . . [an] ambivalent, interstitial, and marginal condition of being 'in between' (or being 'neither nor'): in between Japan and Korea, state and society, subjects and citizens, colony and metropole."⁴ This liminality

1 Takagi 1983a, p. 84.

2 In the following pages I default to convention, largely using Chinese place names, and offer the Japanese readings only referentially.

3 I use the male pronoun here to emphasize both the strongly patriarchal nature of early settler-colonialism in Japanese Manchuria, wherein advance units would often be entirely comprised of men, as well as Takagi's misogynistic tendency to marginalize female characters throughout his writing.

4 Uchida 2011b, p. 25, n. 62. Throughout this article, I use "metropole" in reference to the seat of imperial Japanese power—the parent state—located on the Japanese archipelago, and describe Manchukuo, the satellite state, and other dominated territories as "colonial." While Japan never officially annexed Manchuria, and

applied to settler colonists across the board in Manchuria, many of whom were forced to abandon their homes in rural Japan by a combination of economic hardship and government initiative, while simultaneously benefiting in the colonies from an elevated status guaranteed by their “Japaneseness.”⁵ Indeed, the settler-colonists were more often than not “subalterns of a modernizing nation” who became “agents of foreign domination.”⁶

Of course, the innumerable abuses of this Japanese system—which included exploitive economic practice, kidnapping and sexual slavery, medical experimentation by the infamous Unit 731 and others, and population control via the intentional spread of illicit drugs, in addition to outright violence and warfare—were overwhelmingly directed at non-Japanese. However, many Japanese living within that system recognized that they suffered and benefited from it in complicated ways. It is important to consider the various facets of the liminality of these “brokers of empires” who mediated between alien institutional power and domestic life. I argue that petit-bourgeois Japanese writers in Manchuria like Takagi often perceived themselves as occupying a minority position within the literary and political field. However, this minority status hinged on a metropole-centric worldview, which must additionally be relativized vis-à-vis Japanese privilege in Manchuria and Manchukuo.

In the following pages, I shall introduce the literary works of Takagi Kyōzō as an early case study in a project exploring this complicated liminality of Japanese-language literature in Manchuria.⁷ I begin by introducing “Dust in the Wind,” Takagi’s important biographical context, and the general status of Japanese-language literature in Manchuria, including approaches to it in recent scholarship. Next, I offer the concept of minor literature as a useful tool for understanding the writing of Takagi, as well as many of his contemporaries. Takagi’s minority status as a writer links to his perception of having a fundamental lack of historical agency, which he expressed both explicitly and via the use of nature metaphors. The invocation of such imagery reinforces the connections between identity and environment. Takagi was not a modern subject—liberated from nature—but was irrevocably shaped by place, both in terms of his immediate physical surroundings and the history, culture, politics, and language of the Japanese and Manchurian landscapes he inhabited. Finally, I bring the article to a close by stepping back from the close reading of Takagi to reemphasize the liminal positions of Japanese writers in Manchuria, and how this complicated their literary production.

Manchukuo technically remained a sovereign state, Japan did maintain a position of political and military dominance. Furthermore, even in the more conventional cases of the colonization of Taiwan and Korea, the distinction between “metropole” (*naichi*) and “colonial territory” (*gaichi*), definitions of the Japanese “national land” (*kokudo*) in official discourse, and imaginings of the categories of subject and citizen were often ambiguous and subject to change; see McDonald 2017, pp. 1–7.

5 Driscoll details the tragic circumstances of rural Japanese men who were forced to turn to human trafficking (“peripheral pimps”) and the sexual slaves they forcibly exported to Manchuria and elsewhere; see Driscoll 2010, pp. 57–80. For a more general discussion of Japanese immigration to Manchuria, see Young 1998, especially chapter 8. For discussion specifically of village-division-based immigration plans, whereby entire villages would be divided into units for relocation as settler-colonists, see Kawamura 1990, pp. 28–55. For contemporary literary depictions, see Wada 1964; Yuasa 2017.

6 Uchida 2011b, p. 36.

7 For an alternative perspective, on an ethnic Korean writer seeking the political capital of Japaneseness, see Solomon 2022.

“Dust in the Wind”: A Bleak Tale of Japanese Manchuria

“Dust in the Wind” first appeared in 1940 in the pages of the coterie journal *Sakubun* 作文 (Compositions), one of the most established literary journals in Dalian 大連 (Jp. Dairen), Manchuria. The story draws on heavily autobiographical elements, including a Japanese protagonist who practices medicine while living with his second (in this case, common-law) wife in Manchuria around the time of the Manchurian Incident. The central character’s name is Saruwatari Heisuke, and the story begins with him reluctantly lowering the sign advertising his unlicensed clinic due to increased pressure from the military police. With his primary means of subsistence gone, Saruwatari will turn to some petty money lending and black-market morphine sales. However, throughout the story, his only reliable income is the rent he receives from two of the three families to which he lets his house.

The three families are represented by their Japanese patriarchs: Makino Torazō 牧野虎三, Samejima 鮫島, and Oana 小穴. Torazō is a decadent with a classical education who was run out of Japan after disgracing his first wife’s family and ruining their fortune. He settles down with a Chinese woman and ekes out a living selling insurance in Manchuria.⁸ Samejima specializes in manufacturing firecrackers, and his most remarkable feature is a face scarred through a mishap with gunpowder. Oana raises guinea pigs in the apartment for medical research at a local university; he has features and a personality similar to the timid creatures. He is also the meekest of the four men; indeed, his whole family lives in the closet while the rodents get free reign of the hall.

Saruwatari’s family is fractured. He has abandoned his first wife and child in the metropole, and resides in Manchuria with a common-law wife named Kiku キク with whom he absconded on his way through Korea 朝鮮 (Jp. Chōsen). They have two children: Shōzō 正造, a middle-school-aged boy, and Yaeko 八重子, a maturing young woman. Both children reflect Saruwatari’s lack of authority over the world around him: Shōzō has fallen in with a band of young (non-Japanese) delinquents, and Yaeko has willfully left home to pursue a career as a professional dancer, being hired out by clients for western-style social dancing in a seedy dance hall. Kiku, on the other hand, is portrayed as a stingy, nagging, ineffectual consumptive. Her husband calls her the *shirobuta* 白豚, or “White Sow,” in reference to her corpulent appearance and suffocating mannerisms.⁹

The story of “Dust in the Wind” is ultimately one of the submission of a protagonist unwilling to fight the forces of history and nature piled up against him. The narrative is divided into six episodes: the night Saruwatari shuts his clinic, a flashback to a disastrous drinking party he joins with the three other men, Saruwatari being summoned by the police to collect his truant son Shōzō, an emasculating visit with his daughter Yaeko at the dance hall, a calamitous Chinese New Year’s during which Saruwatari’s apartment is accidentally

8 Like Saruwatari and Kiku, Makino is likely not formally married to the Chinese woman he lives with. In the text, she is merely referred to as “his woman” 彼の女 (*kare no onna*).

