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Remembering and (Re)storing War Memories: The Postwar Fiction of Shimao Toshio

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The tension between remembering and narrating war memories has been a significant theme in the discussion of postwar Japanese literature because it is closely tied to the broader issue of historical consciousness (*rekishi ninshiki mondai*) in postwar Japan. This article focuses on the postwar fiction of Shimao Toshio (1917–1986), whose work was shaped by his *tokkōtai* (special attack force) experience in the Asia-Pacific War. The article argues that the memory of imperial Japan forms an overarching thematic thread in Shimao's postwar fiction. The author engaged with this theme by employing Christian motifs in his work. While his early fiction tends to mask the memory of imperial Japan's violence, his later novels, culminating with his best-known fictional work, *Shi no toge* (*The Sting of Death*, 1977), uses such imagery to deal with the traumatic past, exploring the possibility of a restorative approach in dealing with past failures and their consequences. In this way, Shimao goes beyond the dynamics of victim-victimizer, providing a key illustration of the ways in which the traumatic memory of modern Japan can be transformed into a resource for the regeneration of society.

Keywords: Asia-Pacific War, historical consciousness, *tokkōtai*, Amami Islands, *Shi no toge*, Christian motifs, counternarratives

This article examines the postwar fiction of the war veteran and author, Shimao Toshio 島尾敏雄 (1917–1986). It analyzes how his novels engage with issues of historical consciousness, and their narration of the unresolved tension between Japan's imperialistic past and its postwar present.[1] The article focuses on three novels, written between 1948 and 1977: *Shima no hate* 島の果て (*The Farthest Edge of the Islands*, 1948), *Sono natsu no ima wa* その夏の今は (*This Time That Summer*, 1967), and *Shi no toge* 死の棘 (*The Sting of Death*, 1977, initially published serially 1960–1976). These draw on the author's experiences of the Asia-Pacific War (1937–1945), during which Shimao was a first lieutenant in the Eighteenth *Shin'yōtai* 第十八震洋隊 (Suicide Boat Unit) of the Imperial Japanese Navy (hereafter, IJN)

1 Whether they consider it a complex, national phenomenon or historical culture, scholars have generally argued that the idea of Japan as a victim in the Asia-Pacific War lies deeply embedded in the Japanese consciousness. For detailed discussions on this topic, see Dower 2012, p. 130; Orr 2001, p. 3; and Igarashi 2000, p. 167. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's own.

stationed in the Amami Islands between December 1944 and September 1945.[2] Collectively, these three novels form a counternarrative to the dominant discourses of the war in postwar Japan. I argue that Shimao's fiction represents an important critical perspective on the reconstruction of Japan's identity in the aftermath of the war. His imaginative vision transcends normative ways of seeing postwar Japan as either victim or perpetrator in the quest for an alternative means to face this complicated past. The article asserts that Shimao's works narrate postwar remembrance and (re)store memories of violence in a way that differs from mainstream narratives.

Shimao was not the only veteran author who undercut the victim–victimizer dichotomy that structured postwar Japan's understanding of the war. Tensions between remembering and narrating war memories are central to discourses on postwar Japanese literature, and navigating between experiences of war and processes of national reconstruction formed a recurrent motif in postwar Japanese fiction. Ōshiro Tatsuhiro 大城立裕 (1925–2020) and his novella, *Kakuteru pātī* カクテル・パーティー (*The Cocktail Party*, 1967) are particularly relevant here, as the protagonist's determination to fight against injustice is tied to his perceived duty to repent for his wrongdoings in China.[3] Describing the struggle of an Imperial Army veteran from Okinawa to charge a U.S. serviceman for the rape of his daughter, the novella defies prevailing notions of Okinawans as victims of U.S. hegemony, highlighting guilt and responsibility for imperial Japan's actions in China: "You were the one who opened my eyes, Mr. Sun. The justice I seek for my daughter is the same you would want for the victims of the Japanese occupation in China."[4] The protagonist rejects superficial reconciliation, represented by an international cocktail party, and thus complicates their self-positioning within the victim–victimizer frame.[5]

While his *tokkō* 特攻 mission ended without a battle, Shimao felt guilty about his wartime role—ordering subordinates to their deaths and, worse, exploiting the Amami Islands as a first lieutenant of the IJN. Shimao described his wartime experiences on the islands as a confrontation between Japan's imperialistic tendencies and the historically marginalized status of the Amami Islands, through which the nature of Japan's imperial past could be brought to light.[6] Using the motif of sin, however, he also explicated how the nation's imperial past could be used to reestablish relationships with its victims.[7] Shimao's encounter with the Christian faith after the war played a significant role in his understanding of the possibilities for rejuvenation. In effect, he oscillated between his Japanese self and Christian identity—between recognizing his role in imperial Japan's

2 The *shin'yō* units were part of the *tokkōtai* 特攻隊 (special attack forces) of the IJN responsible for ambush attacks with wooden torpedo boats.

3 For further analysis on the issue of the victim-victimizer dichotomy in *The Cocktail Party*, see Kano 1987, pp. 358–369; Okamoto 1996, pp. 128–135.

4 Ōshiro 1989, p. 78.

5 In addition to *The Cocktail Party*, veteran authors using the imperial past to challenge postwar Japan's victim-victimizer dichotomy include Kojima Nobuo 小島信夫 (1915–2006), Ōoka Shōhei 大岡昇平 (1909–1988), Takeda Taijun 武田泰淳 (1912–1976), and Yoshida Mitsuru 吉田満 (1923–1979). For an analysis of these works, see Stahl 2016, Murakami 2020.

6 For details on the history of modern Japan in this regard, see Smits 1999, pp. 143–149; Miyashita 1999, pp. 179–181.

7 Miura Ayako 三浦綾子 (1922–1999) was another writer of Christian persuasion whose use of the motif of sin is inextricably linked with her sense of guilt for being part of the Japanese imperial project, as exemplified by her debut novel, *Hyōten* 氷点 (*Freezing Point*, 1964); for details, see Takano 2001, pp. 131–170.

national project, and his necessity as a believer to gain redemption for his crimes.[8] The core question in this article is how Shimao's doubly ambiguous identity shapes the counternarrative he developed through his work.

