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"Nanigode kangaeteiruka":

**A Comparative Study on Multilingualism,
Loneliness and Hybridity in the Japanese
Contemporary Literature and Literary-
Adjacent Media**

Serena Armida Adele Ceniccola

Birkbeck, University of London

PhD Comparative Literature

2023

In loving memory of
Dott.ssa Rosalba Mauriello
(1953-2021)

Abstract:

This thesis approaches the complex and multifaceted issue of proposing a transnational and language-oriented method to the analysis of Japanese postwar and contemporary literature and literary-adjacent media, i.e. manga, anime, and light novels. By examining three interconnected main themes – loneliness, multilingualism, and hybridity – in a selection of works in Japanese comprising Dazai Osamu's postwar novels *Shayō* (1947) and *Ningen Shikkaku* (1948), Shimada Masahiko's *Yumetsukai* (1989), and Levy Hideo's literary debut *Seijōki no Kikoenai Heya* (1992), as well as his short novel *Tenanmon* (1996), this research aims to reassess the significance of Japanese literary and literary-adjacent works within the broader context of world literature.

This study builds upon the premise that the American Occupation of Japan (1945-1952) serves as a case of cultural contact leading to a significant language exchange. This results in the increasing use of written multilingualism in contemporary works from both sides of the Pacific, including those by Japanese American writers and American authors of Japanese heritage. By comparing multilingual writing in Japan to Japanese American literary works, this thesis argues for the acknowledgement of a multilingual literary tradition in Japanese and for the recognition of a Japanese and American mutual cultural influence that is also relevant to the popularity of Japanese literary-adjacent media in the US. Moreover, this research finds that access to audiovisual material in Japanese, through the internet, and in particular streaming platforms such as Netflix and Crunchyroll, plays a fundamental role in disseminating the Japanese language beyond Japan, thus carrying on the trans-Pacific language and cultural exchange. American, bilingual, speculative works based on Japanese folklore, such as Julie Kagawa's trilogy *Shadow of the Fox* (2018-2020), can be regarded as a product of this. In addition, a novel development is represented by the popularisation of Japanese literature beyond Japan through literary-adjacent media. Asagiri Kafka's *Bungō Stray Dogs* (2013-ongoing) presents a significant case study. By featuring characters inspired and named after well-known authors, Asagiri not only contribute to making writers of Japanese literature accessible to the general public abroad, but he also locates Japanese literature in the world literary field focusing his narrative on the interconnections of the real Japanese and non-Japanese authors.

Ultimately, in light of its findings, this research supports the argument that scholarships in comparative Japanese literary studies outside of Japan necessitate considering a “Japanese literature as world literature”-approach to the subject.

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Note to the text:

I write Japanese names according to the Japanese order, i.e. first names follow family names, this includes Levy Hideo. Only in the case of authors such as Natsume Sōseki, Mori Ōgai and Nakahara Chūya – when it is not necessary to mention their full names – I instead comply with the tradition of only referring to them by their first names; therefore, Natsume Sōseki as Sōseki, Mori Ōgai as Ōgai, and Nakahara Chūya as Chūya.

As a rule, I provide most of the quotes from Japanese texts in Japanese, English translations are provided in bold in the footnotes. While I appreciate that this might prove to be inconvenient for certain readers, conveying my argument through a multilingual text is an essential part of this work.

After the first mention, the titles of Japanese works appear in their romanised form. An exception to this is presented by works whose original Japanese titles include English words in Katakana, such as Asagiri Kafka's *Bungō Stray Dogs* (文豪ストレイドッグス, *Bungō sutorei doggusu*) and Kirino Natsuo's *Grotesque* (グロテスク 2003, *Grotesque* trans. by Rebecca Copeland, 2007).

Likewise, I refer to Giacomo Puccini's 1904 opera by its Italian title, *Madama Butterfly*.

Except for names that have been canonised according to a different system, such as Masamune Shirow, romanisation complies with the rules set by the Hepburn system.

Finally, while I write according to the British spelling, quotes from authors writing according to the American spelling maintain the original aspect.

Introduction

This thesis aims to highlight the necessity for a new approach to the comparative study of Japanese literature and literary-adjacent media, such as manga, anime, and light novels. Such approach should be based on the concepts of transnationalism and diachronicity, which would enable the subject area to engage with the global literary discourse. Since it could be argued that media such as manga, anime and light novels, regardless of the way I define them in my research, exist in parallel to the literary sphere and are usually labelled as popular culture, here I must clarify my position in regard to the transmedia element which is essential to my work.

My research intends to approach the matter of literature from a similar perspective as Ikka Lähteenmäki approached that of history in his article ‘Transmedia history.’ Similarly to how Lähteenmäki argues that ‘history is by its nature a large-scale transmedia project’,¹ I maintain that contemporary literature does not only exist in its traditional form, and that its interactions with popular culture have shaped it into a transmedia system, which I will refer to as contemporary literary scene. Indeed, the frequent interactions between literature and popular culture, especially in the context of the Japanese literary scene,² represent a fundamental part of the transformative process of the language defined as language change through cultural contact. This process not only influences the contemporary literary perspective on identity and hybridity, but also, as I will discuss later, opens the path to alternative ways of interpreting postwar literary works within and without the national borders and therefore (re)introduces them into the world literary context. Thus, since such interactions between

¹Ikka Lähteenmäki, ‘Transmedia history’, *Rethinking History*, 25 (2021), 281–306. doi: 10.1080/13642529.2021.1963597 (p. 281).

² Other examples of such a phenomenon include the popularity of the Finnish author of Swedish language Tove Jansson’s characters Muumi, in Finnish, Mumin, in Swedish, or as they are mostly known abroad, Moomin in English.

literature and popular culture show the potential to reinforce the position of Japanese literature as part of world literature, I must conclude that literary-adjacent media have to be regarded as part of the Japanese literary scene.

Since I mentioned that literary-adjacent media as part of the contemporary literary scene have an impact on the reception of modern authors' works in the wider contemporary world, I should also clarify what I intend with the terms diachronicity and transnationalism in this context.

The diachronic aspect of my research intends to identify one author from a different generation whose influence can be detected in the works of contemporary writers, as well as the ways contemporary interpretations of specific themes in both literature and literary-adjacent media reshaped the reception of the works of authors from a different generation both inside and outside the country of origin. As I will further discuss, in the case of my work, this will concern the themes of isolation and hybridity starting from the way in which they are presented in the Dazai Osamu's (1909-1948) postwar novels, to their interpretations in the works of contemporary national and transnational writers, as well as *mangaka* and manga authors.³

As for the use of the term transnationalism, it concerns to two points. First, the necessity of introducing a comparison between not only the literature of Japanese-born authors writing in Japanese, usually considered national authors, but also that of translanguaging authors, by which I primarily refer to those who write in Japanese while residing in Japan, even though they are not Japanese-born, such as Ian Levy Hideo (1950-), and more broadly to those who write in languages different from the ones they have been born into, such as Tawada Yōko

³ By *mangaka* I intend authors who both write and illustrate their works, whereas I refer to manga authors in the case of those who are in charge of the story rather than the illustrations.

(1960-).⁴ Second, a transnational approach is also relevant to the analysis of the reception of Japanese literature beyond the national borders and therefore, as already mentioned, as part of the world literary discourse.

Indeed, the ‘myth of Japanese uniqueness’⁵ has prevented the literary production in Japanese from being fully appreciated outside of the circle of national literary studies. Already in 1989, John T. Dorsey raised the concern that ‘studies on the reception of Japanese literature or culture abroad were and still are accepted with some uneasiness.’⁶ Nevertheless, this study fits right into the category mentioned by Dorsey as it intends to reevaluate the position of Japanese literary and literary-adjacent works within the broader context of world literature. While Japanese studies scholars such as Victoria Young tend to play into this idea of uniqueness by approaching the subject of Japanese literature as world literature with the reserve that a fundamental sense of *otherness* still governs the relation between the two,⁷ my work intends to address the fundamental misconception of Japanese literature as *other* by arguing that the Japanese literary scene is neither culturally or linguistically homogenous, and therefore not unique in the sense that has been traditionally given to the word, nor does it exist in opposition to the world literary scene.

Instead, by discussing the mutual influences and the reception of Japanese literary and literary-adjacent media across the Pacific, I intend to highlight that Japanese literature already interacts with the global, and therefore it is inherently part of the world literary discourse. It is to support this argument that I will conduct a case study of these media’s effect on the trans-

⁴ I will refer to these authors as *ekkyō bungaku* (越境文学) or *Nihongo bungaku* (日本語文学) authors, since such labels are fundamental in my work to discuss the way the Japanese literary canon is frequently portrayed as homogenous and therefore separated into a national canon, that opposes a transnational one.

⁵ John T. Dorsey, ‘National and Comparative Literature in Japan’, in *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends*, ed. by Cornelia N. Moore and Raymond A. Moody (Manoa: University of Hawaii Press, 1989) pp. 184-189 (p.185).

⁶ Ibid. p.185.

⁷ Victoria Young, ‘Beyond “Transborder”, *Japanese Language and Literature* 55, (2021), 1-34. (p.3).

Pacific cultural relationship between Japan and the United States (hereafter US), starting from the aftermath of the American Occupation of Japan (1945-1952).

The American Occupation represents the most significant case of cultural contact and consequent language change in the history of modern Japan since the end of the *Sakoku* (1639-1853), the period of trade and cultural seclusion started by the Edo government,⁸ and the beginning of trading relationships with Western countries during the Meiji era (1868-1912). In fact, as opposed to previous occurrences, included the colonial aims of the Japanese Empire, it is during the American Occupation that Japan found itself in a subordinate position and, for all intent and purposes, invaded by a foreign force, subjected to a foreign culture, foreign values, and a foreign language. In comparison, in terms of cultural contact, i.e. the coexistence of two different cultures and languages in the same place at the same time, the American Occupation of Japan shares significant similarities with the alternating ruling of Sweden and Russia over Finland until 1917.

Indeed, while the American Occupation of Japan primarily shaped the political and economic relationship between the two countries in the second half of the 20th century and through the 21st century, it consequently also shaped the way US culture was received in Japan and vice versa. It is necessary to clarify that this has not happened at the same time, as I will describe further in the following chapters, Japan incorporated US cultural elements far earlier than the US began to acknowledge the impact of Japanese culture on their own. However, in the early years of the 2000s, popular culture in the form of manga and anime has been fundamental in spreading Japanese language among the US population, encouraging non-Japanese speakers to learn the language, paving the path for Japanese literature to be imported more consistently and appreciated by a wider audience, as well as influencing the idea of Japan through the lens

⁸ Jay Rubin, 'Wholesomeness to Decadence: The Censorship of Literature under the Allied Occupation', in *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 11 (1985), pp. 71-103 (p. 75).

of the *otaku* culture.⁹ Thus, I will look at the cultural contact during the Occupation as the trigger for this idealisation as well as for the language change and popularisation of Japanese transnational literature both in Japan and in the US.

I must clarify that my research does not intend to discuss the literary representation of the American Occupation, but it focuses on the way the American Occupation influenced the cultural flow in the trans-Pacific, leading to the further question of how popular culture is reimagining literature and literary tropes and how it still contributes to the spread of the Japanese language outside of Japan and therefore how it continues to create a fertile environment for cultural contact through streaming platform and social media.

In order to support my argument, I will employ one of the ‘traditional methods of comparative literature’,¹⁰ which involves the analysis of three themes – multilingualism, loneliness/isolation, and hybridity – in the works of postwar and contemporary Japanese authors, i.e. Dazai Osamu and Shimada Masahiko (1961-), border-crossing writers like Ian Hideo Levy (hereafter Levy Hideo), Japanese American authors such as John Okada (1923-1971), from whose work *No-No Boy* I will start my analysis of the influence of Japanese literature on Japanese American literature, American speculative fiction authors of Japanese heritage such as Julie Kagawa (1982-), and manga artists and novelists like Ishida Sui (1986-) and Asagiri Kafka (1984-).

Perhaps one of the most complex aspects of my research is the comparison between representation and self-portrayal, both strongly connected to the subject of interpretation.

This is both fascinating and daunting and certainly a fundamental part of the development of Japanese language and literature from the postwar onwards. By representation I intend the

⁹ I will expand on the complexities of the term *otaku* further in the following chapters.

¹⁰ John T. Dorsey, ‘National and Comparative Literature in Japan’, in *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends*, ed. by Cornelia N. Moore and Raymond A. Moody (Manoa: University of Hawaii Press, 1989) pp. 184-189 (p.187).

way Japan is seen from the outside, whereas self-portrayal indicates the way Japan aims to be perceived. Literature and popular media both play a role in these areas. Transnational literature in Japanese provides a commentary on the way these two elements often clash. This remains at the core of my choice to present a comparative argument that is not limited by time, language, media, or national labels.

Although my work acknowledges that Comparative Literature and World Literature are closely related,¹¹ it does not aim to portray World Literature as ‘comparative literature for the global age’,¹² as Francesca Orsini brilliantly summarised the current trend in world literary studies. If Comparative Literature ‘presupposes the existence both of something called literature and of at least two national instances of it’,¹³ then World Literature should acknowledge the complex interconnections that exist beyond the concept of national literature. It should also provide a model that goes beyond colonial notions such as primary and minor cultural traditions, as Orsini argued in her 2015 article ‘The Multilingual Local in World Literature’. Therefore, it is particularly relevant in my research to explore the potential of both disciplines to overcome the ‘hierarchical relationship and [...] binary opposition’¹⁴ between East and West that originates from the ‘assumption that there exists one integrated world literary space, visualized as a single literary *map* with clear centers and peripheries on which difference is marked both spatially *and* temporally.’¹⁵ In this regard, I must also clarify that what I refer to as ‘potential’ echoes what Walter Cohen expressed in his paper ‘The

¹¹Walter Cohen, ‘The Concept of World Literature’, in *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends*, ed. by Cornelia N. Moore and Raymond A. Moody (Manoa: University of Hawaii Press, 1989) pp.3-10 (p.4).

¹²Francesca Orsini, ‘The Multilingual Local in World Literature’, *Comparative Literature*, 67 (2015), 345-374 (p.345).

¹³Walter Cohen, ‘The Concept of World Literature’, in *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends*, ed. by Cornelia N. Moore and Raymond A. Moody (Manoa: University of Hawaii Press, 1989) pp.3-10 (p.4).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.4.

¹⁵Francesca Orsini, ‘The Multilingual Local in World Literature’, *Comparative Literature*, 67 (2015), 345-374 (p.347).

Concept of World Literature’ when he stated that ‘world literature might in time take on less hierarchical or oppressive connotations’,¹⁶ but does not excuse the Eurocentrism that has defined both disciplines for decades if not centuries. Still, as disciplines are shaped by scholars, I trust that my research can contribute to remodelling Comparative Literature and, subsequently, World Literature to be less culturally imbalanced.

The approach chosen for this thesis regarding World Literature shares some similarities with Kono Shion’s ‘ふたつのレンズ’.¹⁷ Kono’s method suggests looking at the literary production in Japan from two different perspectives: the area study – Japanese studies – and the world literary studies. In world literary studies, Kono sees a ‘今まで考えてもみななかった新しい文脈に接続する可能性’.¹⁸

I consider Kono’s approach to World literature as situated beside the area study similarly to the way Young describes Damrosch’s approach to world literature, i.e. that the label ‘no longer denotes a category of fiction but a “mode of reading.”’¹⁹ However, I disagree with Young’s point that Damrosch’s statement that ‘a work enters into world literature by a double process: first, by being read *as* literature; second by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin’²⁰ means that ‘a text only acquires value in translation.’²¹ In fact, Young’s point seem to imply that world literature exists in only one language, whereas I argue that world literature is a multilingual system that originates by national literatures precisely because national boundaries have historically kept works in

¹⁶Walter Cohen, ‘The Concept of World Literature’, in *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends*, ed. by Cornelia N. Moore and Raymond A. Moody (Manoa: University of Hawaii Press, 1989) pp.3-10 (p.8).

¹⁷ Shion Kono, “‘Sekai no dokusha’ Kara Yomu Nihon Bungaku: Futatsu no “yomi no mōdo” no hen’yō.”, *Border-Crossings: the journal of Japanese-language literature studies*, 5 (2017), 83-90 (p.85). [‘**Double lens.**’] (my translation).

¹⁸ Ibid. p.87. [‘**The possibility to connect new contexts that has never been thought before.**’] (my translation).

¹⁹ Victoria Young, ‘Beyond “Transborder’’, *Japanese Language and Literature* 55, (2021), 1-34. (p.2).

²⁰ David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 6.

²¹ Victoria Young, ‘Beyond “Transborder’’, *Japanese Language and Literature* 55, (2021), 1-34. (p.2).

different languages separated from each other. The necessity of the term ‘World Literature’ confirms such a statement, as it implies something that exists in opposition to ‘national literature’, otherwise the term ‘literature’ would be enough to refer to the global literary canon.

Precisely because I oppose the argument that it is translation that validates a text as part of the world literary canon, I chose to focus on works written in languages that I am proficient in, namely Japanese, English, Chinese (more specifically Mandarin), and where it is necessary Finnish and French, in order to refer primarily to the originals.

Furthermore, I believe that translation is already a fundamental part of the writing process, especially among transnational, multilingual works which, because of their nature, both resist and rely on it. They resist translation as they present instances of written multilingualism which implies that the author has chosen not to translate their words in a monolingual fashion and rely on translation as they translate instances that are typical of the spoken language, such as codeswitching, into a written form.

Building up on Kono’s argument, my work proposes three points. First, that a multilingual tradition – centred around the Japanese/English alternation – exists and has thrived in the Japanese literary scene over the last few decades; second, that the line between Japanese literature and popular culture is blurring, and finally that the cultural, trans-Pacific movement between Japan and the US initiated in the 19th century and intensified after the end of World War II (henceforth WWII) is still influencing both country’s languages, as well as literary and literary-adjacent traditions through the use of new technologies.²² Authors such as Shimada, Levy, and Asagiri, among others, have contributed to these aspects with their works.

²² It is necessary to clarify here that, even though the expression ‘cultural exchange’ holds a connotation of reciprocity that I do not intend to overlook, my research primarily refers to the influence of Japanese literature and literary-adjacent media culture on the US.

Indeed, a transmedia approach to the subject of world literature supports the point that a text can be read as literature regardless of its original form. Furthermore, the question of where the boundaries lie concerning the academic approach to contemporary fiction, and in parallel to contemporary literature, have already been raised by Robert Eaglestone.²³ This is where my point about literature being a transmedia narrative becomes evident. In fact, looking at Asagiri's manga series, for instance, it appears evident that *Bungō stray dogs* presents an example of 'transnarrative characters'²⁴ in which popular authors are set in an alternative reality which is heavily inspired by postwar Japan. Asagiri's work is especially relevant to my research since one of the main characters in the series is a former criminal turned detective named Dazai Osamu. While one can argue that Asagiri's characters share only their names and a few quirks with their real counterparts, it is undeniable that the popularity of the franchise is impacting the reception of literary works by modern and contemporary Japanese authors abroad. This provides a significant example of how popular culture provides the trigger to a continuous cultural contact and reinterpretation of literature and language. For instance, anime distributed through streaming platforms provide the tool to solidify a sense of familiarity with the Japanese language among non-Japanese speakers. Such a phenomenon is already influencing the editorial choices around new multilingual texts, such as Kagawa's trilogy *Shadow of the Fox* (2018-2020), by creating a linguistic environment that allows authors to use written multilingual strategies without needing a translation. Indeed, the concept of written multilingualism cannot be considered disjointed from codeswitching and code-mixing, both phenomena originating from language and cultural contacts and primarily discussed in spoken language by scholars such as Pieter Muysken and Sarah Grey Thomason. Thus, one of the elements I intend to introduce in my research is

²³ Robert Eaglestone, 'Contemporary fiction in the academy: towards a manifesto', *Textual Practice*, 27 (2013), 1089-1101 (p.1090).

²⁴ Ilkka Lähteenmäki, 'Transmedia history', *Rethinking History*, 25 (2021), 281–306. doi: 10.1080/13642529.2021.1963597 (p. 282).

“language flexibility.” A similar term, “linguistic flexibility,” has already been used by Christiane Donahue in her article ‘The “Trans” in Transnational-Translingual: Rhetorical and Linguistic Flexibility as New Norms’ (2016), where she states ‘[t]he flexibility in writers’ language use [that the translingual model] encourages and embraces is the same flexibility we need in approaching and understanding writing research outside our usual contexts.’²⁵

However, while Donahue refers to the dynamics between different languages in a transnational and translingual context, with the term language flexibility, I instead refer to the measure in which a language can incorporate external, primarily lexical elements, including instances of language alternation, during and after a strong language contact. Therefore, my interpretation of language flexibility echoes Charles R. Duke’s statement in his 1970 article ‘The Bamboo Style of English’, that ‘flexibility in language [...] often does occur when emergency communication is vital.’

In this sense, this thesis could not exist without my previous research project, which culminated in my Laurea Magistrale (MPhil/Master’s) thesis ‘Contaminazioni Anglo-Americane nell’uso della lingua finlandese contemporanea’, recently cited in Felicity Meakin and Jesse’s chapter ‘Mixed Languages’, in Salikoko Mufwene and Anna Maria Escobar’s *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Contact: Volume 2: Multilingualism in Population Structure* (2022).²⁶ Such research argued that the diffusion of English-language media has strongly influenced the Finnish language spoken in Helsinki – from lexical borrowings and calques to cases of code-mixing – since the 19th century in a way that is reminiscent of the progressive acquisition in the Japanese language of English lexicon following the Meiji restoration and the 1945 American Occupation. The Helsinki area is especially relevant to

²⁵ Christiane Donahue, ‘The “Trans” in Transnational-Translingual Rhetorical and Linguistic Flexibility as New Norms’, *Composition Studies*, 44 (2016), 147-150 (p.149).

²⁶ Felicity Meakins and Jesse Stewart, ‘Mixed languages’, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Contact: Volume 2: Multilingualism in Population Structure*, ed. by Salikoko Mufwene and Anna Maria Escobar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) pp. 310-343.

this type of research because it is not new to these sorts of phenomena, as seen by the creation of the *Vanha Helsingin Stadin Slangi* or Old Helsinki Slang, which integrates Swedish vocabulary within a Finnish grammatical framework. I will briefly discuss the similarities between the *Stadin Slangi* and the Bamboo English in the course of my thesis to provide evidence that moderately heavy language contact took place in Japan during the American Occupation. In addition, such comparison also shows that, contrary to expectations, the Japanese language tends to behave fairly similarly to the Finnish language. Thus, my current research moves beyond spoken language and focuses on how instances of language flexibility can be detected in written texts. Hence my work refers to two main groups of primary materials. The first one includes multilingual texts, by which I refer to texts in which language alternation (Japanese/English, English/Japanese, and in some instances Japanese/Chinese/English) and written code-switching are purposefully written on page, or texts whose narration is strongly linked to multilingualism and cultural hybridity. The second group incorporates literary-adjacent media in Japanese, emphasising the role of cultural media in disseminating the language across the Pacific in the US. I propose to analyse the way the diffusion of Japanese literature and popular culture ultimately intersects with other multilingual and multicultural literary traditions such as Japanese American literature. Through this process, I intend to highlight that elements hinting at an attempt to portray the literary tradition in Japanese as part of the global discourse, rather than limiting it to a ‘methodological nationalist approach,’²⁷ can be found in cultural media.

This thesis is then organised into six chapters, progressively analysing the historical, linguistic, literary, and cultural elements before presenting its conclusions. Chapter 1, ‘Transnationalism, Diachronicity and the Trans-Pacific: Relocating Japanese Literary

²⁷ See Aike P. Rots, ‘Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Three Directions for Japanese Studies’, *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 41, (2023), 9-35

Traditions in the World’, serves as a methodological introduction to the research. It aims to position this work in the scholarship, presenting the relevance of phenomena such as cultural contact and language change and the way they affect literature through the use of translingual practices.²⁸ The first chapter also introduces the concept of the “narrative of the disqualified” or “失格文学” (*shikkaku bungaku*), which I intend as the common narrative linking the different texts and media that my research focuses upon. Delving further into the main argument, the chapter proceeds to examine the necessity for a transnational and diachronic approach to the subject of the Japanese literary and literary-adjacent traditions. Finally, it discusses the role of the trans-Pacific trajectory connecting Japan and the US as a “contact zone.”²⁹ Chapter 2, ‘Japan in the Trans-Pacific: On the Convenience of Monolingualism and Multilingualism’, addresses the paradoxical interrelations between the representation and self-representation of Japan across the Pacific. It analyses the role of orientalist, neo-orientalist, and self-orientalist views, as well as the 19th century *Japonisme* – and its more recent forms – in relation to the stereotypical depiction of Japan as a monolingual and monocultural country. This chapter also problematises the role of literature and popular culture in the process of Japanese self-representation and its implications in the context of the “J-Wave.” Finally, it proposes a transnational approach to Dazai’s literature. Such an approach focuses on his self-portrayal as a *burai*, and therefore on both the internal and external cultural influences of his works, as well as the image of Dazai as a writer during the American Occupation. Chapter 3, ‘もっと自由になりてえなあ:³⁰ Freedom and Language in the Works of Dazai Osamu and Shimada Masahiko’, follows from the previous section

²⁸ See Suresh Canagarajah, *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. (Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2013).

²⁹ See Francesca Orsini, ‘The Multilingual Local in World Literature’, *Comparative Literature*, 67 (2015), 345-374.

³⁰ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p.194. [‘I wanna be even more free.’] (my translation).

proposing a comparison between Dazai's literature and Shimada Masahiko's novel *Yumetsukai* (夢使い, 1989, *Dream Messenger*, trans. by Philip Gabriel, 1992). The chapter opens with a section discussing the similarities in the authors' interpretation of the concept of "freedom". It then moves on to present the argument that Shimada's narrative intends multilingualism as a form of rebellion, and therefore it represents a fundamental element in the main character's quest to pursue his own personal freedom to live outside of social boundaries. Lastly, it problematises the role of *ekkyō bungaku* (越境文学, border-crossing literature) in relation to the national Japanese literary canon. Thus chapter 3 bridges to chapter 4 'The *gaijin* as *ningen shikkaku*: Echoes of Dazai in Levy Hideo's Multilingual Stories', which compares Levy Hideo's *gaijin* characters to Dazai's *ningen shikkaku*. The title anticipates the prominence of written multilingualism in the analysis carried out in this chapter, as it proceeds to compare Levy's and Shimada's multilingual writings. As multilingualism provides a metaphor for the embracing of a culturally hybrid, fluid identity, Chapter 5, 'Reclaiming the Memory of the In-between: Translingual Memoirs and Language as Rebellion', further addressed the implications of such a topic. This chapter redirects the argument towards a trans-Pacific dimension, introducing a comparison between writers in Japanese and Japanese American authors. It opens with an analysis of John Okada's 1957 novel *No-No Boy*'s interrelations with Dazai's postwar works, then proceeds to focus on the concepts of in-betweenness and cultural hybridity in both Shimada's and Okada's writings. Such a comparison leads to the interpretation of 'identity as legacy', which highlights the role of language in the passing down of memory, a relevant topic in both Levy's novels *Seijōki no Kikoenai Heya* (星条旗の聞こえない部屋, 1992, *A Room Where the Star-Spangled Banner Cannot Be Heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott, 2011) and *Tenanmon* (天安門, 1996), and Elizabeth Miki Brina's memoir *Speak, Okinawa* (2021). Language, memory, and legacy are

all elements that connect with legends and myths, thus Chapter 6, ‘Blurring the Lines: The International Power of Popular Culture’, brings attention to the role of popular culture in the dissemination of Japanese culture and language beyond Japan. It also expands from the literary representation of cultural hybridity and the sense of displacement experienced by Dazai, Shimada and Levy’s characters to a more extreme form of representation of hybridity which often involves fantastical elements. Therefore, such fantastical representation will be discussed as a metaphor for the cultural hybridity and sense of displacement and isolation present in previous literary works.

Starting from the representation of monsters and mythical creatures in Japanese literature, it moves to the reimagining of fantastical and mythological creatures in literary-adjacent media. The chapter proposes that recent manga, anime, and light novels in Japanese reinterpreting such creatures as hybrids echoes the “narrative of the disqualified,” by presenting displaced characters isolated not from a national society, but from human and non-human societies at the same time. The popularity of works in Japanese centred around this theme in the US provides a significant element for the argument on the relevance of streaming platforms and the internet in making Japanese-language audiovisual media accessible in the US, thus enabling American authors of Japanese heritage to publish multilingual texts about worlds and magical systems heavily inspired by Japanese folklore, as Kagawa does. Following up from this point, the chapter concludes with an analysis of Asagiri Kafka’s well-received series *Bungō Stray Dogs* (文豪ストレイドッグス, *Bungō Sutorei Doggusu*, 2013-ongoing), highlighting the role of literary-adjacent media in promoting Japanese literature as part of the world literary canon. Specifically, the second half focuses on the way Asagiri’s characters are inspired and named after both Japanese and non-Japanese literary authors, while their adventures are based on the national and transnational cultural interconnections among the real authors.

Finally, the conclusive section advocates for a “Japanese literature as World Literature” based on the role of Japanese literature and literary-adjacent media in the transnational, global system and the acknowledgement of diverse literary traditions in Japanese.

Chapter 1: Transnationalism, Diachronicity and the Trans-Pacific: Relocating Japanese Literary Traditions in the World.

As mentioned in the previous section, a fundamental element in this work is the interaction between representation and interpretation. The dichotomy between representation and interpretation is such that, within certain pre-set limits, one depends on the other. For instance, the homogenous representation of Japan creates the understanding of Japan as culturally unique. Consequently, this leads to the sense that the Japanese literary scene has been prevented from being fully appreciated in the context of world literature, as implied by Dorsey, Kono and Young. However, as representation is fundamentally a product of human efforts, as discussed by Angela Yiu, it can be rewritten. The rewriting of representation allows a different interpretation of well-known arguments. This is what my work aims to do, employing the diachronic, transnational, and transmedia approach that I mentioned in the introduction. Such an aim is surely ambitious and one that can easily lead to misreading if not thoroughly debated. This being the case, it is paramount to follow a well-organised procedure that clearly highlights the ways in which the different parts of this thesis interact with one another and with the main argument.

Thus, in addition to introducing the methodological aspects and presenting linguistic elements relevant to the field of cultural contact and language change, such as codeswitching and code-mixing, this first chapter is intended to present two of the central points in my research: the *shikkaku bungaku* (narrative of the disqualified) and the role of the case study of the trans-Pacific trajectory as a cultural contact zone. Proposing to look at the works cited in this study through the lens of the *shikkaku bungaku* clarifies how Dazai Osamu's literature is fundamental to the writing of the other authors upon which my research is based. In addition, it reinforces the position of the trans-Pacific trajectory as a cultural contact zone, setting the

basis for the argument that the influence of Dazai's literature reached across the Pacific in the aftermath of the American Occupation, creating a tether between the contemporary Japanese literary scene and the Japanese American literary sphere.

1.1 From Literature to Literary-Adjacent: Fluid Identities, Hybridity, and the Narrative of the Disqualified.

The seven-year period from 1945 to 1952 in Japan, commonly known as the American or Allied occupation, or *Rengōkoku-gun senryō-ka no Nihon* (連合軍占領下の日本), serves as the starting point for this thesis. Major works, such as Miyoshi Masao and Harry D. Harootunian's *Japan in the World* (1993), Iwabuchi Kōichi's *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (2002), and Pekka Korhonen's *Japan and the Pacific Free Trade Area* (2013) refer to the Occupation in its political capacity to redesign Japan's imperial and war history in order to control the way in which the country would be received in the postwar world as an ally rather than an enemy.³¹ As such, it is important to note that the image of Japan as a 'peace-loving, homogeneous state instead of the prewar militaristic multinational empire' was popularised after the war.³² The reintroduction of the concept of "homogeneity" in this narrative brings it closer to the ideology expressed by the *Nihonjinron*, the discourse on Japaneseness, that supports the notion of Japanese uniqueness. Consequently, it discredits the 'prewar pan-Asian rhetoric' according to which Japan has a strong 'racial' connection with the territories it colonised, such as Korea.³³ Instead, it relies on the depiction of 'culturally unique Japanese people, who

³¹ Stephen Snyder, 'Insistence and Resistance: Murakami and Mizumura in Translation', *New England Review*, 37 (2016), 133-142 (p.133).

³² Lori Watt, *When Empire Comes Home: Repatriation and Reintegration in Postwar Japan* (Harvard & London: Harvard University Press, 2009), p.6.

³³ *Ibid.* p.6.

were *in* Asia but not *of* it'.³⁴ As the topic of the American Occupation of Japan has mostly been addressed from a sociopolitical and socioeconomic angle, the focus has then remained on the unmaking of the Empire, i.e. the process of 'dismantling Japan's fifty-year imperial project',³⁵ and the imposition of the new constitutional framework which forbids Japan from 'remilitarization'.³⁶ Much less represented in the academic debate is its cultural impact on both Japanese language, literary traditions, and its role in the cultural influence over the American popular cultural scene.

In the context of Japan, the necessity to communicate between people speaking different languages but few bilinguals able to switch between languages is at the base of the development of pidgins. More specifically, American GIs incorporated a handful of Japanese expressions into their speech.³⁷ After the end of the occupation, in 1955, Arthur M.Z. Norman coined the expression "Bamboo English" to describe the outcome of such a phenomenon in his article 'Bamboo English the Japanese Influence upon American Speech in Japan.'³⁸ Moreover, new terms were introduced in the spoken language. Some originated from Bamboo English, for instance *mamasan* (ママさん), which still carries a meaning akin to "female bartender" today in certain environments like bars and guest houses.³⁹ Others resulted from the introduction of new products, such as the canned soup (スウプ), mentioned

³⁴ Ibid. p.6.

³⁵ Ibid. p.1.

³⁶ Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian 'Japan in the World', in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 1-9 (p.2).

³⁷ While I refer to the emergence of Bamboo English in Japan, it is noteworthy that evidence of such phenomena can also be found in Korea. See Grant Webster, 'Korean Bamboo English Once More', *American Speech*, 35 (1960), 261-265, and Charles R. Duke, 'The Bamboo Style of English', in *College Composition and Communication*, 21 (1970), 170-172 for more information on this topic.

³⁸ Arthur M. Z. Norman, 'Bamboo English the Japanese Influence upon American Speech In Japan', *American Speech*, 30 (1955), 44-48 (p.44).

³⁹ Eyal Ben-Ari, 'AT THE INTERSTICES: Drinking, Management, and Temporary Groups in a Local Japanese Organization', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology*, 26 (1989), 46-64 (p.62).

in the opening of Dazai Osamu's novel *Shayō* (斜陽, 1947, *The Setting Sun* trans. by Donald Keene, 1956).⁴⁰

The modes in which literature reflected the profound changes in Japanese society can be seen in the significant shift the concept of the 'sincere "self"' underwent, by being now depicted as multifaceted, rather than as a monolithic entity.⁴¹ Dazai's production embraced this development with the introduction of characters like Naoji in the aforementioned *Shayō*, who express the complexities of human nature and the various forces that shape the notion and perception of identity.⁴² It is worth noting that even before WWII, the concept of "self" was a consistent theme in Japanese literature. Indeed, since the Meiji Era (明治時代 1868-1912) 'narrative fiction in Japan has been construed by a large segment of the writing population as a medium for embodying the content of the personal "self"'.⁴³ This leads to the 'conflict' between the representability of the self and its impossibility and undesirability, which remains at the centre of the critical 'debate between the postwar generation and their postmodern successors.'⁴⁴ Although this thesis does not aim to take sides in such a debate, the centrality of "self" in the literary tradition in Japanese language is still relevant to the argument for the interconnection between multilingualism, hybridity and loneliness that this thesis makes, since it is strongly associated to the idea of fluid identity which, in turn, is part of the postmodern discourse.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p. 5.

⁴¹ Stephen Snyder, Philip Gabriel, 'Introduction' in *Ōe and Beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 1-10 (4).

⁴² As a central character in Dazai's postwar writing, Naoji holds particular significance to this research. In the upcoming chapters, I will delve deeper into his role within Dazai's literature and its broader implications in the context of Japanese literature.

⁴³ Stephen Snyder, Philip Gabriel, 'Introduction' in *Ōe and Beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 1-10 (4).

⁴⁴ Stephen Snyder, Philip Gabriel, 'Introduction' in *Ōe and Beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 1-10 (4).

⁴⁵ In this instance, I refer to studies such as Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein's 'Grounding the Postmodern Self', where the scholars argue: '[o]ur approach claims a middle ground between modernism and

This study does not intend to portray the three themes around which it revolves as disjointed from one another. Rather, I seek to emphasise the way narratives centred around the concept of hybridity, in its multiple representations, tend to combine it with a sense of loneliness. The texts referenced in this work, revolve around protagonists who struggle to fit into the standards imposed by society as they ultimately choose to embrace their position as in-betweeners by opposing societal constructs and expectations. Thus, as the characters acknowledge their impossibility to be part of society, they accept their role as *shikkaku* or “disqualified”. The particular sentiment of loneliness that they experience is conveyed by the term *kodoku* (孤独), which carries a meaning of not just “loneliness”, but also “isolation”. Cultural hybridity often plays a central role in such othering processes. This is especially common in works by Japanese or Japanese-writing authors such as Shimada Masahiko’s *Yumetsukai* (夢使い, 1989, *Dream Messenger*, trans. by Philip Gabriel, 1992), and Levy Hideo’s *Seijōki no Kikoenai Heya* (星条旗の聞こえない部屋, 1992, *A Room Where the Star-Spangled Banner Cannot Be Heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott, 2011, henceforth *Seijōki*), that challenge the way Japanese society is traditionally portrayed as linguistically, culturally, and ethnically homogeneous focusing instead their stories on immigrants, people of mixed background (oftentimes referred to with the controversial term ハーフ, *hāfu*, from the English *half*), and returnees to Japan. Hints of this phenomenon can also be found in the works of Japanese American authors like John Okada’s *No-No Boy* (1957). In both these contexts, multilingualism is not only represented as a form of cultural hybridity, but it also provides a medium to convey the complexity of fluid identities. Moreover, in the cases where written multilingualism is employed, it allows the author to openly resist the expectations of

postmodernism in that we recognize the constitutive fluidity and multiplicity of social forms, including the self that is associated with postmodernity.’ [Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, ‘Grounding the Postmodern Self’, *The Sociological Quarterly*, 35 (1994), 685-703 (p.691)].

monoculturalism and monolingualism. In addition, speculative works in Japanese, including manga, anime, and light novels, portray hybridity between species as a metaphor for cultural hybridity. In this instance, the characters grapple with the realisation that they cannot be part of either the human society or the society of monsters or non-human creatures. This is the case in Ishida Sui's *Tokyo Ghoul* (東京喰種, *Tōkyō Gūru*, 2011-2014) and *Tokyo Ghoul:re* (東京喰種:re, *Tōkyō Gūru:re*, 2014-2018), and provides an important storyline in Asagiri Kafka's *Bungō Stray Dogs* (文豪ストレイドッグス, *Bungō Sutorei Doggusu*, 2013-ongoing) concerning the character of Nakahara Chūya. But such a theme is also present in less popular works, for example, Fujiwara Cocoa's *Inu x Boku SS* (妖狐×僕 SS, *Inu Boku Shikuretto Sābisu*, 2009-2014). The employment of such narrative in popular media draws attention to the fact that an interest in the topic is not only pertinent to literature. Thus, as a result of the increasing popularity of literary-adjacent media across the Pacific, it has also been incorporated into fantasy works by American writers of Japanese heritage, such as Julie Kagawa's *Shadow of the Fox*. Because, as previously discussed, in both the literary works and other media mentioned, the protagonists ultimately recognise that they exist in a liminal space, unable to be fully considered as part of society, and therefore free of living as themselves, embodying the notion of the “disqualified”, this study refers to this kind of narrative, both in mundane and speculative settings, as “narrative of the disqualified” or *shikkaku bungaku* (失格文学).

The most significant contribution – and arguably the starting point for the growing recognition of such narrative – is Dazai's postwar production, which includes his last two long novels *Shayō* and *Ningen Shikkaku* (人間失格, 1948, *No Longer Human* trans. by Donald Keene, 1958). Since it is more focused on personal distress while also carrying on an

‘anarchic-revolutionary ideal’ that is never fully explained, critics have often described Dazai’s social critique as confusing.⁴⁶ But it is precisely in the personal distress – rather than a societal one – that the roots of the feeling of *kodoku* can be found. In fact, by focusing on the personal versus the communal, Dazai acknowledges a gap between the way in which the individual pictures themselves and the way society as a whole sees the individual, hence the realisation of identity as inherently subjective and fluid. To attest to the literary interest in such a perspective among contemporary authors in Japan it is worth noting that writers such as Murakami Haruki also raised similar points. In fact, Murakami’s narrator in his 1999 novel *Sputnik no koibito* (スプートニクの恋人, *Supūtonikku no koibito* 1999, *Sputnik Sweetheart* trans. by Philip Gabriel, 2001) is faced with what he calls the ‘自分とはなにか? という命題’⁴⁷ or the ‘*who am I?* paradox’,⁴⁸ when, while dealing with the sudden disappearance of her best friend and love interest, he frustratedly wonders ‘我々は実のところ自分についていったいなにを知ってるというのだろうか?’⁴⁹ By acknowledging the impossibility of determining the nature of identity and personal value according to social constructs and expectations, Dazai’s works ultimately recognise that such constructs and expectations are essentially flawed. Therefore, they are also unsuitable to define the place of the individual in relation to society. Consequently, an important part of Dazai’s texts as well as the more recent works that similarly focus on the aforementioned “narrative of the disqualified” is the issue of “displacement”, whether it be psychological or physical. As a result, a common concept that is sometimes left unnamed but is still central can be detected: the *ibasho* (居場

⁴⁶ Maria Teresa Orsi, ‘Dazai’ in Osamu Dazai, *Il Sole Si Spegne*, trans. by Luciano Bianciardi (Milano: SE, 2001), pp. 131-137 (p.134).

⁴⁷ Haruki Murakami, *Sputnik no Koibito*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2001), p.84.

⁴⁸ Haruki Murakami, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, trans. by Philip Gabriel (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 59.

⁴⁹ Haruki Murakami, *Sputnik no Koibito*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2001), p.85. “**How well do we really know ourselves?**” trad by Gabriel in Haruki Murakami, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, trans. by Philip Gabriel (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 60.

所). In the context of the works analysed in this research *ibasho* refers to the “place where one belongs”. For instance, such theme is predominant in Ishida's *Tokyo Ghoul*, where the protagonist Kaneki has to find his own place as a hybrid in a fundamentally binary society. Instead, in *Yumetsukai*, which centres around migratory movements, Shimada refers to it as ‘帰ってゆく場所’,⁵⁰ “the place to go back to”. In this sense, the term carries a similar meaning to that of “home” in other literary traditions in English, such as Japanese American literature or the literature of American authors of Japanese heritage.

The notion of “home” as a place where one belongs is especially significant in Japanese American internment literature and translingual memoirs. Specifically, internment literature sheds light on the connection between the feeling of displacement and tragic political and historical events, such as the internment of ‘some 112,000 West Coast Japanese Americans’ following the Pearl Harbor attack.⁵¹ This is particularly evident in Okada’s fundamental work *No-No Boy*. Although documents that unequivocally confirm Dazai's influence on the Japanese American literary canon have yet to be found, it is highly likely that this is indeed the case. In fact, considering the limited number of American bilingual military personnel,⁵² being proficient in Japanese would have been sufficient to include Okada among those employed in the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD), affording him both the opportunity and skill to read Dazai's literature.⁵³ It is also worth noting that, after the unsuccessful first publication of Okada's novel, little information was released about the inspiration behind the book. Most of what is known was collected after the author's death by the editors of *Aiiieeee! An anthology of Asian-American Writers* (1974). However, their primary focus in

⁵⁰ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin ni-bu monogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 12.

⁵¹ Greg Robinson, ‘Writing the Internment’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by Crystal Parikh and Daniel Y. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 45-48 (p.45).

⁵² Jay Rubin, ‘Wholesomeness to Decadence: The Censorship of Literature under the Allied Occupation’, in *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 11 (1985), pp. 71-103 (p. 97).