9 A theme running through several of Takagi’s works involves the protagonist remarrying in less than fortunate circumstances, sometimes to a non-Japanese or uneducated woman. This is perhaps a shadow of the tension created by the place of Takagi’s first wife, Fuji, in his literary legacy: his magnum opus *Marumero* takes the form of her “requiem.” After repatriating to *naichi* in the postwar period, his modest literary fame began to grow based on this initial publication. The constant presence of *Marumero*, a work dedicated to his deceased first wife, apparently caused a certain amount of friction with Nobori, his second wife and mother of his children; see Takagi 2005, p. 182.

burned down, and the denouement, in which he bids farewell to Torazō and sets off for distant northern Manchuria.

The climax of the story comes the night before Chinese New Year. Samejima and Oana have both been enjoying great prosperity in their respective professions, and the former has even taken on Manchu laborers to cope with increased demand for his product. (The increased demand for guinea pigs also gestures toward the expansion of Japanese scientific activities in the region following the founding of Manchukuo.) During the middle of the night, however, there is an explosion in his apartment. Samejima is seriously injured, the guinea pigs are baked alive, and half of Saruwatari's property is reduced to cinders.

The final pages of the tale recount Saruwatari's reluctance to abandon his property and move on to new ventures. One day, Yaeko arrives with a propitious offer: a job as a doctor in distant northern Manchuria with a decent salary and no questions regarding his qualifications. Saruwatari nonchalantly accepts the offer before giving a curt farewell to Makino, whom he leaves in an offhanded way with his standard diagnosis of syphilis: in this case, fatal.

Placing Takagi Kyōzō in Manchuria

The little scholarship that exists on Takagi glosses over the nearly two decades he lived in Japan's quasi-colony on the continent. The focus has been on psychoanalyzing his early-period "dialect works," or drawing on his early and postwar writing as examples of mainstream modernist experiments with poetry.¹⁰ The latter are admirable for beginning to open up the work of Takagi and his regionalist-writer peers to broader contextual concerns, and it is my intent to continue in that vein by broaching two more categorical issues: those of Takagi as a writer of Manchuria, and of Takagi as minor writer. In the process, I intend to offer an argument through practice, via a performative reading of "Dust in the Wind," for the translation, reading, and academic appreciation of so-called minor literature.¹¹ Yet it is imperative to first understand Takagi's early influences and origins as a writer to appreciate this minority.

Takagi was born to a family of physicians in 1903 in Aomori City, located at the center point of the prefecture's northern coast and on the threshold between the Tsugaru and Nanbu regions. He left his native Aomori Prefecture to seek greater fortunes in Tokyo in 1927; however, unable to settle properly due to a nationwide recession, and prodded by his wife Fuji, he took off in short order in December 1928 for the most enticing frontier of the Japanese empire, Manchuria.¹² There, he would earn a medical degree and work as a physician while penning several poetry collections and long and short fiction. After repatriation, he established a small clinic near his hometown and continued his literary activities on the side.

10 See Yamada 1979; Shinozaki 1995; Sakaguchi 2007; Arito 2006.

11 There are English translations of Takagi's work by James Kirkup and James Westerhoven. The former first introduced Takagi's poetry to English-reading audiences in the late 1960s, emphasizing his modernist tendencies, before publishing a book-length hodge-podge of Takagi's poetry and prose works; the latter has recently published some of Takagi's short stories in an anthology of translations and scholarship related to Aomori. See Takagi 1997, "Grannies' Lodge" and "Yasaburō's House" in Westerhoven 2009.

12 Shinozaki 1995, p. 11.

Takagi Kyōzō's current literary recognition stems almost exclusively from his work as a writer of place. Under the mentorship of the poet Fukushi Kōjirō 福士幸次郎 (1889–1946), he pioneered the so-called *hōgen shi undō* 方言詩運動 (dialect poetry movement) of Aomori Prefecture. Takagi penned his first book, *Tsugaru hōgen shishū: Marumero* 津軽方言詩集: まるめろ (Marmello: Poems in Tsugaru dialect, 1931), entirely in his esoteric local vernacular, and it remains the most well-known work in that genre. Yet, Takagi wrote many Manchuria-based works in standardized Japanese which also reflect Fukushi's teachings.

Fukushi was a guiding force in the early Shōwa-period literary community in the Tsugaru region. The goal of Fukushi's regionalism, heavily inspired by French nationalist Maurice Barres, was to reorient Japanese subjects toward the place (or environment) which defined them and encourage them toward its cultivation.¹³ This system of thought was anti-modern and anti-cosmopolitan, nationalistic, and perhaps even fascistic. Its message was clear: humans are the product of their environment, and it is incumbent upon Japanese subjects to embrace their localized differences and act as stewards to the land and its traditions in order to cultivate for their nation a deep cultural history resilient in the face of imposing foreign values and modernization.¹⁴ It seems ironic therefore that Takagi's best-known work of regional literature, *Marmello*, was written during his most itinerant period, as he moved between areas of Tsugaru, Tokyo, and Manchuria. On the other hand, Takagi's literary activities during that period might better be thought of as participating in the construction of Tsugaru-as-place and a Tsugaru-based identity, regardless of his geographical location.

By 1928, Takagi was out of a job and struggling to survive in Tokyo. Inspired by utopic descriptions of life with the South Manchuria Railroad Company (SMR; Mantetsu 満鉄), which boasted modern amenities such as steam heating in every apartment, he decided to move to the continent in December of that year. Thus, his emigration predated the founding of the “independent” state of Manchukuo and mass Japanese-government-sponsored agricultural emigration. Yet, he was still unable to secure gainful employment, and turned to the SMR for sponsorship to attend Manchuria Medical University. His wife, Fuji, passed away as a charity patient in the university hospital in December 1929 from military tuberculosis, as recorded in the emotionally gripping short story “Nikutai no zu” 肉体の図 (An anatomical diagram).¹⁵ Takagi married another Tsugaru native named Nobori soon after and worked in Manchuria as a physician and optometrist until Japan's surrender and the mass repatriation of 1946. Nobori would give birth to five of their six children on the continent. Throughout this time, Takagi faced a series of harrowing experiences: social upheaval, anti-Japanese persecution by Chinese police, outright violence, and ultimately forced repatriation from Manchukuo following Japan's defeat.¹⁶

13 This concept of regionalism is regularly referred to by Fukushi's corpus as *kankyō* 環境, often also rendered as “environment” in English, as in my translation of the “Dust in the Wind” quotation above. Less commonly, Fukushi referred to “local color” (*chihōshoku* 地方色 / *kyōdoshoku* 郷土色), “locality” (*chihōsei* 地方性) and the “local” (*kyōdo* 郷土), as well as “indigeneity” (*dochaku* 土着).