In Amami Ōshima: A Doubly Ambiguous Identity

Shimao's experiences of the Amami Islands 奄美諸島—his ten months as a first lieutenant in the Eighteenth *Shin'yō* unit in Kakeromajima 加計呂麻島 and his nearly twenty years as a resident of Amami Ōshima 奄美大島 after the war—fueled his writing. Earlier, he had published short stories and poems in magazines (such as *Kōro* こおろ, 1939–1944) during his school days. In the year of his graduation from Kyushu Imperial University, Shimao collected these early writings and privately published *Yōnenki* 幼年記 (An account of childhood, 1943). A month after its publication, he volunteered for service in the navy and was later assigned to the *shin'yō* unit.[9] Stationed on Kakeromajima, where the islanders (including his future wife, Miho ミホ) lionized him as a defender against invaders, he continued writing in his spare time. A story dedicated to Miho was later published as *Hamabe no uta* はまべのうた (Song of the seashore, 1946). Following the rapid demobilization in early September 1945, Shimao returned to Kobe 神戸 and started a magazine, *Kōyō* 光耀 (1946–1947), with his friends. He married Miho in March 1946. Despite this seemingly smooth transition to postwar life, Shimao left mainland Japan within a decade, with his literary career on the rocks and his wife suffering from chronic depression.[10]

By the time Shimao moved back to Amami Ōshima in October 1955, the Amami Islands had reverted to Japanese control after a period of U.S. occupation, and were experiencing the rapid reconstruction of industry and infrastructure. As he witnessed cultural erosion amid political upheaval, Shimao began to ponder the situation of the marginalized and disadvantaged Amami Islands, whose plight he had contributed to during the war. In a 1957 newspaper article, Shimao wrote that mainlanders characterized the islands as poor due to their ignorance, and that "the days when I came to this island with military authority for their security (?) cannot be an exception."[11] His desire to investigate the tangled history of Amami culture and politics was strengthened further when he revisited Kuji Bay 久慈湾, where his *shin'yō* unit base camp had been located. Shimao painfully recalled his days as a first lieutenant when one of his companions showed him pictures of *shinyō* boats in a book:

> "See, aren't you nostalgic?" Puzzled by his words, I was suddenly shocked to see the picture on the page. It was as if time were playing backward. Oh, isn't it a picture of

8 Other Christian-influenced authors who tried to reconcile their past experiences with their Christian beliefs include Endō Shūsaku 遠藤周作 (1923–1996), see Williams 2003.

9 As a third-generation preparatory student of the IJN, Shimao became a second lieutenant during his military training in May 1944, and was appointed as a commanding officer of the *shin'yō* unit in July. He arrived on the Amami Islands with one hundred eighty-three subordinates in November 1944 and was promoted to first lieutenant in December. In September 1945, he was promoted to captain of the navy and demobilized with his *shin'yō* unit at Sasebo 佐世保. For details about Shimao's military history, see Shimao 2000.

10 For a detailed account of Shimao's return to Kobe and his early postwar years, see Kakehashi 2016, particularly chapters 3 and 4.

11 STZ 16, p. 52, question mark in original.

> the *Maruyon-tei* ○四艇 [a *shin'yō* boat], ambiguously printed like evidence of a violent crime?[12]

Suzuki Naoko 鈴木直子 argues that ambiguity and guilt characterized Shimao's second experience of the Amami Islands, thus exacerbating the uncertainty about his postwar identity. These were also essential for his *Yaponeshia* ヤポネシア writings, and the so-called "sick wife" stories (*byōsai mono* 病妻もの, many later published as *The Sting of Death*), penned between the 1960s and the early 1970s.[13] For Shimao, the sojourn in the Amami Islands meant a return to the islands' history of marginalization during the post-Meiji transition toward modernity and imperialism. His difficult position in that history permeates many of his essays on the history and culture of the Amami Islands and is explored through Shimao's *tokkōtai* protagonists, who are forced to acknowledge their role by islanders who witness their actions. Shimao's representation of wartime experiences can thus be framed as part of his broader artistic concern to facilitate reflections on the unresolved tension between Japan's imperial past and its legacy in the postwar era.

Shimao's use of Christian motifs is also inherently critical. Several of Shimao's works published prior to his return to the Amami Islands, including *Shutsu kotōki* 出孤島記 (Departure from a lonely island, 1949) and *Yoru no nioi* 夜の匂い (The fragrance of the night, 1952), were set in Kakeromajima and drew to varying degrees upon his *tokkōtai* experience. Later novels, such as *Ware fukaki fuchi yori* われ深きふちより (*Out of the Depths*, 1955), *Sugikoshi* 過ぎ越し (Passover, 1965), and *The Sting of Death* employed Christian motifs to symbolically reinscribe his war experiences within postwar daily life. The remembrance of war and violence in Shimao's post-Amami writings was, therefore, an attempt to recreate the war and its influence on the postwar landscape through his religious outlook.

Critics have argued that Shimao's use of Christian motifs confirms his spiritual growth following his conversion to Catholicism in 1956.[14] However, a closer look at Shimao's account of Catholicism suggests that the use of Christian images and metaphors in his work is complex and multifaceted. In his essay, *Shima no katorikku* 島のカトリック (Catholicism in the islands, 1958), he analyzes the rapid spread of Catholicism in Amami Ōshima from the Meiji period to his time in terms of the islands' political dilemma—of how to engage with an external, imperial power. He holds that the initial proliferation of Catholicism reflected the attempts by indigenous political leaders to restore the islanders' pride and dignity, which had been eroded by colonial distortions to their cultural heritage. Shimao's description of the oppressive military censorship imposed on the Catholic community in the Amami Islands during the war supports this thesis:

> Reserved soldiers confiscated objects such as the cross, rosaries, and sacred paintings from believers' homes and burned them … suspicion arose even among believers. The

12 STZ 16, p. 60.
13 Suzuki 2005, pp. 166–167.
14 See Horibe 1992, pp. 79–84; Okuno 2002, pp. 57–58; and Ishii 2020, pp. 189–190.

> decline of faith became widespread among all the islands. Items related to Catholicism were removed from the believers' homes.[15]

Shimao's focus here is not on his knowledge of Catholic tradition in the islands or his spiritual journey with the Catholic community but the legacy of imperial Japan's management of the religious landscape of the islands. His encounter with Catholicism appears integral to his exploration of the marginalized history of the region, and echoes the sense of ambiguity and guilt that he felt at Kuji Bay.