⁵³ Alan Stephen Wolfe, *Suicidal narrative in modern Japan: The case of Dazai Osamu*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 4.

publishing the anthology was on authors of Chinese-, Japanese-, and Filipino- heritage who were ‘American born and raised, who got their China and Japan from the radio, off the silver screen, from television, out of comic books.’⁵⁴ Thus, they appeared to have very limited interest in possible transnational connections between Japanese American and Japanese authors. Instead, their commentary on Okada is more laudatory than critical. As a result, they tend to refer to the man instead than the author, which regrettably leads to the rather nebulous conclusion that ‘John Okada was a magnificent man, a huge man who lived a full life of love and action. Most certainly he had difficulties – he was, after all, a Jap in America, who lived through America, through the War – but what he brought through the beauty of his soul is a tribute to us all.’⁵⁵ In addition, according to Inada, the materials they had gathered, including the interview with Dorothy Okada, Okada’s widow, were lost after their car got broken into in San Francisco.⁵⁶ Consequently, it has become virtually impossible to gather more information about Okada’s writing process and its connections with Dazai’s works. However, as this study will argue in more detail in due course, there are similarities between the narratives in *No-No Boy* and Dazai’s novels. Additionally, contemporary productions by writers such as Shimada and Levy, who distance themselves from the representation of Japan as a culturally and linguistically homogeneous country, show commonalities with those of Japanese American authors who write about their experiences. In both cases, there is evidence of the profound impact of the war on society and, therefore, on literature, marking them as true ‘by-products of the mid-twentieth century’.⁵⁷

When compared to Japan, the Occupation apparently had a much smaller cultural impact on the US at first. Nonetheless, it still brought to light issues concerning Japanese American

⁵⁴ Frank Chin and others, ‘Preface’, in *Aiiieeee! An anthology of Asian-American writers* ed. by Frank Chin and others (Washington: Howard University Press, 1974), pp VI-XVIII (p. VII).

⁵⁵ Lawson Fusao Inada, ‘Introduction’, in John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), pp. XIX -XXII (p. XXI).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. XX.

⁵⁷ Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, (Edinburgh; London: Canongate, 2013), p.32.

communities, especially the *nisei* (second-generation immigrants). Some of them after living through the internment despite being born in the US, therefore being American citizens, enlisted in the US Army. In some cases, like Okada's, they were also deployed in Japan during the Occupation, which enabled them to experience and export Japanese language and literature to the US. Unfortunately, there has been little interest in this cultural trajectory. For example, in terms of literature, only very recent works such as Lynne Kutsukake's *The Translation of Love* (2016) have shed light on this point, moving the narrative across the Pacific Ocean to Japan.⁵⁸ Traditionally, the main focus on the effects of the Occupation on the US has been on the strengthening of international and military relations with Japan. However, after the Occupation, the US began importing not only technology but also cultural items, such as anime and manga.

The awarding of an Oscar for Best Animated Feature to Miyazaki Hayao's film *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* (千と千尋の神隠し, 2001, *Spirited Away*) provides evidence of the increasing popularity of anime and manga in the US at the beginning of the 21st century. Furthermore, the more recent success of streaming platforms such as Netflix, Crunchyroll, and Viki has made it easier to consume Japanese media outside of Japan, adding to the attractiveness of Japanese contemporary subcultures and language across the Pacific. This has also influenced the US publishing market to invest in stories based on the reimagining of Japanese folklore creatures and tales in an anime-like fashion. For instance, from 2018 to 2020, Julie Kagawa published a trilogy inspired by the myth of the *kitsune*, *Shadow of the Fox*. This trend of reimagining Japanese cultural elements through the lens of literary-adjacent media is not limited to myths. In fact, among the numerous manga, anime, and light

⁵⁸ Even though Lynne Kutsukake is a Canadian author of Japanese heritage, I will often reference her 2016 novel *The Translation of Love* in my thesis within the context of Japanese American literary production. I have made this choice because the novel does not solely focus on the Japanese Canadian historical discourse, instead it centres around both Japanese Canadian and Japanese American characters.

novels that have been published in Japan over the last decades and made available to an international audience through various platforms and translations, some also propose a speculative reimagining of the Japanese literary canon. In addition to Asagiri's *Bungō Stray Dogs*, examples also include the series of visual novels, light novels, manga, and anime *Meiji Tōkyō Renka* (明治東京恋伽, 2012, *Meiji Tokyo Renka*), *Code: Riarazu – sōsei no himegimi* (*Code: Realize ~ 創世の姫君*, 2017, *Code: Realize - Guardian of Rebirth*), an anime series based on a visual novel by the same title, and *Bungō to Alchemist - Shinpan no Haguruma* (文豪とアルケミスト ~ 審判ノ齒車, 2020, *Bungō and Alchemist: Gears of Judgment*), another anime series originally based on the 2016 video game *Bungō to Alchemist* (文豪とアルケミスト). Thus, similarly to mythical creatures, Japanese historical literary figures like Dazai Osamu, Mori Ōgai, Nakahara Chūya, and Natsume Sōseki have gained popularity in the US outside of the academic sphere and beyond anime and manga fandoms. Asagiri's works in particular are often discussed among reader communities on social media such as YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, as well as in academic journals.⁵⁹

1.2 Language Change and Translingual Strategies in Multilingual Texts.

The role of the internet in creating an alternative space in which phenomena such as cultural contact and language change can take place – especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic – is highly relevant to this work. In fact, as I discuss in this section, cultural contact enabling language change which consequently leads to the use of multilingual and

⁵⁹ See <https://honoursreview.com/blog/2019/2/15/bungo-stray-dogs-a-101-crash-course-in-world-literature> and <https://www.michigandaily.com/arts/digital-culture/how-bungo-stray-dogs-introduces-literature-classics-to-fans-worldwide/>

translingual practices, including code-switching, remains at the core of this research. This does not only concern the spoken language, but it is also relevant to the use of written multilingualism in literature. As such, in the process of renegotiating the position of Japanese literature and literary-adjacent media in the world literary discourse from a transnational perspective, this thesis follows up from the argument that a multilingual literary tradition has existed and still exists in Japan recently expressed by Angela Yiu, in her 2020 article ‘Literature in Japanese (Nihongo bungaku): An Examination of the New Literary Topography by Plurilingual Writers from the 1990s.’

This thesis intends as multilingual a group of literary works and other media that rely on the use of more than one language on page, primarily Japanese and English, to fulfil a narrative revolving around the notion of *hybridity*, cultural or otherwise. For example, Shimada’s *Yumetsukai*, Levy’s *Seijōki* and *Tenanmon* (天安門, 1996), and Asagiri’s *Bungō Stray Dogs*.

Thus, I carry out my analysis through the lens of Sturm-Trigonakis’s concept of “hybrid texts” which ‘on a formal level [...] contain codeswitching—not necessarily between standardized national languages, but also dialects—and on the thematic level they negotiate issues of a globalized world—that is, they perform the dynamics between the global and the local as far as the fictive personal, spatial, and temporal dimensions are concerned’.⁶⁰

By pointing at the seven-year-long American Occupation as the most significant case of language contact in Japanese contemporary history, leading to the mandatory study of English in schools in 1947,⁶¹ I propose that Japanese and English share a high degree of

⁶⁰ Eike Sturm-Trigonakis, ‘Comparative Cultural Studies and Linguistic Hybridities in Literature’, in *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*, ed. by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India, 2013), pp. 178-191 (p.178).

⁶¹ Rotem Kowner, Michal Daliot-Bul, ‘Japanese: The Dialectic Relationship Between ‘Westernness’ and ‘Japaneseness’ as Reflected in English Loan Words’, in *Globally speaking: motives for adopting English vocabulary in other languages* ed. by J. Rosenhouse and R. Kowner (Clevedon; Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2008) pp.250-275 p.256.

flexibility which allows for a fluid incorporation of foreign elements. In the case of Japanese, this is already evident in its writing system – which when compared to the English one shows a composite structure – displaying a 'great capacity to accommodate [...] hybridity (*zasshusei* 雑種性)'.⁶² Indeed, Katō Shūichi's theory of the *zasshu bunka* (雑種文化) is relevant to the point on popularity of the Japanese/English language alternation. In fact, Katō's theory can be summarised as the idea that Japan, and the Japanese people of his generation who lived through the occupation and afterwards, exist with one foot in the West and one in Japan. Thus while *zasshusei*,⁶³ which Yiu and other scholars translate as hybridity, is dependent on Katō's 'image of Japan' since according to Katō, after the Japanese defeat, Asia became an "anti-Western" and "anti-modern" symbol' as opposed to Japan whose democratisation he saw as being in line with the West,⁶⁴ it also supports the argument that the American Occupation served as a trigger for both the development and the acknowledgment of the hybrid aspect of the written language.

By accommodating hybridity, Japanese language can also express the concept of hybridity, thus through the creative manipulation of the Japanese script, authors such as Shimada and Levy manage to resist translation. This is however not limited to literature, indeed language flexibility and the complexities of the Japanese script, which is amplified by the widely used roman alphabet (*rōmaji*), allow for such hybridity to be shown in other areas such as music, especially among J-pop and J-rock. For instance, the lyrics of the 2006 hit by the songwriter Anna Tsuchiya 'Rose' present an intense Japanese/English alternation already in the first verses: 'When I was darkness at that time 震えてる唇 / 部屋の片隅で I cry/もがけばもが

⁶² Angela Yiu, 'Literature in Japanese (Nihongo bungaku)', *Japanese Language and Literature*, 54 (2020), 37-66. (p.38).

⁶³ It is however important to mention that the term *zasshusei* does not possess an entirely positive connotation as the compound carries the idea of a miscellaneous between different species. As opposed to this, in this thesis I use the term hybrid or hybridity to indicate the effects of a mutual influence between cultures and languages.

⁶⁴ Maja Vodopivec, "On Possibility of the Postwar Knowledge Continuities and Discontinuities in the thought of Katō Shūichi." PhD diss., Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2013. (p.147).

くほど突き刺さるこの傷/ 破られた約束 hurt me.’⁶⁵ More recently, Kaze Fujii’s 2020 song ‘Shinunoga e-wa’ confirms that language flexibility is still widely used in the industry, as it not only was released with romanised title, but a title that uses an alternative romanisation of the Japanese 死ぬのがいいわ, which would traditionally become *shinunoga ii wa* (roughly translated as ‘I’d rather die’).⁶⁶ It is the fact that these strategies are comprehensible to the audience, even expected in some cases, that shows that a level of hybridity is becoming an intrinsic element of the contemporary language.

In this context, the term “translation” refers to the process of interlingual translation ‘between two different verbal sign systems’,⁶⁷ which usually aims for the multilingual speaker/writer to produce a monolingual interpretation to make their speech accessible for a monolingual listener/reader. For example, Suresh Canagarajah uses the expression “translingual practice” to describe the modes expressed in quotes such as ‘Penman、Barbara は Jewish Irish、私は元日本兵だ、そして、子供たちはバラバラ。天使には Family^{みよ}には Family name^{みよ うじ} も Nationality^{こくせき}もないように、私たちの子供は皆、自由なんのだよ’,⁶⁸ or ‘黒髪の女がかれの西洋語のファースト・ネームを流暢に呼び、I’ve heard all about you と言った.’⁶⁹

Under this umbrella term, Canagarajah not only gathers concepts such as Jørgensen’s polylingual languaging and Blommaert’s heterography, both of which focused on specific geographical areas such as Europe in the first case and Africa in the latter, but also expresses

⁶⁵ <https://lyrics.lyricfind.com/lyrics/anna-tsuchiya-rose> (accessed July 2024).

⁶⁶ <https://saniyachan.medium.com/the-rise-of-fujii-kaze-why-shinunoga-e-wa-was-just-the-beginning-48c2b5dfd442> (accessed July 2024).

⁶⁷ Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p.9.

⁶⁸ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 156. (‘Penman and Barbara are Jewish Irish, I am a former Japanese soldier, and the kids came from many many places. So, our children were all absolutely free like the angels who do not have a family name or a nationality’ [my translation]).

⁶⁹ Ian Hideo Levy, *Tenanmon* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996), p.24 (‘The black-haired woman effortlessly called him by his western first name “I’ve heard all about you” she said.’ [my translation])

that these forms of cross-language relations concern either the spoken language and the written texts.⁷⁰ In addition, Canagarajah mentions that ‘For many readers, this kind of writing [...] will be irritating.’⁷¹ In fact, the stereotype against multilingualism heavily implies that ‘movement between languages involves increased intellectual labour’.⁷² This follows the same structuralist rhetoric that imagines ‘language [as] monolithic’ rigidly separated systems,⁷³ and also maintains that ‘[a]n ideal bilingual ‘switches from one language according to appropriate changes in the speech situation (interlocutor, topics, etc.) but not in an unchanged speech situation and certainly not within a single sentence.’⁷⁴ Thus, according to the same tradition, speech and writing patterns like code-switching indicate the speaker’s lack of proficiency in at least one of the languages involved. This is ‘exacerbated by postcolonial criticism, which attempts to structure literature according to presupposed power relationships’ based on language, nationality, and ethnicity.⁷⁵ Consequently, the employment of translingual strategies – the written form of phenomena such as code-switching and code-mixing – in literary texts reclaims the right of the multilingual author to refute their supposed obligation to write monolingually. However, phenomena such as code-switching have been discussed almost exclusively in the context of spoken language until very recently, regardless of the way they have also been used as a stylistic device in literature.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Suresh Canagarajah, *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. (Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 4-6.

⁷¹ Canagarajah, Suresh. *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. Routledge, 2012. (p.1)

⁷² Williams, Hannah Tate. "Translingualism as Creative Revolt: Rewriting Dominant Narratives of Translingual Literature." In *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts*, no. 30. 2020. p.3.

⁷³ Ibid. p.3.

⁷⁴ Muysken, Pieter, and Pieter Cornelis Muysken. *Bilingual speech: A typology of code-mixing*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. (pp.1-2).

⁷⁵ Williams, Hannah Tate. "Translingualism as Creative Revolt: Rewriting Dominant Narratives of Translingual Literature." In *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts*, no. 30. 2020. p.3.

⁷⁶ Cecilia Montes-Alcalá, ‘Written codeswitching: Powerful bilingual images’, in *Codeswitching Worldwide II*, ed. by Rodolfo Jacobson (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 193-222 (p.194).

Two main points need to be addressed concerning the legacy of the structuralist and postcolonial traditions on the study of multilingual literature: first, the binary approach reserved to the study of multilingual texts; second the juxtaposition between national and transnational literature. Indeed, recent publications such as Ayres-Bennet and Fisher's *Multilingualism and Identity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (2022), Hiddleston and Ouyang's *Multilingual Literature as World Literature* (2021), and Jones's *Literature in Motion: Translating Multilingualism Across the Americas* (2022) show an increasing interest in literary multilingualism and translanguaging. The authors certainly offer valuable insights into the least discussed aspects of multilingual literature, such as the translation of a multilingual text and the practical implications of acknowledging the existence of multilingual literature. However, although these studies encourage a transnational approach to literary studies, they ultimately still imply that multilingualism primarily originates from colonialism. This is clear when considering two additional points. First, there is a significant imbalance between the large number of studies on English/Spanish texts, where two Western languages alternate with English being the primary one, and the almost non-existent number of studies on Japanese/English texts, where English is the embedded, secondary language while the primary one, Japanese, is an Asian language. Second, works on literary multilingualism tend to keep multilingual/transnational literature separated from monolingual/national literature. Because multilingual literature is undeniably still commonly viewed merely as a by-product of colonialism, this leads to a focus on the juxtaposition between a dominant language/culture and a secondary one. On the one hand, from a social perspective, the dominant language might be the more prestigious one, while the secondary one might be less prestigious.⁷⁷ On the other hand, from a personal perspective, the dominant language is supposed to be the

⁷⁷ Sarah Grey Thomason and Terrence Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), pp.43-44.

author's native tongue or first language, while the secondary one would be the acquired language. Thus, it is evident that the debate on the nature of multilingualism and monolingualism, including arguments for or against the value of monolingualism, as explored in texts such as David Gramling's *The Invention of Monolingualism* (2016), holds greater significance than that on the actual existence of a national canon in a transnational world. Furthermore, such distinctions have proven to be flimsy when faced with the expanding corpus of translingual writing. For example, Levy who was born into a "dominant" language such as English, chose to write in Japanese instead, one of his acquired languages. In addition, global mobility – whether it concerns large groups or a single individual – is still central in the discourse on multilingual literature. Sturm-Trigonakis distinguishes among three themes as the start of transnational movement in hybrid literatures, marriage, exile, and education. These three themes, regardless of the vastly different circumstances around the people experiencing them as well as those concerning the societal response to each of them, can be summarised with the terms *immigration* or *migration*, in that, without the social stigma often attached to the term, the immigrant is ultimately someone who moves from a point A to a point B. However, by implying that transnationalism is only, or even mostly, relevant in the context of economic migration, older studies have undermined the potential of multilingual literary studies, effectively barring certain directions that could instead have led to a new understanding of transnational literature, ultimately regarding multilingual literature as an inherent part of the migration literary corpus. While it is often the case that migration literature is indeed multilingual in nature, multilingualism in literature is not conditional to migratory movements. Migration or immigrant literature 'in its most general sense, [...] refers to contemporary literature by authors who have immigrated to another culture and language,

most of whom also write in this new language.’⁷⁸ Furthermore, scholars such as Sturm-Trigonakis and Sandra Vlasta associate migration literature with world literature on the basis that the two share ‘texts’ worldliness, their multilingualism and other innovative aesthetic elements and, last but not least, the authors’ familiarity with more than one cultural and linguistic sphere.’⁷⁹ Furthermore, for example in the German context the term has developed into *interkulturelle Literatur*. While Sturm-Trigonakis notices that the term is still rooted in the binary representation of national and non-national literature, Vlasta considers the implication of the expression in a much more positive light since it ‘reveals a fundamental shift from a focus on the authors’ origin and their exclusion from the national literary canon to a broader perspective that nonetheless stresses their biographies, to a body of literature by immigrants with a potentially unifying force and that bridges diversity.’⁸⁰

On the one hand, this thesis challenges the perceived dichotomy between national literature and ‘new world literature’ based on the point that they ‘are juxtaposed as literary systems whose components are contoured by specific differences.’⁸¹ On the other hand, it acknowledges the necessity for the definition of ‘hybrid literature as “minority” texts compared to the monolingual and monoculture majority.’⁸² It aims to highlight that, in the Japanese literary scene, the distinction between national/monolingual and transnational/multilingual literatures is outdated since both themes and the employment of

⁷⁸ Sandra Vlasta, ‘World Literature and Migration Literature’, In *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2022), pp. 176-184 (p. 176).

⁷⁹ Sandra Vlasta, ‘World Literature and Migration Literature’, In *The Routledge Companion to World Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2022), pp. 176-184 (p. 176).

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 177.

⁸¹ Eike Sturm-Trigonakis, ‘Comparative Cultural Studies and Linguistic Hybridities in Literature’, in *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*, ed. by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India, 2013), pp. 178-191 (p.185).

⁸² Ibid. p.184.

multilingual strategies in national authors such as Shimada and transnational authors such as Levy are not dissimilar.

In the Japanese context, multiculturalism has been used as a political device in the context of internationalisation (国際化 *kokusaika*), ultimately supporting a nationalistic view still clinging to the ideas portrayed by the *Nihonjinron* or discourse on Japaneseness, that focuses on the uniqueness of the Japanese culture and therefore on its inherent monoculturalism and monolingualism which provides the very basis for the modern state of Japan.⁸³ Thus, Mika Ko calls it a form of cosmetic multiculturalism created to deal with the issues of a global reality,⁸⁴ but that ultimately does not deny the idea of Japan as a monolingual country. This provides one of the main reasons for the existence of a gap in the field concerning the study of the aftermath of the American Occupation as the trigger for language contact. Looking at the years from 1945 to 1952 from this perspective, it is important to note that despite the national narrative, certain areas in Japan, such as Tokyo, exhibited consistent signs of bilingualism. This is confirmed by the emergence of the aforementioned Bamboo English pidgin to allow verbal communication between English and Japanese speakers, since ‘[p]idgins and creoles emerge in contexts in which people from different linguistic backgrounds need to talk to each other regularly.’⁸⁵

According to Kowner and Daliot-Bul two versions of the pidgin were used, one by the American soldiers and the shop owners or government employees, the other by GIs and the local women who were forced to rely on prostitution to earn money in areas like Ginza.⁸⁶ In

⁸³ Angela Yiu, ‘Literature in Japanese (Nihongo bungaku)’, *Japanese Language and Literature*, 54 (2020), 37-66. (p.37).

⁸⁴ Mika Ko, *Japanese cinema and otherness: nationalism, multiculturalism and the problem of Japaneseness* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), (p.30).

⁸⁵ Sarah Grey Thomason, *Language contact: an introduction*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011) p.158.

⁸⁶ Rotem Kowner, Michal Daliot-Bul, ‘Japanese: The Dialectic Relationship Between ‘Westernness’ and ‘Japaneseness’ as Reflected in English Loan Words’, in *Globally speaking: motives for adopting English*

terms of its origin, Bamboo English is not much dissimilar to the *Vanha Stadin Slangi*, or Old Helsinki Slang, ‘a peculiar speech variety spoken in Helsinki (approx. from 1890 to 1950),⁸⁷ in which Finnish morpho-syntax is combined with Swedish vocabulary’ as can be seen by the word *stadin*. This term exhibits a Swedish stem from the word *stad* (city) with the suffix of a Finnish genitive (the Finnish word for the slang *stadi*, would be *kaupunki*). Similarly to how Bamboo English was created among the soldiers and the common people, *Vanha Stadin Slangi* emerged among the Helsinki working class where Swedish and Finnish speakers lived and worked side by side and therefore needed an effective way to communicate with each other. Consequently, it was regarded poorly as a ‘street boy language’ that ‘violated the romantic idea of a ‘pure language’’,⁸⁸ certainly a curious position in a city that retains its status as bilingual even today.

In contrast to Bamboo English, *Vanha Stadin Slangi* is referred to as a mixed language⁸⁹ instead of a pidgin. However, a clear distinction between the two has not been agreed upon. For example, Sarah Grey Thomason acknowledges that both are supposed to be used as *lingua franca*, but she states that mixed languages, as opposed to pidgins, are ‘in-group languages, not languages of wider communication’.⁹⁰ In Japan, Bamboo English disappeared at the end of the Occupation leaving behind only a few expressions such as the

vocabulary in other languages ed. by J. Rosenhouse and R. Kowner (Clevedon; Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2008) pp.250-275 p.256

⁸⁷ Jarva, Vesa, ‘Old Helsinki Slang and language mixing’, *Journal of Language Contact*, 1, (2008), 52-80 (p.52)

⁸⁸ Jarva, Vesa, ‘Old Helsinki Slang and language mixing’, *Journal of Language Contact*, 1, (2008), 52-80 (p.57)

⁸⁹ Felicity Meakins and Jesse Stewart, ‘Mixed languages’, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Contact: Volume 2: Multilingualism in Population Structure*, ed. by Salikoko Mufwene and Anna Maria Escobar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) pp. 310-343; Merlijn de Smit, Merlijn, ‘Modelling mixed languages: Some remarks on the case of Old Helsinki Slang’, *Journal of Language Contact*, 3 (2010), 1-19; Vesa Jarva, ‘Old Helsinki Slang and language mixing’, *Journal of Language Contact*, 1 (2008), 52-80; Paunonen, Heikki, ‘Vähemmistökielestä varioivaksi valtakieleksi’, in *Helsinki Kieliyhteisönä*, ed. by Kaisu Juusela & Katariina Nisula (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopiston suomen kielen ja kirjallisuuden laitos, 2006) pp. 142-161. Ceniccola, Serena. (2014). *Contaminazioni anglo-americane nell’uso della lingua finlandese contemporanea*. (Laurea Magistrale), Università di Bologna.

⁹⁰ Sarah Grey Thomason, *Language contact: an introduction*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011) p.158.

aforementioned *mamasan*.⁹¹ Originally, the servicemen also used other similar expressions created by linking the Japanese honorific *san* to English words, for instance, ‘*boysans* – usually grown men – to clean barracks, *papasans* to drive and do janitorial work, *mamasans* to tend bar, and sometimes *babysans* – meaning a woman rather than a child – for inspiration’.⁹² Nonetheless, their very existence confirms the occurrence of language contact and shows evidence of postwar Tokyo’s bilingualism in a way that is comparable to Helsinki at the turn of the century.

In the occurrence of a language contact – i.e., two or more languages being spoken at the same time in the same geographical area – there are three possible outcomes: contact-induced language change, extreme language mixture, and language death.⁹³ The process starting point involves the recipient language incorporating features from the source language, said features can either be added to the original ones or replace them altogether. This is how phenomena such as borrowings, code-switching, and code-mixing, as well as the creation of pidgins and mixed languages originate. Usually, such phenomena affect the involved parties differently according to either the intensity of the ‘cultural pressure’,⁹⁴ and whether the contact happens in a language maintenance or in a language shift situation.⁹⁵ The latter implies that either ‘the shifting speakers are likely to fail to acquire marked features of the [target language]’⁹⁶ thus the ‘marked features carried over by the shifting speakers from their original language are

⁹¹ Rotem Kowner, Michal Daliot-Bul, ‘Japanese: The Dialectic Relationship Between ‘Westernness’ and ‘Japaneseness’ as Reflected in English Loan Words’, in *Globally speaking: motives for adopting English vocabulary in other languages* ed. by J. Rosenhouse and R. Kowner (Clevedon; Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2008) pp.250-275 p.256

⁹² Arthur M. Z. Norman, ‘Bamboo English the Japanese Influence upon American Speech In Japan’, *American Speech*, 30 (1955), 44-48 (p.45).

⁹³ Sarah Grey Thomason, *Language contact: an introduction*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011) p.10.

⁹⁴ Sarah Grey Thomason and Terrence Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), p.77.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p.50.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p.51.

unlikely to spread'.⁹⁷ On the contrary, in a language maintenance situation, the borrowing of marked features is dependent on the type and level of bilingualism among the speakers.⁹⁸ The case of Occupation Japan clearly presents a language maintenance kind of scenario, furthermore, the direct contact between the two languages only lasted for a very limited amount of time, which was nonetheless enough to produce a number of borrowings. Indeed, borrowing can refer to both lexical borrowing – which produces loanwords that are always the first element to be incorporated into a language – or structural borrowing such as the ‘incorporation of phonological features.’⁹⁹ Contrary to the expectations, in the case of Japanese the latter is also frequent as can be seen with the introduction of phonemes such as [v] through loanwords, confirming the heightened flexibility of the language.

Because of its similarity with both borrowing and code-mixing, code-switching is somehow more complex to define. While Meakins states that both borrowing and code-switching can refer to either lexicon and morphological items to be absorbed by the recipient language,¹⁰⁰ Pieter Muysken claimed that ‘[t]he term code-switching is less neutral in two ways: as a term, it already suggests something like alternation (as opposed to insertion), and it separates code-mixing too strongly from phenomena of borrowing and interference.’¹⁰¹ Thus, in this thesis, I prefer the use of the term code-switching, as opposed to code-mixing, to refer to the synchronic use of non-uniformed lexical elements from two or more languages in written texts.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.51.

⁹⁸ Ibid. p.51.

⁹⁹ Sarah Grey Thomason and Terrence Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), p.38.

¹⁰⁰ Felicity Meakins and Jesse Stewart, ‘Mixed languages’, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Contact: Volume 2: Multilingualism in Population Structure*, ed. by Salikoko Mufwene and Anna Maria Escobar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) pp. 310-343 (p.332).

¹⁰¹ Pieter Muysken, *Bilingual speech: a typology of code-mixing* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 4.

Given the interdisciplinarity and the novelty of this project, a fundamental issue must be addressed, i.e., the outdated vocabulary clearly showing the limitations of the academic language in the field of trans-Pacific studies based on a transnational comparative model. Such outdated vocabulary and the consequent limitations of the academic language originate from the fact that most of the current vocabulary is based on a set of pre-established terminology rooted in modernist theories.¹⁰² Thus new questions can only be answered according to old paradigms; when it becomes clear that said paradigms are now insufficient to explain the contemporary world, new ones are created whose validity still needs to be demonstrated according to old criteria. This slow process allows compartmentalising the issues in such a way that it still preserves the old paradigms. For instance, while the argument for the employment of a multilingual comparative model to analyse literary works and literary-adjacent media essentially equals an argument for the consideration of a culturally and linguistically hybrid trans-medial tradition, the very term hybridity only makes sense when analysed from a modernist perspective. After all, from a modernist perspective, hybridity at worst represents the opposite of a monolithic entity that can be categorised under a systematic order – from which the negative connotation of the term originates – at best instead, it is its very existence in a liminal space – similar to what Homi K. Bhabha calls Third Space, or reminiscent of Michel Foucault's heterotopia – that defines it.¹⁰³ Consequently, terms like multiculturalism and multilingualism, which are commonly associated with the concept of cultural hybridity, also happen to be a result of the modernist approach to the global world based on an imperialistic, and therefore a western-centric, point

¹⁰²See also P. Werbner's 'Introduction: the dialectics of cultural hybridity', S. Canagarajsh's *Translingual Practice*, and L. Burns' *Postcolonialism After World Literature*.

¹⁰³ "Ordered and systematic categories" create the basis of modernist theories according to Werbner. [Pnina Werbner, 'Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. by Pnina Webner and Tariq Modood,(London: Zed Books, 2015), pp.1-26 (pp. 1-2)].

of view.¹⁰⁴ Thus, far from being considered the norm, the notion of a multicultural and multilingual society still tends to be almost exclusively based on the colonial idea of dominant cultures opposing the dominated ones, which, as shown by Said's *Orientalism*, also created the imaginary divide between a modern civilised West and an uncivilised East.¹⁰⁵ For example, Bhabha's focus in *The Location of Culture* remains on postcolonial diasporic communities implicitly reinforcing the general definition that sees multiculturalism as the coexistence of different cultures side by side.¹⁰⁶ The problem with this definition lies within the fact that it is centred on the distinctiveness of the different cultures, which allows for an easy labelling process in the 'prototypical transnational state formation'¹⁰⁷ such as the US as opposed to cross-cultural contacts in countries such as Japan, where monoculturalism and monolingualism are often regarded as the status quo.¹⁰⁸ For example, this happens with the distinction between Asian American communities and European American communities, which, in the end, favours a sort of hierarchical ghetto system.¹⁰⁹

It is also necessary to remember that multiculturalism and multilingualism are interconnected. If there is a need to state that 'language, race, and culture are not necessarily correlated'¹¹⁰ then the fundamental implication must be that culture itself is supposed to be inherited through genes – similarly to ethnicity – and that culture can be experienced through the

¹⁰⁴ Lorna Burns, *Postcolonialism After World Literature: Relation, Equality, Dissent* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p.2.

¹⁰⁵ Rumi Sakamoto, 'Japan, hybridity and the creation of colonialist discourse', *Theory, Culture & Society* 13, (1996), 113-128 (p. 121).

¹⁰⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies: The key concepts* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 164.

¹⁰⁷ Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease, 'Introduction: Transnational American Studies and the Transpacific Imaginary', in *American Studies as transnational practice: turning toward the transpacific*, ed. by Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2015), pp. 1-35 (p.1).

¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the need for categorization denies Bakhtin's idea that culture - as well as language - is intrinsically hybrid.

¹⁰⁹ See also Levy Hideo and Tawada Yōko, 'Kikō to Gendai', in *Ekkyō no Koe* ed. by Levy Hideo (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007), pp. 31-52.

¹¹⁰ James P. Soffiatti, "Bilingualism and biculturalism", *The Modern Language Journal*, 44 (1960), 275-277 (p.275).

senses as if one could perceive different cultures the same way as they appreciate the difference in textures from different fabrics. However, culture is not tangible, instead, it only exists as part of an inequation that states that $X \neq Y$, that is to say, as Werbner claims, that ‘culture evaporates into a war of positions.’¹¹¹ Conversely, linguistic elements such as idiomatic expressions originate from the very positions that Werbner mentions, hence, since language does not only consist of aseptic grammar rules, it is indeed influenced by the social conventions that make up the notion of culture. Nonetheless, culture can be acquired through experience rather than being passed down from the previous generation. Furthermore, both culture and language are susceptible to change, especially in the aftermath of important historical events and cultural contacts.¹¹² This point is very pertinent to this research, as it highlights that literature is heavily affected by language change and the political interventions on the language. For instance, when in 1895 Ueda Katsutoshi coined the term *Kokugo* to refer to a Japanese national language based on the dialect of the bourgeoisie in the Yamate area in Tokyo,¹¹³ with the purpose of unifying the different dialects that had been spoken around the country until then, multilingual texts such as those presented in this thesis would have been an unthinkable occurrence. Most importantly they would have been deemed a threat to the cause pursued by *genbun’itchi* (言文一致), the Japanese movement for the unification of spoken and written language, whereas in recent decades Levy’s books – among the others – won national awards and were even nominated for the Akutagawa prize. Thus, I argue that studying language and literature as two different instances is counterproductive. This is not the first study to make this assumption. For example, this is also the case of the already

¹¹¹ Pnina Werbner, ‘Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity’, in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, (London: Zed Books, 2015), pp.1-26 (p. 3).

¹¹² For instance, the word “staycation” could not have been so widely understood before the Covid-19 pandemic.

¹¹³ Bjarke Frellesvig, *A history of the Japanese language*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) p. 380.

mentioned monograph by Rebecca Walkowitz *Born Translated* where she discusses the trend in contemporary novels to represent multilingualism as a part of the narration. However, this thesis distances itself from Walkowitz's work on several issues. First, Walkowitz separates languages into two main categories: global languages such as English and Spanish, and regional languages such as Japanese and Turkish.¹¹⁴ By associating English with Spanish, Walkowitz seems to use the expression "global language" as a synonym of "colonial language" without taking into account the implications that, while a global language is recognized in every country,¹¹⁵ it is precisely for this reason that it also develops a wide number of varieties as pointed out by Murata Kumiko and Jennifer Jenkins in their study of English in Asia where they argue for the existence of 'global English(es)'.¹¹⁶ From this perspective, reducing Japanese to the status of a regional language is even more problematic since it completely disregards the colonial past of the Japanese Empire while also relying on a "Colonizing West/Colonized East" kind of opposition. However, said opposition is clearly imprecise and inapplicable to this study as it does not take into account the postcolonial interrelationships between Japan and the rest of Asia, for instance, the complex relationship between Japan and China and especially that between Japan and its former colonies, such as Korea and Taiwan.¹¹⁷ In addition, Walkowitz's main concern is for the book as a product made for consumption, as such she considers multilingual patterns in the texts as 'designed for foreign, non-fluent, and semi-fluent readers who will encounter them',¹¹⁸ rather than a

¹¹⁴ Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born translated: the contemporary novel in an age of world literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015) p. 14.

¹¹⁵ David Crystal, *English as a global language* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.3

¹¹⁶ Kumiko Murata, Jennifer Jenkins, 'Introduction: Global Englishes from Global Perspectives' in *Global Englishes in Asian Contexts*, ed. by Murata, Kumiko and Jennifer Jenkins (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1-13 (p.2).

¹¹⁷ See also Kōichi Iwabuchi's *Recentering Globalization* and Leo T.S. Ching *Anti-Japan: The Politics of Sentiment in Postcolonial East Asia*.

¹¹⁸ Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born translated: the contemporary novel in an age of world literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 44.

written rendering of the authors' complex cultural background or a deliberate choice. Second, while the monograph centres exclusively on English texts,¹¹⁹ Walkowitz includes strategies such as self-translation or pretended self-translation among those aiming to portray multilingualism in a written form; these include occurrences where the reader is informed that specific parts of the texts – mainly dialogues – were originally told in a different language.¹²⁰ Thus among the novels that Walkowitz considers part of a multilingual tradition she also mentions China Miéville's *The City & The City* and – more relevantly to the topic of this thesis – David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten*, in which there is no evidence of translingual strategies being used. A similar point to the one I am making was also raised by Christopher Lee in his paper 'The Writing of Translation' where he argues that by traditionally focusing only on English written texts Asian American literature has been reduced only to 'a subtext of American literature.'¹²¹ In contrast, multilingualism in this thesis refers to the portrayal of alternating languages on page, and to narratives centring around the presence of a distinctive multilingual element by authors from multilingual backgrounds, such as Okada, thus it only considers multilingual those works where two or more languages actively participate in the narration.

¹¹⁹ As I mentioned earlier, this means that in all the texts presented by Walkowitz English is the matrix language.

¹²⁰ Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born translated: the contemporary novel in an age of world literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 41.

¹²¹ Christopher Lee, 'The Writing of Translation' in *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by Crystal Parikh and Daniel Y. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 129-141 (p.130).

1.3 Negotiating Japanese Canon in the Global: The Necessity for a Transnational Approach.

As discussed in the previous section, multilingualism resulting from cultural contact is a significant factor in arguing for the necessity of a transnational approach to the Japanese literary and literary-adjacent scene. However, despite the occurrence of cultural contact in the aftermath of the American Occupation, studies that acknowledge postwar Japan's position in the 'global paradigm'¹²² – such as the aforementioned texts by Miyoshi and Harootunian, Iwabuchi, and Korhonen – still tend to focus primarily on the country's political, military, and trading relationships with the US. Meanwhile, the few works centred around the cultural impact of the Occupation on Japan maintain an inherently national approach. Rots recently defined this as 'the problem of lingering methodological nationalism within the academic discipline usually referred to as Japanese studies'.¹²³ In his work, Rots points out that Japanese studies as a discipline 'does preserve the underlying classification model that reifies Japan as a distinct entity and "things Japanese" as a separate category of social or cultural phenomena that must be studied on their own merits, rather than in an explicitly comparative manner.'¹²⁴ As a result, it 'arguably justifies popular perceptions of Japan as essentially Other, unique and internally coherent.'¹²⁵ Therefore, as this work instead revolves around an "explicitly comparative" subject matter, it must revisit older texts that are still considered defining in the field. This should be done from a transnational perspective to move away from the stereotypical nationalist image of Japan. For instance, *Japan in the World*, published by Harootunian and Miyoshi at the beginning of the 1990s proposes to discuss Japan's

¹²² Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian 'Japan in the World', in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 1-9 (p.2).

¹²³ Aike P. Rots, 'Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Three Directions for Japanese Studies', *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 41, (2023), 9-35 (p.11).

¹²⁴ Ibid. p.15.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.15.

position in the new post-Cold War global system.¹²⁶ It highlights the country's status as one of the three main economic powers, alongside the United States and the European Community.¹²⁷ Even so, in addition to isolating Japan as a "separate category", as it appears evident by the title, it also subconsciously echoes the imagination of a mysterious and unknowable place that was employed in the 19th century *Japonisme* by, for example, frequently employing terms such as 'ambiguous' and 'ambivalent' in relation to Japan's 'foreign policy'.¹²⁸ Thus, regardless of its premise, it is evident that some central elements in the work are still rooted in the 'self/Other dichotomy',¹²⁹ which ultimately reinforces, rather than tackles, 'the ideological picture of a postcolonial world situation constructed by Western postindustrial nations.'¹³⁰ One of the most significant instances is presented by a conversation between Ōe Kenzaburo and Kazuo Ishiguro on the topic of 'The novelist in today's world.' The dialogue between the two authors appears heavily coded as a conversation between a true Japanese writer, Ōe, and someone who is not, Ishiguro. For example, when Ōe asks 'where [Ishiguro] acquired this basic knowledge about [his] Japanese landscapes and characters, and to what extent they were a product of [his] imagination'¹³¹ it immediately presents the reader with the idea that, at least in Ōe's opinion, Ishiguro's Japan is based on imagination alone,

¹²⁶ It is worth mentioning that Rots refers to Harootunian and Miyoshi sharing similar concerns as the ones he expresses in his article regarding the point of 'few Japanese studies scholars hav[ing] a significant impact on the disciplines (sociology, literature, religious studies, philosophy or political science) that they supposedly represent, because few of them do theoretically or methodologically innovative work' [Aike P. Rots, 'Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Three Directions for Japanese Studies', *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 41, (2023), 9-35 (p.15)]. However, when compared to *Japan in the World*, it is significant that Rots references some of the more recent of Harootunian and Miyoshi's works such as *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*.

¹²⁷ Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian 'Japan in the World', in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 1-9 (p.1).

¹²⁸ Ibid. p.2.

¹²⁹ Matsuhiro Yoshimoto, 'The Difficulty of Being Radical: The Discipline of Film Studies and the Postcolonial World Order', in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 338-353 (p.353).

¹³⁰ Ibid. p.353.

¹³¹ Kazuo Ishiguro and Kenzaburo Ōe 'The novelist in today's world: a conversation', in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 163-76 (p. 164).

ignoring the possibility of memory as an equally prominent element in Ishiguro's works. Although imagination is certainly fundamental in the writing process, in this particular instance, it suggests that for a novelist such as Ishiguro, who writes in English and has been raised in the UK, Japan can only be accessed through the process of imagination rather than through memories, either personal or generational. It is worth noting that, in the years following this conversation between Ōe and Ishiguro took place, other authors writing in Japanese have addressed the interconnection between imagination and memory. In Mizumura Minae's novel *Shishōsetsu from Left to Right* (私小説 from left to right, 1995, *An I Novel* trans. by Juliet Winters Carpenter, 2021, henceforth *Shishōsetsu*), the main character, Minae, is a Japanese immigrant in the US where she moved with her family as a child. In one of her frequent inner monologues on her relationship with her birth country, she states '私は自分の戻るべきではない場に自分が^お居り、自分の戻るべき場に自分が戻らないという、そのことばかりをおもっていた。私にとって日本が、ひたむきな望郷の念の中で化物のように膨れ上がっていたのは仕方のないことであった.'¹³² Thus, her imaginary Japan takes the shape of a monster or a ghost which is the product of her memories and her nostalgia. Of course, such a sentiment is not necessarily as central in Ishiguro's narrative, but Mizumura's novel certainly highlights the possibility of a third path in-between imagination and memory. Furthermore, similarly to both Mizumura and her protagonist, Ishiguro too was born in Japan and, according to what he says in the same interview '[his] parents tried to

¹³² Minae Mizumura, *Shishōsetsu from left to right* (Tokyo: Chikumashobō, 2009), p.58. [**'I would constantly think that I was in a place where I should not return, while I could not return to the place I was supposed to return to. It was inevitable that my idea of Japan kept growing like a monster or a ghost amidst the utter sense of nostalgia.'**] (my translation).

continue some sort of education for [him] that would prepare [him] for returning to Japan'¹³³ implying a (trans)cultural connection to the country.

However, the inclination towards methodological nationalism is not limited to socio-political or socio-economic works. Even though rare studies like Michael Molasky's *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa*, which focus on the literary production during the Occupation, attempt to propose an 'interdisciplinary, comparative inquiry into the literature of two integrally related but separate instances of American military occupation in East Asia',¹³⁴ ultimately it appears that his effort is aimed to the preservation of the 'historical memory in postwar Japan.'¹³⁵ This contributes to the representation of Japan as a culturally monolithic entity since 'literature participates in both the construction and preservation of a society's memory of an era.'¹³⁶ Furthermore, Molasky's ultimate interest is on the in-flow, on Japan's acquisition of non-Japanese elements without considering the counter-trajectory, therefore once again carrying out a discourse that ultimately seems to highlight Japan's detachment from the rest of the world rather than its position *in* the cultural world.

This 'increasing attention to Japan's history of cultural absorption of the foreign',¹³⁷ which focuses on the external influence over Japan, is arguably the main reason why studies on postwar Japan so often centre around the notion of "America's Japan." The expression depicts Japan as 'an American cultural colony',¹³⁸ in addition to being a *de facto* military

¹³³ Kazuo Ishiguro and Kenzaburo Ōe 'The novelist in today's world: a conversation', in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 163-76 (p. 164).

¹³⁴ Michael Molasky, *The American occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and memory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), p.2.

¹³⁵ Michael Molasky, *The American occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and memory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), p.2.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* p.2.

¹³⁷ Kōichi Iwabuchi, *Recentring globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.63.

¹³⁸ Luisa Bienati, *Letteratura giapponese. Dalla fine dell'Ottocento all'inizio del terzo millennio*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2005), p. 44.

colony. In a way, throughout the occupation to the end of the Cold War, the portrayal of Japan from an American perspective appears to paint the country as the embodiment of the postcolonial and oriental Other by building a close but unbalanced relationship that ‘imprisoned [Japan] within a never-ending “postwar”’.¹³⁹ Only at the end of the Cold War, in the eyes of the world, did Japan regain its title of Japan’s Japan, while also becoming part of the globalisation process, the interconnection between different parts of the world in a single imaginary space.¹⁴⁰ However, works on postwar and contemporary Japan from an America-centric perspective tend to rely on the representation of Japan's position in the cultural world, particularly in the trans-Pacific zone, as exceptional because it challenged its status as an Asian country under the Orientalist stereotype. This approach fails to acknowledge that Japan's imperialistic past prevents it from ever being part of the Orientalist narrative, which is based on the representation of so-called “oriental countries” as colonised rather than colonisers. Therefore, a different approach to Japanese cultural studies is needed that is centred on a transnational exchange rather than one rooted in the opposition of centres and peripheries, that ultimately carries on the narrative according to which an external influence upsetting the homogenous order of another country. It is then from this perspective that the American Occupation of Japan should not just be regarded as the US virtually “colonising” Japan after the WWII defeat but as a case of short, albeit intense, cultural and language contact not disjointed from the presence of Japanese American communities in the US and North America since the late 19th century. Thus, my work focuses on the trans-Pacific cultural relationships between Japan and the US in the aftermath of the Occupation.

¹³⁹ Kōichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.10.