14 For a more detailed examination of Fukushi's philosophy, see Kawanishi 1986; Solomon 2017, chapter 3.

15 Takagi 1983a, pp. 38–51.

16 One concrete episode is described in his autobiography in a chapter entitled “24 Hours in a Basement,” in which, immediately following Japanese defeat, the Chinese army shot at and ultimately destroyed the house he and his family were hiding in; see Takagi 1990, pp. 159–161. Anti-Japanese (*han'nichi* 反日) bias appears in multiple poems and short stories from his Manchuria period, with Chinese police conducting

Takagi's generalized experiences of place imbricated with more personal episodes contributed to forming his character and literature throughout his life. These included deaths in his family, social pressure and stigma related to his idiosyncratic lifestyle, and other family traumas. These compounded with the sociocultural, environmental, religious, ethnic, and other elements which constituted a milieu for the literature not only of Takagi, but of his peers as well.

A Place for Japanese-Language Literature in Manchuria

Takagi published his first major work, *Marmello*, in 1931, about two years after settling in southern Manchuria. The pace of his literary activities subsequently increased; he published consistently until the last year of the war, and actively participated in the fledgling Manchuria literary establishment. This community was a complex organism whose members at times supported or critiqued the colonial project from a variety of perspectives, and at others were largely apolitical and deeply committed to aesthetic goals.

The early literary community was concentrated within the southern SMR zone, particularly in the port city of Dalian and in the modern southern city of Mukden 奉天 (Ch. Fengtian, Jp. Hōten), subsequent site of the Manchurian Incident. The cutting-edge poetry journal *A* 亜 (1924–1927) was succeeded by *Sakubun*, a coterie journal started by Aoki Minoru 青木実 (1909–1981) in 1932, as representative of this “Dalian Ideology.”¹⁷ Following Aoki's example, Takagi and other contributors emphasized realism, their works often containing depictions of everyday life, (non-Japanese) laborers, and victims of history and government policy. They also engaged in criticism of governmental slogans like “Kingly Way” (Jp. *ōdō* 王道, Ch. *wangdao*) and “Harmony among the five races” (Jp. *gozoku kyōwa* 五族協和, Ch. *wuzu xiehe*), the former referring to the supposed Confucian values of Manchukuo, and the latter signaling the ideal of Japanese, Manchurian, Han Chinese, Korean, and Mongolian people peacefully cohabitating in the region. By the founding of Manchukuo, this cohort of writers had been living on the continent for a decade or more and had already developed strong attachments to the place.¹⁸

The establishment of Manchukuo and its capital in Xinjing 新京 (Jp. Shinkyō) in northern-central Manchuria in 1933 brought a new wave of intellectuals and literati from the metropole to the continent, and a new style of “Xinjing ideology” literature. Annika Culver argues that recanted leftist artists migrated there to demonstrate their political conversion, to seek the formation of a proletarian-run society, or to pen

raids and invasive searches, Chinese figures threatening the poet and his family with weapons, and so forth. See the poetry collection *Wa ga chinkonka* (My own personal requiem) in Takagi 1983b, pp. 11–51.

17 *A* is now best remembered as the spiritual ancestor of *Shi to shiron* 詩と詩論 (Poetry and poetics), in which Anzai Fuyue 安西冬衛 (1898–1965), one of Japan's leading avant-garde poets, also participated. It has been described as the “convergence of modernist poetics from both Japan's colony and its mainland”; Peng 2010, p. 197. *Sakubun* become a mainstay Manchuria publication until the end of the war.

18 Kawamura 1998, pp. 64–73. The aspect of identification—describing colonial spaces as “home”—is introduced by Jun Uchida as a problem of “sentiment.” It is for her a reminder that the perpetrators of colonialism, many of whom were either born on the continent or forcefully removed from their homes on the Japanese archipelago due to food shortages, were “emotional beings” subject to complex networks of power beyond their control. Uchida 2011a, pp. 706–708.

“unofficial propaganda” for the state.¹⁹ Proletarian and avant-garde artists pointed to local underdevelopment as the rationale for Japanese guidance.²⁰ The literature created in Xinjing, represented by the journal *Manshū rōman* 滿洲浪漫 (Manchurian romance) founded by Kitamura Kenjirō 北村謙次郎 (1904–1982) in 1938, has been broadly characterized as reflecting such a nationalistic consciousness.²¹ The journal’s eponymous orientation toward romanticism was amenable to the state’s aims: by eschewing the realism of *Sakubun*, these writers created more eulogistic studies of Japanese pioneers and soldiers heroically defeating lawless bandits, or narratives emphasizing ethnic harmony between the five races.²² The journal also platformed other forms of *kokusaku bungaku* 国策文学 (national policy literature) and articles on cultural development. In Kitamura’s words, this was a “productive literature” for a “productive state.”²³

Then, in 1941, the Manchurian state sought to dictate the politically acceptable bounds of literary production via the *Geibun shidō yōkō* 芸文指導要綱 (Prospectus for the guidance of arts and culture). Publications like *Sakubun* and *Manshū shijin* 滿洲詩人 (Manchurian poets) reprinted the *Geibun shidō yōkō* in their own pages, or otherwise parroted similar ideals in manifestos of their own.²⁴ Both *Sakubun* and *Manshū rōman* were thus theoretically reformulated into pro-Manchukuo mouthpieces, now run by the major metropolitan publishers Bungei Shunjū 文藝春秋 and Shinchōsha 新潮社, respectively. The pages of these magazines became littered with patriotic verse and have been described as having the character of a “total war.” Writers from the metropole like Niwa Fumio 丹羽文雄 (1904–2005) and Ibuse Masuji 井伏鱒二 (1898–1993) began to be promoted over Manchuria-based literati in their pages. During the final years of the war, Kawabata Yasunari 川端康成 (1899–1972), Satō Haruo 佐藤春夫 (1892–1964), Mushanokōji Saneatsu 武者小路実篤 (1885–1976), Hayashi Fusao 林房雄 (1903–1975), and other big-name metropolitan writers made regular contributions to these Manchurian magazines, suggesting a lack of division between “Japan” and “Manchuria.”²⁵

Of course, not all writers in Manchuria were Japanese. Works by Chinese and White Russian writers can be found translated in the pages of *Manshū rōman*, and Manchuria accommodated a community of Chinese-language writers more broadly as well. As Norman Smith’s study of female Chinese writers of the period demonstrates, some were able to thrive by virtue of their liminal positions as partial collaborators. Women in particular were able to fly under the radar of state surveillance and produce modernist literature of resistance inspired by the May Fourth Movement.²⁶ These writers all occupied the same literary field as Japanese writers, although direct intercourse between the two groups was largely

19 Culver 2013, pp. 2, 33. Not only petit-bourgeois artists, but many rural farmers and other proletarians faced political pressure to emigrate to Manchuria—both to demonstrate loyalty to the imperial project, and also to alleviate the issue of food shortages on the archipelago; see, for example, Wu 2019.