In later interviews, Shimao mentioned another type of complexity that had come into play after his conversion to Catholicism: a perceived contradiction between his Japanese self and his Christian identity. While he remained notably laconic about his faith and its impact on his writing throughout his career, he openly revealed his sense of alienation from Japanese society as a Christian. In a 1970 interview, he described this dilemma of faith in terms of a historical discontinuity between the Catholic Church and the Japanese historical-cultural context.[16] The perceived gulf between the two remained at the forefront of his concerns. "I am always haunted," said Shimao in another talk in 1973, "by a sense of betrayal: by a feeling that being a believer is incongruent with Japanese society and its history."[17] As he deliberated on this issue, however, Shimao gradually incorporated his ambivalent feelings into his writing as a critical part of his literary creativity.

For many critics, Shimao's use of Christian motifs affirms his personal beliefs. Some even consider their use as an indication of the author's Christian perspective on existential issues, such as interpersonal relations involving responsibility and sin. Takeda Tomoju 武田友寿 was vociferous in this respect, and argued that Shimao's thoughts on sin were linked to his literary consideration of the victim-victimizer dynamics. For Takeda, Shimao sought to overcome the problematic nature of this binary by acknowledging that each side committed transgressions, and endeavored to offer his vision of the salvation of the self:

> In Shimao's case, this fundamental act [providing his vision of salvation] can itself be regarded as religious and metaphysical, and he was able to continue it despite being in the depths of despair [*fukaki fuchi* 深きふち]. In this sense, he is a writer sensitive to the eternal despair felt by human beings, beyond the category of postwar literature.[18]

Nevertheless, the theme of sin and Shimao's concern with the relationship of the victim-victimizer seem to be inextricably woven into his reflections on the unresolved issue of Japan's imperial past. More specifically, sin relates to his ambivalent position on this historical terrain. My aim here is not to interpret Shimao's use of Christian motifs as a manifestation of his spiritual journey or to universalize it as a representation of existential issues. I wish to examine the extent to which such motifs are incorporated into the fabric of Shimao's counternarratives—stories in which the reader is invited to imagine alternative interpretations of the reality of postwar Japan and of Japan's portrayal of its victimhood in the memory of the Asia-Pacific War—that is distinct from prevalent sensibilities in

15 STZ 16, pp. 416–417.
16 Aeba 1976, p. 127.
17 Shimao and Kazusa 1973, p. 6.
18 Takeda 1980, pp. 155–156.

postwar Japan. The remainder of this article examines Shimao's novels to explicate how the ambiguity and guilt associated with these wartime experiences result in a corpus of work that provides a counternarrative to the conventional understanding of the Asia-Pacific War in postwar Japan.

Remembering and (Re)storing War Memories

Shimao's writings after demobilization were often populated by islanders at war (see *Kotōmu* 孤島夢 [Island dreams, 1946], *The Farthest Edge of the Islands*, and *Departure from a Lonely Island*). However, in these early works, he tended to exoticize the lives of the islanders by showing how the young and old maintained traditional lifestyles in picturesque landscapes and were indifferent to their suffering during the war. Gradually, this perspective changed, and in his later works, written during his second stint in the Amami Islands, the characters begin to function as symbolic Others, whose gazes serve as stark, problematic reminders of the social and psychological costs associated with Japan's wartime imperialism.[19] In his 1967 novel, *This Time That Summer*, the islanders confront the *tokkōtai* protagonists, prompting reflections on the war and, more critically, Japan's imperial past. In this regard, the novel provides "a starting point where Shimao sought to reencounter his war experiences, and in doing so, to define 'the present' ('now' [*ima* 今]) from which he could continually rewrite his relationship with the southern islands."[20]

This theme is further explored through the disharmonious relationship between the veteran protagonist, Toshio トシオ, and his island-born wife, Miho, in *The Sting of Death*. Here, family conflict serves as a mini drama, standing in for mainland Japan's complicated relationship with the Amami region. The narrative symbolically reflects the voice of the marginalized community by describing how Miho critiques her husband's past treatment of her. Seen in this light, the prolonged, fierce fights between Toshio and Miho transcend the depiction of everyday life that dominates the *shishōsetsu* 私小説 ("I" novel) genre. Instead, as Marukawa Tetsushi 丸川哲史 suggests, Miho's madness speaks to the collective emotions of the *ryūkyūko* 琉球弧 (Shimao's term for the southern islands, including the Amami Islands and Okinawa), which have been under the control of modern Japan for centuries, and "we are obliged to identify a counternarrative within such madness."[21]

The Sting of Death adds another layer of counternarrative to popular imaginings of postwar Japanese society by employing the motif of sin in its fictional reconstruction of the nation's imperial past. This literary device is clear in the characterization of Toshio, who functions as a metaphor for postwar Japan in the story. From the outset, Toshio seeks to renew his relationship with his wife and pleads for reconciliation. However, the more he engages in this task, the more he deviates from the desired path because the record of his misdeeds is continuously exposed by Miho's persistent accusations. He is troubled by this

19 Shimao's representation of the Other is inextricably associated with his ambiguous identity, which was discussed in the previous section. A corollary to this are the rhetorical images that challenge normative notions concerning the identity of postwar Japan. This type of literary negotiation, which is seen in the representation of the Other, is not necessarily unique to Shimao's novels; it is also present in the works of writers who can be characterized as Internal Others. For more on this, refer to Hutchinson and Williams 2007, pp. 11–13; Sakurai 2022.

20 Adachibara 2016, p. 143.

21 Marukawa 2004, p. 170. While *ryūkyūko* is originally a geographical term, Shimao borrowed and developed it as a key concept in his *Yaponeshia* writings. See Takara 2000.

dilemma, and is obliged to acknowledge both the consequences of his transgressions and the profound distress that the reconciliation process entails. In the process, he begins to seek an alternative to rescue their relationship rather than relying on his self-interested pleas.

The narrative here portrays postwar Japan with a complexity that is absent in popular accounts of the nation as merely a victim of the war. On the one hand, it exposes and transcribes the wartime memories of imperial Japan's violence through Miho's accusing gaze—a metaphor for the harm that Japanese militarism inflicted on its Asian victims. On the other hand, the narrative is carefully crafted to avoid any idealization of the marginalized group that would result in a reenactment of the victim-victimizer dynamic. Instead, it offers a standpoint from which the memory of violence can be turned into a means to reconstruct the identity of postwar Japan. This regeneration is shaped by the unresolved tension between Japan's imperial past and its legacies in the postwar era, which is Shimao's way of "remembering and (re)storing war memories."