¹⁴⁰ Luisa Bienati, *Letteratura giapponese. Dalla fine dell'Ottocento all'inizio del terzo millennio*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2005), p. 44.

Indeed, Rebecca Suter's *The Japanization of Modernity: Murakami Haruki between Japan and the United States* tends to move in a similar direction as the author refers to Murakami as 'a cultural mediator between Japan and the United States'¹⁴¹ based on the popularity gained by the writer in the US. However, such popularity is juxtaposed by harsh critique from others such as Ōe and Miyoshi who define Murakami's works as 'the symbol of a literature complicit with Japanese capitalism and Japan's worship of American culture',¹⁴² highlighting once again the imbalanced approach to the cultural exchange between the two countries.

From a literary perspective, Japanese-writing authors such as Shimada and Levy present a much more balanced and accurate depiction of such mutual cultural and linguistic exchange, both in terms of narratives and in terms of their use of language. In contrast to Murakami, Shimada and Levy employ written multilingualism to reinforce both the American presence in Japan and the Japanese presence in the US. It is noteworthy that literary or written multilingualism is still often overlooked in the field of Japanese literary studies, with the exception of recent studies such as the aforementioned article by Yiu, 'Literature in Japanese (*Nihongo bungaku*): An Examination of the New Literary Topography by Plurilingual Writers from the 1990s', which focuses on the Chinese elements in Japan's literary tradition rather than the English ones. However, the dynamics portrayed in Shimada and Levy's writing are becoming more common even in literary-adjacent media, appreciated even beyond Japan due to the popularity of the internet and especially of streaming platforms.¹⁴³

As such, their work offers an excellent case study for the much-needed transnational and trans-medial approach to the contemporary literary production in Japanese.

¹⁴¹ Rebecca Suter, *The Japanization of modernity: Murakami Haruki between Japan and the United States* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), p.1.

¹⁴² Ibid. p.47.

¹⁴³ In the upcoming chapters, I will continue to argue for the recognition of the role that these platforms play in promoting the use of the Japanese language. Streaming platforms allow for direct interactions with the language, reducing the need for extensive translation, adaptation, and localization efforts.

1.4 Negotiating Japanese Canon in the Global: The Necessity for a Diachronic Approach.

Limiting the scope of this research to a synchronic transnational and trans-medial approach to the contemporary Japanese literary scene through its interconnections with literary-adjacent media and the Japanese American literary canon would be counterproductive. In fact, the reasons for a critical system rooted in the national, monolingual and monocultural originate from the Meiji government's attempts to present Japan as a modern nation-state.¹⁴⁴ In addition, because of the circumstances around the decades following the end of WWII, the late Shōwa (1945-1989) cultural scene provides the basis for renegotiating the position of Japanese contemporary literature as part of world literature, an argument that is still largely underrepresented in the scholarship. Thus, a diachronic approach is necessary together with a transnational approach. While the use this thesis makes of the term “transnational” is quite straightforward as it opposes the idea of “national” by instead focusing on the interconnection between Japan and the US, or more broadly North America, the connotation of the term “diachronic” in this context needs further clarification.

Diachronic, as opposed to synchronic, is, most appropriately, an expression used in linguistics. Originating from Greek, it literally translates as “across time” and indeed indicates ‘the study of phenomena across time.’¹⁴⁵ Thus, a diachronic approach equals a historical approach, whereas a synchronic approach does not focus on the factor of time.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, on a visual level, a synchronic approach is a horizontal approach – in the context of this thesis this is very close to the transnational approach mentioned earlier – a diachronic

¹⁴⁴ Angela Yiu, ‘Literature in Japanese (Nihongo bungaku)’, *Japanese Language and Literature*, 54 (2020), 37-66. (p.37).

¹⁴⁵ Sergio Scalise and Giorgio Graffi, *Le lingue e il linguaggio: introduzione alla linguistica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), p.43.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.43.

approach instead can be pictured as vertical. By proposing a diachronic approach, this research aims to compare literature and literary-adjacent media from the postwar or the second half of the Shōwa Era (1945-1989) to the contemporary, taking into account the influence of previous authors and works. It is noteworthy that, according to Robert Eaglestone, ‘[t]raditionally, literary history is dated by watershed historical moments.’¹⁴⁷ However, the importance of these events varies depending on the country, which shows how closely literary history is intertwined with national perspectives. In this particular case, it is important to mention that, under the assumption presented by Eaglestone, authors like Dazai are not considered contemporary, whereas Shimada and Levy are, since their first works date back to the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate between postwar, which includes Dazai, and the contemporary. Moreover, other authors such as Nakahara Chūya (1907-1937), who wrote before WWII, cannot be classified as either postwar or contemporary authors, but their works still hold relevance to this thesis. Evidently, this work opposes the ‘temptation to periodize, to create schools, and to label movements’,¹⁴⁸ which has defined literary studies, including Japanese literary studies. In relation to the Japanese literary canon – intended as the body of works written in Japanese, contrary to the more traditional definition of literary canon that insists on the nationality of the authors – such a tendency has been also employed to perpetrate the image of linguistic and cultural homogeneity by creating a boundary between national literature or *kokubungaku* (国文学, hereafter *kokubungaku*) and literature in Japanese, usually referred to as *ekkyō bungaku* (越境文学, literally border-crossing literature, hereafter *ekkyō bungaku*) or *Nihongo bungaku* (日

¹⁴⁷ Robert Eaglestone, ‘Contemporary fiction in the academy: towards a manifesto’, *Textual Practice*, 27 (2013), 1089-1101 (p.1094).

¹⁴⁸ Stephen Snyder, Philip Gabriel, ‘Introduction’ in *Ōe and Beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 1-10 (2).

本語文学). Indeed, it is the apparent necessity for which such labels have been introduced, namely, to distinguish between the works of Japanese-born author and non-Japanese born authors, which provides the main reason why I use these terms in my study. Thus, comparative works involving national and transnational authors writing in Japanese are extremely sparse, and they become almost non-existent when they involve the use of Japanese/English language alternation and older canon-defining authors. However, through a diachronic perspective, it is possible to note the constant development that leads to the still unacknowledged presence of a multilingual tradition in the Japanese literary scene that transcends the label of *kokubungaku* or *ekkyō bungaku*.

Contemporary texts, such as Shimada's *Yumetsukai* and Levy's production, which make use of heterographics or embedded scripts¹⁴⁹ cannot be considered as existing without influence from other factors. In fact, they follow the publication of works attempting to subvert the popular image of Japan as a culturally and linguistically homogeneous nation-state such as Murakami Ryū's *Kagirinaku Tōmei ni Chikai Burū* (限りなく透明に近いブルー, 1976

Almost Transparent Blue 1977 Trans. By Nancy Andrew) and *69 Sixty Nine* (69 シクスティ ナイン *Sixty Nine*, 1987, *69 Sixty-Nine*, 1993 trans. by Raph F. McCarthy), and Yamada Eimi's *Bedtime Eyes* (ベッドタイムアイズ, 1985, *Bedtime Eyes*, 2006 trans. by Yumi Gunji and Marc Jardin).

Shimada's *Yumetsukai*, similar to several of Levy's works – such as the aforementioned *Seijōki* and *Tenanmon*, but also *Kari no Mizu* (仮の水, 2008), and *Mohankyō* (模範郷, 2019) – and, in terms of writing style, Mizumura's *Shishōsetsu* can be defined as 'linguistically and culturally hybrid texts to which the monocultural methodological tools and national canon-

¹⁴⁹ Helena Bodin, 'Heterographics as a Literary Device: Auditory, Visual, and Cultural Features', *Journal of World Literature*, 3 (2018), 196-216 (p.196).

based aesthetic criteria generally do not offer an adequate approach'.¹⁵⁰ However, while in Shimada and Levy's writing multilingualism and multiculturalism are employed as metaphors for the isolation and loneliness experienced by the main characters battling to reclaim their own hybrid identity, in Mizumura's text the focus is on the feeling of displacement. In fact, the Minae in the book does not lack deeper human connections or find it difficult to express her identity, instead she can easily communicate with her sister with whom she shared both childhood as well as the language they speak.¹⁵¹

Although it may appear that written multilingualism has only recently been introduced into Japanese literary production, it can actually be traced back to bilingual Meiji authors such as Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916), Mori Ōgai (1862-1922), and Taishō writers like Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927).¹⁵² However, an arguably less discussed interest in the graphic aspects and in broadening the limits of language can also be detected in the writing of Shōwa era writers such as the Dazai and Nakahara Chūya. This point will be further discussed in the course of this thesis.

1.5 The Trans-Pacific as Contact Zone.

As mentioned in the introductory section, this thesis focuses on cultural exchange in the trans-Pacific region, specifically considering the trajectory connecting Japan and the US as a contact zone, i.e. the space in which cultural, linguistic, and even physical movements take

¹⁵⁰ Eike Sturm-Trigonakis, 'Comparative Cultural Studies and Linguistic Hybridities in Literature', in *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*, ed. by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India, 2013), pp. 178-191 (p.178).

¹⁵¹ Here I intend the reasoned alternation of Japanese and English as a language common to both sisters.

¹⁵² Angela Yiu, 'Literature in Japanese (Nihongo bungaku)', *Japanese Language and Literature*, 54 (2020), 37-66. (p.38).

place. Francesca Orsini further discusses the notion of contact zone in her article ‘The Multilingual Local in World Literature’, where she appreciates that ‘the idea of “contact zone” addresses cultures *coming into contact*—however, prolonged that contact might have been.’¹⁵³

The terms Transpacific and trans-Pacific have both been used by Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease who insert their work in the field of trans-Pacific studies, to signify an area of transnational American studies focusing on the relationship between the US and the Asian-Pacific region.¹⁵⁴ While Shu and Pease make the starting point of the ‘Pacific age’ coincide with Roosevelt’s government,¹⁵⁵ the US ‘expanded its political, military, and economic power’ to include Japan, Korea, Taiwan, mainland China, Philippines, Indonesia finally reaching India between 1945 and 1961.¹⁵⁶ The decades after the end of WWII and the Korean War (1950-1953) also mark the moment in which the US turned into an ‘empire of military bases abroad’,¹⁵⁷ sealing the still ongoing military presence in Japan. It was only in 2005 that the transpacific area was recognised as a ‘a zone of economic cooperation’ under the Trans-Pacific Partnership.¹⁵⁸

Shu and Pease’s study reinforces that the notion of Trans-Pacific is almost exclusively taken into account in the context of political or economic studies, whereas the cultural movement across the Ocean and its effect on the language, and therefore on literature and media, is still under-represented both from a Japanese and from and from an American perspective. WWII

¹⁵³ Francesca Orsini, ‘The Multilingual Local in World Literature’, *Comparative Literature*, 67 (2015), 345-374 (pp.351-352).

¹⁵⁴ Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease, ‘Introduction: Transnational American Studies and the Transpacific Imaginary’, in *American Studies as transnational practice: turning toward the transpacific*, ed. by Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2015), pp. 1-35 (p.1).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.4.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.4.

¹⁵⁷ Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease, ‘Introduction: Transnational American Studies and the Transpacific Imaginary’, in *American Studies as transnational practice: turning toward the transpacific*, ed. by Yuan Shu and Donald E. Pease (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2015), pp. 1-35 (p.4).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p.6.

and the following decades do not represent a defining moment in Japanese history alone, but also in the history of Japanese American communities (both in the US and Canada), who were recovering from the Internment Camps set by the American government in response to the 1941 Pearl Harbour attack. Once the camps were dismantled, the trauma they caused was not forgotten, instead, it deeply influenced the corpus of literary works by *nisei* authors. In addition to Okada's *No-No Boy*, among the most significant works from this time, are Mine Okubo's *Citizen 13660* (1946), and the 1949 version of Toshio Mori's *Yokohama, California* (1949). However, the theme of the Internment Camps and the aftermath of it is also central in contemporary works such as Julie Otsuka's *When The Emperor Was Divine* (2002), and the aforementioned novel by Kutsukake, *The Translation of Love*. In addition, the spectre of the war and the American military presence in Japan and Okinawa also haunts works which do not directly refer to the events involving the Japanese American communities during the war, such as Elizabeth Miki Brina's memoir *Speak, Okinawa* (2021). Japanese American literary works also demonstrate a progressive shift, as they move from the necessity to recognize Japanese American communities as part of American society and simultaneously accept cultural hybridity as part of one's background, as seen in *No-No Boy*, to the use of written code-switching to signify both a sense of isolation and a fight to reclaim one's identity, as depicted in works such as *When the Emperor was Divine* and *Speak, Okinawa*.

The embedding of Japanese lexical elements as well as the frequent referencing of cultural features, and the reimagining of folkloric components presented in an anime-inspired fashion in popular and children's literature –for example in Kagawa's *Shadow of the Fox* – testify to the increasing appreciation that Japanese language and popular culture are gaining in the US context. In fact, while in 2006 Japanese surpassed French as the second most attractive

language for ‘test takers’,¹⁵⁹ it is undeniable that ‘Japanese classes in U.S. universities and high schools are filled these days with students driven by their enthusiasm for anime or manga and an interest in being able to consume made-in Japan comics or animation in their original form.’¹⁶⁰ Thus the centrality of manga and anime in what Anne Allison calls ‘J-Wave’ in American ‘youth culture’¹⁶¹ is evident. Indeed, if by the end of the 1980s ‘Japanese comics and cartoons [...] found eager audiences abroad’,¹⁶² the 1990s, while seeing the economic collapse of the bursting Bubble, also marked the outward cultural explosion.¹⁶³ In addition, ‘[s]ince the 1990s,[...] there has been a palpable shift to a greater mainstreaming of not only Japanese properties but also the way in which Japan or “Japaneseness” gets encoded in the popular imagination of American kids’¹⁶⁴ which is echoed by a demand by non-Japanese fans to have ‘their Japanese fantasies to be as Japanese as possible’.¹⁶⁵ In the next chapter, this work will further discuss whether the tendency mentioned above indicates a genuine demand for authenticity or if it merely reflects a “neo-Japonist” trend. However, it appears that the market is still moving in that direction. It is certainly noteworthy, that recent globally successful Japanese productions such as Gotōge Koyoharu’s *Kimetsu no Yaiba* (鬼滅の刃, *Demon Slayer* 2016-2020), the recently Netflix-released *Watashi no Shiawasena Kekkon* (わたしの幸せな結婚, *My Happy Marriage* 2019-ongoing) based on the light novel

¹⁵⁹ Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnell, ‘Introduction’, in *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, ed. by Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnell (London: Routledge, 2008), pp.xvi-xxxii (p.xxv).

¹⁶⁰ Anne Allison, ‘The attractions of the J-wave for American youth’, in *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, ed. by Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnell (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 99-110 (p.101).

¹⁶¹ Ibid. p.100.

¹⁶² Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.206.

¹⁶³ Ibid. p.12.

¹⁶⁴ Anne Allison, ‘The attractions of the J-wave for American youth’, in *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, ed. by Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnell (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 99-110 (p.101).

¹⁶⁵ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.8.

series by Agitogi Akumi, and the aforementioned *Bungō Stray Dogs* take a speculative turn on specific historical periods in Japanese history – Taishō in *Kimetsu no Yaiba* and Meiji in *Watashi no Shiawasena Kekkon* – or reference Japanese authors, some of whom have little to no scholarship outside Japan. Moreover, such a turn of events would have been inconceivable in the postwar and post-Occupation years. In fact, during that time, even though the US viewed Japan as a necessary ally and a central pawn in their power game in the Pacific, the country was still perceived as a defeated nation whose products were received with scorn by the American society. Thus, Japanese makers did their best to ‘obscure the origins of the products they sold’.¹⁶⁶ Once again, what shifted this negative attitude to the current academic and popular interest for Japan was not a sudden interest in the literary or cultural aspects but the ‘high quality consumer electronics and cars in the late seventies and early eighties.’¹⁶⁷ However, the current relevance that Japanese culture and language has in the American society – among and outside Japanese American communities – shows an effective transnational cultural movement more akin to an exchange rather than a one-way influence from the victorious country over the defeated one, which offers the basis for proposing a trans-Pacific approach to the subject.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p.5.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. p.6.

Chapter 2: Japan in the Trans-Pacific: On the Convenience of Monolingualism and Multilingualism.

In the aftermath of the American Occupation in Japan, the combined efforts of the American and Japanese governments created an image of Japan as a docile, peaceful country that benefitted the following trade and economic association between the two countries. However, such representation of Japan is not completely original and instead shares many similarities with the late 19th century *Japonisme*. On the basis of such similarities, this section intends to interrogate the connections between *Japonisme*, Orientalism, neo-Orientalism, and self-Orientalism in regard to the depiction of Japan as a monolingual nation state to identify the role attributed to Japanese literature and popular culture and attempting to dismantle the derivative stereotypes. An important element in this process is the analysis of Dazai's literature under the label of *buraiha* that aims to propose a new viewpoint on the study of his works, in particular his postwar, long novels, from a national to a transnational interpretation which will provide the basis for a diachronic approach to the contemporary multilingual literary scene in Japan and reinforce the argument that literature and popular culture are both essential part of a transmedia system.

2.1 Japan in the trans-Pacific: *Japonisme*, Propaganda and the Spectre of Orientalism.

The recent demand for products 'as Japanese as possible' mentioned by Matt Alt in his book *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* must not be misinterpreted as a demand for authenticity. In fact, the author maintains that the core element of the demand is the fandoms' "Japanese fantasies." Indeed, Japan has been the object of such fantasies for centuries, and these same fantasies were ultimately central in the portrayal of

postwar and post-Occupation Japan across the Pacific. Therefore, the concept of authenticity does not apply to Alt's statement. Rather, J-Wave in the US is based on the idea of “‘Japan’ operat[ing] more as a signifier for a particular brand and blend of fantasy-ware.’¹⁶⁸

Therefore, the name Japan has become associated with an ‘imaginary space at once foreign and familiar and a subjectivity of continual flux and global mobility’.¹⁶⁹ However, as opposed to the colonial, orientalist discourse, this is supported by the Japanese government that aims ‘to capitalize on in all the rhetoric and attention currently given to Japan’s new soft power in the globalization’ of Japanese popular culture.¹⁷⁰ This strategy of self-representation – which borders on the sort of self-orientalism that encouraged the spread of *Japonisme* abroad – is not novel either. It instead echoes the actions of the Meiji government intending to present Japan as a modern, homogeneous nation-state. In fact, the homogeneity factor could not have been justified if not by simultaneously portraying Japanese culture as unique. This makes it impossible to overlook the issue of Japan’s representation and self-representation in a comparative work like this one. Moreover, despite it being much less frequently discussed in literature than in political and economic studies, the same issue is indeed addressed in Japanese contemporary translingual literary works. For example, when Ben, Levy’s 17-year-old main character in *Seijōki*, finds himself faced with the juxtaposition of the idea of Japan and the reality of Japan – which in the character’s mind is embodied by his friend and guide Andō’s ‘world’ – he realises that ‘安藤の世界は、本の中に書かれています 「JAPAN」とはあまりにも違っていたのだ’.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, in order to differentiate between the imaginary Japan built upon the mixture of historical events, artistic obsession

¹⁶⁸ Anne Allison, ‘The attractions of the J-wave for American youth’, in *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, ed. by Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnell (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 99-110 (p.107).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p.107.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p.107.

¹⁷¹ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoena heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004), pp. 44-45. [‘**Ando’s world was very different from the ‘Japan’ he read in the books.**’] (my translation).

and political narrative and the Japan that Ben is surrounded with, which from Ben's perspective represents the real Japan, Levy chooses the English word "Japan" rather than the Japanese 日本. By doing so, he does not focus on the meaning of the word but on the relationship between signifier and signified. Such a technique not only is an essential component of multilingual literature, but it also provides the reader with an insight into the thinking process of a multilingual mind, showing that different languages do not exist as separate entities, instead they work as extension of one another. Arguably, such a way of employing language resources risks being misinterpreted by the monolingual counterpart, leading to the feeling of isolation stemming from the inevitability of a "loss in translation" during the process of conveying one's thoughts monolingually to make them accessible to the listener. In addition, because it is written in English and uses the Roman script, the term "Japan" is very noticeable on the page, emphasising that it does not refer to the country itself but to the way the country is portrayed in the US or other English-speaking nations. Thus, it refers to a very specific Western portrayal of Japan, which is either rooted in the 1800s *Japonisme* or in the postwar narrative primarily woven by the American government. Several studies have attempted to find a consistent definition of *Japonisme*. For example, Yoko Chiba defines it as 'the term conventionally used to describe the influence of Japan on late 19th-century European art and life'.¹⁷² Joseph Lavery, instead, focuses on the interconnection between Victorian *Japonisme* and the 'figure of Japan [as] the archetype of aesthetic subjectivity as a queer project', but that it is ultimately rooted in the idea of 'Japanese culture as the paradigm of Oriental unintelligibility.'¹⁷³ However, in the context of this thesis, it is more straightforward to describe *Japonisme* as an obsession with an idea of

¹⁷² Yoko Chiba, 'Japonisme: East-West Renaissance in the Late 19th Century', *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 31 (1998), 1-20, (p.1).

¹⁷³ Joseph Lavery, 'Remote Proximities: Aesthetics, Orientalism and the Intimate Life of Japanese Objects', *ELH*, 83 (2016), 1159-1183 (p.1161).

Japan often linked to arts and crafts. According to Alt, ‘this was the enthusiastically condescending mindset Oscar Wilde invoked and subverted when he referred to Japan as “pure invention.”’¹⁷⁴ In truth, Wilde – through the writing of his character in *The Decay of Lying* (1891) – claims that ‘[n]o great artist ever sees things as they really are. If he did, he would cease to be an artist. Take an example from our own day. I know that you are fond of Japanese things. Now do you really imagine that the Japanese people, as they are presented to us in art, have any existence at all? If you do, you have never understood Japanese art at all.’¹⁷⁵ Thus, while acknowledging it, he does not critique the Western representation of Japan, instead, he accuses the audience of taking for granted the fantasy that had been sold to them. In fact, despite the large number of exhibitions focusing on Japan in the 1800s, the collections usually consisted of selections of items which provided only a partial portrayal of their country of origin. For example, as Ono explains, in the 1862 International Exhibition in London – when for the first time an independent space for Japan had been set – examples of *Ukiyo-e* art seem to have been absent.¹⁷⁶ More recently, Alt notably defined *Japonisme* as a Western fantasy of Japan, referring to the way the Victorians used to call the country the “antique land” summarising the popular idea of Japan as a land of exquisite, and sometimes obscure traditions.¹⁷⁷

Indeed, looking back at Gilbert and Sullivan’s opera *The Mikado* (1885) and Giacomo Puccini’s opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904) it appears quite evident that in the West at the turn of the century, Japan was mostly ‘a Western fantasy’.¹⁷⁸ Gilbert and Sullivan’s intention was certainly to play into such a fantasy by portraying Japan in a *fairy-talesque* sort of way,

¹⁷⁴ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.5.

¹⁷⁵ Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.45.

¹⁷⁶ Ayako Ono, *Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menpes, Henry, Hornel and Nineteenth-Century Japan* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 6-8.

¹⁷⁷ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p.5.

which bore little to no resemblance with the actual country. Most noticeably the characters and places in the opera have been given names that do not sound Japanese in the least, such as Nanki-Poo, Yum-Yum, Ko-Ko and Titipu. Giacomo Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* was based on the 1898 short story *Madame Butterfly* by John Luther Long which in turn was partially based on Pierre Loti's novel *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887). As Mari Yoshihara notices, in Long's work, 'the narrative exemplified the gendered dynamics of East-West relations founded upon unequal power relations',¹⁷⁹ thus '[w]hile Butterfly certainly echoed the numerous existing texts of European Orientalism, the specific narrative of *Butterfly* and the timing of its productions [debuting ten years after the Sino-Japanese War and in the very year of the Russo-Japanese war] were also symbolic of America's power in creating its own Orientalism at a time when the geopolitics of East-West relations underwent a rapid change',¹⁸⁰ therefore the 'cross-Pacific dynamics of nation and empire building manifested in these events were embodied in *Butterfly*'s narrative construction as well as its performances on stage.'¹⁸¹

Interestingly, the popularity of *Madama Butterfly* among the US audience was still effective enough in 1962 when Norman Krasna's Hollywood comedy *My Geisha* (directed by Jack Cardiff) was released. Ten years after the Treaty of San Francisco had come into effect sealing the formal end to the American Occupation of Japan, and roughly two years after the signing of the US-Japan Security Treaty or *Anpo jōyaku* (安保条約), Krasna's film attempts to distance itself from the 'Hollywood's negative depictions of the Japanese' popularised during and immediately after the end of WWII.¹⁸² Despite the possibly controversial and

¹⁷⁹ Mari Yoshihara, 'The flight of the Japanese butterfly: Orientalism, nationalism, and performances of Japanese womanhood', *American Quarterly*, 56 (2004), 975-1001 (p. 975).

¹⁸⁰ Mari Yoshihara, 'The flight of the Japanese butterfly: Orientalism, nationalism, and performances of Japanese womanhood', *American Quarterly*, 56 (2004), 975-1001 (p. 975).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 975.

¹⁸² Xiaofei Wang, 'Movies Without Mercy: Race, War, and Images of Japanese People in American Films, 1942-1945', *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 18 (2011), 11-36 (p.13).

inaccurate plot – featuring an American actress disguising herself as a Japanese *maiko* to play the role of Butterfly in her husband’s movie production – Krasna addresses the gap between the Western imagined Japan as a land of tradition and the 1960s technologically advanced as well as, from the protagonists’ perspective, *Americanised* Japan. Regardless of the admittedly clumsy binary depiction of Japanese society, separated into the conservative group passionately holding onto a traditional view of the world and the younger generation that tends to idealise the US as a role model, the film provides a relevant example of the way popular culture perpetrated the post-1945 American narrative that saw Japan as ‘devoted to the storyline of reform, reconstruction, and democratic renovation’,¹⁸³ therefore presenting the country as an ally rather than a former enemy. Thus, ‘Japanese society was made to appear conflict-free consensual, and, in time, came to be reread as a superior and even more efficient expression of liberal democracy.’¹⁸⁴

Consequently, ‘the classical and well-tested configuration of Japan as a place of ‘oriental’ or ‘eastern tradition’ antithetical to ‘western modernity’, generating a rich repertoire of popular icons’¹⁸⁵ proved to be useful to polish the image of an inoffensive country, to contrast that of the aggressive enemy which was popular during the war. In this sense, Donald Keene’s statement in the introductory note to his 1958 translation of Dazai’s *Ningen Shikkaku* is significant. Keene states that:

‘Dazai would have been gratified by the reviews his novel *The Setting Sun* [*Shayō*] received when the English translation was published in the United States. Even though some of the critics were distressed by the picture the book drew of contemporary Japan, they one and all

¹⁸³ H.D. Harootunian, ‘America’s Japan/Japan’s Japan’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 196-221 (p.200).

¹⁸⁴ H.D. Harootunian, ‘America’s Japan/Japan’s Japan’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 196-221 (p.203).

¹⁸⁵ Miyake, Toshio. "Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the 'West' and 'Japan' in Mangaesque Popular Cultures." In *Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti eds. Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* (2015) pp. 93-116 p.98.

discussed it in the terms reserved for works of importance. There was no trace of the condescension often bestowed on writings emanating from remote parts of the world, and for once nobody thought to use the damning adjective “exquisite” about unquestionably Japanese products.’¹⁸⁶

Such a point provides a poignant example of how such an 'orientalist', stereotypical and contemptuous approach was not only limited to political and economic relationships but also extended to literature.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, it shows that despite the narrative created by the American government to present Japan as an ally, from the American perspective, Japan's position was still that of a “remote part of the world” and a subordinate state. This is especially evident in the critics’ distress at the picture that Dazai provides of contemporary Japan. The sentiment of distress seems to imply that an already solidified preconception about Japan as a passive force existed, such passiveness may be interpreted as exquisiteness, for lack of better words, but it ultimately references a docile country. As opposed to this idea, behind the painful defeat, Dazai presents a country that is not passively accepting such reality. Instead, through Kazuko’s final monologue, but also through Naoji’s suicide as an act of defiance, Dazai shows a Japan that may be a defeated country, but it is certainly not passive or a docile one, instead it is hungry for renewal in the form of liberation from the past and from the old labels.

In regard to the critics’ seemingly misguided preconception, Harootunian comments that even the famous picture portraying General MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito side by side instead shows a structure akin to a marriage ‘with all of its attending associations of a sexual relationship and conjugal bliss’ in which ‘Japan, the bride, played by Hirohito [...] appears as

¹⁸⁶ Donald Keene Translation note in Dazai Osamu *No longer Human* New York: New Directions 1973 (p.3)

¹⁸⁷ Alt, Matt. *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World*. Crown Publishing Group (NY), 2020. pp. 5-6.

female, small, nervous, almost shrinking before MacArthur's towering height.'¹⁸⁸

Furthermore, Shimada employs the same allegory in his novel describing postwar Japan through the eyes of one of his, Katagiri Yusaku, who claims that ‘確かにみんなえごいだったかも知れない。しかし、みなし子ではなかった。アメリカに保護され、motherに甘えるえごい人なんて、ろくなものじゃない’.¹⁸⁹ However, completely equating the marriage-analogy employed by Harootunian and Shimada to Said’s orientalism is not possible. While in reimagining Japan as female, Harootunian attempts to imply that it is inferior to the male America,¹⁹⁰ the element of equality that resides – or should reside – in the notion of marriage is not present in Said’s definition of orientalism as ‘a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident."’ which often ‘connotes the high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European colonialism’.¹⁹¹ In fact, orientalism is fundamentally an ‘othering process’,¹⁹² which ultimately intends to justify ‘global asymmetrical power relations’¹⁹³ through the ‘constant generation of ‘oriental’ others functioning as identity mirrors: to be (re)discovered and explained (academic Orientalism), to be educated and reformed (paternalistic Orientalism), to be despised and hated (racist Orientalism), to be fantasised and desired (exoticist Orientalism).’¹⁹⁴ Hence the creation of

¹⁸⁸ H.D. Harootunian, ‘America’s Japan/Japan’s Japan’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 196-221 (p.199).

¹⁸⁹ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p.152. [**They might have been all egoists, but they, for sure, were not orphans. They had an American father to protect them and a Japanese mother to fawn over them, but they were still egoists, never decent people.**] (my translation)

¹⁹⁰ It is important to highlight that Harootunian wrote in the 1990s, therefore the intrinsic sexism of his statement is unfortunately to be expected, but it also shows the necessity for non-male led critical studies to change this rhetoric.

¹⁹¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 2.

¹⁹² Miyake, Toshio. ‘Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’ in Mangaesque Popular Cultures” In *Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* ed. by Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2015) pp. 93-116 (p.97).

¹⁹³ Ibid. p.97.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p.98).

the ‘binary opposition between “traditional,” or “underdeveloped,” Asia and the “developed” West”¹⁹⁵ which highlights that at its very core, Orientalism completely depends on a contingent Western-centric process of ‘self-definition’¹⁹⁶ portraying the West as ‘owner of a superior modernity’ from which stems the ‘the construction of the subaltern ‘oriental’ or ‘eastern’ other [...] marked as a non-Western and non-modern other.’¹⁹⁷ In *Yumetsukai*, Shimada highlights this paradox by having his main character, Matthew, state that in New York he was seen as ‘単に’.¹⁹⁸ Similarly to the previous example from Levy’s novel, by choosing to use the *katakana* directly originating from the English word “oriental” rather than the *kanji* ‘東洋人’, the author not only remarks on Matthew having come across this term in New York but heavily implies that – because of its inherent paradoxical nature – there can be no “Orientals” in “Orient”, such a person can only exist in the West.

However, even though it ‘has been marked or configured as an ‘oriental’ other in contrast to the hegemonic notion of ‘western’ identity and [...] modernity,’¹⁹⁹ Japan does not entirely fit in the oriental stereotype. In fact, Japan’s international relations and political history locate the country outside the centre/periphery and East/West binary discourse from which Said’s Orientalism originates. Consequently, the country’s imperialist past led to the creation of the paradox of an ‘oriental Orientalism [of Japan] against “inferior Asia”²⁰⁰ which was encouraged by the fact Japan never experienced Western colonisation in the way other Asian countries – such as India, Vietnam, and Malaysia – did. Furthermore, as its relations with the

¹⁹⁵ Kōichi, Iwabuchi, *Recentring globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.8.

¹⁹⁶ Miyake, Toshio. ‘Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’ in Mangaesque Popular Cultures” In. *Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* ed. by Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2015) pp. 93-116 (p.97).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p.97.

¹⁹⁸ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin ni-bu monogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 85. [‘**merely an oriental**’] (my translation).

¹⁹⁹ Miyake, Toshio. ‘Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’ in Mangaesque Popular Cultures” In. *Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* ed. by Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2015) pp. 93-116 (p.98).

²⁰⁰ Kōichi, Iwabuchi, *Recentring globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.8.

newly independent Asian nations were severed in the aftermath of WWII, Japan became effectively isolated from Asia, thereafter strengthening its relationship with the US according to its pre-war aspirations to ‘leave Asia.’²⁰¹ In addition, the rapid postwar economic growth partly based on the ‘stable stockholding’ policy put together by the Ministry of Finance,²⁰² which later led to the burst of the Bubble in the 1990s, and partly on defying the American expectations that ‘Japanese don't produce the things that we want’,²⁰³ theoretically locates Japan further away from the oriental narrative and closer to the Western sphere. At the time of the collapse of the Bubble in the 1990s, Japan’s influence over the US was such that, rather than reinstalling the postwar unbalanced power dynamics, the bursting of the Bubble only served to show that the two countries built a form of economic co-dependency that can be summarised as ‘Japan and the United States have realized the financial equivalent of the nuclear balance of terror – mutually assured destruction,’²⁰⁴ since Japan's economic collapse in the 1990s threatened ‘America’s long economic expansion.’²⁰⁵

2.2 Paradoxical representation: popular culture, self-representation, erasure of representation and synchronicity.

Studies on the representation of Japan through Said’s oriental paradigm often tend to overlook the fundamental detail that the paradigm itself is based on a western view. Thus, the attempt to make Japan fit into this narrative comes at the cost of raising the question of how Japan sees itself, rather than how Japan presents itself to the West and especially to the US.

²⁰¹ Pekka Korhonen, *Japan and the Pacific Free Trade Area* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.63-64.

²⁰² Alex Kerr, *Dogs and Demons The Fall of Modern Japan* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 82-83.

²⁰³ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.6.

²⁰⁴ R. Taggard Murphy, e-mail to Alex Kerr 24 Feb 2000 as reported by Kerr in Alex Kerr, *Dogs and Demons The Fall of Modern Japan* (London: Penguin, 2001), p.98.

²⁰⁵ Alex Kerr, *Dogs and Demons The Fall of Modern Japan* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 98.

The line between the two instances is certainly blurred. However, the comparative perspective on which this thesis is based confirms that there is a tendency to equate the western perception of Japan originated from the Meiji ambition to be acknowledged among modern nations – and later exacerbated by the aftermath of WWII – with Japan's self-representation. In this regard, Toshio Miyake argues that, in response to its postwar economic growth and the subsequent prominence of the role that Japan acquired in relation to America, a new form of orientalism has been created which he refers to as ‘Techno or neo-Orientalism’ to ‘preserve exclusive monopoly of at least some of the most enduring and vital modern paradigms attributed to Euro-American identity, such as reason, individualism, freedom or progress.’²⁰⁶ At the core of this new version of orientalism, there is the representation of Japan as a ‘kind of dysfunctional or dystopic version of modernity or the ‘West’, displayed through an endless list of individual, national or ecological crises.’²⁰⁷ Additionally, its central elements are ‘robots, cyborgs, computers, nuclear devastation, *salarymen*, *yakuza*, *otaku*, cute idols, etc.’²⁰⁸ However, these same elements are also extremely relevant in several well-known works by Japanese authors. Cyborgs and androids are central in the narratives of Tezuka Osamu’s manga series *Tetsuwan Atomu* (鉄腕アトム, *Mighty Atom*, 1959-1960), which became ‘Japan’s very first animated television series’,²⁰⁹ Masamune Shirow’s 1980s and 1990s popular media franchise *Kōkaku Kidōtai* (攻殻機動隊, also known as *The Ghost in the Shell*), and Sadamoto Yoshiyuki’s *Shin Seiki Evangelion* (新世紀エヴァンゲリオン,

²⁰⁶ Miyake, Toshio. ‘Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’ in Mangaesque Popular Cultures” In. *Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* ed. by Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2015) pp. 93-116 (p.99).

²⁰⁷ Miyake, Toshio. ‘Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’ in Mangaesque Popular Cultures” In. *Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* ed. by Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2015) pp. 93-116 (p.99).

²⁰⁸ Miyake, Toshio. ‘Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’ in Mangaesque Popular Cultures” In. *Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* ed. by Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2015) pp. 93-116 (p.99).

²⁰⁹ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.206.

Neon Genesis Evangelion, 1995-1996). Manga series such as Otomo Katsuhiro's *AKIRA* (アキラ, 1988), and the less well-known CLAMP's unfinished manga series *X/1999* (1992-unfinished), instead focus on apocalyptic scenarios. It is difficult to say whether Japanese authors and creators appropriated the imagined Japan made in US, or if America took inspiration from the Japanese works, but it is evident that the 'postwar historical background that enables us to witness the paradigm shift from the logic of imitation to the logic of synchronicity between Japan and the United States'²¹⁰ led to the 'chaotic negotiations between orientalism and occidentalism in 1990s'.²¹¹

For example, Azuma Hiroki claims that 'otaku culture in reality originated as a subculture imported from the United States after WWII, from the 1950s to the 1970s.'²¹² However, the term *otaku* was coined in Japan in 1983 by the journalist Nakamori Akio to define a 'new generation of obsessive pop-culture enthusiasts.'²¹³ Thus, the term holds a 'derisive quality' similar to that of "geek" or "nerd", evoking the image of 'an unattractive male obsessed with technology.'²¹⁴ But, in the context of Japan, a similarly negative portrayal of pop-culture enthusiasts dates back to the sixties, when the term *otaku* did not even exist and protests against the Vietnam War and the signing of the *Anpo* were raging across the country. In this climate, the 'culture war [that] had long been unfolding between Japan's old and young adults'²¹⁵ reached its peak, and while the younger generation found an outlet for their frustration in works such as Tomino Yoshiyuki's *Gundam* (ガンダム, 1970s) and a

²¹⁰ Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full metal Apache: transactions between cyberpunk Japan and avant-pop America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 200), pp. 14-15.

²¹¹ Ibid. pp. 14-15.

²¹² Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 11.

²¹³ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p. 208.

²¹⁴ Morikawa, Kaichiro, 'おたく Otaku/Geek', trans. by Dennis Washburn, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, 25 (2013), 56-66 (p. 56).

²¹⁵ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p. 203.

possibility of income in the manga and animation industry,²¹⁶ they were deemed *amae* (甘え), which Alt translates as ‘spoiled rotten’²¹⁷ but that specifically implies both that they relied on the old generation rather than depend upon themselves. In addition, the stereotype of the *otaku* as *hikikomori* – ‘the phenomenon in which young adults (many of them male) withdraw themselves in their own rooms, are unable to engage in any type of social activities including school and work’²¹⁸ originated in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Miyazaki Tsutomu’s abduction, rape and killing of four elementary school girls, and the Kobe child murder took place. In both cases, the media labelled the perpetrators as *otaku*.²¹⁹

Ultimately, while Techno or Neo-Orientalism can be mistaken for a cultural phenomenon, it is instead an economic one, that tends to capitalise on the ‘infectious negotiations [...] between orientalism and occidentalism’,²²⁰ attempting to unite the old aesthetic of *Japonisme* with the new technologically advanced Japan on both side of the Pacific. Indeed, the rebuilding of postwar Japan have been of interest to ‘a large number of writers and thinkers [since] the late 1960s and it continues to capture the popular imagination [...] to remind Japanese [of] this cultural uniqueness and difference.’²²¹ This supposed cultural uniqueness that marks Japan as different from the rest of the world is rooted in the notion of *kokutai* (national essence) which implies the ‘myth of racial homogeneity’,²²² and also implies a linguistic and ethnic consistency, popularised for the first time in the Meiji Era. Thus, *kokutai*

²¹⁶ Ibid. p.200.

²¹⁷ Ibid. p.203.

²¹⁸ Hiroki Azuma, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. by Jonathan E. Able and Shion Kono (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) p.138.

²¹⁹ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.211.

²²⁰ Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full metal Apache: transactions between cyberpunk Japan and avant-pop America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 200), pp. 176.

²²¹ H.D. Harootunian, ‘America’s Japan/Japan’s Japan’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 196-221 (pp.216-17).

²²² Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian ‘Japan in the World’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 1-9 (p.3).

exists ‘at the core of Japanese state nationalism and dominant discourse of ‘Japaneseness’²²³ commonly referred to as *Nihonjinron*. Harootunian’s mention of Japanese cultural uniqueness, which ‘account[s] for the nation's vast economic and technological successes’,²²⁴ is part of the argument that led to the popularity of the *Nihonjinron* in the 70s. A straightforward definition of *Nihonjinron* is difficult to provide, as the ‘types of *Nihonjinron* are varied. and sometimes they are not coherent. Some of them are even conflicting or contradictory to each other’ but ‘they all advocate the uniqueness of Japan.’²²⁵ However, while *Nihonjinron* originated in Japan, it is because of a complementary effort of both ‘Euro-American’ and Japanese scholars that ‘the dominant idea of a homogeneous, particularistic and unique ‘Japan’ antithetical to a generalized and universal ‘West’²²⁶ leading to the contemporary portrayal of Techno Japan has come to be.

Japanese popular culture is clearly one of the areas where the continued negotiations between the myth of uniqueness encouraged by Japan and the western neo-Japonisme based on such a narrative are the most evident. For example, characters from manga, anime and even computer games traditionally ‘for the most part do not look “Japanese.”’²²⁷ Iwabuchi refers to this tendency as *mukokuseki* (absence of nationality) ‘implying the erasure of racial or ethnic characteristics or a context, which does not imprint a particular culture or country with these features.’²²⁸ Thus, according to Anne Allison, regardless of its success abroad, it is because of the absence of elements ‘closely associated with racial and bodily images of a

²²³ Mika Ko, *Japanese cinema and otherness: nationalism, multiculturalism and the problem of Japaneseness* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010) p.12.

²²⁴ H.D. Harootunian, ‘America’s Japan/Japan’s Japan’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 196-221 (pp.216-17).

²²⁵ Mika Ko, *Japanese cinema and otherness: nationalism, multiculturalism and the problem of Japaneseness* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010) p.11.

²²⁶ Miyake, Toshio. ‘Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’ in Mangaesque Popular Cultures” In. *Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* ed. by Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2015) pp. 93-116 (p.101).

²²⁷ Kōichi, Iwabuchi, *Recentring globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.28.

²²⁸ Ibid. p.28.

country of origin'²²⁹ that Japanese popular culture 'does not equate to Japanese soft power'.²³⁰ However, it is also true that the absence of specific ethnic features in manga and anime has itself become a distinguishing trait of Japanese illustration and animation products. In addition, by virtually erasing distinctive features that can be linked to specific ethnicities or cultures, *mukokuseki* produces an alternative kind of homogeneity based on the lack of elements against which to measure said homogeneity. In turn, even though it can be said that Japanese popular culture lacks authentic representations, it is also true that this is not its purpose, instead, it aims to 'fuel a yearning or attraction for the so-called real Japan'²³¹ of which it is still part.

2.3 The role of literature in self-representation.

Ultimately, it is Tatsumi's synchronicity of Japanese occidentalism and American orientalism, which sits at the centre of the contemporary Japanese cultural paradox, in which Japan's self-portrayal both depends on and incites the Techno-orientalist representation popularised by the American media. This contradiction must be considered in any cultural comparative study focusing on Japan's interconnections with the US since it ultimately confirms that the very notion of "contemporary Japan" relies on a complex set of negotiations between the Japanese imperial past, to which the myth of cultural, linguistic and ethnic homogeneity is closely related, its geographical background as an Asian nation, its insular

²²⁹ Ibid. p.28.

²³⁰ Anne Allison, 'The attractions of the J-wave for American youth', in *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, ed. by Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnell (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 99-110 (p.105).

²³¹ Anne Allison, 'The attractions of the J-wave for American youth', in *Soft Power Superpowers: Cultural and National Assets of Japan and the United States*, ed. by Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnell (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 99-110 (p.105).

nature, and the aforementioned American postwar narrative aiming to paint it as orderly and inoffensive.