20 Culver 2013, p. 74.

21 The strictness of this north-south division has been credibly challenged. See Kono 2010, pp. 131–132.

22 Nishida 2002, p. 20.

23 Cited in Kawamura 1998, pp. 43–47.

24 However, some scholars suggest that these proclamations amounted to little more than lip service; see Ino 2004, p. 63.

25 Nishihara et al. 2004. The unclear division between the metropole and nascent colony, with roots as far back as the Treaty of Portsmouth, has been discussed in depth in O’Dwyer 2015.

26 Smith 2007, chapter 3.

hampered by linguistic and social divisions. Like most of his peers, Takagi surely consumed the few translated works which appeared in *Manshū rōman*, *Geibun*, and elsewhere, but lacked the language skills to engage with them further.²⁷

Given that context, what framework can we effectively apply to the diverse Japanese-language literary field of Manchuria in general, and that of Takagi specifically? There are a plethora of schematic interpretations of continental literature: some divide by author status (traveler, settler-colonist, repatriate), by publication venue (southern versus northern), or by relation to metropolitan writing (derivative versus original).²⁸ Nishimura Shin'ichirō 西村真一郎 offered nuanced contemporary observations in the pages of *Manshū rōman* itself, for example, delineating *shuryū* 主流 (mainstream) writers, who followed metropolitan Japanese writers; *kensetsu ha* 建設派 (constructionist) writers, who were politically motivated to build a new literature for Manchukuo; and *genjitsu ha* 現実派 (realist) writers who generally ignored mainland Japanese influence and deployed a proletarian-literature style realism.²⁹

Trying to place Takagi Kyōzō within these schematizations reveals some of their imprecision. Takagi was a settler-colonist, but an urban petite bourgeoisie, as reflected in characters like Saruwatari, rather than a pioneering adventurer or farmer. He was most strongly affiliated with the SMR-sponsored groups in the south, but also lived and published for several years in Xinjing in the north. In addition to dialect literature, he also wrote modernist prose and poetry inspired by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892–1927) and Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) that does not align with southern realism. Bungei Shunjū and Shinchōsha's forays onto the continent further complicated the Manchurian literary landscape, as they brought with them the political dynamics of metropole versus periphery. The *Geibun shidō yōkō* and increased involvement of metropolitan writers certainly squeezed the space afforded their continental compatriots. Takagi's 1943 publication of an uncharacteristically patriotic untitled poem commemorating the tenth anniversary of the founding of Manchukuo, discussed in more detail below, perhaps speaks to these shifting forces in the literary field.³⁰ The literary community of the Japanese metropole was older and wielded more cultural capital than that of its colonies, although even into the 1940s Manchurian writers enjoyed significantly greater access to paper and resources for publishing, as well as more freedom to produce non-propagandistic materials, when compared with those in the homeland.³¹

A New Approach: Minor Literature

This imposition of the metropolitan authority suggests the possibility of an alternative framing of the Manchurian literary community through an Oedipalistic struggle, one which sought to establish itself—a self-conscious offspring of the Japanese metropolitan

27 This was a widespread issue, as few Japanese writers were proficient in Chinese. Even Kitamura Kenjirō is forced to admit in his ostensibly nation-building tale "An Environment" (*Aru kankyō*), which describes a roundtable meeting between Japanese and Chinese literati for the purpose of debating the development of Manchukuoan literature, that language poses a massive barrier between the two communities. The solution, however, is apparently for Chinese writers to learn Japanese, not the other way around. Kitamura 2002, p. 106.

28 Kawamura 1990, pp. 23–25; Nishihara et al. 2004; Xiong 2014, p. 296.

29 Kono 2010, pp. 131–137; Nishimura 2002.

30 Cited in Ino 2005, p. 144.

31 Kawamura 1998, pp. 41–42.

community—through its assertion of independence from the authoritative center. On the other hand, propagandistic and “national myth” writing *within* Manchuria, including for example the “national foundation literature” of *Manshū rōman*, reproduced dominant political discourse. It also bears remembering that Japanese-language writers—Japanese immigrant-settlers in particular—held positions of economic, cultural, and political privilege throughout the Manchurian state, making them the de facto majority when compared with the many Chinese, Mongolians, Koreans, and others who inhabited the same region. This complicated matrix of power located Takagi Kyōzō and others in a liminal space between the metropole and the subaltern.

I propose that much Japanese-language literature in Manchuria, and Takagi’s writing in particular, can be fruitfully understood as a kind of minor literature. Minor literature has been defined in many ways, but here I primarily borrow Bloom’s concept of Oedipal minority.³² For Harold Bloom, the personal and psychological aspect of minor literature occurs in the experience of the author himself. His main thesis is clearly stated upfront: “Poetic history . . . is held to be indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong [major] poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves.”³³ Writers aspire to some kind of poetic ideal (in his view, Shakespeare) but achieve only a creative “misprision” of it. Misprision—misreading—is their necessarily failed attempt to “translate” this aesthetic ideal into their own forms, an enactment of Oedipal rebellion against one’s literary forefathers. The inevitable family resemblance is the cause of an Oedipal-like anxiety.³⁴ The self-consciousness of the major (“strong”) writer of their place within the literary tradition and resultant anxiety are what distinguishes them from the minor (“weak”) writer, who is either imitative or lacks the artistic ambition to pursue their ideal. Bloom thus posits that literature is in a continual tug-of-war between past and present, between strong and weak writers.

How does this inform Takagi’s minority? Takagi’s oeuvre is uneven, split between tonally and technically disparate regionalist dialect literature and modernist Manchuria works. A true, “strong” Bloomian Oedipal majority would demand that Takagi attempt to additionally kill his (literary) fathers, as it were, through misprision. Yet Takagi himself seems to have been in a continual dependency on proxy father figures through much of his adult life and was unabashed in his borrowing from major writers before him.