Camouflaged Tales of War

Following his return from Kakeromajima to Kobe in early September 1946, Shimao wrote about his experiences in several stories and novels published in the 1940s and 1950s. These works explore war memories through interpersonal relationships and have been widely read as an embryonic form of the literary style Shimao would later perfect.[22] This reading is seemingly supported at the textual level by the thematic connections between characters from different sets of texts. However, the exotic depictions of the islanders in the early novels mask memories of imperial Japan's violence. At this early stage of his writing, such violence is superseded by martial melodrama.

In *The Farthest Edge of the Islands*, the first novel Shimao wrote after his demobilization, the memory of violence is hidden by a romantic fantasy. The story is set in a southern island called Kagerōjima カゲロウ島, a fictional topos that lies in wartime Japan. It explores the experiences of First Lieutenant Saku 朔中尉 and his interactions with the islanders during the war. Critics have interpreted that the novel's central focus is the romance between Lt. Saku and a female islander called Toë トエ, a fictional doppelganger of Miho. Takasaka Kaoru 髙阪薫 argues that the novel "beautifully and tenderly depicts the dilemma of love and death for two characters who experience a harsh fate while struggling between their mission and love."[23] Yoshimoto Takaaki 吉本隆明 has also examined this point with a focus on Toë; his analysis suggests that this female character resembles one of ancient, mythic descent, which supports her folk-romance-esque devotion toward Lt. Saku.[24]

Toë's mysterious image is a subtle symbol of the colonial tropes of assimilation. It not only conceals wartime Japan's violent past under the guise of romance but also reflects her internalization of the colonial psyche. Here, Shimao seems sympathetic to dominant discourses and narratives that obfuscate imperial Japan's wartime atrocities, and chooses to weave such memories into the fabric of either sentimental or melodramatic representations.[25] The southern islander serves as a foil who, instead of acting as a reminder of a heinous past

22 See Satō 1983, p. 127.
23 Takasaka 1997, p. 46.
24 Yoshimoto 1968, p. 187.
25 Furukawa Shigemi 古川成美 (1916–2002) is another veteran author who fits this category. For an analysis of his works, see Narita 2020, pp. 81–83.

and its terrible consequences, conceals harsh memories of violence through the fairytale quality of her romantic attachment to Lt. Saku.

The colonial symbolism of the Amami Islands is conveyed by both Toë's character and the utopian nature of the islands. The story opens with a phrase reminiscent of folklore: "This story takes place long ago" (*mukashi* むかし), and a description of Toë, who "lived among roses" and would "play in her room with all the village children."[26] This mythic association of Toë with the islands' nature serves to create an ambiance of fantasy within this colonial landscape. When Lt. Saku, who has the authority to govern Kagerōjima, first approaches Toë's village at night, "It seemed as if the entire village had been created just for Lieutenant Saku to walk around in all by himself," and he feels "enveloped in an indescribably lovely perfume."[27] This sense of romance blossoms the moment he encounters Toë: "Someone was lying on the floor. He thought he smelled lilies … Ah yes, its's Toë, thought the lieutenant."[28] Here, Toë is portrayed as someone who is ripe for exploitation by outsiders, a symbolic representation of the Amami Islands' position during wartime.

The image of Toë as an exotic Other is also concerned with the narrative representation of Lt. Saku's emotional distress. The young first lieutenant is introduced as "just as useless as a lamp in broad daylight [*hiruandon mitaina hito* ひるあんどんみたいな人]," and is constantly described as being distressed by his inability to effectively control his subordinates.[29] This is best represented in the scene where they directly complain to him, and Lt. Saku is "plunged unknowingly into the depths of a great sadness."[30] Troubled, he takes on the duties initially assigned to his subordinates and works alone through the rainy night. It is at this point that the idea of visiting Toë comes to him. In contrast to the miserable events that preceded, the moment he meets Toë appears as a dream:

> Sitting up and putting her hand to the hem of her dress, she said, "I thought you were the moon. I'm sorry. But I wasn't really asleep, you know." Then she rose and walked with a springy step to open wide the sliding doors and beckon to the lieutenant to come in. When Toë stood in front of the candlelight, he could see the outline of her body through her dress. As she replaced the candle, which was about to burn out, Toë glanced at the silver candlestand covered with its shade of figured paper, and her face glowed like a red photo negative.[31]

Ishii Hiroshi 石井洋詩 avers that Lt. Saku is undergoing a process of "recovering an essential self" here. He is reestablishing his lost harmony with nature and regains the balance of his mind through this encounter with Toë.[32] However, the exotic and picturesque presentation of Toë clearly disguises the complex political issues surrounding their relationship.

Shimao develops Toë's exotic image to mark her, not merely as the embodiment of nature in the Amami Islands but as symbolically linked with the region's colonial history.

26 Shimao 1985, p. 11.
27 Shimao 1985, p. 19.
28 Shimao 1985, p. 19.
29 Shimao 1985, p. 12.
30 Shimao 1985, p. 17.
31 Shimao 1985, p. 19.
32 Ishii 2017, pp. 156–157.

By doing this, he implicitly contrasts this romantic tryst with the unpleasant reality of island life; Toë's presence camouflages memories of war and violence. A closer analysis of the text reveals that such connections are further highlighted in Toë's changing characterization. Initially, Toë is described as a naïve and privileged islander; however, as the story progresses, she becomes entangled in the realities of war, especially when she discovers Lt. Saku's suicidal mission to defend the islands. At this point, she becomes a young woman who obediently waits for her messianic prince's visit every night. These depictions suggest her internalization of a hegemonic colonial discourse, through which the story shifts its focus from the burdens of war to its melodrama.

At this point, it is interesting to note that Christianity is closely linked to the drastic change in Toë's personality. For Toë, her Christian faith initially offers a safe harbor in times of sadness and trouble; when praying, she "pressed her cheek to the book" her deceased mother had used.[33] However, her faith in God is replaced by her intense love for Lt. Saku, as symbolized by the dagger that the lieutenant offers her. The weapon is delivered by the lieutenant's orderly, together with a letter describing the time and place of what would prove to be their final meeting, before the orderly's visit is abruptly interrupted by enemy attacks. When Lt. Saku receives the order to prepare for battle, Toë is determined to die for her love as well. Wearing "a dark kimono of raw silk," she meets him on the night of the battle.[34] Their tryst quickly concludes, and the narrative closes with Toë being left on the shore, watching the presumably inevitable death of Lt. Saku, and holding a dagger to her breast:

> Toë had brought with her, wrapped in white cloth, the dagger with the silver carving. This she now held reverently to her breast like a cross. She would wait until daylight. If she were to see something floating in the water, when exactly forty-eight of them had passed through the inlet before her eyes and out toward the open sea, then Toë would fill her kimono sleeves with stones and, clasping the dagger firmly to her breast, walk out into the water.[35]

The imagery of the cross being associated with the dagger is highly suggestive. On the one hand, it shows the culmination of Toë's romantic relationship with Lt. Saku, the inevitable end of their story. On the other, it indicates that the exploitative nature of imperial power—its sheer violence represented by the dagger—now occupies a central position. The imagery suggests that Toë has come to internalize the settler-colonial violence more deeply than her Christian faith. It highlights her determination and unwavering devotion to Lt. Saku, while simultaneously storing the memory of violence behind such symbols.