If popular culture accounts for the most effective vector to export the imaginary Japan upon which to design the ‘neo-Japonisme’ stereotype, this study argues that the role that critics have assigned to literature in this system was originally to portray the hidden side of Japan to the Japanese. For example, the favoured approach to Dazai’s postwar writings notoriously was to primarily focus on the mirroring of the ‘moral chaos afflicting Japan’²³² at the end of WWII or on the implied ‘dark fate of Japan’s essence’²³³ as part of the narrative, with Isoda also claiming that ‘Dazai’s fear of hell [...] eventually manifests as the fear of the world (外界, *gaikai*)’.²³⁴ Both these interpretations hold Dazai’s works contingent on a certain time, i.e. postwar and American Occupation, and a certain space, i.e. Japan. Furthermore, they are evidently based upon 1960s arguments such as Eto Jun’s proposing that the American Occupation, ‘wrenched the Japanese from their own history in the interest of democratizing and Americanizing Japan.’²³⁵ It is also necessary to point out that – as opposed to literary adjacent products – in terms of literature, Japan has traditionally imported more than it has exported to the English-speaking market causing ‘Japanese literature [to be] nearly invisible abroad’²³⁶ where it is often regarded as ‘a minor culture’,²³⁷ therefore easily classified under both the orientalist and national paradigm. This point has also been addressed by Mizumura who discussed it in relation to her mother’s writings by stating:

²³² Paola Scrolavezza, ‘Raccontare il dopoguerra: gli outsiders’, in *La narrativa giapponese moderna e contemporanea* ed. by Luisa Bienati and Paola Scrolavezza. (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009), pp.137-145 (p.139).

²³³ Kōichi Isoda, ‘Kaisetsu’ in Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), pp. 202–210 (p.205).

²³⁴ *Ibid.* p.205.

²³⁵ H.D. Harootunian, ‘America’s Japan/Japan’s Japan’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 196-221 (p.217).

²³⁶ Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full metal Apache: transactions between cyberpunk Japan and avant-pop America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 200), p.171.

²³⁷ *Ibid.* p.171.

‘my mother, also full of artistic aspirations, writes her own autobiography. That novel is well received in Japan but is not translated into French – or any other European language, for that matter. The number of Europeans who read Japanese is just too small. Therefore, only Japanese readers can share the plight of my mother’s life. For other readers in the world, it’s as if her novel never existed. It’s as if she herself never existed.’²³⁸

On the one hand, the orientalist paradigm allows advertisements for new translation of Japanese to continue othering the final product marketing as exceptional using contrastive expressions such as ‘strange, beautiful and affecting’²³⁹ or ‘ominous and charming brilliantly sad’.²⁴⁰ On the other hand, the national paradigm – aiming to present the foreign audience with products that can be easily labelled as ‘Japanese’ – favours originally monolingual works written by Japanese-born authors, in short, the number of *kokubungaku* (国文学, national literature) works translated into English is far superior to the number of *ekkyō bungaku* (越境文学, border-crossing literature) authors, with only few exceptions, such as Tawada Yōko, Mizumura Minae and Levy Hideo. As a concept, *ekkyō bungaku*²⁴¹ is still being developed.²⁴² At this point, it refers to the production of both ethnically non-Japanese authors writing in

²³⁸ Minae Mizumura, *The Fall of Language in the Age of English*, trans. by Mari Yoshihara and Juliet Winters Carpenter (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 58.

²³⁹ From the Sunday Times blurb for the English Translation of Ogawa Yoko’s *The Memory Police*.

²⁴⁰ Keith Reid’s blurb for the English edition of Murata Sayaka’s *Life Ceremony*.

²⁴¹ The terms *ekkyō* or *Nihongo bungaku* in this thesis are used in opposition to terms such as *Nihon bungaku*, *kokubungaku* or national literature. Even though I am aware that authors such as Young and Li present a different approach to the subject and consider the terms either inaccurate (Li) or outdated (Young), I intend to focus on the very fact that the creation of such labels indicates a perceived necessity to differentiate between what is national and what is non-national. Therefore, even though I do agree that such labels should indeed be considered outdated, especially in the context of world literature, it is still necessary that I use it to properly highlight what I perceive as a central issue, namely the fact that transnational literature, with its translingual and multilingual characteristics, is often overlooked in both academia and publishing in order to pursue the portrayal of Japan as homogeneously monolingual and monocultural.

²⁴² Rumi Sakamoto, “Writing as out/insiders, Contemporary Japan’s *ekkyō* literature in globalization”, in *Popular culture, globalization and Japan*, ed. by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 137-157 (p.137).

Japanese and Japanese authors writing in both Japanese and other languages.²⁴³ It also includes both multilingual works – i.e. texts in which more languages coexist – and translingual works – i.e. works written in a language other than the one the writer is born into. In addition to the aforementioned American-born Levy Hideo, Tawada Yōko, who is Japanese-born but lives in Germany and writes in both Japanese and German, and Japanese returnee from the US Mizumura Minae, the expression has been used to refer to authors such as David Zopetti, who was born in Switzerland, Iranian-born Shirin Nezamafi, and Chinese-born Yang Yi. Thus, it appears evident that more immigrant authors residing in Japan have been listed under the label of *ekkyō bungaku* than Japanese authors residing abroad.²⁴⁴ This almost exclusive interest in the ‘inflow’²⁴⁵ reflects an attempt to list foreign-born authors in Japan under a single category since their production is neither recognized as immigrant literature nor as national literature. In fact, besides *ekkyō bungaku*, the term *Nihongo bungaku* writers (writers of literature in Japanese) is also commonly used to indicate translingual authors writing in Japanese, however, both the terms only provide a partial and ambiguous definition.²⁴⁶

Indeed, the efforts made to preserve the myth of a homogeneous Japanese culture go as far as to see minority literature, such as the *Zainichi* literature, literature written in Japanese by Korean immigrants of several generations, as part of the Japanese national literature on the

²⁴³ Sakamoto also clarifies that “[w]riters who emigrated overseas and write exclusively in the language of the host society, such as Kazuo Ishiguro, are not considered *ekkyō* writers even when they write on Japan.” [Rumi Sakamoto ‘Writing as Out/Insiders: Contemporary Japan’s *Ekkyō* literature in Globalization’ in *Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan* ed. by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto (New York, Routledge, 2006) pp. 137-157 (p.137).]

²⁴⁴ Rumi Sakamoto, ‘Writing as out/insiders, Contemporary Japan’s *ekkyō* literature in globalization’, in *Popular culture, globalization and Japan*, ed. by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 137-157 (p.137).

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p.137.

²⁴⁶ Li Jiang, ‘What Border Are They Crossing?: A Few Sociolinguistic Issues with Foreign-born Writers of Japanese’, *Jinbun Shizen Kenkyū*, 5 (2011), 347-379 (p.348).

basis that it originated under ‘specific historical circumstances.’²⁴⁷ Similar forms of assimilation are limited to literature in the postwar and contemporary era, but even to individuals of other ethnic groups such as Ainu, Okinawans, and Taiwanese people,²⁴⁸ who under the Japanese pre-war imperialistic system, were granted Japanese citizenship as per the Emperor’s benevolence, this practice was referred to as *kōminka*.²⁴⁹

The Meiji misconception that *modern* ‘is inextricably tied to the myth of a single ethnicity and monolingualism’²⁵⁰ – rekindled by the *Nihonjinron* resurfacing in the 1970s following Eto’s argument and Nakane Chie’s discourse on the ‘impossibility of individual identity outside the group’²⁵¹ in Japanese society – is at the base of the misinterpretation of Japan as ‘one of the prototypes of a monolingual nation’.²⁵² Consequently, this ‘by-product of the modernisation process starting in the second half of the 19th century’²⁵³ also shaped the hyper-national approach to the study of Japanese literature. Such an approach disregards the variety of Japanese literary traditions, ultimately carrying on the assumption that ‘the narrative of Japanese literary history until the latter half of the twentieth century was created and developed under the illusion of a monolingual condition.’²⁵⁴ However, as the social strata of Japan have evolved, the ‘growing influx of people who speak a language other than Japanese in recent years has entailed trends of a new linguistic diversification’, which is

²⁴⁷ Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, ‘Challenging the Myth of Homogeneity: Immigrant Writing in Japan’ In *Immigrant and Ethnic-Minority Writers since 1945*, ed. by Sandra Vlasta and Wiebke Sievers (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Rodopi, 2018), pp. 318-354 (p.333).

²⁴⁸ Writing more in-depth on the matter of *Zainichi* and other minority ethnic groups in Japan is beyond the scope of my research. However, many studies have been and are being carried out on the matter. Relevant works include Leo T.S. Ching’s *Anti-Japan: The Politics of Sentiment in Postcolonial East Asia* (2019).

²⁴⁹ Kōichi, Iwabuchi, *Recentring globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.9.

²⁵⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 50.

²⁵¹ H.D. Harootunian, ‘America’s Japan/Japan’s Japan’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 196-221 (p. 217).

²⁵² Peter Backhaus, *Linguistic landscapes: a comparative study of urban multilingualism in Tokyo* (Clevedon, Buffalo and Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2007), p.64.

²⁵³ *Ibid.* p.64.

²⁵⁴ Angela Yiu, ‘Literature in Japanese (Nihongo bungaku)’, *Japanese Language and Literature*, 54 (2020), 37-66. (p.37).

reflected in the literary production both among *ekkyō* and *kokubungaku* writers.²⁵⁵

Regrettably, the academic approach to Japanese literary studies still maintains that the two traditions exist in opposition to each other, as widely discussed by Li Jiang in the 2011 article ‘What Border Are They Crossing? – A Few Sociolinguistic Issues with Foreign-born Writers of Japanese.’

Such a binary view clearly mirrors the Western/Eastern juxtaposition summarised by Said. Indeed, by ‘taking a fixed, more or less total geographical position towards a wide variety of social, linguistic, political, and historical realities’,²⁵⁶ the orientalist perspective reimagines everything that is not *west* as a uniform entity implicitly ignoring its diversity, nuances, and cultural varieties. Starting from the Meiji era – when the necessity for an acknowledgement of a consistent literary tradition became part of the modernisation process led to the term ‘*bungaku* com[ing] to refer primarily to "literature" in the sense roughly equivalent to contemporary English’²⁵⁷ – Japanese literature has been approached in a similar manner both from outside and inside the country to the point that it can be concluded that ‘the narrative of Japanese literary history until the latter half of the twentieth century was created and developed under the illusion of a monolingual condition.’²⁵⁸ However, it is necessary to clarify that such a condition is not just endemic of Japanese literary history, it indeed concerns the very idea of national literature as ‘generated by excluding any form of cultural or lingual alterity and [...] based on a homogenizing and essentialist discourse.’²⁵⁹ In addition, such approach to literature – which I refer to as a national approach – is still

²⁵⁵ Peter Backhaus, *Linguistic landscapes: a comparative study of urban multilingualism in Tokyo* (Clevedon, Buffalo and Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2007), p.64.

²⁵⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 50.

²⁵⁷ Denis Washburn, ‘文学 Bungaku/Literature’, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, 25, (2013): 116-126 (116).

²⁵⁸ Angela Yiu, ‘Literature in Japanese (Nihongo bungaku)’, *Japanese Language and Literature*, 54 (2020), 37-66. (p.37).

²⁵⁹ George Steiner, *What is comparative literature?: an inaugural lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on 11 October 1994*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p.9

relevant in the academic institutions, therefore the scholarship as a whole. Thus, it shapes the representation of a literary canon as inherently monolingual in contrast to the vision provided by comparative literature as a discipline ‘immersed in, delights in the prodigal diversity of natural languages.’²⁶⁰

Nonetheless, in the case of Japanese literature additional factors have cooperated to create such a long-lasting illusion which is still present today. As I mentioned, one of the main causes can be found in the efforts to embrace the “modern” as monolingual and monocultural, which later mutated to adapt to the narrative of “uniqueness” at the core of *Nihonjinron*. But the other fundamental element rests in the intricate way to confirm such an ideal of homogeneity by synchronically corresponding to the stereotype expected by the Western world in the form of *Orientalism* or *Japonisme*, while condemning the role of the external influence on the fabric of Japanese society. This is evident, for example, in the case of Mishima Yukio (1925-1970).

Mishima publicly committed suicide by *seppuku*, an act that earned him ‘international celebrity.’²⁶¹ The traditional mode of his suicide was in line with the way he had lived by performing ‘the image of an archetypal Japanese.’²⁶² As Ōe clarifies ‘this image was not the kind that arises spontaneously from a Japanese mentality. It was the superficial image of a Japanese as seen from a European point of view, a fantasy. Mishima acted out that image just as it was.’²⁶³ This points to a certain measure of humour in Mishima’s lifelong act, which only in appearance contrasts with his strong nationalist and Anti-American opinions, for

²⁶⁰ George Steiner, *What is comparative literature?: an inaugural lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on 11 October 1994*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.9

²⁶¹ Kensuke Kōno and Ann Sherif, ‘Trends in postwar literature. 1945-1970s’, in *Cambridge history to Japanese literature* ed. by Haruo Shizane and Tomi Suzuki with David Lurie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 719-747 (p. 734).

²⁶² Kazuo Ishiguro and Kenzaburo Ōe ‘The novelist in today’s world: a conversation’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 163-76 (p. 167).

²⁶³ *Ibid.* p.167.

which he was ‘labeled [a] “fascist.”²⁶⁴ On a surface level, Mishima seemed to abide by a western view of Japan, exaggerating certain elements and completely disregarding others, while becoming well-known amongst the same people whose presence he opposed, but on a deeper level he was ‘present[ing] a false image’.²⁶⁵ Thus, he was adding to the already warped representation of Japan in the West as a place that ‘did everything differently’,²⁶⁶ effectively barring the West from ever accessing – i.e. understanding – Japan. Therefore, even if in an unconventional way, Mishima showed himself to be ‘deeply engaged with the West and wrote in large part in reaction to [his] Western experience or the reading of Western literature’²⁶⁷ carrying on with the same process as ‘[a]ll the leading novelists of modern Japan’ such as Natsume Sōseki, Mori Ōgai, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, and Nagai Kafū.

2.4 Transnationalising the national canon: Dazai as the Burai.

Indeed, regardless of its status as *Nationallitteratur* – a term coined in the 1770s in Germany to signify the literature of a nation, which implies the social, cultural and political function of literature²⁶⁸ – *kokubungaku* has been ‘heavily influenced by Western culture’.²⁶⁹ In addition for such an argument to have been made in regard to modern authors such as Sōseki and Ōgai, both of whom resided abroad for a certain amount of time before moving back to Japan

²⁶⁴ Kensuke Kōno and Ann Sherif, ‘Trends in postwar literature. 1945-1970s’, in *Cambridge history to Japanese literature* ed. by Haruo Shizane and Tomi Suzuki with David Lurie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 719-747 (p. 734).

²⁶⁵ Kazuo Ishiguro and Kenzaburo Ōe ‘The novelist in today’s world: a conversation’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 163-76 (p. 168).

²⁶⁶ Alex Kerr, *Dogs and Demons: The Fall of Modern Japan* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p.6.

²⁶⁷ John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.36.

²⁶⁸ Angela Yiu, ‘National literature and beyond: Mizumura Minae and Hideo Levy’, in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*, ed. by Rachel Hutchinson and Leith Morton (London and New York: 2016), pp. 227-240 (p.230).

²⁶⁹ Rebecca Suter, *The Japanization of modernity: Murakami Haruki between Japan and the United States* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), p.4.

– Sōseki in England and Ōgai in Germany – this becomes even more relevant in the case of the so-called *Buraiha* (無頼派). Despite its name, *Buraiha* does not refer to a school or a literary current, it is merely an expression that has been used to refer to a group of Shōwa era authors – most prominently Dazai Osamu, Sakaguchi Ango (1906-1955) and Oda Sakunosuke (1913-1947) – whose works are indissolubly linked to the early postwar. Often translated as “The Decadents”, the term *Buraiha* was coined by Dazai who used it in a letter in 1946 where he defined himself as a *burai* (無頼), from the Chinese term 無頼 (无赖, *Wúlài*) literally “rascal, scoundrel”, that he intended as equal to the French *libertin*, inspired by the life and works of the French poet François Villon.²⁷⁰ Thus the term *burai* reveals two main points in Dazai’s writing: first his interest in and skill to use language in a translingual manner, and second his preference for a narrative built around the figure of the isolated, the defeated and the rebel. Similarly to how he did with the use of the term *burai*, Dazai showed an ability to work across different vocabularies to create his own lexicon to express his thoughts and feelings, while at the same time maintaining his language immediately comprehensible and ageless.²⁷¹ On the one hand, such peculiarity inspired critics to acknowledge the echoes of *rakugo* in Dazai’s writing,²⁷² on the other hand, it made it possible for the title of his novel *Shayō* to be used to create the term *Shayōzoku* (斜陽族) or the ‘generation of the setting sun’ indicating the disillusioned and lost youth who had witnessed the WWII defeat.²⁷³ It is especially in Dazai’s last two novels that his interest in disgraced characters becomes evident. For example, *Shayō* revolves around a brother and sister from a fallen aristocratic family in the postwar. Naoji, the brother, had already shown a

²⁷⁰ Paola Scrolavezza, ‘Raccontare il dopoguerra: gli outsiders’, in *La narrativa giapponese moderna e contemporanea* ed. by Luisa Bienati and Paola Scrolavezza. (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009), pp.137-145 (p.137).

²⁷¹ Mizuyo Kakuta, ‘Sakuhin Kaisetsu’, in Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), pp.211–217 (p.215).

²⁷² Paola Scrolavezza, ‘Raccontare il dopoguerra: gli outsiders’, in *La narrativa giapponese moderna e contemporanea* ed. by Luisa Bienati and Paola Scrolavezza. (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009), pp.137-145 (p.138).

²⁷³ *Ibid.* p.139.

tendency towards a dissolute lifestyle before enrolling and fighting in the Pacific. By the end of the war, when he returns as a veteran, his alcoholism has worsened to the point where he squanders the last of the family savings on drinking, women, and impromptu visits to Tokyo. During these visits he meets with the writer Uehara, with whom he shares his self-destructive tendencies. It is only in the second to last chapter, *Naoji no Isho* (直治の遺書) – the only one written from his perspective – that Naoji uncovers his true feelings by confessing: ‘僕は下品になりました。下品な言葉づかいをするようになりました。けれども、それは半分は、いや、六十パーセントは、哀れな附け焼刃でした。へたな小細工でした。民衆にとって、僕はやはり、キザったらしく乙にすました気づまりの男でした.’²⁷⁴

Naoji’s inability to fit in the postwar society by completely denying his identity simultaneously opposes his sister Kazuko’s refusal to surrender to the role she is expected to take over by the people and mirrors the alienation of Ōba Yōzō, the main character in Dazai’s last long novel *Ningen Shikkaku*. As opposed to Naoji, at the end of the novel, Kazuko writes to Uehara ‘あなたが私をお忘れになっても、また、あなたがお酒でいのちをお無くしになっても、私は私の革命の完成のために、丈夫で生きて行けそうです.’²⁷⁵ Thus her revolution consists in keeping on living by her own standards despite lifting her face from the mud she had ended up in.²⁷⁶ The embodiment of her revolution is Uehara’s child symbolising the new generation, that she proudly carries, rejecting the social convention that intended for respectable women to get married or to depend on a man.

²⁷⁴ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), pp.175-176 [‘**I became coarse. I learned to use coarse language. But it was half - no sixty percent - a wretched imposture, an odd form of petty trickery. As far as the “people” were concerned, I was a stuck-up prig who put them all on edge with my affected airs.**’] Trans. by Donald Keene in Osamu Dazai, *The Setting Sun*, trans. by Donald Keene (New York: New Directions, 1968), p.155.

²⁷⁵ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p.194. [‘**Even if you forget me, even if you lose your life to alcohol, I will keep on living healthily to bring my revolution to completion.**’] (my translation).

²⁷⁶ Mizuyo Kakuta, ‘Sakuhin Kaisetsu’, in Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), pp.211-217 (p.214).

Similarly to Naoji, Yōzō strongly feels that he is not meant to be part of society. However – rather than mimic the reaction and behaviours of those around him in the same way as Naoji attempts to do – Yōzō tend to manipulate their reactions. As he finds it particularly effective to amuse those around him to hide his much more gloomy and moody personality, thus he wears the mask of a buffoon. His struggles are immediately made clear at the beginning of the novel where he states ‘つまり自分には、人間の営みというものが未だに何もわかっていない、という事になりそうです。自分の幸福の観念と、世のすべての人たちの幸福の観念とが、まるで食いちがっているような不安、自分はその不安のために夜々、転輾し、呻吟し、発狂しかけた事さえあります.’²⁷⁷ *Ningen Shikkaku* – that literally translates as ‘disqualified from being human’ playing on the irony of the words sounding similar to the expression *ningen shakai* (人間社会), human society – follows the story of Yōzō from his childhood to his admission to a mental hospital after several suicide attempts and the acknowledgement of his addiction to painkillers and alcohol. In terms of structure, the novel includes a prologue and an epilogue, both from the perspective of an unnamed narrator who came across Yōzō’s three journals, finally becoming invested in his story. The central part consists of these three journals, thus, similarly to *Shayō*, notwithstanding the changing point of view, the narration is always in first person. Studies on Dazai — such as Isoda Kōchi’s brief essay on Dazai’s life ‘Dazai Osamu Shōden’ (太宰治小伝),²⁷⁸ Phyllis Lyons’s *The Saga of Dazai Osamu: A Critical Study with Translations* (1985), and Paola Scrolavezza’s ‘Raccontare il dopoguerra: gli outsiders’ (2009) – tend to primarily explore the analogies between the author’s writings, his chaotic life and

²⁷⁷ Osamu Dazai, *Ningen Shikkaku*, (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1985), p.12 [**for example, it seems to me that I am unable to understand the way human beings behave. Because of the anxiety caused by the impression that my notion of happiness is completely dissimilar from that of the rest of society, night after night, I turn around, groan and even believe I am going mad**] (my translation).

²⁷⁸ Kōchi Isoda, ‘Dazai Osamu Shōden’, in *Shayō* by Osamu Dazai (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023) pp. 202-210.

self-destructive tendencies, culminated with his death by drowning in 1948, and the general climate of postwar Japan. Certainly, at the time of his death, ‘Dazai's apparent suicide provided Japan with a human symbol of despair that set into bold relief the shadow lurking behind the optimism of postwar reconstruction.’²⁷⁹ However, the frequency with which critics such as Isoda read Dazai’s production through the lens of nostalgia – regarding it as a eulogy to the Japan of the old families²⁸⁰ – is second only to the interest for the author’s ‘loveless’²⁸¹ childhood spent with a governess named Take, who taught him not only basic skills such as reading but also morals (道徳, *dōtoku*).²⁸² In a similar way as with the representation and self-representation of Japan, by discussing Dazai’s works it is necessary to acknowledge that the image provided by decades of critical and academic studies has been twisted to fit the label under which the author has been studied. Thus, previous works on Dazai are not inherently inaccurate, but they surely are partial to a certain kind of interpretation. Instead, Dazai’s cultural legacy cannot be considered only in the context of postwar literature since it still influences the contemporary Japanese literary scene. Furthermore, already three decades ago when Wolfe published his own monograph on *Suicidal Narratives in Modern Japan: The Case of Dazai Osamu*, Dazai had already gained more critical attention than Kawabata Yasunari and Mishima, despite the fact that his works were less known in the West.²⁸³ In this regard, Wolfe claims that ‘[a] good part of the explanation [for this] may lie in the fortuitous presence of the American Occupation in Japan in the immediate postwar period, a presence that enabled the few Americans equipped with the requisite linguistic skills and cultural

²⁷⁹ Alan Stephen Wolfe, *Suicidal narrative in modern Japan: The case of Dazai Osamu*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 12.

²⁸⁰ Kōichi Isoda, ‘Kaisetsu’ in Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), pp. 202–210 (p.202).

²⁸¹ Paola Scrolavezza, ‘Raccontare il dopoguerra: gli outsiders’, in *La narrativa giapponese moderna e contemporanea* ed. by Luisa Bienati and Paola Scrolavezza. (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009), pp.137-145 (p.138).

²⁸² Kōichi Isoda, ‘Dazai Osamu Shōden’, in *Shayō* by Osamu Dazai (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023) pp. 202-210 (p.203-04).

²⁸³ Alan Stephen Wolfe, *Suicidal narrative in modern Japan: The case of Dazai Osamu*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 4.

sensitivity to register the turbulent reactions to postwar life that appeared through the texts and personae of Japanese writers such as Dazai, whose notoriety was then coincidentally at its peak.²⁸⁴ Although the author does not provide further explanation, it is implied that bilingual American soldiers, many of whom were *nisei* working in the army as interpreters and translators, played a role in exporting Dazai's works to the US.²⁸⁵ This perspective allows my research to present Dazai's production as part of the trans-Pacific cultural movement. Thus, it is significant that, while English translations of Japanese works are often late, Donald Keene's translations of both *Shayō* and *Ningen Shikkaku* were originally published in the US only a few years after the end of the American Occupation. Consequently, 'Dazai's emergence as the earliest postwar manifestation of the genuinely alienated writer may best be seen as part of the effort, by both Japanese and Western critics, to represent a recently militarist Japan as a "human" society, sharing a universal humanity with the West.'²⁸⁶ Furthermore, 'the frequent parallels drawn between Dazai and Dostoevsky, Kafka, or Camus are also part of this process at a vital juncture, the late 1940s and 1950s.'²⁸⁷ Thus, similarly to the 1950s and 1960s translations of Kawabata's and Mishima's works 'marketed and read in the US as representatives of a new docile, aestheticized Zen-like Japanese culture that was explicitly meant [...] to replace the bellicose wartime image of Japan'²⁸⁸ Dazai's works became part of the postwar narrative set by the American government to tailor Japan portrayal as an ally.

²⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 4.

²⁸⁵ As mentioned in Jay Rubin, 'Wholesomeness to Decadence: The Censorship of Literature under the Allied Occupation', in *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 11 (1985), pp. 71-103 (p. 90).

²⁸⁶ Alan Stephen Wolfe, *Suicidal narrative in modern Japan: The case of Dazai Osamu*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 4.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 4.

²⁸⁸ Stephen Snyder, 'Insistence and Resistance: Murakami and Mizumura in Translation', *New England Review*, 37 (2016), 133-142 (p.133).

Chapter 3: もっと自由になりてえなあ: Freedom and Language in the Works of Dazai Osamu and Shimada Masahiko.

The main purpose of this chapter is to focus on the role of freedom in the narratives of Dazai and Shimada Masahiko presenting a diachronic comparison between the two authors. The primary aim of such a comparison is to highlight how Shimada employs multilingual strategies as a stylistic device to build on a metaphor that interprets multilingualism as a form of rebellion in the search for a kind of freedom that reminds of Dazai's main character in *Shayō*, Kazuko's desire to be freed from the past. Introducing the element of literary multilingualism also paves the way to the problematisation of *ekkyō bungaku* (越境文学, border-crossing literature) in relation to the national Japanese literary canon, which provides the basis for the comparison between Shimada's and Levy Hideo's works. It is worth noticing that this part of the thesis primarily references literary sources, focusing on the role of multilingualism in what, in Damrosch's words, is already 'read as literature' to then gradually shift to its interactions with popular culture in the following sections.

3.1 A Freedom Manifesto.

Albeit mostly ignored by the critics – who instead often refer to Mishima as the biggest influence on Japanese literature from 1970s onwards –²⁸⁹ Dazai's production left an equally deep mark not only on the following generations of writers but on the perception of Japanese

²⁸⁹ Takashi Nibuya 'Kaisetsu', in *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* by Shimada Masahiko (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), pp.432-440 (p. 432).

literature outside of Japan. If Mishima created a ‘false image’²⁹⁰ of Japan to be exported, Dazai’s writing and – as far as it is known about it – personality does not show any interest in this sense. Instead, the main focus on the narrative remains the individual’s perception of humanity and isolation. As previously mentioned, Wolfe claims that in Dazai, both Japanese and Western critics saw ‘the earliest manifestation of the genuinely alienated writer’, however, I argue that loneliness is a better term to be used in connection with Dazai’s writing. In fact, while ‘[a]lienation is the inability to establish a relation to other human beings, to things, to social institutions and thereby also—so the fundamental intuition of the theory of alienation—to oneself’,²⁹¹ in both *Shayō* and *Ningen Shikkaku*, the main characters manage to establish long lasting relationships, such as in the case of Yōzō and Horiki, as well as Naoji and Uehara, Kazuko and her unborn child, and even Kazuko and Naoji.

Furthermore, since both novels are written as a ‘confession’ conveyed in the form of a diary or a letter,²⁹² the main characters/narrators show a deep awareness of themselves. Indeed, it is the weight of that very awareness that ultimately brings them down. In addition, it is the word *kodoku* (孤独) that is most frequent in the novels, for example in the last pages of *Shayō* where Kazuko writes ‘おなかの小さい生命が、私の孤独の微笑のたねになって います’.²⁹³ As opposed to 寂しい (*sabishii*), which implies the melancholic feeling originating from loneliness, *kodoku*, is written with the character for orphan (孤) and the character for alone (独), thus, in the case of Dazai’s novel, it refers to the acceptance of being inherently different from – and therefore unwelcomed in – society. It is important to mention

²⁹⁰ Kazuo Ishiguro and Kenzaburo Ōe ‘The novelist in today’s world: a conversation’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 163-76 (p. 168).

²⁹¹ Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p.3.

²⁹² David Brudnoy, ‘The immutable despair of Dazai Osamu’, *Monumenta Nipponica*, 23 (1968), 457-474. (p.469).

²⁹³ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p.192 [‘**this little life inside of me has become the seed of my lonely smile**’] (my translation).

that this work does not intend “different” as “lacking”. On the contrary Dazai’s characters tend to show a much deeper understanding of both the society at large and themselves than the average. The idea that the gifted – as in particularly intelligent, talented or beautiful individuals – may be perceived as negative by the rest of the society certainly echoes Dazai’s self-representation as a *burai* who does not care for the negative critique of the establishment trusting that his genius will be one day appreciated.²⁹⁴ This theme is present in more recent works by authors of different generations, such as Nakagami Kenji in his generational saga *Sennen no yuraku* (千年の愉楽, 1982) and also in Kirino Natsuo’s works. For example, in her 2003 novel *Grotesque* (グロテスク 2003, *Grotesque* trans. by Rebecca Copeland, 2007), Kirino Natsuo’s nameless narrator describes her sister saying that ‘悪人でもない。ただ悪魔のように美しい容貌を持っていただけだったのです’.²⁹⁵

In addition to the existential conflict between the gifted and the damned, which is reminiscent of Francis Scott Fitzgerald’s narratives in both *The Great Gatsby* and *The Beautiful and The Damned*, Shimada Masahiko’s novel *Yumetsukai* also presents an interpretation of *kodoku* that echoes Dazai’s. The main character in Shimada’s novel, Matthew/Masao (hereafter referred to as Matthew), is an American-born, bisexual, bicultural, and multilingual individual, the son of a *nisei*, Amino Mika. After Ms. Amino moves back to Japan in her old age, she hires Rokujō Maiko, a Japanese woman, whose name recalls a place in Kyoto which refers to a character in the eponymous *Genji Monogatari*,²⁹⁶ to find her son who had been kidnapped when he was just three. Unbeknownst to his mother, Matthew is also in Japan In

²⁹⁴ Paola Scrolavezza in Paola Scrolavezza, ‘Raccontare il dopoguerra: gli outsiders’, in *La narrativa giapponese moderna e contemporanea* ed. by Luisa Bienati and Paola Scrolavezza. (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009), pp.137-145 (p.137).

²⁹⁵ Natsuo Kirino *Grotesque*, (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 2006) p.15 [‘**She was not even a bad person. She just had a face as beautiful as the devil.**’] (my translation).

²⁹⁶ Philip Gabriel, ‘Dream Messengers, Rental Children, and the Infantile: Shimada Masahiko and the Possibilities of the Postmodern’, in *Ōe and beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 219-244 (p. 231).

addition to Matthew, Ms. Amino, and Maiko the story follows several other characters who are all connected to Matthew one way or the other such as Katagiri Yusaku, the head of the orphanage where Matthew grew up who uses the orphanage as a advertise his Rental Children business. Katagiri rents children to families who have lost their own and wish to find a substitute for a short amount of time. The novel follows Maiko's research and Matthew's movements between Tokyo and New York. Shimada's depiction of *kodoku* is particularly evident in the way Maiko envisions Matthew. Upon hearing about his childhood before being taken from his mother, Maiko concludes that ‘マサオは当時、三カ国語を話していたという。母親とは英語、父親とは日本語、中国人のベビーシッターとは広東語で話し、独り言はそれらの混成語で話していた。三歳のマサオは一体、何語で考えていたか？ ミカイナイトがその三つの国の神や英雄たちを材料にして作られた雑種なら、全てを受け容れる偉大な神となるだろう。と同時に永遠に誰からも相手にされない孤独な神となるに違いない’.²⁹⁷ In this passage, Shimada implies that Masao’s multilingualism is one of the elements that marks his isolation, as the language in which he thinks must be a mixture of the three languages he used to speak with the people around him, a sort of mixed language or a pidgin that remains however obscure to the rest of the world. Multilingualism has long since been seen as a flaw by society, especially when it manifests in the form of code-switching. This has been extensively discussed by Peter Muysken in his works on code-mixing and code-switching where he states that the monolingual model is ‘so commonplace that the essential enrichment of having several grammars and lexicons

²⁹⁷ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p.58 [‘When he was three, Masao apparently spoke three languages, English with his mother, Japanese with his father, Cantonese with his baby-sitter. And he talked to himself in a mixture of all three, Both what language, at age three, did he think in? If Mikainaito was a mixed breed, Maiko mused, a blend of heroes in all three languages, he must be an open-minded sort of guy. But also a lonely one.’] Transl. by Peter Gabriel in Masahiko Shimada, *Dream messenger*, trans. by Philip Gabriel (New York: Warner Books, 1994), p.35.

participate in it at the same time is often seen as a threat, a disruption, a malady.²⁹⁸ In fact, as previously mentioned the misrepresentation of multilingual speakers stems from the essentialist school, which has later granted the “pureness” of a language a romantic connotation.²⁹⁹ Thus, in the context of Shimada’s novel – and specifically when referred to Matthew – the idea of *kodokuna kami* (孤独な神) mirrors that of Dazai’s *ningen shikkaku* (人間失格).

As Keene noted in the translator’s introduction to Dazai’s work, even though the novel has originally been published in English with the title *No Longer Human* – and more recently as *A Shameful Life* –³⁰⁰ this is not a literal translation, as the expression “ningen shikkaku” literally means “disqualified as a human being.”³⁰¹ Keene himself states that he often referred to the novel as *The Disqualified*,³⁰² which is the title with which it has been published for example in Italian, *Lo Squalificato*. In addition to “disqualified”, the term “shikkaku” in its everyday use is also intended to mean “unqualified”, “flawed”, or “defective”. However, it is important to note that in Dazai’s novel, it is never other people who refer to Yōzō as “ningen shikkaku”. Instead, it is Yōzō himself who, upon being admitted to the psychiatric hospital, claims that ‘いまに、ここから出ても、自分はやっぱり狂人、いや、癡人という刻印を額に打たれることでしょう。人間、失格’.³⁰³ Thus, from Yōzō’s perspective the definition of “shikkaku” is twofold: on the one hand he is the one who is bestowing the seal

²⁹⁸ ²⁹⁸ Pieter Muysken, *Bilingual speech: a typology of code-mixing* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.

²⁹⁹ Jarva, Vesa, ‘Old Helsinki Slang and language mixing’, *Journal of Language Contact*, 1, (2008), 52-80 (p.57)

³⁰⁰ The title *No Longer Human* is nowadays the most popular one in consequence to the English translation and dubbing Asagiri Kafka’s series *Bungō Stray Dogs* (2013-)

³⁰¹ Donald Keene, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, in Osamu Dazai, *No Longer Human* (New York: New Directions, 1973), pp. 3-10 (p.4).

³⁰² Donald Keene, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, in Osamu Dazai, *No Longer Human* (New York: New Directions, 1973), pp. 3-10 (p.4).

³⁰³ Osamu Dazai, *Ningen Shikkaku*, (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1985), p.147.[‘**From now on, even if I get out of here, there will always be a brand on my forehead marking me as a madman, no, an invalid. Human: unqualified.**’] (my translation).

of unqualified upon himself, on the other hand he does so because, based on the years he spent studying them, he is certain that society would not recognise him as a fellow human. The psychiatric hospital assumes the same connotation as Katagiri's orphanage in *Yumetsukai*, where Matthew was raised, as well as the Internment Camp in both John Okada's *No-No Boy*, and to a certain extent it also evokes the American Consulate in Yokohama at the beginning of Levy's novel *Seijōki*. These places have a deep impact on the protagonists' identities, but they also keep them separated from the rest of the world, marking them as 'others'. Consequently, it is such places that inspire in the characters a sense of rebellion. In the case of Okada's novel, the main character, Ichiro, chooses to acknowledge the need to discover his own identity in the world, despite his mother's efforts to impose a Japanese identity on him. In *Seijōki*, Ben runs away from the Consulate effectively refuting his American nationality to which he does not feel any form of attachment. Both Dazai and Shimada refer to that desire to oppose the established order explicitly as 革命 (*kakumei*, revolution). In *Shayō*, *kakumei* is Kazuko's ultimate purpose but it is also sits at the very core of Naoji's reasons to commit suicide who chooses to die an aristocrat since he cannot be accepted by the people around him as himself. Additionally, it also inspires Yōzō to keep on pursuing a literary career away from his influential family. In Shimada's work, this sentiment makes Matthew choose to keep on living outside of the social order as a rental child. In *Yumetsukai*, Shimada often employs the term *koji* (孤児, orphan) to refer to the orphaned children. As they share the first character, the use of *koji* anticipates the interconnection between the concept of orphan as intended in the novel and that of *kodoku* (孤独). The notion of "orphan", both as *koji* and as *minashiko* (みなし子), appears frequently in Katagiri's speeches.

Arguably one of the most complex characters in Shimada's novel, Katagiri, in addition to being Matthew's mentor and parental figure, is a former Japanese soldier and a current expat

in the US. As he raised Matthew after he was kidnapped by his father, Katagiri also introduced Matthew to the concept of rental children. In the novel, he does not exclusively use the term ‘orphan’ to refer to the rental children. Instead, he associates “being an orphan” with the notion of freedom (自由, *jiyū*), claiming, for example, that the Japanese American people who had been treated like enemies during the war and relocated in the camps had no choice but to become ‘みなし子’ (orphans), as they lost any connection to both their ancestral and their national country.³⁰⁴ Thus, from Katagiri’s perspective, details such as nationality and family relationships are merely social constructs, which he attempts to subvert since they limit the freedom of the individual.³⁰⁵ In order to achieve his purpose, similarly to another character in *Yumetsukai*, Kubi Takehiko, he planned on creating a new country, specifically a ‘みなし子の共和国.’³⁰⁶ Thus, since to Katagiri, being an “orphan” ultimately means being free, as a results, from his perspective true freedom only comes from loneliness (孤独, *kodoku*). In his long novels, Dazai hints at a similar interpretation of “freedom” that can be found by distancing oneself from social constructs and emotional links. Indeed, it shows in Kazuko’s determination to keep on living outside of society’s expectations, but it can also be recognised in Yōzō’s resignation to the role of *ningen shikkaku* since only by accepting that he is not qualified to be human he can finally be free to stop pretending to be one.

³⁰⁴ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 153.

³⁰⁵ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 156.

³⁰⁶ The expression can be translated as both ‘a republic of orphans’ or an ‘orphan republic’, Shimada is purposefully ambiguous here. Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 154.

3.2 Scripting the resistance: the use of Japanese orthography to oppose monolingualism.

Yōzō's description of himself as carrying a brand on his forehead that makes himself easily identifiable as a *ningen shikkaku* is mirrored in Shimada's novel by the way different facial features or accents are perceived in Japanese society. Indeed, in *Shayō*, Dazai describes a similar occurrence when Kazuko get suspected of being a spy because '外国人みたいだから'.³⁰⁷ Kazuko's reply is presented in such a way to completely eradicate any possible doubt that her physical appearance might have caused, since she still uses the kind of refined speech pattern that she has been raised into as she says '私、日本人ですわ'.³⁰⁸ Kazuko's way of speaking in the novel contrasts with Naoji's, who, in an attempt to hide his origins, speaks using an extremely rough language patterns. This is not only part of Dazai's writing style or a decorative element, instead it presents the reader of the original works with an additional layer of characterisation and a certain level of foreshadowing. For example, in the case of Naoji, his way of speaking which contrasts with Kazuko's despite their common upbringing anticipates his confession about purposefully attempting to hide his aristocratic origins. Furthermore, because of the frequent mentions of non-Japanese figures or works, such as Dostoevsky, Monet, Rosa Luxemburg, *katakana* is frequently used in Dazai's texts. In *Shayō*, Kazuko often signs her letters to Uehara with 'M C' which she claims are not the initials of 'マイ、チェホフ'³⁰⁹ (My Chekhov) rather of 'マイ、チャイルド'³¹⁰ or 'マイ、コメデアン'.³¹¹ While in the case of Chekhov, the use of *katakana* is to be expected as the foreign name has to be transliterated into the Japanese writing system to provide a suitable

³⁰⁷ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p.47 ('[she] looks like a foreigner' (my translation))

³⁰⁸ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p.47. ('I am Japanese' [my translation])

³⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 113

³¹⁰ Ibid. p. 113

³¹¹ Ibid. p. 195

pronunciation, in the case of my child and my comedian, Dazai does transliterate the English words without translating them. These hybrid terms – part English and part Japanese – are not considered loanwords, instead they can be referred to as *wasei eigo* (Japan-made English) or *katakana eigo*.³¹² Outside of the literary field *wasei eigo* is often used for ‘aesthetic and poetic’³¹³ purposes, and also include polygraphic forms in which *katakana* alternates with *hiragana* and *romaji*, however, this thesis argues that in Dazai’s case it is more appropriate to refer to this style as *katakana eigo*, since he only uses *katakana*. Shimada makes a similar stylistic choice in the subtitle of his novel ‘レンタルチャイルドの新一都物語’ (*A new tale of the two cities by a rental child*). In this case, the purpose of presenting *katakana eigo* – レンタルチャイルド (rental child) – and Japanese – 新一都物語 (a new tale of two cities) – is not exclusively aesthetic nor poetic, instead it mirrors the movements of the characters in the novel between Tokyo and New York, and therefore between English and Japanese.

Japanese is no stranger to the influence of foreign languages. Even though the concept of loanwords was first introduced in the Meiji era (1868-1912),³¹⁴ the practice of acquiring new lexical items through borrowing – especially from Chinese – was already in use back in the Heian period (XI century).³¹⁵ Nonetheless, it was during the Meiji era that the impact of European languages on Japanese reached a point where it was enough to compare to that of Chinese in the previous centuries. Eventually, in the postwar years, thanks to the introduction of English as a school subject and an easier access to American English, the number of

³¹² Laura Miller, ‘Wasei eigo English" loanwords" coined in Japan’, *Trends in Linguistics*, (1997): 123-139 p.124.

³¹³ Ibid. p.130.

³¹⁴ Rotem Kowner, Michal Daliot-Bul, ‘Japanese: The Dialectic Relationship Between ‘Westernness’ and ‘Japaneseness’ as Reflected in English Loan Words’, in *Globally speaking: motives for adopting English vocabulary in other languages* ed. by J. Rosenhouse and R. Kowner (Clevedon; Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2008) pp.250-275 (p. 253).

³¹⁵ Fundamental literary works such as the *Genji Monogatari* already show that Japanese made use of Chinese features both in terms of script and vocabulary.

English loanwords increased exponentially.³¹⁶ Historically the presence of a large number of English loanwords has been regarded with a mixture of concern and excitement by the Japanese governments; on the one hand, English was and still is regarded as a symbol of modernisation and therefore of prestige, on the other hand, it was seen as undermining Japanese values and identity. For instance, during the Pacific War and until the American Occupation, English loanwords were banned and almost integrally replaced by Sino-Japanese words.³¹⁷ Today, contemporary Japanese vocabulary can be separated into three categories: *wago* or *yamatokotoba* (和語), including Japanese native words, *kango* (漢語) that refers to the ancient borrowings from Chinese, and *gairaigo* (外来語) comprising loanwords from English and other foreign languages.³¹⁸ Two points can be raised based on the large number of loanwords present in the Japanese vocabulary. The first one relates to the notion of “language flexibility”, the second one explores the ways the Japanese writing systems are being used as stylistic devices in literature and popular culture.

Concerning the first point, it is necessary to mention that also Wesley C. Robertson uses the term “flexibility” in the context of the Japanese language, but – while he refers to orthographic flexibility –³¹⁹ this work intends flexibility to mean the capability that a language possesses to introduce loanwords in its vocabulary and modify them to fit into the grammatical and phonetical frames, and the writing system. That is to say the degree to which a language is resilient to the effects of cultural contact,³²⁰ the argument that this thesis

³¹⁶ Bjarke Frellesvig, *A history of the Japanese language*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press), pp. 403-411.

³¹⁷ Rotem Kowner, Michal Dalot-Bul, ‘Japanese: The Dialectic Relationship Between ‘Westernness’ and ‘Japaneseness’ as Reflected in English Loan Words’, in *Globally speaking: motives for adopting English vocabulary in other languages* ed. by J. Rosenhouse and R. Kowner (Clevedon; Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2008) pp.250-275 (pp. 253-257).