Takagi had a poor relationship with his biological father. Young Takagi’s initial refusal to attend medical school was a refusal of his father. This moment represents Takagi’s one honest act of rebellion. After leaving his natal home, however, Takagi attached himself to the poet Fukushi Kōjirō, who offered paternal guidance and even material and spiritual support during his times of need. When he moved to Manchuria, Takagi took to the locally renowned poet Anzai Fuyue 安西冬衛 (1898–1965), mimicking his prose poetry style and dedicating his second poetry collection *Wa ga chinkonka* わが鎮魂歌 (My own personal requiem) to him. His mimicry was so great that Takagi eventually earned the moniker Sumōru Anzai スモール・アンザイ (small Anzai) from fellow Tsugaru native

32 For a broad introduction to different theorizations of minor literature, see Renza 1984, pp. 1–42.

33 Bloom 1997, p. 5.

34 For a simplified overview, see Bloom 1997, pp. 14–16.

Ichinohe Kenzō 一戸謙三 (1899–1979) and others.³⁵ His next poetic foray borrowed from Ichinohe by mimicking his use of alliterative quatrains 聯 (*ren*), while its title, *Karasu no sue* 鴉の裔 (Descendent of the raven), is likely an homage to Edgar Allen Poe.³⁶ Takagi was an unabashed fan of Poe and Akutagawa. His prose, on the other hand, also rarely deviated from a straightforward combination of southern Manchuria realism and Fukushi's regionalism, and was almost exclusively written in a quasi-autobiographical mode. In his professional persona as an optometrist, Takagi was furthermore beholden to his medical mentor, Funaishi Shin'ichi, who held his hand through all of Takagi's research and academic writing while in Manchuria. Takagi developed such a dedicated aversion to subjective action—what I interpret as his Bloomian minority—that he took the title of his autobiography, *Maboroshi no chō* 幻の蝶 (Phantom butterfly), from a childhood episode in which a hypnotist tricked him into chasing after an illusory insect. He uses this example of being hypnotized in conjunction with several others to conclude that

From [these experiences] it became crystal clear that I was particularly susceptible to being hypnotized. I made a firm promise in my heart never to tell a soul about this. If, for example, a strange beauty appeared before me and said “You are my lapdog. Bark for me!” I couldn't guarantee that I would not immediately fly to her side. I can't tell anyone about this because it's so frightening. But, conversely, if some respected leader would stand before me and say “Do this thing: I know you can do it!” I would be able to do just about anything. That's what I felt upon this realization.³⁷

It is this sense of passivity and self-abasement which characterizes Takagi's as a minor literature, never succeeding in Bloom's Oedipal rebellion, maintaining its status as a marginal art.

One would be hard pressed to characterize Takagi as a politically major writer. He rarely acted as a mouthpiece for either Manchuria or Japanese state ideology, and therefore could not easily be described as a regular producer of informal propaganda. While he did spend several years (1933–1937) in Xinjing, he spent the majority of his continental sojourn in southern Manchuria and most of his writing appeared in *Sakubun*. There are two notable exceptions to this rule of apoliticality, but given their publication late in the war, they would seem to suggest Takagi's caving in to environmental pressures, such as the promulgation of the *Geibun shidō yōkō*, mentioned above, and gradual depletion of valuable materials for publishing as the war drew on. There is no evidence that Takagi's late shift in message was a subjective decision to raise the banner of the Manchurian Empire, and his most nationalistic poem—the second exception discussed below—does not appear in his collected works.³⁸

35 Takagi 1990, p. 130.

36 His third book-length poetry collection; see Takagi 1983b, pp. 55–83.

37 Takagi 1990, p. 115.

38 Several of Takagi's poems, and at least one other short story, portray a Japanese protagonist suffering some indignity at the hands of Chinese police, and other works portray continental Chinese in a somewhat disparaging light. The two works I discuss in this section explicitly raise issues of Manchukuo (Japanese) institutional power, whereas the others focus on the Japanese protagonist as individualized victims. Although one may read both as examples of Manchurian state propaganda, I view them as categorically divided between what Okada Hideki and others have called “Xinjing ideology” and “Dalian ideology.” The former was often characterized by a Romantic aesthetic deployed to bolster support for Manchukuo and Japanese imperial interests, whereas the latter focused on individualism and realism, sometimes in critique of the state. Notably,

The first exception is the short story *Nogusa* 野草 (Wildflowers) which was his last major continental publication, appearing in the pages of *Geibun* in 1944.³⁹ The story stands out, both for adopting the voice of a female narrator and for aping romantic portrayals of Manchurian pioneers battling native bandits. The contemporary setting takes a back seat, however, to the narrator's reconstruction of Tsugaru festival culture. This results in a work somewhat in the vein of Takagi's earliest regional literature, pushing the open propaganda into the background. Thus, the portrayal of a heroic samurai-like figure battling lawlessness in the Manchuria frontier—with a sword—feels more like lip service paid to contemporary political forces than a full-throated cry of patriotism. The nationalistic discourse instead serves as the literal background to Takagi's primary focus on his home region of Tsugaru, itself a politically and economically marginalized province on the Japanese archipelago. By minimizing the broader issue of national security and focusing instead on Tsugaru festival culture, Takagi may be appealing to his marginalized place of origin, an internal periphery of the metropole.

The other significant exception to Takagi's general apoliticality is a 1943 untitled poem which does not appear in his collected works, written in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the founding of Manchukuo. It is notable that both "Wildflowers" and this poem were published after the announcement of the *Prospectus for the Guidance of Arts and Culture* enforcing a stricter official literary policy:

あれから十年／そのあひだに私は／四人の子の父親になつてゐる
 子供等はみな若木のやうに健やかだ／丁度この国のあらたな勢のやうに
 もう十年たつたら／この国はもつと立派になるだらう／そして私は植物のやうに老いるだらう
 更に十年後には／私はもはやこの地上に居ないだらう／その時は私の子供らよ／私の墓場の上で歌ふがよい

あゝ 父なるニッポン
 あゝ 母なるマンシユウ

歲月一建国十周年を迎へて

Ten years have passed . . . / In that time, I / have become a father of four
 The children are all vigorous in body, like little saplings / just like this nation's
 resurgent strength
 When ten years more have passed / this nation shall grow even greater / and I shall
 grow old in the manner of a plant
 Ten years beyond that / I shall no longer walk upon the earth / At that time, my
 dearest children / stand upon my grave and sing!

Oh, Father *Nippon!*
 Oh, Mother *Manchuria!*

Written for the tenth anniversary of the national foundation⁴⁰

Takagi's postwar autobiography and other prose writings do tend to paint the continental Chinese in a warmer light, in an apparent attempt at reparations for his Japanese-centric writings from the war period (Okada 2014).

³⁹ Takagi 1983a, pp. 193–204.

⁴⁰ Ino suggests that this work was aimed at the Japanese propaganda bureau in the *naichi* and intended to be used as an "inroad" from the Manchuria literary establishment into the Japanese homeland literary community. Cited in Ino 2005, p. 144.

This work not only concludes with an emphatic cry to Takagi's now doubled ancestral lands, but also reproduces the trope of the hybrid sons of Japan literally transforming the continental landscape—here, by taking the form of trees growing into a sturdy forest.