The Hostile Islands

The novel, titled *Shuppatsu wa tsuini otozurezu* 出発は遂に訪れず (The departure never came, 1962), and its sequel in the series of *tokkōtai* stories, *This Time That Summer*, represent a shift in Shimao's attitude toward the theme of war memory while continuing the narrative of his earlier works. They focus on the vacillation of the narrator as the order of

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33 Shimao 1985, p. 23.
34 Shimao 1985, p. 28.
35 Shimao 1985, p. 29.

the *tokkō* attack never arrives, and his unexpected reprieve as the war ends in Japan's defeat. This time, though, the islanders are not presented as the exotic Other, but as signifiers of their status as victims during the war. They direct animosity toward the narrator because their resources are exploited for the benefit of his troops. Confronted with this reaction, the narrator feels vulnerable and is compelled to engage with the complexities of a wounded, postwar reality. In a 1965 newspaper article, Shimao wrote that he had begun to view the Amami Islands as a place to contemplate the history of modern Japan rather than one of exotic allure.[36] This reexamination of Japan through the lens of the southern islands is a central theme in his writings on the Amami Islands. In these novels, one can trace his evolving views on war memory, which resulted in his exploration of postwar Japan's painful past.

The narrative timeframe of *The Departure Never Came* spans two days (14–15 August 1945). As the war draws to a close, the (self-)presentation of Japanese troops as protectors of the Amami Islands collapses, and their presence becomes a cause of resentment. The emotional disjuncture between the narrator's account of his imagined future and the unfolding reality is the primary focus of the narrative. He finds that the bright, new day he sees on the island is "beyond my understanding."[37] Simultaneously, the novel details the protagonist's gradual understanding of the islanders' hostility. It is first seen when, despite the hospitality offered by the islanders, the narrator realizes that "the bridge that I felt connected us to the villagers had vanished quickly," and that "an original rupture" exists between them.[38] The following day, he also witnesses grievances among some villagers working at a farm during the day, demonstrating that "things were not right."[39] These disturbing impressions of the islanders develop within the chronological timeframe of the narrative, and the novel uses them to draw attention to these tensions and the islanders' resistance.

This Time That Summer depicts the days that followed the emperor's announcement of Japan's unconditional surrender on 15 August, and details the narrator's uncertain transition from wartime to postwar. This difficulty is symbolically present at the outset. The morning after the surrender, the narrator finds a villager at the base camp who demands the return of his wooden boats. The man gave "no sign of acknowledgment," and his "gravity and solidity oozed defiance."[40] This unexpected attitude leads the protagonist to comprehend his responsibility for the war, which would have been left unquestioned if his death had been successfully attained through the suicide mission. He also reflects on his troops now occupying the island without a legal title, and their uncertain future in the postwar political and societal situation. Amid these concerns, the narrator realizes that he has lost his position of privilege. He is brought back to reality by the problems he now views with "a stern countenance toward those who had ignored them."[41]

The figure of the islander lays the narrator bare with his piercing stare and reveals the uncertainty and unease of postwar reality. Other characters in the novel also serve

36 STZ 17, p. 40.
37 Shimao 2005, p. 757.
38 Shimao 2005, p. 763.
39 Shimao 2005, p. 770.
40 Shimao 1985, p. 31.
41 Shimao 1985, p. 32.

as foils for the narrator's reflection on his wartime misdeeds. As Adachibara Tatsuharu 安達原達晴 argues, the disorganized state (and loss of discipline) displayed by the narrator's subordinates following the surrender makes him realize that he violated wartime norms by visiting Toë at night.[42] Moreover, the islanders' characters play a symbolic role: they allude to the exploitative relationship between wartime Japan and the Amami Islands. This image of the marginalized and oppressed islanders comes to the fore in this text. For example, on the same day as that of the boat incident, another islander comes to the base camp at noon, asking for the return of two carp that he had presented to the narrator. Earlier, he had expressed a "dazzling interest" in the protagonist as a commanding officer of the Imperial Navy. Here, he assumes a hostile attitude, as if "he was talking to some young boy unschooled in the ways of the world."[43] Overwhelmed by this sudden change in attitude, the unsettled narrator remarks, "I cannot rid myself of a needling dissatisfaction."[44]

As the story proceeds, the challenging gaze of the islanders becomes more evident within the text. This aspect is shown when the narrator visits "O" village to read the Imperial Rescript of Surrender aloud in front of the villagers. He finds that "he did not see any men" in the village, even though they were supposed to have been informed about this event prior to his visit.[45] Some men appear as the narrator starts reading the Rescript to the women and children, with tears filling his eyes; however, the text only describes their late arrival in the village square. The contrast between the emotional narrator and the taciturn men is sharpened when the former completes his speech. As he feels reluctant to leave the place, deeply moved by his eloquence, "no one seemed inclined to speak to me; they avoided me as they receded."[46]

When viewed alongside Shimao's other novels, particularly those depicting his second experience of the Amami Islands, these islanders demonstrate the author's increased concerns with encountering the Other. Suzuki Naoko has argued that novels such as *Kawa nite* 川にて (At the river, 1959) and *Shima e* 島へ (To the island, 1961) describe the indigenous culture of the Amami Islands as an "absolute Other" to their metropolitan protagonists.[47] Ishii Hiroshi has recently reexamined this issue by studying Shimao's experiences as a Catholic since his baptism, arguing that the reflective viewpoint of the narrator of *This Time That Summer* is consistent with the author's religious outlook.[48] However, as I have suggested above, there is another layer to this story—the ghost of imperialism that suffuses the landscape of postwar Japan. Here, the gaze of the islander Others reveals the suppressed memories of Japan's imperialistic management of the islands. The novel is, in essence, a text about remembering issues of exploitation, marginalization, and violence, as well as the war that restored the memory of these problems to history.