³¹⁸ Bjarke Frellesvig, *A history of the Japanese language*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press) p. 403.

³¹⁹ Wesley C. Robertson, *Scripting Japan: Orthography, Variation, and the Creation of Meaning in Written Japanese*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2021), p.8.

³²⁰ Here I intend that the language in question adapts to said effect by incorporating new elements rather than incur the risk of language death.

supports is that Japanese has a rate of language flexibility as high as English.³²¹ In addition, it is also important to note that language flexibility is not to be mistaken with Matti Miestamo's notion of language complexity, albeit the two concepts are related to a certain extent. In fact, Miestamo states that a low degree of complexity is related to a high rate of language contact, a high number of speakers and a central location, whereas the combination of a low rate of language contact, isolation, and a peripheral location leads to a high degree of complexity. To put it more simply, according to Miestamo, English is less complex than Japanese.³²² However, while language complexity can be measured according to different criteria, Miestamo mostly defines it according to grammar.³²³

The second point cannot be discussed without mentioning the peculiarity of written Japanese, which comprises two syllabic alphabets – *hiragana* and *katakana* – plus the corpus of Chinese characters usually referred to as *kanji*, and the occasional use of Latin script called *romaji*.

The different scripts are not to be considered separated units as they are all used at the same time constantly alternating in a text. Traditionally, *hiragana* and *katakana* are also used in the guise of *furigana* when they are placed beside or above a *kanji* to convey the correct reading to the reader. As Robertson explains it 'a difficult character like 鬱 can be written with its reading of *utsu* (うつ) placed above it',³²⁴ but *furigana* are not only used in the case of difficult characters, nor they only provide a common reading, instead sometimes authors suggest that a character or a compound has to be read in an unusual way as a stylistic or even

³²¹ 'English has borrowed words from over 350 other languages, and over three-quarters of the English lexicon is actually Classical or Romance in origin.' David Crystal, *English as a Global Language*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 23 Japanese has a complex history made of strong cultural influences and attempted isolation from the world, which results in a unique vocabulary.

³²² In fact, Miestamo states that English is already less complex than other German languages. [Matti Miestamo, 'Linguistic diversity and complexity', in *Lingue e linguaggio*, 16, (2017), 227-254 (p. 243)].

³²³ Matti Miestamo, 'Linguistic diversity and complexity', in *Lingue e linguaggio*, 16, (2017), 227-254 (pp. 230-241). See also, *Language complexity: Typology, contact, change*, ed. by Matti Miestamo, Kaius Sinnemäki, and Fred Karlsson, (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008).

³²⁴ Wesley C. Robertson, *Scripting Japan: Orthography, Variation, and the Creation of Meaning in Written Japanese*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2021), p.14.

a plot device.³²⁵ One of the most common examples is in Ōba Tsugumi and Obata Takeshi's manga *Death Note* (2003-2006). The main protagonist's name – Light in the English translation – is written with the character for 'moon' 月 (*tsuki*) but the provided *furigana* is ライト (*Raito*), which is the way the English word *light* would sound when written in *katakana*. On Ōba and Obata's part, this is a stylistic choice, which is later revealed to be a plot device, not a linguistic necessity. In fact, not only the character 月 (*tsuki*) is an elementary one, therefore well-known among Japanese speakers both native and not, but, since the Japanese language already has a word for *light*, 光 (*hikari*), there is virtually no need to use a non-Japanese word to describe a new concept. A more recent instance can be found in the second volume of Asagiri's manga *Bungō Stray Dogs*, where the word 鬼魅 (*kibi*, demon, apparition, monster) is paired up with the *furigana* きみ (*kimi*, you) plainly showing the distrust between the speaker and the listener who is being addressed in the scene. Even in contemporary literature *furigana* are used in original ways more akin to a stylistic or plot devices than an actual necessity. For example, when in *Yumetsukai*, Shimada writes:

だけど、^{ごかいし}ないでくださいよ。When I said 日本人、^{そんじよ}It's entirely different from

^{ちがう}ordinary な日本人ね。私が考える日本人は Pacific Ocean の上を飛んでいる

^{つる}Crane だよ。

鶴.....ですか。

そう。^{わたりどりのことさ}I mean, migration of birds.

渡り鳥?

³²⁵ Asagiri Kafka, Harukawa Sango, *Bungō Stray Dogs* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2012-) II, p. 30.

そうそう Exactly. 私の子供たちはみんな渡り鳥です。ペネロピーもマチューもヘレンも
ジェシーもサムもね。同じところには長くいない。³²⁶

he subverts the reader's expectation by writing the *furigana* above – or rather beside in the original text – the English. The *furigana* in this case does not provide the reader with a particular reading but with the Japanese translation. In *Seijōki*, Levy does a similar thing in the line:

神は死んだ ニーチェのしたに、 [GOD IS DEAD] Nietzscheのしたに、 [NIETZSCHE IS DEAD] God³²⁷

However, in the opening scene of the more recent *Kari no Mizu*, when he writes ‘運転手の口から、チュアン、という音が出た。うしろの座席でかれは耳を澄まして、それをチュアン^{チュアン}船と受けとめて’,³²⁸ the use of the furigana ‘チュアン’ on the kanji ‘船’ serves to clarify for the reader that the driver is speaking in Chinese, which the main character can understand. In this case a translation is not necessary, as the character is already comprehensible to the Japanese speaking readership, however here Levy attempts to bring the sound of the spoken language on page.

Concerning English loanwords, the spelling has been regulated to be written in *katakana*, which brings up the point that English loanwords have been used in literary texts not out of

³²⁶ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 146. [‘So, don’t misunderstand me. When I say Japanese, it’s entirely different from ordinary Japanese. The Japanese I am thinking about is a crane flying over the Pacific Ocean.

A crane?

Yes. I mean, migration of birds.

Migrating birds?

Exactly. My children are those migrating birds. Penelope, Machu, Helen, Jessie, Sam. They don’t stay long in the same place.’] (my translation).

³²⁷ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoenahei*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992) p.30. [“GOD IS DEAD” - Nietzsche. And beneath that: “NIETZSCHE IS DEAD”- God’] (Trans. by C. Scott in Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)).

³²⁸ Levy Hideo, *Kari no Mizu* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2008), p.7.

necessity, but rather to create a stylistic effect and evoke specific imagery in the reader's mind.³²⁹ For instance, the second chapter of Murakami Ryū's novel *Piasshingu* (ピアッシング, 1994 *Piercing*, trans. 2001) opens with the lines: ‘キッチンの引き出しにアイスピックをしまい、バスルームで顔を洗って、リビングの隅にある自分の仕事机の前に座ってもなかなか動悸は鎮まらなかった’³³⁰ even though either キッチ (kitchen), バスルーム (bathroom) and リビング (living room) have their *wago* synonyms in *daidokoro* (台所), *yokushitsu* (浴室) and *kyoshitsu* (居室). However, had Murakami used the *wago* terms, it would have compromised the mental image of a western-style modern flat which is at the core of the narrative. Murakami is not the first to use English loanwords for this purpose. For example, in the first lines of *Shayō*, Kazuko recounts ‘朝、食堂でスープを一さじ、すつと吸ってお母さまが、「あ。」と幽かなび声をお挙げになった’.³³¹ In this case, because Dazai uses the word “スープ”(soup), rather than any other word indicating a broth based meal, it is immediately clear that the mother is sipping an American canned soup, which was commonly used during the American Occupation. Thus, a single loanword, which is extremely visible on page because it is written in *katakana* as opposed to the numerous *hiragana* and *kanji*, sets the scene in a particular historical moment. Thus, the possibility of relying on several script combinations provides the writers with a degree of freedom when it comes to the representation of lexical elements that is not mirrored by Western scripts.³³²

³²⁹ Bjarke Frellesvig, *A history of the Japanese language*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p.411.

³³⁰ Murakami Ryū, *Piasshingu*, (Tokyo: Gentosha, 1997) p. 10 [‘Kawashima put the ice pick away in a kitchen drawer, washed his face in the bathroom sink, and walked into the living room. He sat at his desk and waited in vain for his heartbeat to slow down.’] translation by R. McCarthy in Murakami Ryū, *Piercing*, trans. by R. McCarthy (London: Bloomsbury, 2001) p. 7.

³³¹ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p.5 [‘**Mother uttered a faint cry. She was eating soup in the dining room.**’] trans. By Donald Keene in Osamu Dazai, *The Setting Sun*, trans. by Donald Keene (New York: New Directions, 1968), p.3.

³³² Wesley C. Robertson, *Scripting Japan: Orthography, Variation, and the Creation of Meaning in Written Japanese*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2021), p.1.

3.3 Many forms of multilingualism: Defying the idea of a monolingual *kokubungaku*.

The stylistic possibilities created by the existence of multiple scripts in Japanese are endless and keep expanding, either in everyday life, in popular culture, especially in manga, and in literature. On the one hand, the alternation of modern Japanese scripts cannot be considered a case of heterographic strategies, since *kanji*, *hiragana* and *katakana* all belong to the same writing system. On the other hand, it cannot be ignored that Japanese orthography is ‘internally non-monolingual, a mixture of two or more languages.’³³³ Thus, it already implicitly resists the traditional idea that ‘monolingualism has been able to steady [different] platforms ever since [its creation] for a vast superstructural constellation of aesthetic repertoires and epistemic paradigms,’ which led the ‘canon of world literature [to take] the translated monolingual book as its most granular integer of political appearance.’³³⁴ It is, however, also impossible to ignore the fact that ideal monolingualism can only be defined by the premise that multilingualism exists. Indeed, in 2013, Bhatia and Ritchie were already claiming that the number of bilingual/multilingual speakers in the world was higher than that of monolinguals,³³⁵ hence the rising demand from multilingual speakers for positive representations. In fact, as previously mentioned, in a global system based on the premise of cultural centres and peripheries that sees monolingualism as the norm, multilingualism – especially when shown through the act of switching from one language to another in the same speech – has often been viewed negatively.³³⁶ Thus, through those literatures written in more than one language, multilingualism is finally being normalised to a certain extent.

³³³ Angela Yiu, ‘Literature in Japanese (Nihongo bungaku)’, *Japanese Language and Literature*, 54 (2020), 37-66. (p.38).

³³⁴ David Gramling, *The Invention of Monolingualism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 1.

³³⁵ Bhatia, Tej K, William C. Ritchie, “Introduction” in *The handbook of bilingualism and multilingualism*, ed. by Bhatia, Tej K and William C. Ritchie (Chichester; Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. xxi - xxiii (p.xxi).

³³⁶ Pieter Muysken, *Bilingual speech: a typology of code-mixing* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1.

Cross-lingual patterns that define the multilingual condition have been traditionally researched by linguists like Rodolfo Jakobson, who refers to them as code-switching and language alternation, and the aforementioned Pieter Muysken, who preferred the term code-mixing. Noticeably both these excellent scholars focused almost exclusively on the spoken language. Indeed, until the early 2000s, the academic interest in written multilingualism was fairly limited. Among the first works to raise the question of written code-switching was Cecilia Mantes-Alcalá's 'Written codeswitching: Powerful bilingual images' which brought attention to the use of code-switching as a stylistic device. More recent studies, such as Ana Pavlenko's *Bilingual Selves*, examine bilingualism and multilingualism from a literary studies perspective. While in the last two decades the popularity of the scholarships on translingual, bilingual, and multilingual authors has increased, it mostly focuses on texts written primarily in English by authors residing either in America or, in a few cases, in the UK. Furthermore, relevant texts have largely been researched through the lens of the so-called "immigration literature". In fact, if works like Junot Diaz's *This Is How You Lose Her* and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* can be considered among the most popular examples of multilingual texts,³³⁷ the portrayal of multilingualism in Shimada's *Yumetsukai* and Levy's *Seijōki* have not been consistently studied yet. In part, this is due to the stereotype of Japanese literature as inherently monolingual.³³⁸ Although it is common knowledge that authors such as Natsume Sōseki and Mori Ōgai knew at least one additional language besides Japanese, and that Dazai and Nakahara Chūya both studied French at university,³³⁹ neither them nor their writings have ever been considered bilingual. However, Chūya already used at least two

³³⁷ See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994) and Rebecca Walkowitz, *Born translated: the contemporary novel in an age of world literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015)

³³⁸ As stated by Yiu in Angela Yiu, 'Literature in Japanese (Nihongo bungaku)', *Japanese Language and Literature*, 54 (2020), 37-66. (p.37).

³³⁹ Paola Scrolavezza, 'Raccontare il dopoguerra: gli outsiders', in *La narrativa giapponese moderna e contemporanea* ed. by Luisa Bienati and Paola Scrolavezza. (Venezia: Marsilio, 2009), pp.137-145 (p.138).

languages in his works, Japanese and French. For example, in ‘Tableau Triste’, the title is in French while the poem is entirely in Japanese, the opening of *Shōsui* (憔悴) has the line ‘il faut d’abord avoir soif’, a quote in French by Caterina de’ Medici. In addition, Chūya’s production provides further confirmation of both the flexibility of the Japanese language as well as the fluid nature of the language itself. As Sasaki Mikirō notes, words that could be labelled as orthographically incorrect such as the 汚れっちまった (*yogorecchimatta*) in *Yogorecchimatta Kanashimi Ni...* (汚れっちまった悲しみに・・・) are now so embedded in the literary culture that are immediately recognisable as Chūya’s words, in fact Sasaki claims they are now part of the ‘Nakaharanese’³⁴⁰ vocabulary.

This introduces the fundamental point that not all multilingual speakers share the same experience. In other words, the reasons why and the ways in which they acquired the competence in their chosen language are different and as such influence the way the writers’ use of the language differently. For example, Steven Kellman defines authors writing in more than one language – such as Fernando Pessoa or Tawada Yōko – ‘ambilingual translinguals’, and distinguishes these authors who, in Kellman’s words ‘might be thought to demonstrate greater cognitive flexibility’ from those who chose to write in a single language which is not the language they were born into.³⁴¹ Thus Levy’s literature might be listed as part of this second category, however, as this study concerns itself with texts showing certain degrees of alternation between two (or in some cases more) languages, it is necessary to conclude that Kellman’s reasoning does not fit the works or the kind of transnational literature it argues for. Instead, Pavlenko’s approach seems more relevant. Pavlenko claims that there are three different types of translinguals: coordinate bilinguals, ‘who learned their languages in distinct

³⁴⁰ Mikirō Sasaki, ‘Kaisetsu’, in Chūya Nakahara, *Yogorecchimatta Kanashimi Ni...* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2022), pp. 248–253 (p.251).

³⁴¹ Steven Kellman, ‘Does Literary Translingualism Matter? Reflections on the Translingual and Isolinguual Text’ *Dibur Literary Journal*, 7 (2019), 100-118 (p. 115).

environments and have two conceptual systems associated with their two lexicons’, compound bilinguals who ‘learned their languages in a single environment and, consequently, have a single underlying and undifferentiated conceptual system linked to the two lexicon’, and subordinate bilinguals typically classroom learned who learned the second language via the means of the first, have a single system where the second-language lexicon is linked to conceptual representations through first-language words’.³⁴² Of course, the way the writer acquired their languages influences both their narrative and the linguistic choices. Since in their texts, writers express their feelings, experience, and beliefs through language, it becomes evident that a strong link between language and emotions exists. However, as Altarriba points out ‘in terms of bilingualism and emotion, the study of emotions, especially as expressed through the use of words, has been a highly neglected area of investigation, at least from an empirical standpoint’.³⁴³

Studies on multilingual and translingual texts highlight the problematic use of expressions such as “first language” or “primary language”. Together with other terms like “native language” or “mother tongue” – whose connotations in hindsight sound alarmingly nationalistic – these expressions have been used in monolingual societies or, more appropriately, in societies that are expected to be monolingual for decades both on daily basis and in academia.³⁴⁴ For example, in his paper ‘Does Literary Translingualism Matter? Reflections on the Translingual and Isolingual Text’, Kellman defines translingual literature as ‘written in a language other than the author’s primary language’.³⁴⁵ The idea of a

³⁴² Steven Kellman, ‘Does Literary Translingualism Matter? Reflections on the Translingual and Isolingual Text’ *Dibur Literary Journal*, 7 (2019), 100-118 (pp. 115-16). cross-referenced from Aneta Pavlenko, *The Bilingual Mind and What It Tells Us about Language and Thought*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 18.

³⁴³ Jeanette Altarriba, ‘Cognitive Approaches to the Study of Emotion-Laden and Emotion Words in Monolingual and Bilingual Memory’, in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 232-256 (p. 233).

³⁴⁴ For instance, the expression Primary Language has been recently used in one of the 2021 Census questions in England.

³⁴⁵ Steven Kellman, ‘Does Literary Translingualism Matter? Reflections on the Translingual and Isolingual Text’ *Dibur Literary Journal*, 7 (2019), 100-118 (p. 109).

“primary” or “first” language assumes that a hierarchical relationship exists in the speaker’s mind between their languages. In simpler terms, it portrays the so-called “primary/first language” as opposed to the other languages. If the term “first language” can be understood as a reference to temporality, in that said language is the first one that the individual learnt in his life, the expression “primary language” is more problematic in that there are no doubts that it refers to a more relevant role of that particular language in the life of the speaker. Thus, concepts like nationality and ethnicity are usually taken into consideration when electing one’s first language. There are clear benefits to being fluent in the language spoken in one’s place of residence. However, it is important to acknowledge that the social construct considering the existence of a primary language as the norm originates from the same discourse which led to the view of bilingualism and multilingualism as a flaw. This is particularly evident in the West – mainly in Europe and the US – where in the course of history bilingualism or multilingualism have often been condemned as a sign of illiteracy or even a sign of madness. As Pavlenko explains, in the first half of the 20th century ‘in traditionally monolingual societies, bilinguals are at times seen as people with two conflicting personalities whose shifting linguistic allegiances imply shifting political allegiances and moral commitments’.³⁴⁶ Even though the increasing number of transnational migrant in the second half of the 20th century contributed to a moderate change of attitude towards bilingualism and multilingualism, whose benefits began to be acknowledged, the portrayal of bilingualism as a form of ‘linguistic schizophrenia’ remained,³⁴⁷ causing immigrant students in US schools to be compared to schizophrenic patients.³⁴⁸

It is evident that studies like Pavlenko still maintain that bilingualism and multilingualism mostly exist in a migratory context, implicitly supporting the problematic reading of

³⁴⁶ Aneta Pavlenko, ‘Bilingual Selves’ in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 1- 33 (p. 2).

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 3.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 3.

multilingual literature as migration literature. In literary study, and even more prominently in the context of Japanese literary studies, this assumption causes the multilingual aspect of texts like Shimada's to be ignored. Furthermore, as in today's world, people cross national and cultural borders all the time and for different reasons, movement, either physical, cultural, or linguistic has become the norm rather than the exception. Thus, trying to limit multilingual literature to the context of immigrant literature is progressively turning into a sterile attempt to gather different works together according to the reasons behind the author's/character's multilingualism rather than focusing on the fact that transnational and transcultural movement sit at the core of the texts. Levy already addressed this point at the beginning of the 21st century, referring to this kind of narrative as *ugoki no bungaku* (動きの文学), literature of movement.³⁴⁹

3.4 Locating multilingualism and hybridity in literature and literary-adjacent media.

This study considers that, regardless of its inherent hybridity, a multilingual text is still part of a certain literary tradition. In the case of Shimada and Levy, their works are undeniably part of the Japanese literary tradition. This is because none of the texts analysed in this thesis can be defined as perfectly multilingual. On the contrary, even in the case of *Yumetsukai* and Levy's works, they are primarily Japanese according to the Myers-Scotton's matrix language frame model proposed by the linguist Carol Myers-Scotton. From a linguistic point of view, most texts written in more than one language follow this particular paradigm, which rules that

³⁴⁹ Levy Hideo and Tawada Yōko, 'Kikō to Gendai', in *Ekkkyō no Koe* ed. by Levy Hideo (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007), pp. 31-52 (p.33).

in a multilingual text only one of the participating varieties determines the grammatical frame of the text itself. This is called matrix language.³⁵⁰ Azuma Shoji claims that this is defined by the functional category – which opposes the lexical one – that cannot be codeswitched, as it represents ‘the core of its language.’³⁵¹ Azuma considers four major functional categories AGR (agreement), T (tense), D (determiner), C (complement). As the ‘functional parametrization hypothesis essentially claims that languages differ from each other only in the functional category’ and assuming that instead ‘codeswitching occurs between interchangeable items’, then it is possible to conclude that, in addition to marking the matrix language, functional categories also convey the basic context of the text to allow the audience to comprehend it regardless of their proficiency in the second participating language. For example, in the case of *Yumetsukai* and *Seijōki*, the matrix language is Japanese.

Additionally, a Japanese speaker who is not familiar with English can still easily read and comprehend either novel, even in passages where a translation is not provided, based on the context.³⁵²

For example, in *Seijōki*'s case, as Levy alternates between Japanese and English to both represent a codified bilingual conversation as authentically as possible and to create a certain kind of atmosphere, he does not always translate the English parts into Japanese. This happens, for instance, when the main character Ben's father switches from Japanese to English, while he is reprimanding his son: “”寄り道をするんじゃないぞ”父は貴蘭に目くばせをして、”especially not to places like Shinjuku”と付け加えた.”³⁵³ It is important to

³⁵⁰ Carol Myers-Scotton, ‘The matrix language frame model: Development and responses’, in *Codeswitching Worldwide II*, ed. by Rodolfo Jacobson (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 23-58 (p.24).

³⁵¹ Shoji Azuma, ‘Functional categories and codeswitching in Japanese/English’, in *Codeswitching Worldwide II*, ed. by Rodolfo Jacobson (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 91-104 (p.93).

³⁵² Shoji Azuma, ‘Functional categories and codeswitching in Japanese/English’, in *Codeswitching Worldwide II*, ed. by Rodolfo Jacobson (Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 91-104 (pp.93-94).

³⁵³ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoena heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992) p. 28 [“No detours on your way home”, his father warned. Then winking at Gui-lan, he added, “especially not to places like Shinjuku” [trans. by C. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) p. 18].

note that at this point in the novel Ben still lives with his family in the American Consulate in Yokohama. His father is a diplomat who, in addition to English, is shown speaking fluent Shanghainese³⁵⁴ and it is hinted that he is also proficient in Japanese. In addition, his second wife is a Shanghai native and her Chinese name Gui Lan is also mentioned in the quoted passage. Thus, the few sentences are enough to provide the reader with an image of a multicultural and multilingual environment. However, the meaning of the whole passage remains clear from the perspective of the Japanese-written part, whereas the sentence in English alone is not enough to understand the whole passage.

As the Mayers-Scotton's model presents a hierarchical system, where the matrix language is dominant among the participants, it justifies that multilingual literatures have frequently been discussed in the field of post-colonial studies, for example in the case of Anglophone Indian authors, or in that of the *Zainichi* Korean literature in Japan. However, this work is more interested in the hybrid aspect of multilingual literature, which becomes especially evident when looking at it from the perspective of monolingual tradition. Hence, supporting Webner's claim that 'hybridity is a theoretical metaconstruction of social order',³⁵⁵ this research finds that multilingualism in written texts is not a consequence of multicultural background, but a deliberate choice to oppose the monolingual/monocultural tradition.

Hybridity as a form of resistance – an argument that has been discussed from a sociopolitical and sociological perspective by Werbner, Bhabha, and even hinted at by Levy – is particularly significant in the context of Japan and Japanese American communities. In the first case, it is possible to find traces of a similar idea expressed by Fukuzawa Yukichi already in the early

³⁵⁴ Levy refers to Gui-Lan, Ben's stepmother, native language – which she speaks with her husband – as 上海語 (Shanghai tongue), (Levy 1992, p.24), Scott translates the term as "Shanghainese". In the classification of Chinese dialects, Shanghainese is listed in the Taihu subgroup under the Wu Group (Maria Kurpaska, *Chinese language (s): A look through the prism of the great dictionary of modern Chinese dialects*, (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010) p.140.

³⁵⁵ Pnina Werbner, 'Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, (London: Zed Books, 2015), pp.1-26 (p. 1).

Meiji era. Fukuzawa advocated for “Japanese Spirit, Western technology”, that stood for an understanding of the Western civilization to be absorbed into the Japanese society in order to resist the Western expansion.³⁵⁶ The theme of hybridity as resistance in the context of the Japanese American communities is instead addressed by Okada in his novel. Following the events at Pearl Harbor, as Japanese and American-born people of Japanese descent were deported to the internment camps, they automatically became the prime suspects of treasonous activities against America as recently described in Heather Hathaway’s 2022 work *That Damned Fence: The Literature of the Japanese American Prison Camps* and previously in Erika Lee’s *The Making of Asian America* (2015). Thus, cultural hybridity became effectively forbidden for Japanese American citizens who were then called to choose one of the two sides, being American or being Japanese.³⁵⁷ In the first chapter of *No-No Boy*, Okada describes, through the eyes of his main character, Ichiro, what it feels like to be alternatively denied the opportunity to acknowledge one’s own hybrid identity. After he returns home after serving his sentence for refusing to sign his declaration of loyalty to the US and to enrol in the American army, Ichiro addresses the topic of his delusional Japanese mother – who blindly believes that Japan won WWII and that news of the American victory is only propaganda – in an inner monologue. He recalls the way she used to tell him old Japanese stories ‘about gallant and fierce warriors who protected their lords with blades of shining steel’ and even remember that he felt like a real-life Momotarō, the little boy, protagonist of a Japanese legend, who came out from a peach that an old woman had brought home to her husband, because he shared a Japanese identity and ‘Japanese feelings and Japanese pride and Japanese thoughts’ with her mother, which made him absolutely certain of being Japanese ‘because it was all right then to be Japanese and feel and think all the things

³⁵⁶ Rumi Sakamoto, ‘Japan, hybridity and the creation of colonialist discourse’, *Theory, Culture & Society* 13, (1996), 113-128 (p. 114).

³⁵⁷ King-Kok Cheung, ‘Re-Viewing Asian American Literary Studies’, in *An interethnic companion to Asian American literature*, ed. by King-Kok Cheung (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1-36 (p.5).

that Japanese do even if we lived in America.³⁵⁸ Ichiro's perception of being Japanese in America, like that of many others, changed in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbour attack in 1941 when he started to realize that he 'was only half Japanese because one is not born in America and raised in America and taught in America and one does not speak and swear and drink and smoke and play and fight and see and hear in America among Americans in American streets and houses without becoming American and loving it.'³⁵⁹ It is at that moment that Ichiro starts to perceive himself as split in half, since he could still think of himself as half Japanese which made him not love America enough to accept to fight for it nor was he strong enough to betray it in the name of being half Japanese. In the end he concludes that because his Japanese half was only there as a by-product of his mother's own identity 'the half that remains is American by law because the government was wise and strong enough to know why it was that I could not fight for America and did not strip me of my birth right. But it is not enough to be American only in the eyes of the law and it is not enough to be only half an American and know that it is an empty half.'³⁶⁰

It is important to note that, in comparing Ichiro to Momotarō, Okada never mentions the original Japanese name of the character, this not a rare occurrence in Okada's novel. In fact, even though the reader knows that Ichiro can easily understand his mother speaking Japanese, the author translates the Japanese expressions into common English. For instance, the moment when Ichiro first returns to his parents' house after being jailed, the verbal exchange between mother and son goes as follows:

"Ya, Ichiro, you have come home. How good that you have come home." The gently spoken Japanese which he had not heard for so long sounded strange,³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ John Okada, *No-no boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), p.16.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p.16.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.16.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.8.

In mentioning that the mother was speaking Japanese while only providing a translation, Okada appeals to the reader's suspension of disbelief asking them to believe that a bilingual conversation is taking place in a bicultural environment while erasing all the evidence of bilingualism and biculturalism from the text.³⁶² In doing so, Okada also makes this a kind of “still narrative” in that this clearly is an American novel made for an English speaking audience, providing a critique of the American society, which includes the Japanese American immigrant communities too, thus it does not show any kind of movement from the outside to the inside nor the other way around. This becomes even more evident when comparing Okada's words to a brief excerpt from Lynne Kutsukake's *The Translation of Love*:

‘She heard a loud laughter, and then Kondo Sensei was kneeling beside her. ‘*Daijōbu desu ka?* Are you alright? [...]’³⁶³

As opposed to Okada's stylistic strategy – which this study refers to as internal translation – Kutsukake chooses to use both the Japanese and the English. Of course, to a bilingual speaker the speech might sound unnatural and redundant – in fact, if translated Kondo's words would sound like ‘Are you alright? Are you alright?’ – nonetheless it effectively puts the bilingual exchange taking place at the forefront of the narrative. In Kutsukake's case, it is the visual effect created by the two different languages existing side by side in the text that immediately shows to the reader the characters struggling with the awareness of their hybrid identities and the ways they are not well received in the kind of society they inhabit.

³⁶² This is reminiscent of Walkowitz' representation of internal and external multilingualism (Walkowitz p.41), it is then to be noted that the works in this research provide almost exclusively representations of external multilingualism.

³⁶³ Lynne Kutsukake, *The Translation of Love*, (New York: Doubleday, 2016), p. 46.

The sense of displacement and alienation from society that is prominent in both Okada's and Kutsukake's novels, as well as in the other works discussed in this thesis such as *Yumetsukai* and Levy's production, is also common Kagawa's novels, in which the author employs both written multilingualism and a speculative turn to the story to describe the feeling of living as a hybrid in a society that denies hybridity.³⁶⁴ Before the term hybridity was used by Homi K. Bhabha in his discourse on cultural hybridity, hybridism was already a popular plot device in Gothic novels, making it a common topic of discussion among scholars on Gothic literature. In the field of Gothic studies, the hybrid differs from the monster, which helps to set the boundaries between human and other, good and evil. Instead, the hybrid has the innate ability to cross those same boundaries. Because of this the gothic hybrid is portrayed as disturbing and uncanny. In her analysis of H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr Moreau*, Glennis Byron also defines hybridity as chaotic.³⁶⁵ Indeed, hybridity refuses to abide by the set of rules put in place by a social or, in the case of Wells's novel, some sort of moral order.³⁶⁶ This is also true in the case of cultural hybridity, which pushes beyond the boundaries set by the construct of national culture.³⁶⁷ In the case of Japan, with its complex relationship with the claims of cultural homogeneity and nationalism, this is particularly significant. Hybridity as a concept in Japanese media is regarded ambiguously depending on the context. On the one hand, it sparks a sense of fascination when addressed by speculative fiction and popular culture; on the other hand, the representation of *hāfu* (Japanese people of mixed heritage) in Japanese fiction often associates it with a sense of distrust. Several manga and anime deal with the

³⁶⁴ Here I do not only refer to cultural hybridity, rather I intend it in the wider sense that the term assumes in the context of speculative fiction. For example, the main heroine in Kagawa's novels is part human and part *kitsune*.

³⁶⁵ Glennis Byron, 'Gothic in the 1890s', in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 186-196 (p.189).

³⁶⁶ As Fish argues, this social and moral order tends to be based on the arguments raised during the Enlightenment, in which Fish sees the basis of the "Western skin-based racism" [Robert A. Fish, 'Mixed-blood' Japanese: a reconsideration of race and purity in Japan', in *Japan's minorities: the illusion of homogeneity*, ed. by Michael Weiner (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 40-58 (p.43)].

³⁶⁷ Pnina Werbner, 'Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. by Pnina Webner and Tariq Modood, (London: Zed Books, 2015), pp.1-26 (p. 4).

concept of “hybridity” in a way akin to the Gothic stereotype of monstrosity. For example, in addition Ishida’s *Tokyo Ghoul*, Hoshino Lily’s *shōjo* manga *Otome Yōkai Zakuro* (乙女妖怪ざくろ, 2006-ongoing) regardless of its much less sinister atmosphere, addresses the topic of hybridity in a speculative setting based on Japanese folklore and history, as the story takes place in an alternative Meiji era in which humans have to learn to collaborate with Japanese mythological creatures. Zakuro and her close friends, all half-humans, are appointed to assist the human soldiers and instruct them on the non-human world. Similarly to the world of the Southern Gothic novel by Poppy Z. Brite,³⁶⁸ *Lost Souls*, in the world of *Tokyo Ghoul* humanity coexists with another species of predators. While in *Lost Souls* it is vampires, predictably in *Tokyo Ghoul* these are ghouls who feed on human flesh. In the context of *Tokyo Ghoul* hybridity is such a serious taboo that human/ghoul hybrid children are said to die before birth.³⁶⁹ The main character, Kaneki Ken, instead is a Frankenstein’s monster-like creature. Born as a human his body has been implanted with ghoul organs effectively making him a one-eyed ghoul, a hybrid half-ghoul. Most of the story revolves around him trying to find his own place while being part of both the human and the ghoul world. Early in the story, he states that he does not have a place to belong,³⁷⁰ echoing Ichiro’s words from *No-no Boy*. As the story progresses, the reader is presented with the fact that, as a hybrid, Kaneki is stronger than most ghouls, while he also shows signs that his IQ is higher than the average which allows him to learn fighting techniques simply by reading about them. Several of these characteristics are also associated with the fictionalised image of the *hāfu* in Japanese popular culture and literature since there is a distinction to be made between the representation and the reality when it comes to Japanese people of mixed background. The term gained

³⁶⁸ Following the publication of his novels in the 90s, the author changed his name to Billy Martin, however his novels are still published under the pseudonym of Poppy Z. Brite.

³⁶⁹ *Tokyo Ghoul*, dir. by Morita Shuhei 2014 S1 E4 (scene starting at remaining 00:13:49). Netflix.

³⁷⁰ Sui Ishida, *Tokyo Ghoul*, 14 vols (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2012-14), I, p.215.

popularity in the 70s to mainly indicate the child of a Japanese parent and a non-Japanese parent. However, despite being based on the English word “half” it can also refer to people with more than two ethnic backgrounds, as long as one of those is Japanese, the absence of Japanese descent marks the person as a foreigner even if they too are of mixed background and resident in Japan. The debate on the appropriateness of such an expression that seems to imply that the only valuable part of the individual is the Japanese one is still ongoing, even though it is accepted among the *hāfu* people.³⁷¹ Although the term itself does not differentiate between one’s heritage, the glamorous representation of *hāfu* people as more attractive and more intelligent than the average as well as bilingual mainly refers to American-Japanese or more broadly to Caucasian-Japanese, while negative stereotypes are still related to people of black heritage. In addition, people who do not show a distinguishable appearance are not seen as part of this category.³⁷²

This is the case explored by Kirino Natsuo in her novel *Grotesque*, where the main characters are two *hāfu* sisters. While the older one, Watashi, – since she always refers to herself with the first-person pronoun *watashi* – does not possess any distinctive feature marking her as not entirely Japanese, the younger sister, Yuriko, inherited several traits from their German father. She is then described as the ideal *hāfu*: extremely beautiful and, according to her sister, the golden child in their household. Clearly, most of the resentment that Watashi feels towards Yuriko is fuelled by petty jealousy, nonetheless it is significant that these apparently positive traits of Yuriko, become terrifying in the eyes of Watashi to the point that she starts one of her long monologues by saying that:

³⁷¹Kimie Oshima, ‘Perception of Hafu or Mixed-race People in Japan: Group-session Studies Among Hafu Students at a Japanese University’, *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 23, (2014), 22-34 (pp. 24-25).

³⁷² Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, ‘Identities of multiethnic people in Japan’, in *Japan and Global Migration: Foreign Workers and the Advent of a Multicultural Society*, ed. by Mike Douglass and Glenda Roberts (London; New York: Routledge, 2015) pp. 198-218 (pp. 214-215).

‘わたしがぜひとも話したいのは、妹についてです。わたしには一歳遠いの妹がいました。ユリコという名前です。ユリコは、何と書いていいのかわかりませんが、ひと言で言うなら怪物でした。’³⁷³

As highlighted by Robert A. Fish, no matter how glamorous the portrayal of *hāfu* has turned out to be in recent years, from an institutional point of view, Japanese of mixed heritage – even those of Caucasian descent – are still regarded as outsiders in a society that still pleads so much faith in the idea of homogeneity and pure-bloodedness,³⁷⁴ so much so in fact that studies on *hāfu* as a minority group are few and far between.³⁷⁵ Similarly, the happy ending for hybrid characters in speculative fiction, manga and anime is always a hard-earned one, paved with challenges in which the character needs to prove their worth time and time again in a way that is sinisterly reminiscent of Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu’s words concerning the general response to Japanese people of mixed heritage in Japan that ‘[t]hey may be required to prove that they possess the required cultural knowledge. Certain behaviours will be understood as proof of the existence of Japanese blood, while deviations will be judged as verification of the influence of foreign genes.’³⁷⁶

The approach to cultural hybridity in literary fiction follows a similar line. In Kirino’s novel, Yuriko serves as the central element to the mystery plotline, since after becoming a prostitute

³⁷³ Natsuo Kirino *Grotesque*, (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 2006) p.14 [‘**The one I really want to talk about is my sister. I had a sister who was a year younger than me. Her name was Yuriko. I have no idea how best to describe her, but if I were to come up with one word, it would be monster. She was terrifyingly beautiful. You may doubt that a person can be so beautiful that she is monstrous. Being beautiful is far preferable to being ugly, after all—at least that’s the general consensus. I wish I could give people who hold that opinion just one glimpse of Yuriko**’] Translation by Rebecca Copeland in Natsuo Kirino, *Grotesque*, trans. by Rebecca Copeland (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), p.7.

³⁷⁴ Robert A. Fish, ‘Mixed-blood" Japanese: a reconsideration of race and purity in Japan’, in *Japan’s minorities: the illusion of homogeneity*, ed. by Michael Weiner (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 40-58 (p.41).

³⁷⁵ Kimie Oshima, ‘Perception of Hāfu or Mixed-race People in Japan: Group-session Studies Among Hāfu Students at a Japanese University’, *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 23, (2014), 22-34 (p.22).

³⁷⁶ Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, ‘Identities of multiethnic people in Japan’, in *Japan and Global Migration: Foreign Workers and the Advent of a Multicultural Society*, ed. by Mike Douglass and Glenda Roberts (London; New York: Routledge, 2015) pp. 198-218 (p. 213).

in her adulthood she is murdered. It is her killing that prompts Watashi's narration about hers and her sister's lives. In this sense, Yuriko's tragic story is reminiscent of Nakagami Kenji's *Sennen no yuraku*. Thus, such narratives provide an interesting metaphor to discuss the positioning of multilingual literature in Japanese, in relation to the *kokubungaku*.

3.5 *Ekkyō bungaku* and border-crossing.

Except for sparse works such as Zhang Weixiong 2013 article 'Bairingaruna Nihongo Bungaku' (バイリンガルな日本語文学), literary bilingualism, as well as written multilingualism in the literary canon have not been consistently explored by scholars in the field of Japanese literary studies. While it does not appear that an argument in favour of the correlation between bilingualism and schizophrenia akin to that described by Pavlenko in the context of the US has ever been carried out in Japan, a common belief is that Japanese being a complex language, non-native speakers cannot master it.³⁷⁷ This implies that an ideal divide exists between the way the language is used – both as written and spoken – by a native speaker and by a person who acquired it. Said divide contributes to separate native Japanese people from “foreigners”. This is central in the use of the expression *Nihongo bungaku*, to signify works written in Japanese by non-Japanese born authors. The term retains a measure of ambiguity as it also refers to the production of Japanese residents in the Americas,³⁷⁸ but in Japan, it aims to distinguish between those writers for whom Japanese is not their first language and those who were born into the Japanese language.³⁷⁹ Albeit *Nihongo* is indeed

³⁷⁷ Aneta Pavlenko, 'Bilingual Selves' in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 1- 33 (p. 3).

³⁷⁸ Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, 'Challenging the Myth of Homogeneity: Immigrant Writing in Japan', in *Immigrant and Ethnic-Minority Writers since 1945*, ed. by Sandra Vlasta and Wiebke Sievers (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Rodopi, 2018), pp. 318-354 (p.319).

³⁷⁹ Li Jiang. 'What Border Are They Crossing?: A Few Sociolinguistic Issues with Foreign-born Writers of Japanese', *Jinbun Shizen Kenkyū*, 5 (2011), 347-379 (p.361).

the official name of the language spoken in Japan, in this case, it opposes the term *kokugo* (国語) which holds the institutional meaning of “national language”.³⁸⁰ Additionally a multilingual literary tradition in Japan has not been formally acknowledged yet. Furthermore, the scholarship centring around foreign-born Japanese authors is also still developing. Explicit mentions of multilingualism in Japan mostly refer to the aftermath of the 1980s economic boom, which inspired the consequent rise in the number of immigrants.³⁸¹ As a consequence, beyond few short papers and a single monograph by Sasanuma Toshiaki on Levy Hideo’s production, there is neither consistent research being carried out on the topic,³⁸² nor comparative studies on *ekkyō bungaku* and *kokubungaku*.

As a general rule, authors gathered under the label of *ekkyō bungaku* do not share a common cultural heritage. Instead plenty of attention is given to the authors’ “foreignness”, based on their nationality and on what language they were born into as opposed to the language they chose to write in.³⁸³ In addition, to highlight the weariness of the Japanese system against any sort of immigrant cultural movement being associated with its national counterpart, the term *ekkyō* itself, far from being poetic, holds a negative connotation since in current Japanese it emphasises the illegitimacy of the act of crossing a border rather than its cultural implications.³⁸⁴ Thus, the few comparative studies carried out until now not only tend to compare *ekkyō bungaku* authors among themselves,³⁸⁵ but also mainly focus on their approach to language. Even in Sasanuma’s case, his approach to Levy’s literature aims to

³⁸⁰ Ibid. p.361.

³⁸¹ Janice Nakamura, ‘Hidden bilingualism: Ideological influences on the language practices of multilingual migrant mothers in Japan’, *International Multilingual Research Journal* 10, no. 4 (2016), 308-323 (p.308).

³⁸² Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, ‘Challenging the Myth of Homogeneity: Immigrant Writing in Japan’ In *Immigrant and Ethnic-Minority Writers since 1945*, ed. by Sandra Vlasta and Wiebke Sievers (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Rodopi, 2018), pp. 318-354 (p.330).

³⁸³ As discussed in Li Jiang. ‘What Border Are They Crossing?: A Few Sociolinguistic Issues with Foreign-born Writers of Japanese’, *Jinbun Shizen Kenkyū*, 5 (2011), 347-379

³⁸⁴ Li Jiang. ‘What Border Are They Crossing?: A Few Sociolinguistic Issues with Foreign-born Writers of Japanese’, *Jinbun Shizen Kenkyū*, 5 (2011), 347-379 (p.359).

³⁸⁵ Ibid. p.348.

highlight its effect on separating the Japanese language from the construct of Japaneseeness.³⁸⁶ Yiu's article 'National Literature and Beyond: Mizumura Minae and Levy Hideo' associates Levy's and Mizumura's literatures, even though the authors' works have only few elements in common. For example, while Levy's *Seijōki* and Mizumura's *Shishōsetsu* both share a large part of the narrative with the authors' personal experiences, as opposed to Levy, in Mizumura's novel this can be identified as an attempt at metafiction, a 'term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality.'³⁸⁷ In this sense, the novel has plenty in common with Ruth Ozeki's 2013 novel *A Tale For the Time Being* as, in both novels, the main character and primary narrator share their name and complete background with the author. On the contrary, a definite parallel can be drawn between Levy's writings and Shimada's *Yumetsukai*, and therefore with Dazai's works, not only because of the formal use of the written language alternation but also in the main character being presented as an outsider. Consequently, although certain writers on Japan such as Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu tend to often put the Japanese socio-cultural reality in opposition to the American, for example in relation to multiculturalism and cultural hybridity,³⁸⁸ when it comes to immigrant literatures and multilingual literary traditions, the two countries seem to face a similar problem: how to differentiate among literary traditions based on the coexistence of different cultural backgrounds (cultural hybridity) while also maintaining the idea of a single nation intact. As Japan tries to either incorporate them in its national tradition or to segregate them outside of it, America prefers to explicitly distinguish

³⁸⁶ Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, 'Challenging the Myth of Homogeneity: Immigrant Writing in Japan' In *Immigrant and Ethnic-Minority Writers since 1945*, ed. by Sandra Vlasta and Wiebke Sievers (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill | Rodopi, 2018), pp. 318-354 (p.341).

³⁸⁷ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction* (London & New York: Routledge, 1984), p.2.

³⁸⁸ Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, 'Identities of multiethnic people in Japan', in *Japan and Global Migration: Foreign Workers and the Advent of a Multicultural Society*, ed. by Mike Douglass and Glenda Roberts (London; New York: Routledge, 2015) pp. 198-218 (p. 215).

one tradition from the other through umbrella terms such as African American literature and Asian American literature.³⁸⁹ Paradoxically, the two approaches are not as different as they might seem at first glance. Going back to the old metaphor of hybridity in the Gothic novel it seems appropriate to claim that, rather than hiding hybridity in an attic, like some sort of disgraced Bertha Mason, American culture hides it in plain sight, through the use of adjectives such as African or Asian, while still making it a part of the overall American literary tradition.