On the other hand, the poet himself shall “grow old in the manner of a plant”: he will wither and die and disappear from the earth leaving only his progeny and his grave. These metaphors firmly establish a connection between the Japanese settler-colonists and the land itself, even if the first generation of transplants will not enjoy the grand future imagined for its progeny and the nation. This poem thus contains a shadow of hesitation, doubt, or perhaps even regret about the trajectory of Takagi's life. Indeed, the fatalistic reference to his own death aligns with a particular resignation—a consciousness of a lack of historical agency—uniting much of his oeuvre.

Environment Versus Agency

“Dust in the Wind” is thematically resonant with Takagi's other works, particularly from his Manchuria period. He articulates frustration through his protagonist Saruwatari's references to “place” or *kankyō* (environment), a keyword borrowed from Fukushi Kōjirō. For Fukushi, place contained a mutable spirit through which the individual's identity was mediated. Inheriting and cultivating this spirit were seen as moral acts through which communal meaning is established via a deep diachronic connection to a geographic location. However, the environment also constructs the individual, just as Saruwatari bemoans his condition and that of his son. Ever the faithful student, Takagi tended to foreground issues of place and environment in his literature, particularly concerning the dialectical nature of their relationship with identity.⁴¹ The transplantation of Saruwatari/Takagi to the continent entailed the loss of their home place (northern Tōhoku/Tsugaru) and a radical encounter with a completely new quality of placeness, resulting in a crisis of identity.

The conflation of place and Takagi's inability or unwillingness to confront it actively is crystallized in his use of often continentally-specific nature metaphors. The title of the short story “Dust in the Wind” evokes an image of the yellow sands which originate on the continent and are carried on the wind to the Japanese archipelago, primarily between the months of March and May. More explicit reference to this phenomenon is made in his poems from *Wa ga chinkonka*, including a poem entitled *Ōdo (resu)* 黄土(レス) (Loess), which is written with the kanji for “yellow earth,” 黄土. It is a double entendre, simultaneously referring to the yellow sands of Manchuria, and the mythological underworld.⁴² Other works in the collection make similar references, including *Yo wa koko ni ari* 予は此処にあり (Here, I am), which is set amid a sandstorm; and *Haru no saiten* 春の祭典 (Spring festival), which references “yellow-sand plastered” Mongolian riders.⁴³ The collection also includes a poem entitled *Fūjin: Are wa futatabi kaeranai* 風塵: あれは再び帰らない (Dust in the wind: Gone forever), again, featuring sandstorms and a Mongolian pony.⁴⁴ And there are *Sokō*

41 For more details, see Solomon 2019.

42 The kanji for “yellow earth” are glossed in Takagi's collected works with the katakana *renu* レス. This is most likely an erroneous transcription of the similar-looking *resu* レス, a vernacularization of the English word “loess.” Takagi 1983b, p. 23.

43 Takagi 1983b, pp. 27, 28.

44 Takagi 1983b, p. 32.

廻行 (Rewind) and “Bridal March,” in which the characters are surrounded, respectively, by an oppressive “storm of dust as yellow as the sun” and “yellow dust cloud.”⁴⁵

Each deployment of continental imagery here firmly locates the poet in a desolate continental wasteland, populated with various characters who are enveloped and battered by forces of nature. Indeed, the sandstorm has the paradoxical function of both marking the place as northern Manchuria and of disturbing the solidity and identity of the place *as* place. He describes it in one poem thus: “The only redeeming aspect of this sandstorm is the tonal shades, the light and shadow. That’s because the photographs I appear in will just be definitive proof of the geographic location, a transitory location.”⁴⁶ Such descriptions of Manchuria as an oceanic non-place place—unbounded, undefined, and unsettled—can be found throughout the Manchukuo period and repatriation literature.⁴⁷

Yet, the dust-in-wind image is not merely a trick used to signal geographic location or create an oppressive atmosphere. The main force of the image is its allusion to the powerlessness of the individual in the face of grand historical, political, and economic forces, as well as in the face of the “spirit” of place. Borrowing from Michael Bourdaghs, Van Compernelle describes Manchuria as a “dumping ground” coded as “failure in the homeland.”⁴⁸ Saruwatari, and Takagi himself, were early-Shōwa “failures,” unable to find stability or success in the metropole, and were cast off into the dustbin of the colonial space.⁴⁹ The characters in “Dust in the Wind” are tossed around at the mercy of forces greater than themselves, an image Takagi reinforces in the figure of “dried leaves” blown about by the wind. The meaning of this image is spelled out directly in his heavily autobiographical 1968 novel *Ochiba no mure* 落葉の群れ (A heap of dried leaves), which concludes immediately after the protagonist’s post-defeat repatriation with the words:

That is when it happened. A whirlwind kicked up in the middle of a vacant lot, and the fallen, dry leaves were whipped up to the sky all at once. . . . Aren’t the Japanese today exactly like that heap of leaves, all tossed up into the sky? In the end, we’ll all be scattered about, doubtless never to meet face-to-face ever again. Not Dr. Kataoka . . . not the woman from the kitchen . . .⁵⁰

45 The title “Bridal March” is written in English; see Takagi 1983b, pp. 28, 31.

46 Takagi 1983b, p. 27.

47 For examples of painting Manchuria as a “blank paper” 白紙 (*hakushi*), see Tucker 2005. This trope appears more subtly in literature, such as in the short stories of Aoki Minoru like “Tekkei nikki” 鉄警日記 (Diary of a railway patrolman), “Hōten tsūshin” 奉天通信 (Message from Hōten), “Ajia nite” アジアにて (It happened in Asia), “Manshū nite” 満洲にて (It happened in Manchuria), “Kōya no naka ni” 曠野の中に (In the steppes), and the trope occupies nearly half of the Abe Kōbō novel *Kemonotachi wa kokyō o mezasu* けものたちは故郷をめざす (Beasts head for home). Sometimes the emptiness of the continent works in favor of imperial occupational desires, but in these works it tends to be a more oppressive depiction of isolation, sometimes of a lone Japanese stranded among continental neighbors; see Aoki 1980; Abe 1957.

48 Van Compernelle 2016, p. 22.

49 Mass immigration to Manchuria was an effective method for Japan to deal with undesirable populations starving in the countryside. This phenomenon is not unique to Japan: for example, wartime England originally used the American colonies as a “sink hole” into which to cast vagrants, idlers, and criminals. See Isenberg 2016, pp. 2–3.