These concerns are also mirrored in the characterization of Toë. Unlike Shimao's earlier stories, she no longer fits the depiction of an exotic Other, but emerges as indifferent or even spiteful toward the narrator. This change is seen when the protagonist visits her

42 Adachibara 2016, pp. 138–139.
43 Shimao 1985, p. 36.
44 Shimao 1985, p. 36.
45 Shimao 1985, p. 38.
46 Shimao 1985, p. 42.
47 Suzuki 1997, p. 49.
48 Ishii 2020, p. 190.

house after reading the Rescript, where her father comes back from the shelter. In contrast to this old man, whose "countenance was serene," now that he was free from the fear of air raids, Toë refrains from voicing her thoughts regarding the end of the war:

> Sitting behind and to the side of her father, as if to hide in his shadow, she had kept an unobtrusive eye on me without looking at me directly. Her long, deepest eyes gave off a pure and somehow helpless impression. I had not seen her since yesterday's news of the surrender; we had many things to talk about, but I did not feel the usual sense of urgency that it must be tonight … After a brief exchange of casual conversation with her father, I felt better, and when I got up to leave, he did not protest. Toë looked off into the distance, and what her thoughts were I could not tell from her eyes.[49]

Toë's sunken, helpless eyes are indicative of the toll of war, reflecting the sentiments of the islanders in general. She encounters a postwar reality in which the idealized image of the young lieutenant is absent. Along with this disillusionment, there is an awareness that there are "many things to talk about," which carries over into Shimao's other stories, culminating in *The Sting of Death*.

Beyond the Dynamics of Victim-Victimizer

The Sting of Death is often read as the culmination of Shimao's "sick wife" stories (*byōsai mono*), praised for its portrayal of the author's torment while his wife was suffering from a psychogenetic reaction.[50] However, viewed outside of this conventional understanding, the novel has much in common with his *tokkōtai* stories. For example, its two protagonists—Toshio, a mainland novelist who served in the IJN in the southern islands during the war, and his wife Miho, who comes from the southern islands of Japan—resemble Lt. Saku and Toë from the earlier novels. In addition, while the story is set in the context of daily life in postwar Tokyo, Toshio's emotional struggles and vulnerabilities are described as a comparison to his *tokkōtai* experiences. This juxtaposition between the mundane present and wartime realities runs throughout the novel; it is further reinforced through images of Miho's madness concerning Toshio's affair with another woman, called "Ano onna" (that woman) in the story.

Nevertheless, Toshio is more complex than Shimao's earlier *tokkōtai* protagonists. He reenacts the original sin of his earlier betrayal—engaging in the exploitation of the islanders in the name of liberating them from the enemy—and, in the process, punishes himself for his sin. In this sense, *The Sting of Death* is a critical example of Shimao's representation of war experiences; it describes how the experience of daily postwar life can be used to cope with the lingering memories of war. As he completed the full version of *The Sting of Death*, Shimao commented on the continuing sense of the war in his life. In an interview with Yoshida Mitsuru, he observed:

> I have been compelled to dwell on it [the memory of the Asia-Pacific War]. In my mind, however, it is not something to be treasured and preserved, but the war has

49 Shimao 1985, p. 42.
50 See Kokubo 2002; Shigematsu 2002; Kobayashi 2002, pp. 215–229.

> always been present in my experience and that of others. On a superficial level, we should assume that war takes place when it does; but on a deeper level, would it not be a similar thing [for someone who has experienced the war]?[51]

The confusion of Shimao's *tokkōtai* protagonists in the face of complex postwar reality is also present in *The Departure Never Came* and *This Time That Summer*. However, *The Sting of Death* delves deeply into the complexity of this reality. Viewed in this light, the intense, frenzied marital dispute over Miho's accusations about Toshio's infidelity appears as a metaphor for the Amami Islands' rebellion against the domination of imperial Japan. Miho's madness represents her role as the Other responding to the cumulative hardships experienced by these islands, thereby highlighting the imperial continuities in modern Japan's exercise of control over the islands in the postwar era.

The Sting of Death, with its title taken from the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15:16 ("The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law" [New International Version]), suggests that the story is more than a mere remembrance of Japan's imperialism. It also explores how such a past would translate into the reconfiguration of postwar Japan's identity. This theme revolves around the characterization of Toshio. He first attempts to shift Miho's attention away from his troubled past by asking her to forget about it. However, as he attempts to reestablish a bond with Miho, he is forced to acknowledge the necessity of unlearning his privilege and listening to her voice. This recognition pushes him, albeit via a slow and painful process, to ultimately face and take responsibility for his past, in order to live with Miho in the present.

Shimao strategically uses the motif of sin to describe the journey undertaken by Toshio to seek reconciliation with his wife, as he symbolically portrays postwar Japan's relationship with its marginalized territories. Thus, the author goes beyond the victim-victimizer dynamics that form a large part of the discourse on postwar memory politics by introducing both a sense of failure and a renewed sense of self to Japan's postwar image. Shimao's effort provides a counternarrative of war memories and the nation's identity. *The Sting of Death* is, therefore, both about remembering and (re)storing Japan's past and present in the postwar era.

The first of these aspects, remembering, is shown in the way bodies are referenced during Miho's accusations regarding Toshio's marital infidelity. From the outset, Miho expresses resentment by focusing on how her body has been granted little attention over the years. She asks: "You don't need me, do you? Over the past ten years, you have treated me like that. I can't tolerate this anymore … Look, I am becoming skinny, like a skeleton."[52] As her anger intensifies, Miho contrasts her ardent devotion to Toshio with his frigidity: "I have built and taken care of these [Toshio's] arms and legs. If I hadn't paid attention to your nutrition, you would have died a long time ago … But you have abandoned me, being selfish for not one or two months, but for over ten years."[53]

Critics have focused on the depictions of Miho's body as a rhetorical trope that describes the problems and hurdles faced by women in postwar Japanese society. Philip

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51 Shimao and Yoshida 2014, p. 149.

52 STZ 8, p. 8.

53 STZ 8, p. 70.

Gabriel, in his critique of scholars who view Miho merely as representative of modern women, argues that her madness reveals the systemic gender-based structural inequality in postwar Japan.[54] However, viewed in the context of Shimao's war experience, this contrast highlights the unresolved tension between the Amami Islands and mainland Japan in the postwar era. Here, Miho's outrage against Toshio's infidelity hints at the burden of involvement in the imperial management of the islands under modern Japan. The poor state of her body becomes a metaphor for the marginalized role of the islands, where they appear to be of merely strategic value for the nation, while their voices and experiences are neglected. This struggle is symbolically represented by Miho's questions regarding Toshio's perception of her sexuality: "In fact, you aren't interested in my *body*, are you?"[55] Miho is no longer an object of exotic longing but serves as a problematic Other to Toshio.