The first scholars to insist on the consideration of an Asian American literary tradition were the editors of *Aiiieeeee! An anthology of Asian-American writers* Frank Chin, Jeffery Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Shawn Wong. Their purpose in publishing the first anthology completely dedicated to Asian American authors was to make Asian American writers, who had been kept away from the American cultural scene until then, as recognized and appreciated as their European-American counterparts.³⁹⁰ On the one hand, in the case of John Okada, the publication of the anthology indeed led to a rediscovery of his novel, *No-No Boy*. While originally criticised and even rejected by the very Japanese American communities that it aimed to describe,³⁹¹ *No-No Boy* later became the first novel to be canonised as a classic of Japanese American literature.³⁹² On the other hand, the definition of Asian American provided in the *Aiiieeeee! An anthology of Asian-American writers* is a problematic one based on a set of boundaries whose original value decreased during the years. Most significantly, in the introduction to the anthology, the editors clarify that: '[o]ur anthology is exclusively Asian-American. That means Filipino -, Chinese-, and Japanese-Americans,

³⁸⁹ I will not delve further into the discourse on African-American literature or Anglo-American literature, as they are both beyond the scope of my research.

³⁹⁰ Frank Chin and others, 'Preface', in *Aiiieeeee! An anthology of Asian-American writers* ed. by Frank Chin and others (Washington: Howard University Press, 1974), pp vi-xviii (p. viii).

³⁹¹ Stan Yogi, 'Japanese American Literature', in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by King-Kok Cheung (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 125-155. pp.136-137

³⁹² Ibid. p.137.

American born and raised, who got their China and Japan from the radio, off the silver screen, from television, out of comic books, from the pushers of white American culture that pictured the yellow man as something that when wounded, sad, or angry, or swearing, or wondering whined, shouted, or screamed “aiiiieee!”³⁹³ Such a statement raises two points: first that the concept of Asian American itself originates from a desire to oppose the white American culture, which is in turn regarded as a whole when in truth it is a fragmented system that includes many different ethnic groups and cultural traditions; second, the editors do recognize this same issue when it comes to defining what Asian means, so they arbitrarily limit the definition to the three ethnic groups Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese while ignoring, for example, the Korean communities.³⁹⁴ However, the heterogeneity of the Asian American communities was later addressed by Lowe in 1991 who widened the definition to also include Vietnamese American and Indian American communities hinting that Asian America is expanding.³⁹⁵ In addition, in the system created by Chin and the other editors, the production of first-generation immigrants – which usually contains most of the non-English texts written by Asian immigrants in America – tends to be left ignored. Nonetheless, concerning this thesis the importance of the *Aiiieee!* lies in the fact that it was the first text to acknowledge the literary production of Japanese immigrants in America.

In the last decades, as the awareness around the implications of the traditional approach to the literary traditions of America increased, a transnational turn has been proposed in the field of American studies,³⁹⁶ however, the debate around issues such as whether the term transnational refers to multicultural literary tradition inside America or if it does instead

³⁹³ Frank Chin and others, ‘Preface’, in *Aiiieee! An anthology of Asian-American writers* ed. by Frank Chin and others (Washington: Howard University Press, 1974), pp vi-xviii (p. viii).

³⁹⁴ In addition, the editors tend to overlook the production of first-generation immigrants, which usually includes most of the non-English texts written by Asian immigrants in America.

³⁹⁵ Lisa Lowe ‘Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity’, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Vol 1 Issue 1 (1991), 24-44. (p.27)

³⁹⁶ Yogita, Goyal ‘Introduction: The Transnational Turn’ in *The Cambridge Companion To Transnational American Literature* ed. by Yogita Goyal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) pp. 1-15 (p.1).

encompass also literary traditions from outside the US, as well as whether a transnational turn also takes into account the interconnections between America and Asia or America and other regional areas outside of the American continent are still ongoing.³⁹⁷ Such an approach, however, has not been mirrored in the field of Japanese studies, which confirms the presence of a distinctive gap in the scholarship, not only concerning a transnational approach to Japanese literature but also in proposing to reevaluate the positioning of Japanese literature inside the discourse of world literature. In order to fill this gap, the next chapter of this study will proceed to discuss Levy's literature in the context of Japan and expand on the transnational nature of his works, as well as their place among the Japanese contemporary literary canon.

³⁹⁷ Ibid. p.1.

Chapter 4: The *gaijin* as *ningen shikkaku*: Echoes of Dazai in Levy Hideo's Multilingual Stories.

By revolving around a comparison between Dazai's last long novel *Ningen Shikkaku* and a selection of Levy's works, this chapter aims to present a comparative study between well-established national authors and the new generation of transnational, translingual ones. Since the primary focus of such a comparison is on the identification of the elements that mark Levy's works as part of the *shikkaku bungaku*, leading to the process that considers multilingualism as the evidence of Levy's characters' states as *shikkaku* in their stories, the study moves then on to a further comparative perspective that associates Levy's and Shimada's works. Multilingualism in both Levy's and Shimada's writings is to be intended as a representation of cultural hybridity. The frequent language and script alternation employed by both authors not only reflect the main characters' speech patterns but presents the reader with a peculiarly constructed page which, for instance, sometimes requires the book to be turned in order to read the parts in English more comfortably. Such elements reinforce the central role that the concept of hybridity has not just in the narrative but in every aspect of the novel from its ideation to its development in book form. As such, this chapter aims to provide a conclusive argument on the interconnection between hybridity and language in the context of the Japanese literary scene, before moving to the exploration of the influence of the *Shikkaku bungaku* on Japanese American literature.

4.1 Locating Levy in the Japanese literary scene.

The misrepresentation of multilingual literature as migration literature, and the limited scholarships in both areas that lead to aforementioned lack of an acknowledged multilingual

literary tradition in Japan, paired with the postcolonial imaginary that still sees migration as a phenomenon rooted into a westward's trajectory reinforce that Levy Hideo's literature remains uncategorizable under the old modernist paradigm of language, ethnicity, and nationality. Thus, scholars such as Rumi Sakamoto, Yiu and Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt consider Levy as one of the most prominent *ekkyō bungaku* authors. Popular sources in English such as Wikipedia, instead, describe him as an 'American-born Japanese language author',³⁹⁸ meanwhile, the dedicated Japanese page on the same platform calls him 'one of the writers whose production is in Japanese even though Japanese is not their mother tongue.'³⁹⁹ Even in Japan, Levy's books are invariably advertised by sensationalising the fact that, while not having 'even a drop of Japanese blood',⁴⁰⁰ he nevertheless writes in Japanese.⁴⁰¹ What immediately appears clear from these different definitions is that the main interest around him as a writer as well as his literary production is in the juxtaposition between Levy's nationality and his chosen language. Li Jiang problematizes this point by stating that this approach tends to put the "Japanese-language" part before the "writer" one,⁴⁰² in the case of Levy, effectively favouring the why and how concerning Levy's writing in Japanese over the essence of his production. In addition, the few studies mentioning Levy do not focus on his connection to America nor on how this is hinted at in his literature.

Levy was indeed born in the US, his father was a Jewish-American diplomat, whose job allowed Levy to live in the US, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan during his childhood and

³⁹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hideo_Levy (September 26, 2023).

³⁹⁹ <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E3%83%AA%E3%83%BC%E3%83%93%E8%8B%B1%E9%9B%84> (September 26, 2023) (my translation).

⁴⁰⁰ Rumi Sakamoto, "Writing as out/insiders, Contemporary Japan's *ekkyō* literature in globalization", in *Popular culture, globalization and Japan*, ed. by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 137-157 (p.143).

⁴⁰¹ "Promotional blurbs for his [Levy's] books invariably include some versions of the following comments: 'an American-born writer without a single drop of Japanese blood', 'a writer who leaves his mother tongue', 'a writer who crosses borders from the Western world/language to the nonWestern world/language'. (Yiu, 232).

⁴⁰² Li Jiang, 'What Border Are They Crossing?: A Few Sociolinguistic Issues with Foreign-born Writers of Japanese', *Jinbun Shizen Kenkyū*, 5 (2011), 347-379 (p.370).

adolescence, while his mother was a Polish-American immigrant.⁴⁰³ His Jewish heritage as well as the fact that it clashed with the Christian heritage from his mother's side are often touched upon in Levy's writing, together with the process that led him to start writing in Japanese. For instance, he compares himself to the Polish-born Joseph Conrad to point out that in the eyes of both the society and the critics it seemed perfectly acceptable for Joseph Conrad to write in English, rather than his native tongue, whereas Levy's own choice to write in Japanese is still met with a certain degree of bewilderment. This shows that the fact that an author writes in a language different from their native one is not a surprising or rare occurrence *per se*, but that at the core of the matter sits the fact that an author who is born into a dominant language chooses to write in a "non-dominant" one instead.⁴⁰⁴ In addition, the analogy with Conrad also implies that, while it is expected from a native speaker of a "minor" language to be proficient in at least one of the "dominant" ones, preferably English, the opposite is still considered to be an exception. However, because the choice of a non-native English speaker to write in English is not only never questioned, but even expected the case for the ownership of the English language is easily dismissed. On the contrary, an American-born writer in Japanese such as Levy gets frequently asked 'なぜ日本語で書くのか'.⁴⁰⁵ Thus Levy's literature questions the process of internationalisation (国際化, *kokusaika*)⁴⁰⁶ and the 'ownership' of the Japanese language.⁴⁰⁷

If the language has long since acquired the role of a criterion to distinguish between different social groups and provide proof of one's belonging to a certain one, rather than the other,⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Ibid. p.350.

⁴⁰⁴ Levy Hideo "Naze Nihongode Kakunoka" in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1992) pp. 65-69 (p.66).

⁴⁰⁵ ['**Why do you write in Japanese?**'] (my translation).

⁴⁰⁶ Levy Hideo, "Nihongo no Shōri" in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1992) pp. 16-39 (p.16).

⁴⁰⁷ Levy Hideo "Naze Nihongode Kakunoka" in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1992) pp. 65-69 (p.68).

⁴⁰⁸ David Crystal, *English as a global language* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 22.

then unsurprisingly in a society as complex as the Japanese one that is used to the illusion of homogeneity, language possesses an even higher value in that it has the potential to separate between who belongs “inside” the nation and who does not. A recurrent theme in literature and literary-adjacent media, the idea of “belonging” tends to be discussed in relation to the concepts of *uchi* (内) and *soto* (外), which literally translate as *in* and *out* or *inside* and *outside*, but that also acquire the figurative meanings of “being part of a certain group” and “not being a part of a certain group”.⁴⁰⁹ Concerning nationality and ethnicity, a common term to define a non-Japanese person is *gaijin* that originates from the expression *gaikokujin* 外国人 (a person from a foreign country, a foreigner) by dropping the second character 国 (*kuni*, country)⁴¹⁰. Upon leaving only the two characters 外 (*soto*, outside) and 人 (*hito*, person) the connotation of the term *gaijin* oscillates between the more objective *foreigner* to the more abrasive – and sometimes blatantly rude – *outsider* according to the context. Even though it can be referred to any non-Japanese person in Japan, according to Sakamoto, nowadays the term *gaijin* mostly refers to white people, who are still regarded ambiguously with both spite and admiration due to the colonial, outdated idea that white people stand at the top of some sort of racial hierarchy.⁴¹¹ In this regard, in one of his essays, Levy shares a significant anecdote from his adolescence when a Japanese man inquired on Levy’s ability to read Japanese by aggressively stating that if he was reading and speaking Japanese – which the man arbitrarily decided was not his mother tongue based solely on Levy’s physical appearance – then it must be because his own country did not have any language or

⁴⁰⁹ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), pp. 215-216.

⁴¹⁰ The same character can be found in the aforementioned terms *kokubungaku* and *kokugo*.

⁴¹¹ Rumi Sakamoto, “Writing as out/insiders, Contemporary Japan’s *ekkyō* literature in globalization”, in *Popular culture, globalization and Japan*, ed. by Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 137-157 (p.144).

literature.⁴¹² Being perceived as a *gaijin* is a fundamental element in Levy's literature. This is particularly evident when it comes to the constant mention of his characters, especially Ben in *Seijōki*, standing out by being fair-haired and blue-eyed. Regardless, both as a critic and an author, he does not shy away from his *gaijin-ness*, nor does he use it as a plot device to hint at an implicit desire to become Japanese. Instead, it allows him to state that 'in the act of writing in Japanese, I think I can challenge the old fashioned common sense still ingrained in the Japanese intellectuals no matter if left-wing or right-wing, modern or postmodern that nationality = race = language = culture',⁴¹³ as well as discuss themes like cultural hybridity, fluid identities and the loss of multilingualism/multiculturalism in contemporary Japan.⁴¹⁴ These themes are the most recurrent in Levy's production and all originate from his personal experience.

4.2 *Kakumei* or a Revolution Against Translation.

While Li states that 'Levy's trilingual and tricultural experiences are what set him apart from the majority of his readers, and constantly drawing attention to these experiences may be as much a way of self-expression as a way of self-discovery',⁴¹⁵ this work argues that by acknowledging his multilingualism and multiculturalism in his writings, Levy also handles his own cultural hybridity as a form of personal revolution akin to Kazuko's

⁴¹² Levy Hideo "Naze Nihongode Kakunoka" in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kōdansha, 1992) pp. 65-69 (p.68).

⁴¹³ Levy Hideo "Naze Nihongode Kakunoka" in Ian Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kōdansha, 1992) pp. 65-69 (p.67-68). (my translation)

⁴¹⁴ Levy Hideo and Tawada Yoko, 'Kikō to Gendai', in *Ekkyō no Koe* ed. by Ian Levy Hideo (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007), pp. 31-52 (pp.38-39).

⁴¹⁵ Li Jiang, 'What Border Are They Crossing?: A Few Sociolinguistic Issues with Foreign-born Writers of Japanese', *Jinbun Shizen Kenkyū*, 5 (2011), 347-379 (p.352).

kakumei against a society that still expects identity to be fixed rather than fluid.⁴¹⁶ Instead of employing lengthy descriptions to expand on what being a *gaijin* and what being regarded as a *gaijin* mean, Levy shows it through the use of the language, which, as mentioned in the previous sections, adds English and Chinese elements to the Japanese frame, sometimes without providing a translation, in order to authentically recreate the thought process of a multilingual mind on paper.⁴¹⁷ This is the case for example of *Tenanmon*, the sixty-eight-page short novel separated into four chapters and first published in 1996. The action follows an anonymous protagonist, referred to as *kare* (かれ, he/him), travelling from Japan to Beijing. Kare, much like Levy himself, is an American resident in Japan who can speak English, Japanese and Chinese.⁴¹⁸ The story unfolds through Kare's inner monologue, mostly in Japanese, and several dialogues, in Japanese, Chinese, and English. The elements linking the chapters are Kare's physical movement from Japan to Beijing and through the streets of Beijing itself – which metaphorically retrace his mental movement to face his memories of his father from his childhood – and his struggle to explain his own identity to his different counterparts, a struggle that is mirrored by his multilingualism. For instance, from a stylistic point of view the following passage shows two significant points; first, the alternation between two different languages (in this case Japanese and Chinese) translates Kare's train of thought into written words, and second, a translation of the Chinese into Japanese is provided, when necessary, to make the text accessible to a Japanese readership.

⁴¹⁶ See also Pnina Werbner, 'Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, ed. by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, (London: Zed Books, 2015), pp.1-26.

⁴¹⁷ Li Jiang. 'What Border Are They Crossing?: A Few Sociolinguistic Issues with Foreign-born Writers of Japanese', *Jinbun Shizen Kenkyū*, 5 (2011), 347-379 (p.351).

⁴¹⁸ In the original Levy frequently uses the word 北京語 (*Pekingo*, Mandarin) in the original as opposed to the generic 中国語 (*Chūgokugo*, Chinese).

‘「你是」という音がかれの口を出ようとしたのは、三十年ぶりだった。你是於大陸出生的嗎？你是在大陸長大的嗎？君は大陸で生まれたのか？君は大陸で育ったのか？敗軍の島の地方都市で、三十年前のかれの耳を満たした、大陸を失った將軍たちの大陸の言葉が、切れ切れに蘇った。

「我是。。。」とかれは逆のことを告げようと告げよう、頭の中で大陸の言葉を綴ってみた。「我是日本。。。」そのあとにつづくはずの「人」が、すなおに出てこなかった。「我是日本的。。。」と頭の中で言い直してみた。「我是日本的。。。」なんだろうか、なんとさえばいいのだろうか。⁴¹⁹

Content-wise the text is purposefully ambiguous in that it does not explain whether Kare is unable to express the meaning of “a foreign resident in Japan” in Chinese merely because of a lack of proficiency or if he cannot think of a word that would convey how nuanced his situation is. It also hints at the surprised reaction of an Asian person hearing an American man speaking Japanese or, as in this case, Chinese, another recurring element in Levy’s works. However, it is in the frustration expressed in the last bit of the character’s monologue ‘なんとさえばいいのだろうか’ that echoes of Dazai’s characters can be found, specifically, Kare’s feelings are reminiscent of both Yōzō’s anxiety and Naoji’s resignation. Similarly to Dazai’s works, in which ‘the individual in the society of *seken* and *ie* strives impotently to overcome his isolation through his sincerity and confession’, in Levy’s literature this same sincerity remains caged in the liminal space between different languages

⁴¹⁹ Levy Hideo, *Tenanmon* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1996), pp. 14-15. [“You...” such a sound hadn’t left his mouth in around thirty years. “Were you born in China? Were you raised in China?” The sounds filled his ears with the echoes of those he used to, in a defeated island, thirty years before. The words of the generals who had lost the continent came back to life piece by piece. “I am...” he attempted to spell the Mandarin word in his head, battling against his instinct. “I am Japan...” He could not manage to say what was supposed to follow, ‘Japanese’. “I am a Japanese...” he tried to repeat over and over in his head, “I am a Japanese...” what? How could he explain?] (my translation).

that reside in the character's mind. Thus, writing multilingually provides an outlet for the author, through the narrator, to organise the constant linguistic movements.

Thus, in *Tenanmon*, well-organised alternations of Japanese, Chinese and English appear at the beginning of the first chapter and in the second chapter. In the first case, while he is on the plane to Beijing, Kare is suddenly reminded of a song in Mandarin he used to hear when he was a child, then he proceeds to mentally translate it both into Japanese and English.⁴²⁰ In the second case, the alternation happens in the middle of a dialogue between Kare and his father as the latter introduces him to his Chinese lover, ‘父が口述の腰を折って、即座に英語に切り換えた。This is Miss Jiao. [...] 黒髪の女がかれの西洋語のファースト・ネームを流暢に呼び、I've heard all about you’;⁴²¹ and further down in the exchange ‘ミス・ジャオがわずかに振り返り、「你的孩子……」と言いかけた。「他不明白」と父が言った’.⁴²²

In addition to the wide use of translingual strategies – the alternation of both languages and scripts to portray a multilingualism on page – Levy's Japanese appears carefully crafted through the process of handpicking the most suitable words across the vocabularies of all of his languages, with the sole purpose of effectively conveying the author's and the character's thoughts. For instance, as Tawada Yōko highlights, in *Wareteki Chūgoku* (我的中国, *My China*, 2004), Levy refers to himself acquiring an undetermined leave to remain in Japan using the Chinese word 常住 (*chángzhù*) rather than the Japanese 定住 (*teijū*). According to Tawada –who states that she not fluent in Chinese – the implication appears clear all the

⁴²⁰ “东方红 太阳升 東方は紅、太陽が昇った。[...] The east is red, the sun has risen” [*Tenanmon*] (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1996) pp.5-68 (pp. 7-18).

⁴²¹ *Tenanmon* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1996) pp.5-68 (pp. 23-24).[‘My father stopped speaking and immediately switched to English "This is Miss Jiao" [...] The black-haired woman spoke fluently calling him by his western first name, "I've heard all about you"'] (my translation)

⁴²² *Tenanmon* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1996) pp.5-68 (p. 32).[‘Miss Jiao looked over her shoulder a little, "Your kid..." she said. "He doesn't understand." His father replied.’] (my translation).

same: while the Japanese word emphasises the obligation of living in Japan for the time being, the Chinese equivalent instead highlights the permanence of the action.⁴²³ Tawada's argument remains significant as it acknowledges that there is a clear intention behind Levy's lexical choices, as opposed to what might happen in a situation of spoken code-switching, which is instead an instinctual action. In addition, in the title of his essay on Shimada's *Yumetsukai*, "Zai" to "bai" to, Katagiri no me' (「在」と「バイ」と、カタギリの目), the character “在” and the word ‘バイ’ refer to the main points that Levy intends to analyse in the text. However, when it comes to ‘在’ the implications run a bit deeper. In Japanese, the character mostly appears as part of a compound, the same way as Shimada uses it in the novel, but by itself, it refers to the Chinese verb *zai* meaning "to be/stay in a certain place", the Japanese equivalent is いる/ある (*iru/aru*). Thus, Levy intends the character to be read and understood as in Chinese rather than in Japanese. Furthermore, Levy himself explains his choice in the text by stating that ‘「夢使い」はまず「在」の物語である。その「在」は、「在日」と「在米」という二つの現象が入れ替わる形になっているのだが、どちらもけっして在住ということの意味しない」.⁴²⁴

At the time when the essay was first published in 1990, *Seijōki* was still being serialised in the literary journal *Gunzō*,⁴²⁵ while *Yumetsukai* had been published the previous year. Thus, “Zai” to “bai” to Katagiri no Me’ can conveniently be regarded as a writing encounter between the two authors. Not only Levy compares Katagiri to a version of Sakaguchi Ango

⁴²³ Levy Hideo, Yoko Tawada, “Kikō to Gendai” in Levy Hideo *Ekkō no Koe* (Tokyo, Iwanami, 2007) pp. 31-52 (pp.33-34).

⁴²⁴ Levy Hideo, ‘「Zai」 To 「Bai」 , To Katagiri no Me’, in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1992) pp. 96-103 (pp.97-98). [‘*Dream Messenger* is clearly a tale of the “在”(zai). Even though this character “在” (zai) is used in words like “在日” (*zainichi*) resident in Japan and “在米” (*zaibei*) resident in the US acquiring a connotation linked to both these phenomena, in neither of these cases it actually maintains the meaning of “living, staying” in those places.’] (my translation).

⁴²⁵ Christopher D. Scott, ‘Translator’s Introduction, in Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-Spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. vii-xii (p.ix).

who had moved to the West Village⁴²⁶— highlighting the *buraiha* influence on Shimada’s work – but he also mimics the way Shimada multilingually writes Katagiri’s speeches, therefore alternating Japanese to meaningful English terms, such as *migration* which is repeated multiple times through the text. Ultimately, Levy’s works share Shimada’s interest for the interconnection between *gengo* (言語) and *kodoku* (孤独), language and isolation. Thus, similarly to Shimada, in *Seijōki*, Levy uses different linguistic elements to put on page the different layers of multilingual communication. This is evident in the use of *furigana* that sometimes provides an intralingual translation through the employment of *katakana eigo*, rather than an interlingual translation, as in the case of Shimada, or providing a pronunciation, as Levy does in *Kari no Mizu*. For example, while describing the place Ben, the main character, used to live with his mother in the US he refers to the neighbourhood as ‘白人労働層の家並’ (*hakujin rōdōsō no ienami*) adding the reading ‘プア ホワイト’ (*pua howaito*).⁴²⁷ The *kanji* compound literally translates as “working-class white people”, while the *furigana* only provides a *katakana eigo* translation, “poor white”, reinforcing the complete lack of diversity which is particularly frustrating for a boy like Ben who grew up around Asia and adding a sense of squalor which does not originally belong to the *kanji* compound. On a second occurrence, when Ben is faced with a Japanese student’s questions, during his time in Japan, he is asked if as an American he feels “罪悪感” (*zaiakukan*) about the Vietnam War or the Hiroshima bombing, but the *furigana* reads ギルト (*giruto*).⁴²⁸ Considering that both terms mean “guilty”, the purpose of providing an English-based reading is that by choosing that pronunciation the Japanese student expresses the feeling in

⁴²⁶ Levy Hideo, ‘「Zai」 To 「Bai」, To Katagiri no Me’, in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1992) pp. 96-103 (p.98).

⁴²⁷ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoena i heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992) pp.11-12.

⁴²⁸ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoena i heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004) p.32.

such a way that he believes it may be understandable for a non-Japanese person, or more specifically for an American *gaijin* who was not born into the Japanese language, at the same time, by using the *kanji* for *zaiakukan*, the author makes sure that the text is accessible to a larger and more diverse readership.

4.3 Freedom, Loneliness, and the *Gaijin* as the *ningen shikkaku* in *Seijōki*.

While language arguably sits at the very core of his entire production in Japanese, Levy's approach focuses on the emotional link between the speaker and their chosen language as opposed to that between the speaker and their mother tongue. For example, in *Wareteki Chūgoku*, he states that he became used to hearing mainland Mandarin every day when he was a child living in Taiwan to the point that, even though it was not his mother tongue, it was like his mother tongue.⁴²⁹ However, Levy remarks that it was out of a personal (個人的 *kojinteki*) and subjective (主觀的 *shukanteki*)⁴³⁰ necessity (必然性 *hitsuzensei*)⁴³¹ dictated only by the experience (經驗的, *keikenteki*) that he chose to write in Japanese.

If the freedom of choosing to write in Japanese is what links Levy to the other non-*zainichi* foreign-born authors writing in Japanese such as David Zoppetti, Boyanhishig, Tian Yuan, and Shirin Nezamafi, it is also the reason why his literary production has been set apart from that of the Japanese national writers and compared almost exclusively to those of the other foreign-born authors.⁴³² However, as hinted at by the mention of Shimada's novel,

⁴²⁹ Levy Hideo, *Wareteki Chūgoku* (Tokyo, Iwanami Shōten, 2011) p. 1.

⁴³⁰ Levy Hideo "Naze Nihongode Kakunoka" in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1992) pp. 65-69 (p.66).

⁴³¹ Levy Hideo "Naze Nihongode Kakunoka" in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1992) pp. 65-69 (p.66).

⁴³² Li Jiang, 'What Border Are They Crossing?: A Few Sociolinguistic Issues with Foreign-born Writers of Japanese', *Jinbun Shizen Kenkyū*, 5 (2011), 347-379 (p.348).

Levy's works do not only depend on his being foreign-born but they are also influenced by his knowledge and interest in Japanese literature. Furthermore, this study argues that an approach that aims to completely separate Levy's production from the context of *kokubungaku* is not advisable since it does not take into account the role of transnational movement in Levy's literature, incurring the risk of once again limiting the discourse on the Japanese literary scene to a national perspective which would isolate the whole production in Japanese from the context of world literature.

In fact, it cannot be ignored that, even though it was published in his book form in 1992, *Seijōki* had been already known among the readers of *Gunzō* since it started its serialisation, thus it has been originally released at the same time as Shimada's *Yumetsukai* and Murakami Ryū's *69 Sixty-Nine* (*69 Sixty Nine*, 1987, *Sixty-Nine*, trans. 1993). The three novels can all be described as *bildungsroman* whose narratives are centred on the making of self in a Japanese American culturally hybrid environment. While Shimada's novel shares Levy's originality in the use of the language and an interest in the idea of fluid identities, *69 Sixty-Nine* not only is a semi-autobiographical novel same as *Seijōki* but it is also set in the same decade, the 60s.

As expected from a semi-autobiographical novel, *Seijōki* takes a lot from Levy's actual experiences as a child and later as an adolescent living in Asia. For instance, in the novel, Ben first becomes acquainted with the Japanese language during his childhood, when he was living in Taiwan in a house where the previous owners had left a small book in Japanese⁴³³ together with Japanese decorations like *sumi-e* prints.⁴³⁴ In *Wareteki Chūgoku*, Levy similarly describes his childhood home in Taichung as 'a house made by Japanese people.'⁴³⁵

⁴³³ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kiko enai heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004) p.50. (Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-Spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) p. 34)

⁴³⁴ Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-Spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) p.19.

⁴³⁵ Hideo Levy, *Wareteki Chūgoku*, (Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 2011) p.1. (my translation)

Regardless of the similarities in the setting and the anecdotes, *Seijōki* cannot be mistaken for a memoir like *Wareteki Chūgoku*. In addition to the fact that Ben remains a fictional character, two more instances make the ultimately fictional nature of the work clear to the reader. First, the presence of an omniscient narrator that also translates Ben's thoughts from English into fluent Japanese. This is especially clear when comparing the narration with the dialogues, for instance when Ben is being shown Shinjuku from afar and being told that 'あれはしんじゅくだ'.⁴³⁶ Similarly to how Shimada writes the Indian-born Swami's speech in an unusual alternation of *katakana* and *kanji* – such as 'アナタ、先生ガ好きニナルヨ',⁴³⁷ – to signify that the man is still learning Japanese, therefore he is not fluent and perhaps his accent is very noticeable, Levy writes the sentence using only the *hiragana* to show that while Ben manages to recognise the sounds, he is still unable to picture the corresponding *kanji* in his head, capturing the thought process of a language learner. Second, although such historical events as the Japanese defeat in WWII and the consequent rise in power of the American government over the Japanese former colonial territories, such as Taiwan,⁴³⁸ are frequently hinted at, Levy never details the Japanese socio-political background in the 60s, so everything reaches the reader through the filter of Ben's eyes. Thus, what the reader is presented with is not Tokyo, Japan, but Ben's Tokyo as he saw it at 17 years old. This is mirrored and enhanced in *Yumetsukai* when, from Matthew's perspective, the names of well-known areas do not maintain their original form in *kanji*, but are instead written in *katakana*, for example Shibuya is not 渋谷, rather it is シブヤ.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁶ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoena heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004) p.107. ['That's Shinjuku over there'] (My translation).

⁴³⁷ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 126.

⁴³⁸ Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-Spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) p.19.

⁴³⁹ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 121.

Like Ben, Yazaki Kensuke, Murakami Ryū's main character in *69 Sixty-Nine*, is also 17, but he is a Japanese high school student who lives in Sasebo in the Nagasaki prefecture,⁴⁴⁰ close to one of the American military bases set in Japan in the aftermath of the American Occupation. While Ben becomes fascinated with the Japanese language, Kensuke is interested in jazz and rock music and the Beat Generation; while Ben dreams of going to Shinjuku – that in his mind takes the shape of a promised land – Kensuke's dreamland is America with its glittering and prolific music scene and its literary production crying for freedom. In short, Ben and Kensuke are two faces of the same reality. Alone, *69 Sixty-Nine* is a humorous story of a Japanese high schooler who organises a student protest at his school with the sole purpose of impressing a girl. Yet, when discussed in relation to *Seijōki* it acquires a new layer of complexity. On the one hand, Kensuke's interest in the injustice of the Vietnam War and his indignation at the possibility of repercussions in Japan are fake and the targets he aims at with his angry words are faceless entities. On the other hand, Ben being an American citizen and the son of the American consul, he represents the embodiment of those faceless targets. Beyond the humour, Kensuke and his friends tend to see the Americans as objects, fuelling the stereotypical idealisation of the *gaijin*.⁴⁴¹ The effects of this practice on an American-born person are shown in *Seijōki* when Ben realises that the Japanese students enrolled at the International Studies Center at W University, where he studies Japanese, do not see him as an individual, but as an appendage of his birth country. In this instance, the aforementioned dialogue between Ben and a Japanese university student asking him ‘あなたはベトナム戦争について罪悪感を感じませんか？広島に原爆を

⁴⁴⁰ Incidentally Sasebo is Murakami's hometown as well.

⁴⁴¹ Rumi Sakamoto, “Writing as out/insiders, Contemporary Japan's *ekkyō* literature in globalization”, in *Popular culture, globalization and Japan*, ed. by M. Allen and R. Sakamoto (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 137-157 (p.144).

投下したことについては?’⁴⁴² is especially significant, not only because of the nature of the question, but also because of its structure. For example, the constant use of the second person pronoun *anata* (あなた), which is usually replaced by the listener’s given name in order to make the language sound more polite already shows that Ben is not considered an equal by the speaker.

Because identity in *Seijōki* is not intended as a single entity, instead, it is reminiscent of a shattered mirror reflecting a different part of one’s face according to the angle, Ben tends to play different roles depending on the person he is interacting with. When he is talking with his father he is constantly reminded of his Jewish heritage, but during his sessions with the Japanese students, he is an American *gaijin*. Throughout the story, while learning Japanese, Ben is trying to prove to the rest of the world that he is not what they see. Thus, from this perspective, Shinjuku represents a place for renewal as if by reaching it Ben would be able to finally free himself of the expectations that originate from his American-ness, since to him America was never home.⁴⁴³ Levy describes the day Ben went back to the US with his mother as follows: ‘ベンが母と二人で基隆からプレジデント・ウィルソン号に乗って、見知らぬアメリカへ「帰」ったのは、その年の暮れ、ケネディ大統領の当選から一週間後だった.’ By isolating the verb *kaeru* (帰る) – literally returning home – between *nijū kagi kakko*, Levy makes it clear that to Ben travelling back to the U.S. does not equal going back home, even though this is the general consensus around the journey. In the end, however, Ben does not need to shed his being American away. Instead, he acknowledges

⁴⁴² Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoenahei heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004) p.32. [‘**Don’t you feel guilty about the Vietnam War? What about the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima?**’] translation by Christopher D. Scott in Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-Spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) p.21.

⁴⁴³ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoenahei heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004) pp.15-16. [‘**It was later that same year, one week after John F. Kennedy won the U.S. presidential election, that Ben and his mother boarded the SS President Wilson at Keelung and returned “home” to an America that felt like a foreign country.**’] Translation by Christopher D. Scott in Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-Spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) p.8.

that he is indeed American, his appearance says so, his heritage says so, he may have come to Japan as one of the men in the fleet of Commodore Perry many centuries earlier,⁴⁴⁴ but he also acknowledges that he is different from them.⁴⁴⁵ Thus Ben's personal growth leads him to accept that he exists between two realities. This final realisation leads to the parallel between Levy's novel and Shimada's *Yumetsukai*.

Compared to Murakami Ryū, Shimada's prose shares more similarities with Levy's, starting from the themes he explores, such as the feeling of alienation, through the eyes of orphaned characters or refugees or – as in the case of *Yumetsukai* – migrants. This is not surprising as Shimada stated that he sees himself as a *kokunai bōmeisha* (国内亡命者), a domestic refugee, eternally 'in-between' Japan and the rest of the world.⁴⁴⁶ In addition, his writing is influenced by Japanese and non-Japanese authors alike.⁴⁴⁷ Similarly to the case of *Seijōki*, *Yumetsukai* aims to convey the representation of movement across boundaries through the physicality of the script,⁴⁴⁸ but, as opposed to both *Seijōki* and *69 Sixty-Nine*, it is a work of fiction with a speculative twist to it. Indeed, the main character, Matthew, has the ability to travel across the dream world.

Boundaries are inexistent, especially in the case of Matthew. As Gabriel describes him, he is 'the American Matthew, the Rental Child and Dream Messenger, but at the same time he is the lost Japanese boy Masao - and Mikainaito. He is bilingual, bicultural, and bisexual - a person for whom the boundaries of self and other, of nation, of culture, of language, of dream

⁴⁴⁴ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoena heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004) p.62. (my translation).

⁴⁴⁵ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoena heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004) p.62.

⁴⁴⁶ Philip Gabriel, 'Dream Messengers, Rental Children, and the Infantile: Shimada Masahiko and the Possibilities of the Postmodern', in *Ōe and beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 219-244 (p. 227).

⁴⁴⁷ Philip Gabriel, 'Dream Messengers, Rental Children, and the Infantile: Shimada Masahiko and the Possibilities of the Postmodern', in *Ōe and beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 219-244 (p. 220).

⁴⁴⁸ Philip Gabriel, 'Dream Messengers, Rental Children, and the Infantile: Shimada Masahiko and the Possibilities of the Postmodern', in *Ōe and beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 219-244 (p. 234).

and reality, are no barriers at all.’⁴⁴⁹ This is also the reason why Levy describes the novel as a バイ (bi) novel.⁴⁵⁰ While Matthew moves across boundaries, his mother, Amino, is drawn to the space in-between, not only in that she was born in a city ‘on the boundary between California and Arizona’,⁴⁵¹ but also because, as previously mentioned, she strongly believes that her place to return to is in fact the Pacific Ocean that lies in the middle between America and Japan. Amino claims that this idea is not dependent on her status as a Japanese immigrant, indeed she strongly states that: ‘自分が帰ってゆく場所はそのあいだの太平洋だと思っていた。いや、何か彼女にそう思わせていたのだ。両親でも先祖でもなく、アメリカでもなく、日本でもなく、彼女の本能が’⁴⁵² In a way, both the Pacific Ocean and Amino’s birth town recall the Yokohama US embassy in *Seijōki*, in that the embassy too represents an in-between space which is neither America nor Japan. An even more striking resemblance exists between Shimada’s Rental child that ‘remains a positive model of resistance to fixed identity’⁴⁵³ and Levy’s Ben as well as between Ben as a *gaijin*, Matthew as *kodokuna kami*, and Dazai’s Yōzō as a *ningen shikkaku*. To both Ben and Matthew – the embodiment of the perfect Rental child– boundaries are mere societal constructs which they cannot and will not abide by. Movement in Shimada’s novel is described as *watari* (渡り), literally "passage, transit", a word that does not imply the existence of one single trajectory between two points, but, as Shimada describes it, ‘a

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 232.

⁴⁵⁰ Levy Hideo, ‘「Zai」 To 「Bai」, To Katagiri no Me’, in Levy Hideo, *Nihongo no Shōri* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1992) pp. 96-103 (p. 100).

⁴⁵¹ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 12. (My Translation)

⁴⁵² Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 12. [**‘No, it was something that made her think so. It wasn’t her parents nor her ancestors, it wasn’t America nor Japan, it was her instinct.’**] (my translation).

⁴⁵³ Philip Gabriel, ‘Dream Messengers, Rental Children, and the Infantile: Shimada Masahiko and the Possibilities of the Postmodern’, in *Ōe and beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 219-244 (p. 241).

migration of birds'⁴⁵⁴ that never spend a long time in a single place. In addition to being the same kind of movement as the one experienced by Ben in *Seijōki* and Levy himself – first moving through Asia, then to the US, then to Japan, then back to the US and finally back to Japan – the expression “migration of birds” also effectively expresses the same feeling encapsulated by the concept of literature of movement. However, this same perception of the boundaries also marks both Ben and Matthew as “other”, in the same way as Yōzō sees himself as *other* in regard to society. Thus, similarly to how the idea of a *kodokuna kami* expressed by Shimada in *Yumetsukai* echoes Dazai’s *ningen shikkaku*, Levy’s portrayal of *gaijin* through a *gaijin*’s perspective highlights that rather than becoming outdated, Dazai’s fundamental narrative expanded to be transfigured into a “narrative of the *gaijin*”.

⁴⁵⁴ in Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p.146. (my translation)

Chapter 5: Reclaiming the Memory of the In-between: Translingual Memoirs and Language as Rebellion.

This section primarily aims to provide the basis for the argument that postwar Japanese literature influenced certain aspects of Japanese American literature across the Pacific. In order to accomplish this, it shifts the focus on to the trans-Pacific perspective. Still maintaining the comparative approach central to my research, this chapter analyses John Okada's *No-No Boy*, originally published in 1957, in connection to Dazai's *Ningen Shikkaku*. Such an original perspective stems from the disclosure of Okada's presence in Japan during the Occupation as well as his knowledge of Japanese, which suggests that the author was familiar with Dazai's work even before the publication of Donald Keene's English translation. In referring to the effects of the trans-Pacific cultural exchange in the literary representation of cultural hybridity among Japanese American authors, this chapter intends to open the way towards the discussion on memory and legacy in a culturally hybrid environment and the role of language in such a context, as explored by both Levy and Elizabeth Brina. It is necessary to clarify that while this section intends to bring the examination of hybridity and language in literature to a close, it also serves as a bridge to introduce the way the concepts of hybridity, legacy, and memory are reinterpreted in literary-adjacent media that expand from the same *shikkaku* narrative which is essential in the analysis of the literary sources carried up to this point.

5.1 日本人ではなくて、American 失格である: The Case of *No-No Boy*.

Otherness – like that experienced by Yōzō and Matthew as well as both of Levy’s main characters in *Seijōki* and *Tenanmon* – represents ‘the limit against which the self is defined’.⁴⁵⁵ Thus, it mirrors the position of Japan in the orientalist discourse, as it reproduces the same complex balance between the outside, by which this study intends the way Japan is depicted in the Western narrative, and the inside, i.e. Japan’s self-representation which scholars like Toshio Miyake refer to as Japanese self-Orientalism.⁴⁵⁶ It appears evident that in the case of the literary characters mentioned in this work – whether considering them as an extension of the author’s psyche or not – the “inside” refers to the individual’s self, while the “outside” constitutes the society. Hence, the attempt at sincerity and authenticity at the core of the writings of Dazai, Shimada and Levy is to be intended as ‘being true to one self’ even if it means going against the demands of society or conventionality’ where ‘[t]o be oneself is to go to whatever extremes it takes to follow one’s own will, even to the point of breaking with and rejecting society as a whole.’⁴⁵⁷ The form of rebellion, which leads to self-isolation as opposed to the loneliness as a product of societal discrimination and incommunicability, differs from the concept of *kakumei* as mentioned by Dazai and Shimada since the final purpose of *kakumei* is to bring change to the society rather than to oneself. This appears evident in the juxtaposition of Kazuko and Naoji in *Shayō*. While the first strongly believes in the ideal of revolution and chooses to keep on living by her own rules and morals since ‘古い

⁴⁵⁵ Susan Yi Sencindiver, Marie Lauritzen and Maria Beville, ‘Introduction’ in *Otherness: A Multilateral Perspective*, ed. by Susan Yi Sencindiver, Marie Lauritzen and Maria Beville (Frankfurt am Main; Berlin; Bruxelles; New York; Oxford; Wien: Peter Lang, 2011), 17-42 p.17

⁴⁵⁶ Miyake, Toshio. ‘Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’ in Mangaesque Popular Cultures” In. *Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* ed. by Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2015) pp. 93-116 (p.96).

⁴⁵⁷ Carl Cassegård, *Shock and naturalization in contemporary Japanese literature* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2007), p.198.

道徳はやっぱりそのまま、みじんも変わらず’,⁴⁵⁸ in the case of Naoji upon realising that his attempts at denying his true self to integrate among the people who kept refusing him have failed he instead chooses the ultimate self-destructive act and kills himself. But Naoji is a rebel nonetheless, his rebellion is summarised in the last desperate appeal to his sister at the end of his suicide note where he writes ‘姉さん。僕は、貴族です’⁴⁵⁹ where he metaphorically shouts his rejection to society’s standards. Indeed, Naoji’s words betray a similar intention as the silenced scream of the young Japanese American boy in Julie Otsuka’s novel *When the Emperor Was Divine* (2002), who in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbour attack is told by his mother to pretend to be Chinese for his own safety. However, after lying when prompted by a passer-by he finds himself unable to keep denying his own identity so ‘when he got to the corner [...] he turn[ed] around and shout[ed], “Jap! Jap! I’m a Jap!”’⁴⁶⁰ As opposed to Otsuka, in Okada’s *No-No Boy*, Ichiro, refuses to lie about his answers to questions 27 and 28 of the so-called ‘loyalty questionnaire,’⁴⁶¹ and therefore on the reason why he did not fight with the American army. Question 27 asked ‘Are you willing to serve in the Armed Forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?’, in addition Question 28 ‘asked the inmates whether they were prepared to swear unqualified allegiance to the United States ‘and foreswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization.’’⁴⁶² Thus, by answering no and no, Okada’s protagonist becomes one of the ‘no-no boys.’⁴⁶³ Ichiro reclaims such label since, while he could have ‘go[ne] somewhere and tell people that [he’d]

⁴⁵⁸Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p.193. [‘**If we continue like this the old morals will remain unchanged.**’] (my translation).

⁴⁵⁹ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p. 191. (Sister, I remain an aristocrat (my translation))

⁴⁶⁰ Julie Otsuka, *When the Emperor was Divine* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p.76.

⁴⁶¹ Greg Robinson, *A tragedy of democracy: Japanese confinement in North America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p.163.

⁴⁶² Greg Robinson, *A tragedy of democracy: Japanese confinement in North America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p.186.