50 Takagi 1983a, p. 317.

The same metaphor is deployed in “Dust in the Wind” where Takagi describes Saruwatari and his tenants as “these four men, swept up together like dried leaves in the wind . . .” The vicissitudes of life are portrayed by the capricious movement of wind and dust and leaves; not the subjective actions of an active agent of history. Takagi expresses this lack of agency more literally in a later work entitled “Pachinko Sensei,” in which the titular character offers the insight that, “Well, son—I think all of us, mankind, we are kind of like pachinko balls shot out into the world. Go bouncing off that [telephone] pole, slip right on by the jackpot, and, in the end, every single one drops down into the grave . . . this is just how it is for all men.”⁵¹ In other words, the course of one’s life is random, beyond one’s control, and completely determined by the environmental circumstances into which one has been born.

This non-subjective perspective is realized again and again across Takagi’s oeuvre in the deliberate use of plant and animal images, reinforcing the feeling of subordination of subjects to their environment. Some poetic examples include his untitled poem commemorating the foundation of the Manchurian state above and in the poems “Nenrin” 年輪 (tree rings) and “Jumoku” 樹木 (timber), in each of which the poet becomes a tree.⁵² Mobilizations of animal identification by juxtaposition can be observed in the main cast of the short story “Tarubagan” 獺兒 (Siberian marmot), a team of plague experts named “Kameyama” 龜山 (turtle-mountain), “Inukai” 犬養 (dog-rearer), and “Dr. Igari” 猪狩 (boar-hunter) who find their lives shaped by their relationship to the local fauna.⁵³

Like “Siberian Marmot,” the main characters in “Dust in the Wind” are strongly identified with animals. The characters of Saruwatari’s name suggest “monkey overseas” and his nickname of “Tanuki” (raccoon dog) becomes a major point of discussion in the story. His suffocating wife Kiku is nicknamed “the White Sow”; Samejima is as shrewd and dangerous as a “shark” (*same*); and Oana and his family have taken on the appearance and mannerisms of the guinea pigs they raise, going so far as to live in the closet while the rodents get free rein of the hall. Makino Torazō, known to Kiku simply as “Tiger” (*tora* トラ) is ultimately branded “Sea Pineapple” (*hoya* 海鞘) by Saruwatari in reaction to the “Tanuki” slur. In short, Takagi deliberately deployed animals and animal language in his literature when depicting characters lacking human agency, reinforcing the notion that these settler-colonists should be seen as simply passive occupants of nature shaped by their environments.

The two exceptions in “Dust in the Wind” are worthy of note. Yaeko, whose name contains the kanji 八重, meaning multilayered, demonstrates the most successful adaptation to the world of Manchuria. She earns a good living in a quintessentially modern setting with enough connections to procure new employment for her father by the end of the tale. Saruwatari views Yaeko as morally compromised, describing the dance hall, her place of employment, as a den of sin even as he gazes lecherously over her revealing costume. Whereas Saruwatari may characterize his daughter—the “slattern”—as degraded by her environment, it is apparent to the reader that she has deftly taken advantage of her place as a young Japanese woman in Manchuria. She breaks her father’s trust by consorting with a young Chinese lover, but in doing so hews closer to the cosmopolitan ideals of Manchukuo than Saruwatari, who has at best a transactional relationship with the local non-Japanese

51 Takagi 1983a, p. 212.

52 Takagi 1983b, pp. 11, 14.

53 Takagi 1983a, pp. 14–22.

people. Yaeko rejects her father's offer to be sold into servitude as a traditional Japanese geisha while begging for the opportunity to work in the modern, Westernized context of social dance. She gains social and financial independence beyond her father's limited means, but only through trading away traditional Japanese values and distancing herself further from metropolitan culture—neither of which she has direct experience with.

On the other hand, Shōzō, his name ironically bearing the literal meaning of “made correctly,” represents Saruwatari's complete failure as a patriarch in the face of overwhelming forces of “place.” Rather than being “made correctly” by his father, Shōzō has been fashioned by the multi-ethnic neighborhoods of South Manchuria, and in the process became a delinquent in his father's eyes. Saruwatari states that it is the negative influence of the environment which has overwhelmed his son's domestic upbringing, resulting in truancy and petty crime. However, Saruwatari himself is no paragon of virtue: he is introduced as having lost one job for keeping false ledgers and being run out of a Japanese neighborhood for cheating customers in another, both soon after arriving in Manchuria. As with Yaeko's dalliance with the Chinese boy, Shōzō's easy association with non-Japanese locals reflects his grounding in the place of Manchuria; not a character flaw, but a natural effect of the context of his upbringing. In this light, Saruwatari's criticisms of his children seem to speak more of his own dissatisfaction with his inability to adapt to the new environment, characterized by modernity and multi-ethnic cosmopolitanism, than the failures of his offspring. This distinction is baked into the very names of the characters themselves.

But animal images in “Dust in the Wind” are mobilized on a level more sophisticated than simply labeling which characters are given agency within their context or not. They are also used to allude to half-baked states of transformation, a physical correlative for Saruwatari and Makino's liminality. This theme is most overtly demonstrated in the teasing exchange of nicknames between the “Tanuki” Saruwatari and the “Sea Pineapple” Makino. The former is first branded a tanuki because of his wizened countenance, contrasting with the surprisingly vital appearance of the latter. But the tanuki is considered magical in Japanese folklore and has the power of transmutation. A true tanuki should be able to adapt to any context through cleverly applying his supernatural ability of disguise. Yet, such a flexible agent of change is not the tanuki of “Dust in the Wind.” Instead, Saruwatari views himself as the creature from the folktale “Bunpuku chagama” 分福茶釜 (Overflowing teapot of luck), in which the tanuki's magical transformation is inexplicably stalled, resulting in a hybrid magical teapot with legs and a tail. The conclusion of this folktale is usually portrayed as auspicious, but in actuality the novelty comes from the tanuki's impairment, its inability to complete its transformation. Saruwatari spontaneously introduces this metaphor on the last page of the story to describe the revelation of his true nature as a physician:

[Makino:] “Good for you. From now on, you'll be a practicing tanuki on the up-and-up.”

[Saruwatari:] “Just like the tanuki-in-disguise fairytale . . . once my tail is out, there's no going back to hiding. It's just as they say, you know—learn a trade, and you'll never starve.”⁵⁴

54 Takagi 1983a, p. 87.

Saruwatari's true nature is discovered, lost, and ultimately rediscovered as the result of a random succession of events. Furthermore, it is completely beyond his ability to change himself, to adapt, or to evolve to meet the challenges of his environment.

The case of Makino is even more straightforward. A sea pineapple is a remarkably ugly ventricular aquatic organism native to Aomori Prefecture. While Saruwatari initially intends to insult his tenant's appearance, Makino deftly turns the attack around, claiming that it is the perfect nickname: first, because it is the perfect dish for a tippler like himself; and second, because in its larval stage it moves around freely before metamorphosing into a plantlike ventricle which permanently adheres to a rocky surface. This mirror's Makino's life, as he traveled freely before ultimately becoming stuck in Manchuria. His cavalier interpretation takes a darker turn in the closing lines of the short story, as he lies immobilized by syphilis, literally transforming into an unsightly lump of flesh—like some Aomori fish unable to adapt to foreign waters. Thus, just like Saruwatari's tanuki, Makino's animal nickname simultaneously represents metamorphosis and stasis, evolution and decadence.