Toshio's initial responses to Miho's madness aim at channeling her attention away from his unpleasant past. To this end, Toshio attempts various actions: he swears that he will never lie again, shows his willingness to commit suicide, acts like a fool, and turns to self-harm.[56] These responses are motivated by Toshio's desire to attain the advantage on this particular battlefield, as the memory of his misdeeds disrupts his identity. Thus, Toshio says: "I am content not to be forgiven, but [Miho's] endless interrogations are meaningless."[57] A corollary here is his emphasis on the necessity for reconciliation, albeit grounded in a call to dismiss the past as irrelevant. Toshio explicitly suggests it after several fights with Miho:

> I'm sorry. I was wrong. If you and I and the children don't learn to live happily together, I don't know what I'll do. Who'll take care of us? Let's stop this stupid fighting … Now I want you to forget all about the past. I'm not trying to play the good boy. No matter how deep you go into a past based on lies, all you'll come up with is more stale lies. From now on, I won't ever lie to you, even about the most trivial matters. So please—I'm asking you to stop digging up the past and concentrate on the future.[58]

Toshio's pleading with Miho to stop complaining about his past has led critics to argue that he has come to realize his victimizer's position and to begin to accept the challenging demands of his wife.[59] However, a closer analysis of the text reveals that the Toshio-Miho relationship is still oriented around the husband's needs alone. For example, despite Miho's reluctance to undertake a trip to rural Fukushima where Toshio's relatives live, he unilaterally decides to "artificially cut the strings of the past."[60] When this attempt fails, Toshio takes her to a psychiatric hospital, with the intention that "whatever the future, if its immediate anguish can be smothered, I am determined to do anything possible."[61] Moreover, when her madness abates, Miho sometimes plays a submissive role: she buys an

54 Gabriel 1999, pp. 134–141.
55 STZ 8, p. 138, emphasis added.
56 STZ 8, pp. 13–19, 83, 101, 145, 146–147, 153, 166, 182, and 192.
57 STZ 8, p. 13.
58 Shimao 1985, p. 92
59 Awazu 2002, p. 148; Takeda 2002, pp. 37–41.
60 STZ 8, p. 201.
61 STZ 8, p. 293.

expensive fountain pen to celebrate Toshio's turning over a new leaf after their first fight, encourages him to work, and follows him around as he moves from one relative to another in Fukushima.[62] As in the novels discussed earlier, the structural hierarchy between Toshio and Miho is left intact in *The Sting of Death*: the reader deciphers a pattern similar to the relationship of Lt. Saku and Toë.

In contrast, the reality of guilt and responsibility associated with the Toshio-Miho relationship marks the narrative as something more than another tale of Shimao's war experiences. This reality constitutes the second theme of the story: (re)storing war memories. As he confronts Miho about his past, Toshio is led to ponder on his relationship with her, thus recognizing himself as a perpetrator who deceives her about his connection with another woman.[63] This goes beyond the current love affair and involves a series of deceptions made in the past: "The fleshy odor of secrets from my past unexpectedly rose to the surface, like foam on the polluted water of a canal."[64] These struggles lead Toshio to an impasse, where he feels powerless against Miho's constant accusations and cries out:

> "Help me!" When I could not help but shout, Miho said, "To whom are you asking for help? Who can hear your loud voice here? Oh, I see, you want that woman to hear your voice. Oh, yes, you have asked her for help, haven't you? Where did you ask for help? Tell me…" I wonder if my words, which I shouted unconsciously, really meant to ask somebody for help. I may want someone to help me. But at the bottom of my heart, I know no one would help me due to my character, and my hopes have perished. I envision myself somehow managing this situation and living a different life devoid of sting (*mō hitotsu no toge no nai jinsei* もうひとつのとげのない人生), but when my wife becomes angry and starts to expose my past, I cannot tolerate it anymore.[65]

The life that Toshio desires is juxtaposed with their conflict and evokes an ironic representation of his fate. On the one hand, he desperately desires a reconciled relationship with Miho. On the other, his past misdeeds—a love affair with another woman and, more fundamentally, his wartime actions in the southern islands—disqualify him from being in a position to direct this process of reconciliation. Toshio must begin this trajectory as the one who must be reconciled, with a painful awareness of his own guilt. This protagonist seems caught in a vicious cycle—what Kazusa Hideo 上総英郎 describes as "a hell-like repeating life over nine months, in which dawn breaks with [Miho's] endless accusations of the past, and the day ends with heavy unrefreshing sleep."[66] Underneath this battle lies Toshio's compulsive attempts to perform penance for his sins, albeit at the expense of his relationship with Miho.

Equally important, however, are Toshio's gradual changes in response to this dilemma, especially in his approach to Miho's madness. As Toshio repeatedly fails in his attempts to divert Miho's attention from his past faults, he realizes that the deeper desire behind her relentless accusations is not merely to expose his unfaithful past, but rather to focus,

62 STZ 8, pp. 20, 124, 226, and 234.
63 STZ 8, p. 51.
64 Shimao 1985, p. 74.
65 STZ 8, p. 107.
66 Kazusa 2002, p. 157.

"on how accurate they [the facts of betrayal] are."[67] Here, Toshio appears to be standing at a distance from himself, seemingly listening to Miho's outburst. Sensing that Miho holds a fundamentally opposing attitude toward the same issue, Toshio begins to envision alternative paths to deal with her. Equally importantly, he addresses his past faults that are brought to the surface by Miho's candid explorations of his infidelity.