⁴⁶³ Ibid. p.163.

got an inverted stomach and that [he was] an American, true and blue and Hail Columbia',⁴⁶⁴ he should have 'convince[d him]self first and that [he could not] do.'⁴⁶⁵ Consequently, while Ichiro shares with Kazuko his determination to pursue his path in life bearing the responsibility of his decisions, similarly to Yōzō he is recognisable as an outsider because of a legal document, akin to the medical ones indicating Yōzō as a patient in the psychiatric hospital. In the case of Ichiro, his status as a no-no boy separates him from both the American society as a whole and the Japanese American community in which he was born where old friends like Eto, upon learning about him, immediately distance themselves, their 'friendliness gone'⁴⁶⁶ and turned into 'suspicion'⁴⁶⁷ that anticipates the question 'No-no boy, huh?'⁴⁶⁸

There are no studies confirming that John Okada had read Dazai before publishing his novel in 1957, ten years after the publication of *Shayō*, since few information about his life is available.⁴⁶⁹ However it is not impossible that the similarities between *No-No Boy* and Dazai's postwar novels are not random. In fact, as an American soldier Okada worked as an interpreter during the war and, during the American Occupation, he went to Japan 'as a member of the U.S. occupation forces',⁴⁷⁰ among which only the few soldiers who were proficient in Japanese worked for the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) that among the rest was also in charge of reviewing Japanese literary works.⁴⁷¹ For example, Dazai's short story *Haha* (母) was among the works reviewed by the CCD.⁴⁷² An additional indication in

⁴⁶⁴ John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), p.16

⁴⁶⁵ John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), p.17

⁴⁶⁶ John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), p.5

⁴⁶⁷ John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), p.5

⁴⁶⁸ John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), p.5

⁴⁶⁹ Ruth Ozeki, 'Foreword', in John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), pp. VII -XVIII (p. XIII)

⁴⁷⁰ Ruth Ozeki, 'Foreword', in John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), pp. VII -XVIII (p. XIII)

⁴⁷¹ Jay Rubin, 'Wholesomeness to Decadence: The Censorship of Literature under the Allied Occupation', in *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 11 (1985), pp. 71-103 (p. 97).

⁴⁷² Jay Rubin, 'Wholesomeness to Decadence: The Censorship of Literature under the Allied Occupation', in *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 11 (1985), pp. 71-103 (p. 99).

this sense, is that Okada clearly did not write *No-No Boy* based on his personal experience, in fact as a member of the army he was instead ‘a model member of the model minority’,⁴⁷³ therefore the choice to write a character as Ichiro, who is as much a *shikkaku* as Dazai’s Yōzō, is deliberate and disengaged from any autobiographical influence. Furthermore, as Wolfe mentioned, there were at the time those among the American forces equipped with the requisite linguistic skills and cultural sensitivity⁴⁷⁴ to appreciate Dazai’s works.

Unfortunately, since at the time of its publication *No-No Boy* was ‘panned’ by the ‘few [American] critics who bothered to review it’⁴⁷⁵ and ‘shunned’ by the Japanese American communities,⁴⁷⁶ most studies on Okada’s work are posthumous. However, considering that upon being republished in 1976 after having been featured in the *Aiiieeeee!*, the novel was successfully received as groundbreaking in the Japanese American literary canon,⁴⁷⁷ making Okada one of the most influential Japanese American authors, the possibility that the author was partially inspired by Dazai’s works surely redesigns the interconnection between Japanese and Japanese American literature, as well as the role of Dazai’s production as part the transnational cultural movement between Japan and the US.

⁴⁷³ Ruth Ozeki, ‘Foreword’, in John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), pp. VII -XVIII (p. XIII)

⁴⁷⁴ Alan Stephen Wolfe, *Suicidal narrative in modern Japan: The case of Dazai Osamu*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 4.

⁴⁷⁵ Ruth Ozeki, ‘Foreword’, in John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), pp. VII -XVIII (p. VII).

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. VII.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. IX.

5.2 In-Betweenness *aida* and incompleteness.

Traditionally, in Dazai's writings critics have attempted to find testimonies of his political beliefs, references to autobiographical elements, such as his complex relationship with his mother,⁴⁷⁸ or, especially in the case of *Shayō*, on the historical setting and specifically on the turmoil of the defeated Japan.⁴⁷⁹ But the most popular approach has by far been that focusing on the element of despair who led to his (apparent) suicide in 1948,⁴⁸⁰ to the point that Wolfe claims that 'Dazai's apparent suicide provided Japan with a human symbol of despair that set into bold relief the shadow lurking behind the optimism of postwar reconstruction.'⁴⁸¹ Even though such elements are all, in some measure, present in Dazai's works and especially in *Shayō* and *Ningen Shikkaku*, by overlooking the universality of some of the major themes in Dazai's literature in favour of the "national theme"— i.e. the fall of old Japan and the consequent sense of despair born by the loss of the traditional values embodied by the Emperor's divinity – Dazai's literature has been metaphorically stored away under the labels of *kokubungaku* and modern literature. *No-No Boy* suffered a similar fate. Even though its first attempt at a publication has been fairly unsuccessful – and certainly the fact that the first publisher of the novel was located in Tokyo⁴⁸² during a time when the American perception of Japan was cheap did not provide any incentive to the success of the novel – it 'has been

⁴⁷⁸ Kōichi Isoda, 'Kaisetsu' in Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), pp. 202–210 (p.203).

⁴⁷⁹ See Kōichi Isoda, 'Kaisetsu' in Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), pp. 202–210 (p.205), and Maria Teresa Orsi, 'Dazai' in Osamu Dazai, *Il Sole Si Spegne*, trans. by Luciano Bianciardi (Milano: SE, 2001), pp. 131-137 (p.132).

⁴⁸⁰ Maria Teresa Orsi, 'Dazai' in Osamu Dazai, *Il Sole Si Spegne*, trans. by Luciano Bianciardi (Milano: SE, 2001), pp. 131-137 (p.131). and David Brudnoy, 'The immutable despair of Dazai Osamu', *Monumenta Nipponica*, 23 (1968), 457-474.

⁴⁸¹ Alan Stephen Wolfe, *Suicidal narrative in modern Japan: The case of Dazai Osamu*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 12.

⁴⁸² Ruth Ozeki, 'Foreword', in John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), pp. VII -XVIII (p. VII)

canonized as a classic of Asian American literature'⁴⁸³ after its rediscovery in the 1970s.

While Stan Yogi intends the term canonised in a positive if not enthusiastic manner similar to how Ozeki calls *No-No Boy* 'groundbreaking',⁴⁸⁴ this caused the critical approach to focus almost exclusively on the value of the work in the context of Asian American literary studies, in particular Japanese American *nisei* internment literature. Such point can be seen in notable publications, for instance, King-Kok Cheung's *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* (1997) or Rachel C. Lee's *The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature* (2014), in which, although the Japanese American literary corpus is taken into account, it is not yet discussed as separated from the rest of the Asian American or Pacific Islander literature. Other important works, such as the aforementioned Hathaway's *That Damned Fence: The Literature of the Japanese American Prison Camps* (2022), show a central focus on the internment literature as opposed to either previous or more recent works. While this cannot be defined as a "national approach", it is certainly one that ultimately labels *No-No Boy* as part of the migration literature canon. Thus, regardless of whether Okada did or did not read Dazai, paradoxically both writers' cultural legacies were partially overlooked because of the weight of imposed limitations, despite the fact that at the core of their writing sits the desire or the necessity to cross boundaries.

In *No-No Boy*, Ichiro's purpose is to 'reclaim his identity'⁴⁸⁵ in a binary society where he should abide by being either Japanese or American. However, already early in the novel he states that '[he] wish[es] with all [his] heart that [he] were Japanese or that [he] were American [but he is] neither' therefore realising that he is something different. In this sense,

⁴⁸³ Stan Yogi, 'Japanese American Literature', in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by King-Kok Cheung (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 125-155. p.137

⁴⁸⁴ Ruth Ozeki, 'Foreword', in John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), pp. VII -XVIII (p. IX)

⁴⁸⁵ Stan Yogi, 'Japanese American Literature', in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. by King-Kok Cheung (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 125-155. p.137

Ichiro's position is similar to that of Ben in *Seijōki* when he states that ‘おれ絶対に違う!’⁴⁸⁶ At the end of the novel, Ben completely embraces his hybrid identity by walking away from his job that he had secured in Tokyo, after eating a raw egg, a challenge set by his colleagues to measure his Japaneseness that he clearly passed.⁴⁸⁷ Hence, the act of walking away implies that while he proved not to be another *gaijin*, he also acknowledges that he is not nor could he become Japanese, similarly to Ichiro he is neither. What Okada verbalises as “being neither,” which is echoed by Ben's statement in *Seijōki* that he is “something different”, implies the existence of an in-between area, which has a similar connotation to Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial and sociolinguistic theory of the third space. Since – in terms of language – Bhabha states that:

‘It is [this] Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew’⁴⁸⁸

it appears evident that Bhabha's theory is relevant to Levy's literature and his use of the language. However, the third space also holds a more abstractly spatial representation as ‘the non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space – a third space – where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences.’⁴⁸⁹ Shimada envisions this “cultural space” as an in-between area with the term *aida* (あいだ), which in *Yumetsukai* is primarily embodied by the Pacific

⁴⁸⁶ Ian Hideo Levy, *Tenanmon* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996), p.62 (“I am definitely a different story” [my translation]).

⁴⁸⁷ Ian Hideo Levy, *Tenanmon* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996), p.156.

⁴⁸⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), p.37.

⁴⁸⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), p.218.

Ocean. To Mrs. Amino, who is the American-born daughter of two Japanese American immigrants, the Pacific Ocean as the in-between represents her ‘place to go back to’.⁴⁹⁰ Similarly to Ichiro, Mrs Amino states ‘両親のように日本を祖国だと思えることはできなかった。Yankee と Jap のあいだをハラハラしながら行ったり来たりするコウモリみたいでした’⁴⁹¹ remarking that she not only inhabits an uncharted area between the two opposites, but also that she is neither of those. However, Shimada also expands on the idea of in-betweenness. In addition to its physical meaning, which mostly corresponds to the term *aida*, another significant expression in *Yumetsukai* is *chūtohanpa* (中途半端), which literally translates as ‘halfway through’. In *Dream Messenger* —Philip Gabriel’s 1994 adapted translation of Shimada’s work – the sentence ‘レンタルチャイルドは永遠に中途半端な存在であり続けなければならないのだから’⁴⁹² is rendered as ‘[b]ecause that’s where rental children would spend the rest of their lives. In-between’ making it seem that the term *chūtohanpa* and the term *aida* work as synonyms. However, looking at the complete quote from *Yumetsukai* it says ‘何者かになってしまった子より中途半端な子の方をカタギリは選んだ。レンタルチャイルドは永遠に中途半端な存在であり続けなければならないのだから’.⁴⁹³ The term *chūtohanpa* is repeated twice, the first one it refers to the children, while the second time it refers to the existence, thus an alternative translation to Gabriel’s would be ‘[t]he children Katagiri chose were only halfway formed individuals. Because this is the kind of existence that rental children would carry, an existence eternally halfway’.⁴⁹⁴ In

⁴⁹⁰ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 12. (my translation).

⁴⁹¹ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 29. [‘I have never been able to regard Japan as my homeland the way my parents did. I have always been going back and forth between being a Yankee or a Jap, like a bat with anxiety.’] (my translation).

⁴⁹² Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 168.

⁴⁹³ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 167-68.

⁴⁹⁴ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 168. (my translation).

this sense, the sense of in-betweenness acquires the same sense of ‘incomplete’ that Ichiro expresses when he says ‘I was [...] still half Japanese when the war came and they told me to fight for America [...]. Now that I know the truth when it is too late and the half of me that was [my mother] is no longer there, I am only half of me and the half that remains is American by law [...]. But it is not enough to be American only in the eyes of the law and it is not enough to be only half an American and know that it is an empty half.’⁴⁹⁵

5.3 Identity as legacy.

As Ichiro blames his mother for instilling into him the Japanese identity ‘with Japanese feelings and Japanese pride and Japanese thoughts’⁴⁹⁶ that made him still ‘half Japanese’⁴⁹⁷ when he answered *no* and *no*, Okada raises the point on the older generation’s influence on the younger generation’s identity. It is then clear that the idea of identity entails an element of legacy which is often referred to as cultural background. It is easy to notice a similar motif in *Seijōki*, where, in addition to being labelled a *gaijin*, Ben also has to constantly negotiate his own identity as the son of a Jewish American father and a Catholic-Polish mother. While this may appear more evident in the case of hybrid identities, such as Ichiro’s or Ben’s, this is a theme that is also present in *Shayō*, when Naoji expresses his inability and unwillingness to erase his aristocratic heritage. In both texts, this generational element – which is passed down through stories, like the tale of Momotarō mentioned by Okada, or by examples, such as Naoji’s mother’s aristocratic demeanour that both he and Kazuko admire, or by crass

⁴⁹⁵ John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), p. 16

⁴⁹⁶ John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), p. 16.

⁴⁹⁷ John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), p. 16.

comments, such as Ben's father exclaiming 'クリスチャンども'⁴⁹⁸ in a deprecatory tone immediately setting himself apart from the other western people around him – is invariably something against which the main characters rebel as part of the process to build their own personal identity, which involves accepting their positions as *shikkaku* or 'others'. In the case of Naoji, in his suicide note he explicitly claims that he '父の血に反抗しなければならぬ',⁴⁹⁹ before acknowledging that despite everything he has done to achieve his rebellion against his family's blood, he remains fundamentally an aristocrat.

Thus, by destroying the part of themselves that they inherited from the previous generation, the individual experiences a sense of alienation from themselves. Shimada plays with this concept by defining Matthew as an *uchūjin no kodomo* (宇宙人の子供),⁵⁰⁰ an alien child.⁵⁰¹ The eeriness of Matthew's portrayal as an extraterrestrial (宇宙人, *uchūjin*), and therefore someone who is not human, replicates the darker subtones of *Ningen Shikkaku*, in which – regardless of the absence of an openly speculative element – the title itself suggests that Yōzō is not only resigning from society, but that he is giving up his own humanity, which would turn him into something other. The narrator's tone in the prologue echoes the same disturbing feeling when, after seeing three pictures of Yōzō at different ages, he mentions '私はこれまで、そんな不思議な男の顔を見た事が、やはり、いちども無かった'.⁵⁰² Mentions of supernatural creature, such as *obake* (おばけ) and *yōkai* (妖怪) are also present in the novel, as they show that in Yōzō's eyes humans are the scariest monsters.⁵⁰³

⁴⁹⁸ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoena heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004) p.25. ('Damned Christians' trans. by Christopher D. Scott in Hideo Levy, *A Room Where the Star-Spangled Banner Cannot Be Heard: A Novel in Three Parts*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York, Columbia University Press, 2011), p.16).

⁴⁹⁹ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p.175 ['had to rebel against Father's blood'] (my translation).

⁵⁰⁰ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p.181.

⁵⁰¹ Here I intend the common stem of the words *alienation* and *alien*.

⁵⁰² Osamu Dazai, *Ningen Shikkaku*, (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1985), p.8. ['Up until now, I had never seen such an uncanny face on a man.'] (my translation).

⁵⁰³ Osamu Dazai, *Ningen Shikkaku*, (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1985), pp.38-39.

As seen, this dichotomy between human and inhuman is frequently used in manga and anime employing a vaguely gothic element to approach the topic of hybridity and in-betweenness from a metaphorical perspective, such as Masamune Shirow's *Kōkaku Kidōtai*, Ishida Sui's *Tokyo Ghoul*, and Asagiri Kafka's *Bungō Stray Dogs*.

Such an interest in the matter of the self that allows authors to explore the concept of hybridity from different angles dates back in Japan to the Meiji era. Since then fiction has been intended as 'a medium for embodying the content of the personal 'self.'⁵⁰⁴ This is especially evident in the *shishōsetsu* (私小説, I Novel) and in the Taishō production of the *Shinkankakuha* (新感覚派, the school of the new sensations), both centering the narrative around subjectivity as opposed to the objectivity originated from the influence of naturalism.⁵⁰⁵ Miyoshi's claim that "no 'I' exists as a possible object of representation"⁵⁰⁶ does not discredit the role of self at the centre of narratives revolving around identity and isolation. Indeed, the idea of the linguistic representation of the 'I' remains relevant in the authors and works mentioned in this thesis. Whereas authors such as Dazai and, in some instances, Shimada rely on the multiple forms in which the concept of 'I' can be expressed, such as '僕', 'ぼく', '私', '俺' or even 'オレ', Levy, with the exception of *Seijōki*, prefers to use *boku* in his memoir or non-fiction works, while he narrates the lives of fictional nameless protagonist to whom he refers as *kare* (彼 or かれ), as he does in *Tenanmon* and *Kari no Mizu*. Other contemporary authors, for example Murakami Ryū and Mizumura Minae, sometimes create alter-egos with whom they share their name, as is the case in *Kagirinaku Tōmei ni Chikai Burū* or in *Shishōsetsu from left to right*. However, it is Tawada Yōko who

⁵⁰⁴ Stephen Snyder, Philip Gabriel, 'Introduction' in *Ōe and Beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 1-10 (4).

⁵⁰⁵ Maria Teresa Orsi, 'Dazai' in Osamu Dazai, *Il Sole Si Spegne*, trans. by Luciano Bianciardi (Milano: SE, 2001), pp. 131-137 (p.133).

⁵⁰⁶ Stephen Snyder, Philip Gabriel, 'Introduction' in *Ōe and Beyond: fiction in contemporary Japan*, ed. by Stephen Snyder and Philip Gabriel (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 1-10 (9).

problematizes the expression of the first-person pronoun in the context of translingual narrative in her short story *Das Bad* (*The Bath*, 1993). The main character in the story is a Japanese woman who, similarly to the author, lives in Germany. While she is still learning the language she struggles with the use and meaning of the pronoun *Ich* and the general meaning of ‘I’, for example during a phone call she is asked ‘Bist du es?’ (Is this you?), she answers ‘Nein’ (no), her counterpart then asks again ‘Wenn nicht du es bist, wer bist du dann?’ (If it’s not you then who are you?).⁵⁰⁷ Unable to reply, the protagonist hangs up. Further in the work, Tawada develops her inability to assert her existence through the use of the word ‘I’ into a nightmarish speculative narrative in which a half-rat lady cuts her tongue effectively preventing her from speaking.⁵⁰⁸ Finally, at the end of the short story, the protagonist implies that she does not appear in pictures. The metaphor in *Das Bad*, which Tawada first published in German, refers to two main points, the first one is the impossibility to fit one’s identity, especially a complex hybrid identity, into a single word such as ‘I’, while the second one associates silence to disappearance. From a translingual perspective, the loss of the main character’s voice represents the loss of one’s identity as connected to the person’s birth language. In this sense, the ending of the story should be read as tragic. However, this study argues that a second interpretation exists according to which the transparency mentioned at the end of the novel is not to be intended as a disappearance, but as a mutation – which is another relevant theme in Tawada’s work, since the protagonist finds herself gradually turning into a fish – like creature as the story progresses. Changing is part of the process to acquire a new language, allowing the language to become part of the individual.

⁵⁰⁷ Tawada Yōko. *Das Bad* (Tubingen: Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 1993), p.3.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p.24.

Thus, language is strongly interconnected not only with identity, but also with the self⁵⁰⁹ since the perception of self and selfhood changes and expands according to the language that is being used. Similarly, in literature, especially in multilingual and Translingual works, language functions as a means to express the complex network that defines identity. Hence, the necessity for multilingual text to culturally express hybrid identities like those described in Shimada, Levy and Okada's works. In addition to translating hybridity into the written form through language and script alternation influencing the graphic aspect of writing, in Shimada and Levy's novels, multilingualism also purposefully opposes the “monolingual normal.” As mentioned previously, the notion that monolingualism is the norm is based on a misleading essentialist premise that suggests that individuals should only exist in one language at a time, and that switching between languages requires more intellectual effort.⁵¹⁰ However, in the Japanese context, multilingual writing can be associated with a form of rebellion against the traditional portrayal of the country as culturally and linguistically homogeneous. Thus, similarly to Kazuko's hope that the old morals would be changed by revolution, this resistance against multilingualism becomes an attempt to subvert the outdated ideal of homogeneity.

While Shimada and Levy are extremely straightforward in their attempt, other authors employed analogous techniques. In some instances, they even anticipated Shimada and Levy, aiming at redesigning the imaginary of Japan as multicultural and multilingual. For example, in her short novel *Bedtime Eyes* (ベツトタイムアイズ, 1985 *Bedtime Eyes*), nominated for the Akutagawa literary prize and winner of the Bungei prize,⁵¹¹ Yamada's main character,

⁵⁰⁹ Mary Besemeres, 'Language and Emotional Experience: The Voice of Translingual Memoir', in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 34-58 (p. 37).

⁵¹⁰ Hannah Tate Williams, 'Translingualism as Creative Revolt: Rewriting Dominant Narratives of Translingual Literature', *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts*, 30 (2020), pp. 2-12 (p.3).

⁵¹¹ Luisa Bienati, *Letteratura giapponese. Dalla fine dell'Ottocento all'inizio del terzo millennio*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2005), p. 397.

Kim, while living in Japan, interacts almost exclusively with non-Japanese people. Her lover, Spoon, is an Afro-American navy deserter turned drug dealer, furthermore Kim works as a singer in a club together with Filipino, Taiwanese and other south-eastern Asian immigrants, such as her Filipino best friend Maria. While it is explicitly mentioned that Kim communicates mostly in English,⁵¹² Yamada writes mostly in Japanese embedding the English text and providing a translation in brackets, for example when Spoon enthusiastically claims ‘I’m gonna be your teacher (オレは、お前に教えてやるよ)’.⁵¹³ The use of オレ rather than 俺 to signify ‘I’ when the speaker is Spoon implies the non-Japanese origin of the character, while at the same time makes it easier for the reader to immediately understand who is speaking. In *Yumetsukai*, Shimada uses the same device to differentiate between Matthew and Mikainaito, while at the same time hinting at the fact that, together with Matthew’s memories,⁵¹⁴ Mikainaito also keeps his identity as a non-Japanese safe. In addition, similarly to Levy, Yamada she uses furigana in *katakana eigo* to indicate the English pronunciation of expressions whose meaning is expressed by the *kanji*, as in the case of ‘静かに、ベイビー。リスント ザレイン 雨の音を聴きなよ’.⁵¹⁵ Regrettably, the multilingual element in the story has been largely ignored by the scholars in the field, who instead tended to focus on the author’s subversion of the patriarchal narrative that presented women as meek and condemned female characters who expressed enjoyment for sexual activities.⁵¹⁶ In this sense, Kim is very reminiscent of Kazuko, in that she too rejects the common values – symbolised by her dropping out of school and living in the streets – and the expectations that society pushes over women, finally turning herself into an outcast. Furthermore, the characterisation

⁵¹² Yamada Eimi, *Bedtime Eyes* (Tokyo: Shinchō bunko, 2020), pp. 18 and 68.

⁵¹³ Yamada Eimi, *Bedtime Eyes* (Tokyo: Shinchō bunko, 2020), p. 28.

⁵¹⁴ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 39.

⁵¹⁵ Yamada Eimi, *Bedtime Eyes* (Tokyo: Shinchō bunko, 2020), p. 39. [‘Hush baby, listen to the rain’ my translation]

⁵¹⁶ Luisa Bienati, *Letteratura giapponese. Dalla fine dell’Ottocento all’inizio del terzo millennio*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2005), p. 400.

of Yamada's protagonist shares several analogies with Matthew: they both surround themselves with people from around the world, they both live as outcast opposing society's standards, they are both bisexual,⁵¹⁷ neither of them has a father,⁵¹⁸ and both have an uncanny talent to forget. While throughout the story, Kim's past is only mentioned in passing – but enough to suggest that it was filled with neglect – in her final monologue Kim explains that remembering has always ever been a ‘私にはまったく関係のなった意味のない言葉’,⁵¹⁹ implying that she chose to forget most of her childhood and adolescence. Considering the sort of environment, she lives in, which involves drug dealing and prostitution, the fact that her name is written in *katakana* also suggests that it may not be her birth name but something that she chose for herself. From this perspective, Kim embodies the ideal of the rental children. In fact, as Matthew explains, rental children are not comparable to child actors, as they cannot just act a role, they have to forget about themselves and become the role altogether.⁵²⁰ Thus, both Yamada and Shimada raise the point on the interconnection between memory and identity. In addition, in the case of the rental children, it is evident that a large part of the interaction with the people the children were assigned to relied on verbal communication, as the child had to know what to say in any circumstance, for example Matthew clarifies that in the case of a mother that has lost her child just acting as the child is not enough, instead one has to say things like ‘ママも大変だったね’.⁵²¹ Hence, as language is fundamental to build relationships, it assumes an even deeper meaning in the context of culturally hybrid identities such as Ichiro's, since in this particular case the ability the ability

⁵¹⁷ Yamada Eimi, *Bedtime Eyes* (Tokyo: Shinchō bunko, 2020), p. 63.

⁵¹⁸ Yamada Eimi, *Bedtime Eyes* (Tokyo: Shinchō bunko, 2020), p. 31.

⁵¹⁹ Yamada Eimi, *Bedtime Eyes* (Tokyo: Shinchō bunko, 2020), p. 98 [‘**a dumb meaningless word that has nothing to do with me.**’] (my translation).

⁵²⁰ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), pp. 201-02.

⁵²¹ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 201.

to speak multiple languages allows the person to access the part of their heritage, which is that part of their identity that has been passed down as legacy. Language is part of the legacy, since ‘the production of meaning requires that [the system of meaning and the place of utterance] be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious.’⁵²² That is to say that a language exchange – either spoken or written – cannot only rely on the structure and the vocabulary⁵²³ but it has to take into account a deeper layer involving personal interrelationships, which is evident in the use of emotion words, i.e. terms and expressions referring to feeling in specific languages. This is related to Bühler’s organon model, and especially to the *Ausdrucksfunktion* or expressive function of language, and the second with Bühler’s *Darstellungsfunktion* or representational function of language⁵²⁴ and to what Pavlenko calls ‘bi-and multilingual mental lexicon’ and ‘linguistic relativity.’⁵²⁵ It must be stated that the use of emotion words in the spoken language versus the written language is substantially different. In fact, while the choice of words in a spoken language context is completely instinctive, the written language allows the author to ponder which word they feel more comfortable using, in which language and why. Such a topic is often discussed in non-fiction works such as memoirs, but it is also present in historical fiction works that aim to preserve the authenticity of the original scene, as well as in semi-autobiographical novels where the gap between the character and the author is narrow. For example, as Besemeres states in her critiques to Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel *An Artist of the Floating World*, “moving

⁵²² See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), p.36.

⁵²³ See also Halliday’s works on Functional Grammar.

⁵²⁴ Mary Besemeres, ‘Language and Emotional Experience: The Voice of Translingual Memoir’, in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 34-58 (p. 35).

⁵²⁵ Aneta Pavlenko, ‘Preface: Multilingualism and emotions as a new area of research’, in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. xii-xvi p. xiii.

between languages involves inhabiting significantly different conceptual and emotional worlds”.⁵²⁶ In addition, in her article ‘Language and emotional experience’, Besemeres compares words in different languages used in translingual memoirs to highlight that their connotation is different and that the writer/bilingual speaker has to analyse their feelings before accepting in which language to express what they are experiencing, for example the word “anxious” and the polish verb “boję się” which is more akin to the feeling of fear than anxiety.⁵²⁷

5.4 Multilingual writing and the lexical power of representation.

Studies have been carried out to research the link between language and autobiographical memories on the basis that ‘[a] shift in language leads, in bicultural bilinguals, to the shift in cultural constructs and memories activated by that language and, consequently, to the shift in self-knowledge, self-perceptions, and self-descriptions.’⁵²⁸ According to Pavlenko the results ‘suggest that the language of encoding is a stable property for linguistic memories, even though a memory can then be ‘translated’ into another language.’⁵²⁹ In other words, language is an active participant in the memory, therefore translating the memory would require the effort of looking at it from the outside in order to pick the important details to be described to a new audience, effectively forcing the author separate their current self – which includes the language they are currently speaking – from their past self. This process requires complete awareness of the aforementioned detail that the very notion of self can only be measured

⁵²⁶ Mary Besemeres, ‘Language and Emotional Experience: The Voice of Translingual Memoir’, in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 34-58 (p. 39).

⁵²⁷ Ibid. p. 39.

⁵²⁸ Aneta Pavlenko, ‘Bilingual Selves’ in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 1- 33 (p. 16).

⁵²⁹ Ibid. p. 17.

against the notion of other, and vice versa. Thus, in Pavlenko's words, multilingual writers 'display a unique sensitivity to intrinsic links between languages and selves'.⁵³⁰ In addition, authors like Okada, Levy and Otsuka are as completely aware of the motivations of their writing as are authors such as Dazai and Shimada. In both cases, the idea of language as legacy is fundamental. On the one hand, Okada and Otsuka mention the struggle of the younger generation to communicate with the older one as the younger generation is not as well versed in Japanese, while the older one only speaks few words of English. In *Shayō*, Naoji's attempt to switch to a crass language style is part of his rebellion against his own blood. On the other hand, in *Yumetsukai*, Matthew does not experience such a strong divide, instead he fluidly moves back and forth from Japanese to English showing that the two languages coexist in his mind as a single entity, in addition he does not experience a strong generational switch since the only person to whom he can compare his Japanese is Katagiri, with whom he did not share a traditional familiar bond which would lead to the creation of an emotional shared vocabulary. Finally, Levy consistently links Japanese to his adult age and Chinese to his childhood, as if each stage of his life is told in a different language overcoming the stereotype of primary or mother tongue. Indeed, the definition of mother tongue is blurred at best, but its implications play a central role in most if not all the relevant texts in this thesis. For example, in her memoir Elizabeth Miki Brina plays with the idea of mother tongue reinterpreting it as "the language of the mother", while in *Seijōki*, Levy mentions the term *bokokugo* (母国語), mother tongue, referring to English in the beginning of the novel when Ben is just arrived in Japan after spending months in the US with his mother. In both cases, the authors defy the original purpose of the expression "mother tongue" to create an idea of a strong bond and affection toward the language akin to that of mother and child, to use the

⁵³⁰ Aneta Pavlenko, 'Bilingual Selves' in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 1- 33 (p. 3).

term in a much more literal and, to a certain extent, sardonic way: Brina spent most of her life running from the Japanese spoken by her mother, while Levy chose to speak and write in Japanese rather than English. However, in both cases the thread connecting the authors to their languages is undeniably memory, or lack thereof. Brina goes back to learn Japanese in order to understand her mother and carry on her memories, while Levy's own memories rarely involve English or exclusively English. In both writers' works, personal memory is at the base of an emotional vocabulary. However, while Brina's motivation to learn Japanese originates from the awareness that by not doing so one would completely lose their connections to their parents and therefore to their heritage –which is a theme that is also hinted at by Okada in *No-No Boy* – in the case of Levy, much like Naoji does in *Shayō*, Ben learning Japanese symbolises his rebellion against the idea of him being American, therefore against his birth family. Thus, in Levy's writing there is no remorse in using Japanese instead of English. In fact, Levy's language tends to convey an attachment to the language itself, while not employing emotional terminologies when referring to other people. Besemeres notices that an important part of the translingual context is the use of idioms and endearments.⁵³¹ Besemeres states that '[i]dioms [...] convey a certain attitude towards a display of feeling, an attitude for which there may be no ready counterpart in another language.'⁵³² Interestingly, Besemeres refers to the Japanese expression *morai-naki* used by Kyoko Mori in her memoir, which Besemeres explains as 'the crying aroused by seeing someone else's tears'⁵³³ which in Mori's memoir represents such a familiar feeling that there is a specific word to describe it. Clearly it cannot be conveyed in English using a single word,

⁵³¹ Mary Besemeres, 'Language and Emotional Experience: The Voice of Translingual Memoir', in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 34-58 (p. 46).

⁵³² *Ibid.* p. 35.

⁵³³ Mary Besemeres, 'Language and Emotional Experience: The Voice of Translingual Memoir', in *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression, and representation*, ed. by Aneta Pavlenko (Multilingual Matters, 2006), pp. 34-58 (p. 35).

which in turn makes it clear that such a feeling is not as present in English speaking countries as it is in Japan.⁵³⁴ As Besemeres states ‘[b]ilingual writers’ reflections on these diverse kinds of emotional vocabulary shed light moreover on cultural evaluations of emotional expression, and the related issue of the relative importance of verbal and non-verbal communication of feeling within different cultures.’⁵³⁵

In the case of endearments, they provide an interesting comparison with honorifics in Japanese. Honorifics do not really exist in the English language, but in Japanese, they are a fundamental part of the spoken language. They are not only required for politeness but also provide a pattern for the reader to understand the hierarchy of the society as well as the kind of relationship among the characters. In Lynne Kutsukake’s novel, even though it is written in English, the author chose to leave the honorifics as they are. And so “chan” is often used by the teacher when he talks to the returnee main character. This highlights the fact that the story is taught in Japanese and translated into English by the narrator. However, honorifics are absent in *Seijōki*, the main reason is that most of the narration happens through Ben’s thoughts, he mostly talks to his Japanese friend acting as a guide and a sponsor, but also the absence of honorifics marks the fact that Ben is not yet part of the Japanese world, that his fluency and cultural comprehension is not advanced enough for him to feel the need of honorifics. One of the most significant examples is that Ben never refers to his parents as ‘お母さん’ (*okāsan*) and ‘お父さん’ (*otōsan*) but always as ‘母’ (*haha*) and ‘父’ (*chichi*) in a way that is reminiscent of Naoji in *Shayō*.

From the discourse on idioms and specific use of the language regulated by cultural reasons stems the discourse on slurs.⁵³⁶ However, it is common in the works of Japanese American writers or in those by American writers of Japanese heritage to highlight that in the aftermath

⁵³⁴ Ibid. p. 35.

⁵³⁵ Ibid. p. 35.

⁵³⁶ This study will not focus on this topic as it is beyond its scope.

of the Pearl Harbour attack and the consequent start of the internment in both the US and Canada, the word 'Jap' originally short for Japanese, started being used as slur against the Japanese American communities. The term still retains this negative connotation. This is clearly portrayed in the scene I previously mentioned from Otsuka's *When the Emperor was Divine*, when the boy is asked "Chink or Jap?" to determine whether he is an ally (Chinese) or an enemy (Japanese).⁵³⁷ And later in the novel, when the title of one particular newspaper article is said to read "Jap Emperor repudiates own divinity!"⁵³⁸

In the context of this research the discourse on language needs to be expanded to include free will, in other words to introduce the occurrence of the writer choosing their language rather than being forced by society or familial bonds. *Speak, Okinawa* for example discusses the phenomenon Labov called "language shift" at length and from an emotional point of view. To Brina what is central is the way her relationship with her mother has been shaped by the gap left by them speaking different languages. Despite living in Okinawa for a few years in her childhood, once gone back to the US, living in an English-speaking world, Brina progressively distances herself from the Japanese her mother speaks, to the point where she is unable to understand most of what her mother tries to express in broken English and Japanese alike. As for Levy, growing up in a non-English speaking world and in a multilingual context he portrays this peculiarity of his family in his novel by making it sound like each language belongs to a certain area of concern. I.e. Ben's father speaks Shanghainese to his second wife, English to Ben and presumably Japanese in his work life. To Ben, not being able to completely understand what his father is saying while speaking to his wife is part of his daily life. This point comes back in *Tenamon* where, when the father of the main character introduces him to his mistress (presumably another literary version of *Seijōki*'s Gui Lan) the

⁵³⁷ Julie Otsuka, *When the Emperor was Divine* (London: Penguin, 2013) p. 76.

⁵³⁸ Julie Otsuka, *When the Emperor was Divine* (London: Penguin, 2013) p. 136.

two talk in Chinese and when the woman worriedly asks him about his child, the father is quick to reply in the same language that “他不明白”, he doesn't understand.

It is important to note that the backbone of Levy's writing is personal memory, while collective memory – which sits at the core of works such as Otsuka's novels *When the Emperor was Divine* and *The Buddha in the Attic* (2011) – centres around the presence of a community. This is not surprising, in fact while in the history of Japanese American people is rooted into the creation of communities and marked by the internment camps they were subjected during WW2, and the long-lasting effects of the trauma caused by internment itself, the kind of migration Levy experienced is an individual's experience which cannot relate on the sharing of a common heritage.

Nevertheless, there is not such a thing as a clear line separating the two, in fact certain texts such as *Speak, Okinawa* move back and forth between the two, while others such as *Shishōsetsu* expand on the topic creating the illusion of a communal memory buried inside the displaced individual as Minae, the main character, pictures her own grandmother and great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother among the *Yamanba* – mountain women, sometimes mountain sorceresses of the Japanese folklore –⁵³⁹ coming down from the mountains and calling her to go back to Japan. Mizumura's metaphorically refers to the *Yamanba* as an element of collective Japanese memory, therefore being invited by the *Yamanba* implies returning to be part of the country she was born into, however, since the mountain witch is a creature who lives in complete isolation,⁵⁴⁰ her being mentioned in the novel also implies Mizumura's acknowledgment that she will never be completely part of that society, regardless of her blood. In this case, the community she refers to is the entire country she feels exiled from, but it can also be part of one's family, as Brina expresses in

⁵³⁹ Minae Mizumura, *An I Novel*, trans. by Juliet Winters Carpenter (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), p. 5.

⁵⁴⁰ Maria Gioia Vienna, 'Ōba Minako: Il lungo viaggio verso le radici della cultura giapponese, *Il Giappone*, 34, (1994), pp.89-128 (p. 98).

Speak, Okinawa. The memoir describes the way in her adolescence the author tried to detach herself from her mother's culture and speak exclusively English in order to feel accepted by the white American population. By refusing to learn Japanese she becomes unable to communicate with her mother and to learn about her past or the history of the place she came from, Okinawa. Brina's approach shows the depth of the link between language and memory and even how the way someone uses the language becomes part of one's emotional memory at first and of collective memory the more a story is told.

5.5 Collective memory and personal memory in multilingual narratives.

Julie Otsuka's 2011 novel *The Buddha in the Attic* follows the journey and the lives of a group of picture brides, Japanese girls and women who would travel to the US and Canada to marry fellow countrymen already settled there. The name originated from the practice of having a matchmaker provide pictures of the prospective wives to the husbands and their families. As opposed to Kutsukake's *The Translation of Love*, where the author recounts historical events and describes historical figures through the eyes of the characters she created, Otsuka's main purpose is to highlight the collective nature of the story she is telling. To achieve this, Otsuka writes from the perspective of an anonymous "we", starting from the opening line: 'On the boat we were mostly virgins. We had long black hair and flat wide feet and we were not very tall.'⁵⁴¹ Otsuka's authorial choices brings up two significant points: first, by using the plural "we" and leaving the characters anonymous, the narration acquires an eerie feeling almost as if the spectres of the picture brides are telling their story themselves using the author as a conduit; and second, the author does not distance herself from the

⁵⁴¹ Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 3.

brides, instead she puts herself among them reclaiming their history as hers too. Once the brides settle in the US with (or without) their new husbands, a “they” starts to emerge as opposed to the “we”. “They” are the husbands or the Americans or the children they gave birth to who slowly become more and more American, progressively forgetting, or refusing their Japanese identity. The weakening of their link to Japan is symbolized by the forgetting of the language their mothers taught them in their childhood. In the short passage: ‘one by one all the old words we had taught them began to disappear from their heads. They forgot the names of the flowers in Japanese. They forgot the names of the colors. They forgot the names of the fox god and the thunder god and the god of poverty, whom we could never escape.’⁵⁴² Otsuka hints at the way the mothers kept telling their children old Japanese legends, perhaps the same ones they were told in their childhood, pointing out at the significance of passing shared traditions down from one generation to the other, especially in immigrant communities. Such a juxtaposition between we and them is absent in Levy and Mizumura’s works, in which the juxtaposition focuses on the individual as opposed to the Japanese society, which becomes extremely evident in Mizumura as she presents her novel as a *shishōsetsu*. However, in Shimada an echo of the “us and them” opposition is present in the discourse of the self-proclaimed Heike descendants as well as the rental children when seen as a social group by themselves.

Both the use of the plural “we” used to recount the history of a group of people who share the same birthplace and the forgetting of the language as a metaphor to losing the ancestral memory are present in Brina’s memoir *Speak, Okinawa*. When, after years spent running away from it, Brina finally starts to learn Japanese from her mother they start from the names of the flowers, as shown in the following passage: ‘I like pointing at the flowers, hearing [my mother] tell me the names in Japanese as I try to recall the names in English. “Ayame” “Iris”

⁵⁴² Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic* (London: Penguin, 2013), pp. 72-73.

“Ajisai” “Hydrangea” “Tsutsuji” “Um...azalea.”⁵⁴³ Like Otsuka, Brina portrays language as a generational element, and this brings up the dualism in Otsuka’s novel, on the one hand this is a fictionalised chronicle of what the lives of a group of Japanese women in the early 20th century to the Pearl Harbour attack looked like. On the other hand, it also concerns the structure and struggles of the Japanese American communities in the US. It is important to point out that it is in fact the Japanese American community that is absent from most of Brina’s book, worsening the author’s mother’s sense of alienation which leads her to look for solace in excessive consumption of alcohol. From Brina’s perspective, the fact that half of her family – albeit an immigrant family all the same since his father is originally Italian – is perceived as white American while the other part is clearly Asian weighs on her teenager self, causing her to try to erase part of her heritage that she sees as not fitting as an act of rebellion. Thus, to Brina, refusing to learn Japanese equals cutting any link she might have with her mother’s birthplace. The fact that by not speaking Japanese she also becomes unable to communicate with her mother to a deeper level, therefore, to carry on her legacy is something that occurs to her only in her adulthood and inspires her to try and finally learn the language. It is by focusing on learning Japanese with her mother that Brina also learns about the condition of Okinawa, finally understanding how deeply her mother’s linguistic isolation runs. As a native Okinawan, Brina’s mother is familiar with both Ryukyu languages – the native Okinawan language group – and Japanese, in other words her Japanese is accented in a way that shows her not being “actually Japanese”, which makes her feel self-conscious even when she speaks to people from Japan’s mainland. The same pattern is replicated when she moves to the US. If in the US her accented English, in addition to her appearance, marks her as an immigrant in the eyes of the Euro-American society, in Japan her accented Japanese marks her as a foreigner as well.

⁵⁴³ Elizabeth Miki Brina, *Speak, Okinawa* (London: Granta Books, 2021), p.256.

As opposed to the picture brides in *The Buddha in the Attic* and akin to Mori Keiko's *The City of the Mockingbirds*,⁵⁴⁴ Brina's mother, Kyōko, is a war bride, or *sensō hanayome* (戦争花嫁),⁵⁴⁵ Japanese women married to American officials after WW2.⁵⁴⁶ In her work on war brides in Japanese literature 'War Brides as Transnational Subjects' in Mori Reiko's *The Town of the Mockingbirds*, Linda Flores echoes Yoshimizu Ayaka's argument that "war brides were stigmatized in various ways as promiscuous, submissive, and as traitors to their native country; at times they were even vilified as the enemy due to lingering resentment towards Japan's military campaigns in the Second World War"⁵⁴⁷

Brina partially seems to agree with Yoshimizu that as a Japanese woman married to an American man her mother was perceived as "meek" by other Americans, whereas, she argues, the best term to describe her would be humble. However, in the American context, humbleness is not regarded as a virtue in the same way as it is considered a good feature in Japan. Thus, even though lexicon wise, humble might indeed be the best word to describe her mother's attitude, the misunderstanding at the core of the word choice is that attitude is different from personality. Both Flores' work and in Brina's memoir, bring up the issue of the depersonalization of the war brides in the US where, unable to speak their language and share their stories and their feelings sometimes even with their families, they progressively become invisible to society. This is clearly expressed by Brina when recalling one of her mother's drunken episodes when she kept kicking the table and screaming, upon trying to reach for her

⁵⁴⁴ Here I am borrowing Flores' translation of the title of Mori's novel.

⁵⁴⁵ Linda Flores, 'War Brides as Transnational Subjects in Mori Reiko's *The Town of the Mockingbirds*', in *New Steps in Japanese Studies: Kobe University Joint Research*, ed. by Nobuo, Kazashi and Marcella Mariotti (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing, 2017), pp. 13-30 (p. 14).

⁵⁴⁶ Outside of this context, the term 'war bride' does not exclusively refer to Japanese women.

⁵⁴⁷ Yoshimizu, Ayaka (2009). "'Hello, War Brides'. Heteroglossia, Counter Memory, and the Auto/biographical Work of Japanese War Brides". *Meridians*, 10(1), 111-36 as cited by Flores in Linda Flores, 'War Brides as Transnational Subjects in Mori Reiko's *The Town of the Mockingbirds*', in *New Steps in Japanese Studies: Kobe University Joint Research*, ed. by Nobuo, Kazashi and Marcella Mariotti (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing, 2017), pp. 13-30 (p. 15).

Brina says: ‘When I looked under the table, I didn’t see my mother. I saw me. I saw a woman hurting. I saw a woman fighting to be acknowledged and understood. Fighting to matter.’⁵⁴⁸ Indeed, Flores claims that as transnational subjects, the war brides she focuses upon exist in a liminal space, however while the implications of this statement certainly are relevant to the novel she is analysing, it becomes less relevant in more recent works such as Brina’s. In *Speak, Okinawa*, Kyōko – while feeling invisible in her own family – does not feel like she is inhabiting an in-between space, instead she embraces her identity as an Okinawan and seeks other people with whom sharing her story. The message Brina is trying to convey with her book is encapsulated in the word Kyōko’s nephew says to Brina ‘*oboeteimasu*’,⁵⁴⁹ meaning “I remember”.