Via their nicknames, Makino and Saruwatari are both juxtaposed with strange transforming animals which ironically find themselves caught in stasis. At first glance, both men may seem to reify the continental adventurer archetype, escaping their native place, abandoning their failed pasts, and seeking new futures abroad—chameleons adapting to new contexts, or perhaps the true metamorphosis of caterpillar-turned-butterfly. However, in reality, they do not achieve any more freedom, evolution, or creativity. Instead, they are caught in a double bind: on the one hand, their identities formed by their upbringing in their homeland—in this example, expressed through the essentialized nicknames derived from Japanese folklore and Aomori marine life—and, on the other, restrained by the contemporary environment of Manchuria and its historical context. The conclusion is that there is no agency, only a liminal, animal-like existence.

Conclusion: Takagi in Manchuria

Takagi Kyōzō's "Dust in the Wind" is characteristic of both his regionalist Tsugaru and Manchurian literature, combining place-consciousness with a liminal point of view. The story expresses, via themes of environment and place, the lack of agency felt by the writing-subject settler-colonist. However, it does not shrink away from acknowledging the opposing side of the settler-colonists' existence: in other words, their relative dominance over their continental neighbors. Saruwatari's exclusion from the SMR zone thrusts him into a "contact zone," a "social [space] where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."⁵⁵ There he provides crucial medical services and financial opportunity through his money-lending business to the neighborhood while illegitimately occupying a Manchurian home, exploiting "coolie" laborers through the sale of morphine, and belittling the local Peking opera. In short, Saruwatari represents Takagi's conflicted status, both marginalized vis-à-vis the metropole while also exerting privilege over his Asian subalterns.

Race and ethnicity therefore appear in Takagi's Manchuria-period works in an often self-contradictory and self-abasing expression of the writer's experiences. "Dust in the

55 Pratt 2008, p. 7.

Wind” contains derisive representations of Korean thugs, Manchu degenerates, obnoxious Peking Opera performers, and “coolie” drug addicts. Kiku, portrayed as lazy and ugly in both appearance and character, is implied to be a Korean-born Japanese, and therefore perhaps of a different social or even ethnic stock from her indifferent, often callous husband. Makino, who shares Saruwatari’s very hometown, is an example of a Japanese who has “gone native,” taken a Chinese lover, and suffers in parallel the most ignoble physical and moral degeneration. Furthermore, his treatment of “his [Chinese] woman” is terribly abusive and exploitive—a pithy critical summation of the relationship between imperial Japan and Manchuria. Elsewhere, particularly through the depiction of Chinese authority in the poetry collection *Wa ga chinkonka* and the short story “Hōtenjō fukin” 奉天城附近 (Near Fengtian castle), Takagi’s writing is colored by a persecution complex reflecting contemporary anti-Japanese sentiment (*han’nichi; hainichi*). Following the conventions of the time, he utilizes the racist term “*Shinajin*” (Chinaman) and does not distinguish between Han Chinese and “Manchus” (*Manjin*).⁵⁶ Only in retrospect, in his postwar autobiography, *Phantom Butterfly*, does Takagi reflect on how well the locals treated the Japanese during their occupation, a sentiment which also generally comes through in their depiction in his postwar novel *A Heap of Dried Leaves*.

Takagi’s representation of race and ethnicity is clearly problematic in many respects. Still, the natural and dehumanizing animal metaphors in “Dust in the Wind” are applied to Japanese people arrested in non-subjective states, with non-Japanese characters relegated to the background.⁵⁷ Overall, Takagi faithfully reproduces a Japanese-centric literary vision while alternately portraying Japanese subjects along a spectrum of victim to oppressor. And it is no benign thing that Saruwatari conflates the problems he observes in all the characters around him with a poisonous environment (one which he presumes exerts similar forces on its non-Japanese inhabitants).

My reading above thus attempts to grapple with Takagi’s literature as presenting a perspective on the complex relationship between Japanese settler-colonist and Manchuria as place. There is no central ideology driving his work, although there is a through-line of submission to both environment and the father figures in his biography. I argue that it is an example of Oedipal minority, which via either success or failure serves to reaffirm a binary top-down relation between center and periphery, metropole and colonial space. The naturalistic metaphors of leaves and dust arbitrarily blown about strengthen this interpretation by suggesting a non-subjective or animal-like lack of historical agency among Japanese settler-colonists. They are moved between places, and wherever they go, they are passively shaped by both their origins and their new environment. Takagi’s protagonists are not heroes, but victims. Yet simultaneously there is a constant tacit acknowledgement of the inequities between the Japanese and continental people of Manchuria. In its

56 The Japanese government took census data on people referred to as “Manjin,” which included both Han Chinese and ethnic Manchus. However, various terms for “Manchu” and the less-common category of “Manchukuoan” were both complicated and internally-inconsistent (Manchukuoan was more a racialized category than political nationality). Manchu was sometimes a political category related to the Banner system, sometimes ethnic, sometimes cultural. Thus, there is no way to be sure if Takagi uses “Manjin” in reference to racial or other characteristics; or, if he merely did not distinguish between Chinese-language speakers (Tamanoi 2000, pp. 253–255; Shao 2011).

57 With the notable exception of “Near Fengtian Castle,” in which both Chinese authorities and Europeans emasculate the Japanese protagonist, this applies to his work as a whole.

self-contradiction, Takagi's narrativization of his experience in Manchuria recalls what Jun Uchida calls the "sentimental" narrative of settler colonialism, something infinitely more complex and tortuous than the simple straight-forward stories relayed via state propaganda machines.⁵⁸

Following the realist school of southern Manchuria and the regionalist teachings of Fukushi Kōjirō, Takagi wrote observational works based on personal experiences. These writings never articulated a holistic political critique: he rarely strayed into the territory of blatant state propaganda or an avant-garde misprision of his literary forebears. Takagi's experience within and across the imperial system began in his home region of Tsugaru on the periphery of Japan's domestic front and culminated in a turbulent forced repatriation at the conclusion of the war. This is the context in which the Japanese settler-colonist occupied a dual space of oppressor-oppressed, perpetrator and victim. The contradiction between recognizing Takagi's wartime indiscretions along with his lack of agency—all refracted through the lens of place—is the significance of colonial minor literature, and actively reading Takagi's and other Manchuria writers' works, as I have just begun to do here, is one step toward attaining a better understanding of this experience.

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