An early indication of this transformation is evident in Toshio's determination to remain present and listen to Miho's pain regarding his past betrayal, albeit at the cost of his own pain. He begins to view the wounds he suffered during the confrontation with Miho as "a telltale sign of not forgetting [his unfaithful] past."[68] Toshio's transformation here is contrasted with the doctors, who regard Miho as a mere object of observation. Despite Toshio's eagerness to learn about Miho's condition, they use her as an object to teach their trainees. In addition, when treatment is interrupted because Miho escapes from the hospital, her primary doctor dismisses her madness as a typical case of hysteria: "This is not an issue of medical treatment but one of interpersonal relationships between husband and wife. This is your [Toshio's] problem. When you bring your wife under your control, her illness will be healed."[69]

While this is also Toshio's attitude at the beginning of Miho's madness, he eventually overcomes it with a more hopeful vision of their future. Therefore, when he recalls the doctor's advice after Miho meets "Ano onna" for the first time and behaves violently toward her, Toshio interprets the suggestion in his own way: "If [Miho's recovery depends on Toshio's attitude], I cannot expect her to be restored to her former state unless *my* personality drastically changes."[70] Despite this renewed awareness, Toshio once again falls into the vicious cycle: the more he strives to accept Miho's madness, the more he senses his inability to do so. However, the difference compared to the earlier attempts is critical. The predicament in which Toshio finds himself at this juncture does not involve forgetting the past but entails its exploration as a component of their current lives. In other words, while Toshio still seeks reconciliation with Miho, his understanding of that work is now different. His current struggle stems from a determination to stay with Miho—and the memory of his past faults—at any cost.

The evolved Toshio is clearly shown in the last scene of the narrative. When he leaves Miho in a psychiatric hospital and goes out to prepare for her hospitalization, Toshio feels free from the accusations of his wife, "as if my body lifted and flew off."[71] Simultaneously, however, he finds himself caught by Miho, frightened at being alone in a solitary cell:

> My body, which wishes to fly away, has been caught by a remnant of my wife. My wife, who relies on me and yet is deceived by me, falls into the abyss of loneliness, and her remnant grabs my soul. My wife is waiting for my return to a mental hospital. I could not think of anything other than living with Miho in the hospital room.[72]

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67 STZ 8, p. 265.
68 STZ 8, p. 348.
69 STZ 8, p. 363.
70 STZ 8, p. 468, emphasis added.
71 STZ 8, p. 519.
72 STZ 8, p. 519.

While this conclusion represents the ambivalence in Toshio's mind, it marks a pivotal movement in his attitude toward Miho. The desire to dismiss past failures as irrelevant to their present lives is replaced by the recognition of a relationship that brings Toshio a new vision of reconciliation. He appears to relinquish his grip on his life and make himself vulnerable, willing to endure distress in the process of reestablishing relations with Miho. The novel ends on a hopeful note, echoing this sentiment and hinting at the change in Toshio's attitude towards the future: "And I came to think that if we are in the hospital, a locked space detached from the rest of the world, we could start a new life."[73] Toshio is not entirely free of ambiguity, but he certainly glimpses the possibility of a renewal—of a new beginning that redeems past sins, even while keeping memories of those events alive.

As mentioned earlier, many critics analyze *The Sting of Death* as representing the author's most compelling expression of his domestic experience, while others consider the motif of sin as symbolic of the existential problem of human life. Tamaoki Kunio 玉置邦雄 argues that the novel reflects Shimao's deeper thoughts on the discovery of the Otherness, which stemmed from his traumatic recollections of his wife:

> Namely, [Shimao] considered Miho as "the Other" due to his unfaithful behavior. From this point of view, the issue of sin, a fundamental problem of human existence, comes to the fore. The essence of *The Sting of Death* is the depiction of human sin.[74]

When viewed in connection with Shimao's *tokkōtai* stories, however, the function of the motif of sin lends extra depth and resonance to the narration. Through the complex representation of a veteran mainland protagonist, Shimao portrays a postwar Japan struggling for harmony with postcolonial Others while acknowledging the complexity and distress involved in the process. Shimao, thus, offers a counternarrative to the mainstream discourses about the war and depicts a penitent Japan responding to the marginalized voices in the imperialistic history of the nation. This view of the past, which goes beyond victim-victimizer dynamics, bears witness to an alternative approach of coping with war memories. The violence of war and empire is incorporated into the process of reconciliation and is itself dependent on the possibility of remembering and (re)storing war memories.

Conclusion

In his essay *Ushiro muki no sengo* うしろ向きの戦後 (A backward-looking postwar, 1974), Shimao reveals his ambivalent attitude toward the postwar era. On the one hand, he acknowledges that, "It has been almost thirty years since I was freed from the war," and recognizes his sense of relief and freedom at the beginning of his postwar life.[75] On the other, Shimao also describes himself as not being entirely free from memories of the war, as "I sometimes wonder if I have not been demobilized yet."[76] Here, the author hints at the complexity of the task before him—to reconcile his present self with his history during the Asia-Pacific War. This concern remained throughout his life and led him to immerse

73 STZ 8, p. 520.
74 Tamaoki 1977, p. 147.
75 STZ 15, p. 166.
76 STZ 15, p. 172.

himself in his past. Shimao asks himself: "For what purpose had I fought? Are the two feelings [relief and freedom] truly the ones I felt right after the defeat? Have I possibly modified these in nearly thirty years? What did I feel toward the nation's defeat?"[77]

The answer to the last question can be found in his posthumous and unfinished novel *(Fukuin) kuni yaburete* (復員)国破れて ([Demobilization] After defeat, 1987). It serves as a sequel to *This Time That Summer*, but the narrative is thirty years after the demobilization. This gap between events and actions allows the narrator-protagonist to reflect on his experiences during the demobilization. This is clearest in the last scene, where the narrator is on his way to Sasebo with his *tokkōtai* subordinates. He becomes aware of a large American seaplane over his troopship, which takes some photos and flies away:

> The roaring noise [of the seaplane] went through my entire body and barely disappeared. "Oh, we are defeated," I strongly sensed. The airship probably took detailed photos of us. I felt I was being captured by inescapable black hands.[78]

The image of the black hands (*nogareyō no nai kuroi te* 脱れようのない黒い手) suggests the nation's defeat, requiring the narrator—and Shimao himself—to be held accountable for his war crimes throughout his postwar life.

However, as I have suggested in this discussion, Shimao's efforts can be understood as an attempt to (re)store war memories and transform the past into a narrative that reimagines the future of postwar Japan. A sense of guilt embedded in his ambiguous postwar identity, both as a first lieutenant in his *shin'yō* unit and as a Christian, led Shimao to engage in this literary pursuit. In this sense, his devotion to narrating his wartime and demobilization (*fukuin* 復員) experiences can be attributed to his desire to bring good news (*fukuin* 福音) to a defeated nation—of the possibility that remembering and deciphering the past could be a source of renewing the future. This vision of the past echoes Isaiah in the Bible, where he envisions a transition from swords to plowshares. Here, the reader can see how Shimao's doubly ambiguous identity provided him a synthesis, one which enabled him to respond to the dominant cultural discourses in postwar Japan.

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77 STZ 15, p. 167.

78 Shimao 2012, p. 129.

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