If Brina’s reconnection with her Okinawan heritage through learning Japanese is marked in the book by the increasing number of Japanese words and excursus on Japanese basic grammar added to the text, Flores notices that the progressive forgetting of the Japanese language in Mori’s novel is shown through the use of the Japanese scripts. ‘The Town of the Mockingbirds’ Flores states, ‘is also characterized by a double movement of language in its usage of kanji and katakana, as many proper nouns that would ordinarily be written in kanji are rendered into *katakana*.[...] This suggests a movement of the protagonist towards English and American culture as well as an estrangement from her native language of Japanese.’⁵⁵⁰ Such a thing would be impossible in an English text, instead movement in English/Japanese multilingual texts is often physical. For example, an entire chapter in Brina’s memoir concerns her journey with her parents through Japan and Okinawa, while Kutsukake’s *The Translation of Love* is set in Japan in 1947 and focuses on the main

⁵⁴⁸ Elizabeth Miki Brina, *Speak, Okinawa* (London: Granta Books, 2021), p.101.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid. p.219.

⁵⁵⁰ Linda Flores, ‘War Brides as Transnational Subjects in Mori Reiko’s *The Town of the Mockingbirds*’, in *New Steps in Japanese Studies: Kobe University Joint Research*, ed. by Nobuo, Kazashi and Marcella Mariotti (Venice: Edizioni Ca’ Forscari - Digital Publishing, 2017), pp. 13-30 (p. 25).

characters', mostly *nisei*, feelings through flashbacks showing their lives in the US or Canada as opposed as their present lives in Japan. Compared to Otsuka's novel, *The Translation of Love* moves in reverse. Rather than focusing on the struggles of Japanese immigrants in the US, it portrays the same feeling of alienation, but this time as experienced by *nisei* – therefore American-born people of Japanese heritage – in Japan. Aya, a 13-year-old girl leaving Canada with her father to go living with his Japanese family in Tokyo, speaks Japanese 'like a six-year-old'⁵⁵¹ according to her aunt. Aya's inability to express herself mirrors that of her own mother, who was a picture bride moving to Canada where she never learnt much English only speaking to Aya in Japanese, which makes her able to understand the language to a certain extent even though she cannot speak it properly.⁵⁵² Similarly to how Brina describes her mother, Aya is perceived as being a 'stupid immigrant'⁵⁵³ because of her silence and endures bullying at school. While she does not feel welcome in Japan, despite it being both of her parents' birth country, after she and her mother experienced the internment camps where her mother finally took her own life, Canada does not feel like her own country either. Aya's case opposes that of a large number of Japanese American people, like the family Otsuka's describes in her novel *When the Emperor was Divine*, whose features marked them as "other", instead, much like Brina's Okinawan mother, it is her way of speaking or her silence that makes other people regarding her as different. Furthermore, Aya cannot share her trauma with anyone as nobody else around her has lived through the internment camp, and while her silence might be a defence mechanism originating from her insecurity in speaking Japanese, it is also a manifestation of the horror she experienced. It is precisely this that presents Aya's character as the embodiment of the collective memory of the internment camp survivors who were forced to leave America or Canada and go back to a nation that, in the aftermath of

⁵⁵¹ Lynne Kutsukake, *The Translation of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2016), p.14.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.* p.15.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.* p.7.

WW2, saw them as traitors for leaving in the first place. Kutsukake expands on this point through her other main character Corporal Yoshitaka Matsumoto, known as Matt among his colleagues. As opposed to Aya, Matt is fluent in Japanese enough to be part of the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service (ATIS) together with other *nisei*.⁵⁵⁴ Because he looks and sounds Japanese after having studied at the Japanese school in the US,⁵⁵⁵ the Japanese identity is forced upon him by other Japanese people as shown when he and his colleague try to enter a nightclub only to be refused entrance on the basis that the nightclub is for ‘*Amerikajin dake*. American[s] only’⁵⁵⁶ despite the fact that they are wearing the American GI uniform. The uniform is perhaps the only thing that saved Matt from the internment or at the very least from being revoked his American citizenship, as the postwar was a period of unrest in America and, despite the promises, Japanese Americans released from the camps were not able to go back to their previous life, often finding that their houses and properties had been given to others. Nancy, another *nisei* working at the ATIS summarizes the issue by explaining that ‘everything got all messed up because I was here during the war [...] I entered my name in the family registry in order to get a ration card. Now I’m told I’m not American anymore, I am Japanese.’⁵⁵⁷ In the case of Matt, he chooses this in-between space to inhabit where he is both Japanese and American, an unthinkable compromise for both the Japanese and the American society, since this only reinforces the feeling of alienation he has been growing up with because of his sexuality. In fact, it is heavily implied in the novel that Matt is gay. This is especially evident in the description of Matt’s relationship with his superior, Lieutenant Baker. As Baker is suddenly transferred to Osaka from Tokyo, he gives a copy of Natsume Sōseki’s novel *Kokoro* (こゝろ, 1914) to Matt. As Matt tries to give it back since ‘it

⁵⁵⁴ Lynne Kutsukake, *The Translation of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2016), p.26.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.53.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.139.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.93.

look[ed] very expensive’,⁵⁵⁸ ‘Baker pushed the book back at him, and for a few electric seconds Matt felt Baker’s hands on top of his own.’⁵⁵⁹ Baker then adds “‘No! No, it’s for you. I want you to read it.’”⁵⁶⁰ This exchange does not only refer to Matt’s feelings for Baker, and possibly at them being returned, but it is also significant as it presents Matt’s first encounter with untranslated Japanese literature. At the end of Kutsukake’s novel, Matt has finished reading *Kokoro* and proceeds to read another of Sōseki’s novels *Sorekara* (それから, 1909) and proudly tells his bunkmate that ‘it’s in Japanese.’⁵⁶¹ Thus he reinforces his attempts of embracing his identity as part Japanese and part American, through the appreciation of Japanese language outside of the working hours spent on translating.

Kutsukake’s work suggests that – because they cannot share their own experiences with others – neither Aya nor Matt has a part in the Japanese collective memory. Especially in the aftermath of WW2, collective memory in Japan was marked by the reminders of events such as the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Emperor Hirohito’s speech where he renounced his divine status which represented the backbone of the national identity. While according to Otsuka’s *When the Emperor Was Divine*, the figure of the divine Emperor was worshipped in the Japanese American communities as well, the fact that Kutsukake’s characters seem not to be touched by these events if not on a purely sympathetic level locates them in an in-between dimension that emphasises the prominence of a narrative created around physical and emotional displacement. Such an element as displacement is also relevant to certain literary representations of the American military bases in Japan, for instance in Murakami Ryū’s literature and in Yamada Eimi’s short novels. In these works, the military bases essentially function as heterotopias – in the sense that they share a ‘somewhat general sense of being set-apart from what might contrastingly be thought of as the

⁵⁵⁸ Lynne Kutsukake, *The Translation of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2016), p.154.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid. p.155.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid. p.155.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid. p.297.

‘normal’⁵⁶² as Mariangela Palladino and John Miller define Foucauldian heterotopia expanding from Peter Johnson’s argument – since they are clearly not located in the US, yet they are not actually in Japan either when one considers that the most common language is English rather than Japanese, and the overall society structure is American. Additionally, they seem to attract and metaphorically absorb the adjoining environments. The liminal quality of the American bases in Japan and the way they affect those living in or around them is especially relevant in Yamada’s *Bedtime Eyes*. The novel portrays the space in which the main character exists as disjointed from the rest of the world. Kim exists outside of the social constructs and expectations relevant to the rest of the city. This point is reinforced by her ability to forget. Memory, in Yamada’s work, represents a fundamental part of the character’s identity, thus forgetting can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it allows Kim to reinvent herself, becoming someone new day after day. This is the sense in which she is reminiscent of Matthew in Shimada’s novel. On the other hand, by forgetting, Kim also disappears. Similarly, to Aya and Matt, as she does not share the collective memory of those around her, she is invisible to society. In addition, Yamada depicts the process of finally forming personal memories as emotionally draining as indicated in Kim’s monologue when she states that ‘もし彼が罪を犯したとしたら、それは私の心に記憶を作ってしまった事。私はそれまで記憶するという事を知らなかったし、その自体を憎んでいたはずであるのに.’⁵⁶³ This second instance presents Kim’s denying herself memories as having a similar effect to Tawada’s protagonist in *Das Bad* being unable to refer to herself with the word “I”. In both cases, the characters also experience a progressive loss of their language, in Yamada’s case, as Kim speaks English most of the time, she progressively distances herself

⁵⁶² John Miller and Mariangela Palladino, ‘Introduction’, in *The globalization of space: Foucault and heterotopia*, ed. by John Miller and Mariangela Palladino (London & New York: Routledge, 2015) pp.1-12 (p.1)

⁵⁶³ Yamada Eimi, *Bedtime Eyes* (Tokyo: Shinchō bunko, 2020), p. 80. [‘If there was one crime [Spoon] was guilty of, it was that he created memories in my heart. Up until then, I had never known anything about memories, I hated them so much.’] (my translation).

from the language she apparently was born into, thus locking herself out of her own memories and past experiences in her native tongue.

Although previous studies have not focused on the interconnections between loneliness, memories, and identity, this is a prominent subtext in Levy's works. As opposed to Japanese American literary works – in which the presence of the community is predominant – transnational movement in Levy's writing is presented as a solitary experience. Thus, his narratives focus on personal rather than collective memory. *Seijōki*, as well as *Tenanmon* and *Wareteki Chūgoku* all take directly from Levy's life. Because of this, Levy's three main languages – Japanese, English, and Chinese – each connect to one period of the author's life, and also to specific places. For example, when in *Wareteki Chūgoku*, he talks about the Mandarin spoken by the people working in the house he lived in with his parents in Taiwan, Levy states that 'even though it was not [his] mother tongue it reverberated around the house like a mother tongue, since [his] every day were filled with only that language.'⁵⁶⁴

Furthermore, in *Seijōki*, Ben's attempt to learn Japanese is used as a metaphor for his personal growth from adolescent to adulthood, the open ending of the novel – in which Ben changes into his American clothes and steps to the glass door to his workplace in Shinjuku–⁵⁶⁵ can be then interpreted as a promise that he will be in Japan as both an American-born man and a fluent Japanese speaker who is therefore able to understand the world around him. Lastly, the adult main character in *Tenanmon*, who is an American resident in Japan, states that he had not spoken Mandarin in thirty years but speaks Japanese fluently.⁵⁶⁶

This opposes Mizumura's approach to translingual memory. Since in *Shishōsetsu* Mizumura refers to Japanese as the language of the land she is bound by blood, it appears that she is referring to Japanese as her true language, as opposed to English that is supposed to be her

⁵⁶⁴ Hideo Levy, *Wareteki Chūgoku* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2011) p. 1. (My translation).

⁵⁶⁵ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoenahei heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004), pp.157-158.

⁵⁶⁶ Hideo Levy, *Tenanmon* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996), p.14.

public language. In fact, the Minae in the novel speaks Japanese to her sister and most likely to her Japanese former boyfriend who recently moved back to Japan, while she is attending an American university where she is a graduate student and where she most likely speaks English. It is also evident, that, as opposed to, for example, Kim in Yamada's novel, Minae surrounds herself with Japanese people even though she has lived in the US since her childhood. This opposition is expressed by Mizumura herself in the novel by having Minae comparing herself to her sister Nanae who mostly rejects her Japanese heritage and falls in and out of relationship with non-Japanese men.⁵⁶⁷ Ultimately, as seen in the passage about the *Yamanba* in the first chapters of the novel, Minae creates an imaginary Japan for herself out of old legends and modern Japanese literature and fits the Japanese language she is familiar with – which is mostly based on her family lexicon and the written texts she read, thus it may strongly differ from the actual Japanese spoken in the real Japan – into it. Minae's efforts show her desire to connect herself to Japanese collective memory which in this case is symbolised by old legends and traditions.

In complete opposition to Mizumura's narrative, Levy expresses an ambition to create one's own personal memory completely disjointed by the collective memory of their birth country. In this regard, in *Seijōki*, Ben is able to see that his own presence in Japan as the son of the American consul barely more than a decade after the end of the American Occupation might resemble the arrival of Commodore Perry's black ships century earlier, but rather than embracing it, he refuses this legacy.⁵⁶⁸ By doing so, Ben distances himself from his father in a way that is reminiscent of Brina's detaching herself from her mother and her mother's culture. Even though *Speak, Okinawa* is a translingual memoir written in English, while *Seijōki* is a semi-autobiographical novel written in Japanese, the two share similarities in the

⁵⁶⁷ Minae Mizumura, *An I Novel*, trans. by Juliet Winters Carpenter (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), p. 20.

⁵⁶⁸ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoena heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004), p.62.

approach to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and displacement that both main characters experience. When discussing Brina's memoir two different approaches can be taken: either the one focusing on the collective memory of the war brides through the story of Kyōko as told by her daughter, or the other mainly considering Brina's personal memory. Certainly, by looking at the book exclusively as the portrayal of the struggles Brina as a Japanese American woman growing up in the US had to deal with would be more fitting to a thesis centred around problematizing migration literature. However, this study approaches Brina's story by comparing the way she deals with cultural legacy as opposed to the way Levy deals with it in *Seijōki*.

In both works, the perception of the individual according to their physical appearance is central. In the first pages of Levy's novel, Ben is described as having blond hair,⁵⁶⁹ which is not common in Japan, thus it is one of the elements that make him stand out as a *gaijin*. Instead, Brina reveals that in order to blend more in with the people around her during her teenage years, she would 'insist on bleaching [her] hair blond and wearing fake thick-rimmed glasses that [hid] the shape of [her] eyes and the lack of a bridge on [her] nose.'⁵⁷⁰ Brina's naive attempts to look less "Asian" echo her progressively shutting her mother away, which ultimately culminates in her refusal to learn Japanese which effectively causes her and Kyōko to become unable to communicate. These dynamics between mother and daughter are akin to Ben's rocky relationship with his father. Similarly to Kyōko, Robert, Ben's father, is himself part of a minority community in the US since he is a Jewish American. His heritage explains his own attitude against white Americans, which then causes Ben to wonder about the notion of home and question whether he could ever consider the US his home.

⁵⁶⁹ Levy Hideo, *Seijōki no kikoenahei heya*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004), p.8.

⁵⁷⁰ Elizabeth Miki Brina, *Speak, Okinawa* (London: Granta Books, 2021), p.76.

While Brina's memoir follows her personal journey to reconnect with her mother and her mother's culture, the ending of *Seijōki* does not mention whether Ben and Robert manage to connect more. However, on the basis that they are both semi-autobiographical works following an American-born man living in Japan, it is indeed possible to consider *Tenanmon* a follow up novel to *Seijōki*. Consequently, the protagonist in *Tenanmon* might be considered an aged-up version of Ben, in which case it might be concluded that Ben manages to reconnect to the memory of his father by visiting Beijing and finally speaking Mandarin again, the language that was his father's chosen language in the same way as Japanese is Ben's chosen language, in the same way as Brina finally manages to converse in Japanese with her mother. In both cases, language carries the author's and the characters' ancestors' legacy through memory. As memory can be shared through anecdotes and old legends, languages become fundamental to this process.

Chapter 6: Blurring the lines: the international power of popular culture.

This section's main purpose is to highlight the intersections between literature and popular culture. In doing so it proposes that the two subjects should be regarded not as inherently disjointed but as two essential parts of the Japanese contemporary literary scene.

Thus, I propose a new approach to literary-adjacent media focusing on the way they reimagine the sense of loneliness and displacement that originates from the otherness of the hybrid condition. Such interpretation often leans toward the horror genre, as is the case in Ishida Sui's manga series *Tokyo Ghoul*. While this approach shifts the perspective from cultural hybridity to monstrous hybridity, what remains untouched is the use of hybridity as a metaphor to rebel against the perceived homogeneity of society. Consequently, the juxtaposition between 'hybridity' and 'homogeneity' creates a continuum between the literary canon and the popular media, which the traditional presence of supernatural creatures from Japanese folklore in modern literature confirms. This is especially evident in some of Dazai's works where the author mentions supernatural creatures such as the *obake* to signify the main character's view of reality from the perspective of someone who experiences a sense of profound isolation.⁵⁷¹ This chapter intends argue that the presence of supernatural beings and hybrid main characters having to face their 'monstrous' side in manga and other literary-adjacent media has spread in the trans-Pacific inspiring the works of contemporary fantasy

⁵⁷¹ Further examples include, for instance, Akutagawa Ryunosuke's story *Kappa*.

writers, such as Julie Kagawa, in the US. The spreading of this narrative trope, which continues from the *shikkaku bungaku*, has been encouraged by the popularity of manga and anime beyond Japan. Lately, streaming platforms that allow their audience to familiarise themselves with the original Japanese language have been favouring the production of multilingual works such as Kagawa's that include Japanese lexical elements in English texts. Furthermore, the increasing number of manga and anime made available abroad, as well as the themes in the original work are affecting not only the reception of popular media, but also that of literature, making it even more evident how interconnected the two aspects are. In order to support this argument, in this chapter, I will discuss the adaptation and reinterpretation of literature in the form of literary-adjacent media primarily manga, which incidentally presents the fundamental point of literature as a transmedia system. Works such as Ito Junji's *Ningen Shikkaku*, for instance, provide a significant example of this as the author not only adapts Dazai's novel into a different media but chooses to approach the rewriting from a specific angle, in this case, the horror element, which is only a subtext in the original. Asagiri's *Bungō Stray Dogs*, as mentioned in the introduction, presents a similar occurrence, where rather than adapting literary works in a different format, the author made the literary masters of the title into protagonists of his own creation, starting a transnarrative process that is leading to a rediscovery of older literary works both in Japan and abroad. The newfound popularity of certain authors, Dazai, Chūya, and Akutagawa for instance, beyond

Japan, opens the path for further research and new perspectives on both literature and popular culture.

Ultimately, by expanding on the role of popular culture in facilitating the publication of multilingual works based on Japanese folklore and on popularise Japanese literature in the US, this chapter intends to bring my original argument on the necessity of a transnational, diachronic, and transmedia approach to the Japanese literary scene is in order to engage with the subject as part of the world literary debate.

6.1 Monsters across time and space.

Even though the mythological creatures that populate old stories like Urashima-tarō - such as the Yamanba mentioned by Mizumura in *Shishōsetsu*, the *kitsune* (キツネ) to which Matthew compares Japanese people in *Yumetsukai*,⁵⁷² as well as the *obake* and *yōkai* that Dazai refers to in *Ningen Shikkaku* - have been of general and academic interest in Japan at least since the Meiji era, they have become well-known in the US following the popularity of J culture – an umbrella term that covers elements from anime, video games, manga, character design to sushi and fashion and Neo-pop art –⁵⁷³ and their representation in anime and manga. For instance, the term *mononoke* (モノノケ, 物の怪), referring to the animist interpretation of the words “soul”, or “spirits” who can occasionally possess humans with bad

⁵⁷² Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 183.

⁵⁷³ Toshio Miyake, ‘Mostri made in Japan. Orientalismo e auto-orientalismo nell’era della globalizzazione’, in *Culture del Giappone contemporaneo: Manga, anime, videogiochi, arti visive, cinema, letteratura, teatro, architettura*, ed. by Matteo Casari (Latina: Tunué, 2011), 165-97. (p. 165).

outcomes,⁵⁷⁴ was introduced in the West following the release of Miyazaki's movie *Mononoke Hime* (もののけ姫, 1997, *Princess Mononoke*).⁵⁷⁵ Additionally, the term *yōkai* (妖怪) – also mentioned in critical texts such as Micheal Dylan Foster's 2009 *Pandemonium and Parade*⁵⁷⁶ is often left untranslated in manga, anime and light novels. For example, in the case of the light novel, manga and anime series *Yōkai Apāto no Yūga na Nichijō* (妖怪アパートの幽雅な日常, 2003-20013), the English title, *Elegant Yōkai Apartment Life*, maintains the term untranslated. *Yōkai* are creatures that are midway between divine beings and demons such as *oni* (ogres), *tengu*, and *kappa*.⁵⁷⁷ However, such a definition is not completely unambiguous, in fact, while the expression *bakemono* (化け物, things that transform) is sometimes regarded as a synonym for *yōkai*, it also refers to the shapeshifting abilities of creatures that are mostly animals such as the *kitsune* (fox), *tanuki* (raccoon), and *neko* (cat). Because the description of these creatures often focuses on their ghostly nature it overlaps with the *yūrei*, who are, instead, the spirits of the dead.⁵⁷⁸ In general, these are creatures from different times in Japanese history, they include old monsters – such as *yōkai*, *bakemono* and *yūrei* – and modern monsters, especially those connected to the *kawaii* aesthetic, and that have become part of a sort of 'national branding'.⁵⁷⁹

Efforts to catalogue and study supernatural Japanese creatures have been made since the early Meiji era. Between the late 19th century and the early 20th century, in Japan, supernatural creatures became legitimate subjects of academic (scientific) studies. Inoue Enryō

⁵⁷⁴ Toshio Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone. Narrative, figure, egemonie della dis-locazione identitaria* (Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2014), p.17.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid. p.17.

⁵⁷⁶ Toshio Miyake, 'Mostri made in Japan. Orientalismo e auto-orientalismo nell'era della globalizzazione', in *Culture del Giappone contemporaneo: Manga, anime, videogiochi, arti visive, cinema, letteratura, teatro, architettura*, ed. by Matteo Casari (Latina: Tunué, 2011), 165-97. (p. 167).

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 169.

⁵⁷⁸ Toshio Miyake, 'Mostri made in Japan. Orientalismo e auto-orientalismo nell'era della globalizzazione', in *Culture del Giappone contemporaneo: Manga, anime, videogiochi, arti visive, cinema, letteratura, teatro, architettura*, ed. by Matteo Casari (Latina: Tunué, 2011), 165-97. (p. 170).

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 167.

(nicknamed *yōkai hakase* 妖怪博士 or *obake hakase* お化け博士)⁵⁸⁰ established the *yōkaibungaku* (studies on the *yōkai*) aiming to free the younger generations from believing in the supernatural. Inoue considered these creatures as the representation of fears and terror induced by inexplicable natural or human phenomena.⁵⁸¹ Indeed, Dazai refers to this idea in *Ningen Shikkaku* when Yōzō claims that ‘あまりに人間を恐怖している人たちは、[...] もっともっと、おそろしい妖怪を確実に眠で見たいと願望するに至る心理.’⁵⁸²

Following Inoue, Yanagita Kunio started the study on Japanese traditional supernatural creatures which is known as *minzokugaku* (民俗学, Japanese ethnology).⁵⁸³ He approached the subject of the traditional monsters from the perspective of cultural studies, which led to a newfound interest in traditional legends featuring supernatural creatures. Yanagita’s studies consider monsters as quintessentially Japanese, thus he believed that studying them is fundamental to learning about Japanese folklore and most importantly to preserving Japanese folklore against the modernization and westernisation processes.⁵⁸⁴ In this sense, Yanagita’s ideals contributed to the Japanese traditional monsters becoming more of a national symbol than scary nightmarish creatures.⁵⁸⁵

In the postwar and post-Occupation time, the appreciation for the *yōkai* increased after the publication of Mizuki Shigeru’s manga series *Gegege no Kitarō* (ゲゲゲの鬼太郎, 1959-69), reaching the top of their popularity in the 60s when the manga was adapted into an anime

⁵⁸⁰ Toshio Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone. Narrative, figure, egemonie della dis-locazione identitaria* (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2014), p.18.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid. p.18.

⁵⁸² Osamu Dazai, *Ningen Shikkaku*, (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1985), p.39. [‘**The mind of people who are terrified by human beings, makes them long to see even more terrifying yōkai in their sleep.**’] (my translation)

⁵⁸³ Toshio Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone. Narrative, figure, egemonie della dis-locazione identitaria* (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2014), p.19.

⁵⁸⁴ Toshio Miyake, ‘Mostri made in Japan. Orientalismo e auto-orientalismo nell’era della globalizzazione’, in *Culture del Giappone contemporaneo: Manga, anime, videogiochi, arti visive, cinema, letteratura, teatro, architettura*, ed. by Matteo Casari (Latina: Tunué, 2011), 165-97. (p. 172).

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 172.

series and videogames.⁵⁸⁶ This is mirrored by a significant academic interest in the subject. Since the year of its foundation, in 1987, the *Nichibunken* (日 文 研, International Centre of Japanese Studies) in Kyoto has hosted a research project, led by anthropologist Komatsu Kazuhiko, about the eerie and the supernatural.⁵⁸⁷ According to Komatsu, the study of Japanese monsters must distance itself from the old nationalistic perspective and move to a more cultural and historical one which should focus on the intersection between different forms, for example written literature and oral tradition, visual arts and theatre. Through this inter-disciplinary approach, the culture of monsters has become popular around the Japanese archipelago across different times. Because of this shift in perspective which moves his studies away from the previous ones, Komatsu introduced the term *yōkaibunkagaku* (妖怪文化学), which translates as “studies on the culture of *yōkai*”.⁵⁸⁸ The introduction of *yōkaibunkagaku* led to the resurgence of studies on the *yōkai* in the 1990s⁵⁸⁹ shifting the core question of the research from the previously used “what are *yōkai*?” to “how have *yōkai* been represented in Japanese cultural history?”⁵⁹⁰

As Okada shows in *No-No Boy* – where Ichiro compares himself to the Japanese hero Momotarō, the little boy who was found by an elderly childless couple in a peach – old legends have often been used to pass down the cultural legacy. Therefore, as discussed in the previous chapter, they represent an effective means to preserve memory, both collective and personal. As the terminology concerning the old stories is so specific, it has not been often translated, until fairly recently, thus language is fundamental to this process. However, it does not only concern memory and culture passed down transnationally, but also locally and

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 173.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 173.

⁵⁸⁸ Toshio Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone. Narrative, figure, egemonie della dis-locazione identitaria* (Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2014), p.20.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid. p.20.

⁵⁹⁰ Toshio Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone. Narrative, figure, egemonie della dis-locazione identitaria* (Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2014), p.20.

especially during times of crisis. A clear example of this is the publication of Dazai's *Otogizōshi* (お伽草紙, *Otogizōshi: The Fairy Tale Book of Dazai Osamu*, 1945, trans. by Ralph F. McCarthy, 2011) in 1945. The 'government-imposed mandate for writing that conformed to "national policy" made traditional stories a safe choice for authors in the postwar.⁵⁹¹ However, Dazai does not remove the present from the legends he recounts in the book, in fact, the prologue to the stories portrays a father who is taking his child to the bomb shelter during a bombing, which mirrors Dazai's actual experience during WWII. Thus, contrary to the expectations, *Otogizōshi* does not celebrate the greatness of the old Japan in the face of defeat, nor does it portray Japanese people as different from other human beings, instead, similarly to *Shayō*, it conveys a sense of resilience through failure. Furthermore, Dazai also addresses the similar flaws shared by human beings across nations and time. In this sense, Dazai's retelling of the legend of Urashima Tarō – the man who after spending a few days in the Dragon Palace under the sea was gifted a box that he should have never opened – is particularly significant. Dazai applies the story to the discussion of the '「あけてはならぬ」と言われると、なお、あけて見たい誘惑を感じると云う人間の弱点.'⁵⁹² Upon calling this a 'human weakness' (人間の弱点) the author mentions the legend of Pandora's box as he states that 'この浦島の物語に限らず、ギリシャ神話のパンドラの箱の物語に於いて、それと同様の心理が取りあつかわれているように' thus clarifying that his discourse is not to the Japanese context.⁵⁹³ By doing so, Dazai confirms his propensity to a comparative and transnational critical reading of folklore and literature. Similarly to Pandora, Urashima-tarō opens his box finding himself back in his home country

⁵⁹¹ Joel Cohn, 'Introduction', in Osamu Dazai, *Otogizōshi*, trans. by Ralph F. McCarthy (Fukuoka: Kurodahan Press, 2011), pp. ix-xv (p. xi)

⁵⁹² Osamu Dazai, *Otogizōshi* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha), p. 326. [**the human weakness to want to open something whenever we are told not to open it.**] (my translation).

⁵⁹³ Osamu Dazai, *Otogizōshi* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha), p. 326. [**It is not just the story of Urashima-tarō, but also the Greek legend of Pandora's box deals with a similar human mindset.**] (my translation).

only to discover that three hundred years have passed, and he is now an old man alone in a world that he does not recognise. However, Dazai also states that, while Pandora has been played by the vengeful gods, Urashima-tarō has no one else to blame except himself for his weakness.⁵⁹⁴ The several authorial interventions that document autobiographical elements from Dazai's experience during the war imply the existence of a metaphorical subtext in the stories, which directs the narrative towards an allegorical dimension. For instance, Urashima-tarō can be viewed as a metaphor for the defeated Japan. Approaching the text from such an angle shows that statements concerning Urashima's condition upon being brought back from the Dragon Palace, such as '三百歳の爺さんに「希望」を与えたって、それは悪ふざけに似ている',⁵⁹⁵ easily apply to the apparently hopeless situation. Dazai maintains the association between Urashima and Japan as an implication throughout the story, even stating that as 'foreigners might very well believe that Japanese folk stories are harsher than Greek mythology',⁵⁹⁶ a spark of hope exists even in Urashima-tarō story. Thus he vehemently claims that 'from the perspective of Urashima-tarō, such an ending is definitely not a tragic one',⁵⁹⁷ proceeding to motivate his claim with the bitter statement that '年月は、人間の救いである。忘却は、人間の救いである'.⁵⁹⁸ If regarded through the lens of metaphor, this statement evokes the sense of *kodoku* in the reader which is one of the themes at the base of Dazai's literature. Specifically, it reinforces the point discussed in the previous chapter about the deep interconnection between the act of forgetting or being forgotten and invisibility or disappearance.

⁵⁹⁴ Osamu Dazai, *Otogizōshi* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha), p. 326.

⁵⁹⁵ Osamu Dazai, *Otogizōshi* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha), p. 328. ['**giving hope to an old man of 300 years of age sounds like a joke in poor taste.**'] (my translation).

⁵⁹⁶ Osamu Dazai, *Otogizōshi* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha), p. 329. (my translation).

⁵⁹⁷ Osamu Dazai, *Otogizōshi* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha), p. 330. (my translation).

⁵⁹⁸ Osamu Dazai, *Otogizōshi* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha), p. 330. ['**There is a measure of salvation in the passing of time. There is a measure of salvation in oblivion.**'] (my translation).

Furthermore, the sense of displacement experienced by Urashima-tarō upon discovering that 300 years have passed since he first arrived in the Dragon Palace mirrors that of the people living in postwar Japan, an element that is also central in Sakaguchi Ango's literature. In addition, an alternative reading of Dazai's rewriting of the legend of Urashima-tarō – and one that the author hints at through sarcasm and irony – raises the point that Urashima's demise was caused by his own curiosity and greed. Urashima-tarō is also mentioned in *Yumetsukai*, where Swami - an Indian immigrant - brings Matthew to his *sensei* (先生)⁵⁹⁹ named Urashima Tarō. Shimada's Urashima Tarō is a *clochard* who was once part of the Red Army (日本赤軍, *Nihon Sekigun*),⁶⁰⁰ and who claims to be one of the disgraced Heike from the old times now dreaming of bringing the descendants of the Heike back together.⁶⁰¹ Thus, similarly to Dazai's Urashima, Shimada's character lives in the fantasy of a glorious past and with the only hope that said glorious past may come back.

6.2 Gothic Echoes in the narrative of Japanese monsters.

In line with Komatsu's approach and to reiterate on the potential of the monstrous to embody the sense of displacement caused by the inherent instability of the postwar/contemporary world, in recent decades Neo-Pop artists such as Murakami Takashi have been reimaging the Japanese supernatural beings. The monsters, both old and new, are seen as representations of identity and national culture, which aligns itself with an interpretation of popular cultures and

⁵⁹⁹ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 125.

⁶⁰⁰ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 328.

⁶⁰¹ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 326.

postwar subcultures as a metaphor for a paradoxical, dual nature of Japan.⁶⁰² This theme is recurrent in famous manga and anime franchise, such as Masamune Shirow's *Kōkaku Kidōtai/The Ghost in the Shell*.

Such paradoxical nature can already be viewed in the fundamentals of the political system in postwar Japan, which are based on the conundrum of a 'symbolic emperor system combined with liberal democracy',⁶⁰³ two elements whose complementarity in postwar Japan seemed to be found by Sakaguchi Ango in stating that 'the emperor is necessary for both the manipulative aspect and for the "noble duty" aspect of politics.'⁶⁰⁴ Indeed such the presence of the Emperor still carries out these two functions during the Occupation. Thus Tatsumi Takayuki proposes that in the popular imaginary 'just as the emperor has survived postwar life as a cyborgian chimaera, so too have the Japanese people all become cyborgs [...]transforming a once divine nation into a monstrously hybrid one.'⁶⁰⁵ In addition to its already unstable political position under the *de facto* official ruling of the American army, led by General MacArthur, Japan was also grappling with the trauma caused by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Because of their complexities, these issues have rarely been openly discussed. However, echoes of them can be found in subcultures such as the *otaku* scene, and in media like anime, manga, light novels, and video games.⁶⁰⁶ Moreover, in the aftermath of the war and the end of the Occupation, the process of reevaluating Japan's imperial past, to align it with the American narrative, was also taking place causing a shift in the political and

⁶⁰² Toshio Miyake, 'Mostri made in Japan. Orientalismo e auto-orientalismo nell'era della globalizzazione', in *Culture del Giappone contemporaneo: Manga, anime, videogiochi, arti visive, cinema, letteratura, teatro, architettura*, ed. by Matteo Casari (Latina: Tunué, 2011), 165-97. (p. 174).

⁶⁰³ Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full metal Apache: transactions between cyberpunk Japan and avant-pop America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 200), p. 25.

⁶⁰⁴ Sakaguchi, Ango, 'Discourse on Decadence', trans. By Seiji M. Lippit, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, 1 (1986), 1-5 (p.3).

⁶⁰⁵ Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full metal Apache: transactions between cyberpunk Japan and avant-pop America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 200), p. 25.

⁶⁰⁶ Toshio Miyake, 'Mostri made in Japan. Orientalismo e auto-orientalismo nell'era della globalizzazione', in *Culture del Giappone contemporaneo: Manga, anime, videogiochi, arti visive, cinema, letteratura, teatro, architettura*, ed. by Matteo Casari (Latina: Tunué, 2011), 165-97. (p. 174-75)

cultural rhetoric. For example, the ‘ ideology of pan-Asianism to camouflage [the Japanese] imperial ambitions’,⁶⁰⁷ which was prevalent until the end of the war, was transformed into a celebration of Japan's uniqueness following its economic and technological achievements. However, the two seemingly opposing narratives aim to establish a sense of continuity in order to downplay the perception of the mentioned change occurring. Specifically, according to Harootunian, the emphasis on the idea of uniqueness implies ‘the ceaseless effort to persuade Japanese that they have not yet become anything other than what they have been since the beginning of time in a world where everything else is changing.’⁶⁰⁸ This process also affects the portrayal of WWII in the Japanese context. Japanese war memories became ‘encoded in everyday culture’ under three main narrative groups:⁶⁰⁹ the first one attempts to preserve a connection between the present and the former generations by pointing at the heroism of the people who fought during the war whose sacrifice granted today’s peace and wealth; the second group focuses on the violence perpetrated against the Japanese people, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki; finally the third group opposes the second one by portraying Japan as the perpetrator of violence, especially against its former colonies.⁶¹⁰ The expression “America’s Japan” – of which this study provided a definition in chapter 1 – perfectly summarises the second of Hashimoto Akiko’s narratives, since it not only portrays Japan as a wronged nation that had been kept ignorant of the principles of democracy and because of this became the victim of a tragic conflict but also implies that as a *de facto* American cultural colony Japan was subjected to a foreign oppressive power limiting Japan’s political and military independence through the US-Japan security treaty. Such a point was at

⁶⁰⁷ Kōichi Iwabuchi, ‘Japanese popular culture and postcolonial desire for “Asia”’, in in *Popular culture, globalization and Japan*, ed. by M. Allen and R. Sakamoto (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 15-35 (p.20).

⁶⁰⁸ H.D. Harootunian, ‘America’s Japan/Japan’s Japan’, in *Japan in the World*, ed. by Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 196-221 (p. 221).

⁶⁰⁹ Hashimoto, Akiko. *The long defeat: Cultural trauma, memory, and identity in Japan*. Oxford University Press, 2015. p.4.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.8.

the core of the anti-American protests in the 1960s. Therefore, since the portrayal of postwar and consequently contemporary Japan once again relies on the balance between representation and self-representation that has been a constant element in Japanese history since the creation of the *wakon yōsai*,⁶¹¹ Iwabuchi is evidently correct when he claims that ‘the complicity between Western Orientalism and Japan’s self-Orientalism effectively works only when Japanese cultural power in Asia is subsumed under Japan’s cultural subordination to the West—that is, when Japan’s peculiar position as the only modern, non-Western imperial/colonial power tends to be translated with a great skew toward Japan’s relation with the West.’⁶¹² Thus, with regards to Murakami’s art, it shows a ‘trans/national monsterring process shaping present Japan’,⁶¹³ in which the ‘monstrous’ becomes a metaphor of the contradictions of the Japanese national identity which always comes after the political and cultural hegemony of the US.⁶¹⁴ Such a perspective is mirrored in the contemporary neo-Orientalist narrative supporting the claims that ‘present Orientalism of Japan is mostly effective by inducing fascination for Japan as a cultural paradox or oxymoron.’⁶¹⁵ Additionally, this monstrous representation of Japan opposes the tendency of Japanese experts to look for ‘the beautiful, artistic, efficient Japan that they continue to believe in’,⁶¹⁶ rather echoing the portrayal of the country in several literary adjacent media such as popular Sci-Fi works like *AKIRA* and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, but also more recent

⁶¹¹ ‘Japanese spirit, Western know-how’ (as defined by Alt in Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.299).

⁶¹² Kōichi Iwabuchi, *Recentring globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.7.

⁶¹³ Toshio Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone. Narrative, figure, egemonie della dis-locazione identitaria* (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2014), p.7.

⁶¹⁴ Toshio Miyake, ‘Mostri made in Japan. Orientalismo e auto-orientalismo nell’era della globalizzazione’, in *Culture del Giappone contemporaneo: Manga, anime, videogiochi, arti visive, cinema, letteratura, teatro, architettura*, ed. by Matteo Casari (Latina: Tunué, 2011), 165-97. (p. 175).

⁶¹⁵ Miyake, Toshio. ‘Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-Inventing the ‘West’ and ‘Japan’ in Mangaesque Popular Cultures” In. *Contemporary Japan Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition* ed. by Paolo Calvetti and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2015) pp. 93-116 (p.100).

⁶¹⁶ Alex Kerr, *Dogs and Demons The Fall of Modern Japan* (London: Penguin, 2001), p.7.

dark fantasy manga such as *Death Note* that focus on the dysfunctionality and sickness of the human society. On the one hand, this juxtaposition between the idea of an artistic classical Japan and a dysfunctional hypermodern one causes the portrayal and reception of Japan in the West to become a “non-identity”, referring to the ‘discrepancy between concepts and what they claim to represent.’⁶¹⁷ On the other hand, it emphasises the discrepancy between the way Japan portrays itself and its actual form, Murakami’s monsters, similarly to Masamune’s cyborgs, ultimately inhabit the liminal between the two.

The increasing popularity of works featuring supernatural creatures since the end of the Occupation – as in the case of the manga *Gegege no Kitaro* – shows a tendency to rationalise the long-term consequences of WWII on Japan through paranormal metaphors. Such a reaction to social unrest has already been seen in Victorian Britain in the late 1890s, when the British Empire’s power was rapidly declining as its role in the global political scene, already weakened by the crisis of the overseas markets, was being threatened by Germany and the US, the rebellion in the colonies and the rise of a new moral that started to condemn the colonial system as a whole.⁶¹⁸ The climate of uncertainty, the questioning of the ideals on which the Empire had been built, and the general feeling of social decay led to new fears and anxieties that became embodied by ‘Gothic monstrosity’ in works such as R. L. Stevenson’s *Olalla* (1885) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891).⁶¹⁹ Similarly, the popularity of manga, anime and light novels featuring monsters – either traditional Japanese monsters or reinterpretation of supernatural creatures from abroad, as is the case in Ishida Sui’s *Tokyo Ghoul* – or monstrous characters has yet to fade.

The Oscar for Best Animation features awarded to Miyazaki’s *Sen to Chihiro no*

⁶¹⁷ Carl Cassegård, *Shock and naturalization in contemporary Japanese literature* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2007), p.215.

⁶¹⁸ Byron, Glennis. ‘Gothic in the 1890s.’, in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2012), 186-196 (p.186).

⁶¹⁹ Byron, Glennis. ‘Gothic in the 1890s.’, in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2012), 186-196 (p.187).

Kamikakushi (千と千尋の神隠し 2001, *Spirited Away*) in 2001, simultaneously confirmed the popularity of Japanese animation in the US and sparked a newfound interest in Japanese folklore across the Pacific. The success of Miyazaki's movie abroad at the time of its release was partly due to the fact that, it 'maintain[s] a distinctly Japanese aesthetic without demanding any particular knowledge of Japanese culture to enjoy them.'⁶²⁰ Therefore while the awarding of *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* influenced several Hollywood blockbuster movies in the following years – most notably, Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (2003), which features a violent anime sequence, and American-produced "Japan-styled content" such as *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005-2009),⁶²¹ *Mononoke Hime*, the work Miyazaki released less than five years earlier did not share the same success abroad. The difference between the two lies in the fact that in the case of *Mononoke Hime*, Miyazaki presents a conflict between 'the realm of man and the creatures of Shintō myth'⁶²² which is rooted in the history of Japan. Frequent references to the Ainu people in the way the main character's tribe is portrayed are not obvious to the American audience. In addition, the mention of specific cultural elements has been erased in the English adaptation. For instance, when in one of the earlier scenes the main character, Ashitaka, after being accidentally cursed during a fight with a corrupted god, is forced to leave his people and travel westwards, one of the elders of the village complains that '大和との戦さに敗れこの地に潜んでから五百有余年今や大和の王の力は萎え一将軍どもの牙も折れたと聞くだが我が一族の血もまた衰えた。この時に一族の長となるべき若者が西へ旅立つのは運命かもしれぬ.'⁶²³

⁶²⁰ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.221.

⁶²¹ Ibid. p.221.

⁶²² Timothy Perper and Martha Cornog, *Mangatopia: essays on manga and anime in the modern world*. (Santa Barbara and Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2011), p.62.

⁶²³ *Mononoke Hime*, dir. by Hayao Miyazaki 1997 (scene starting at remaining 2:04:21). Netflix. Literally translates as [**It has been more than 500 years since we lost the battle with Yamato and lurked in this land. Now, even though we hear that the power of the king of Yamato has withered, and the fangs of the lords have broken, the blood of our clan has also gotten thinner. At this time, it must be fate that the youngster who was supposed to become the head of the clan has to leave for the West.**'] (my translation).

However, the English translation makes no mention of Yamato, the ancient name of Japan, instead it says ‘we are the last of the Emishi. It’s been 500 hundred years since the emperor destroyed our tribe and drove the remnants of our people to the east. Some managed to survive here for all these years, but our tribe’s blood has grown thinner and weaker with each generation. Now our last prince must cut his hair and leave us, never to return? Sometimes I think the gods are laughing at us.’⁶²⁴ By making the English translation as disjointed from the history of Japan as possible without erasing the mention of the Emishi, it produces in the audience a feeling that the tale is happening in a whimsical world populated with emperors and princes and supernatural creatures whose origins do not need to be explained. Conversely, once the title itself provides a clear indication of the link of the story to the Shintō through the use of the word *Mononoke*.

Even two decades after their release, Miyazaki’s works continue to gather popularity in the US – arguably only partly because of this kind of translations that aimed to make the film accessible to an audience without further knowledge of Japanese culture and more because of the easy access to the movies provided by streaming platforms – *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* and *Mononoke Hime* are still among the influential works that sparked a newfound interest in fantasy stories populated by Japanese supernatural creatures beyond Japan.

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

6.3 Metaphorical monsters: *Yōkai*, hybrids, and *kodoku* in literary adjacent media.

The success of *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* shows that animation provides an interesting means to export traditional elements, or a representation of them, across the Pacific. The reception of *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* indicates that in the early 2000s, the American audience's interest was expanding to include a wider range of Japanese products. This was in addition to the already successful dystopian ones like *AKIRA*, which happened to be the first manga to ‘get a marquee in American comic-book stores.’⁶²⁵ Other popular genres in the US included *mecha*, featuring big robots as seen in the *Gundam* series and *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, and Sci-Fi anime focused on androids that closely resemble humans, such as Masamune’s *Kōkaku Kidōtai/The Ghost in the Shell*. In contrast, *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* presented the audience with a variety of ‘creatures inspired by local folklore and religion.’⁶²⁶ Similarly to the case of *Mononoke Hime*, the original Japanese title foreshadows the folkloric element by using the term *kamikakushi* (神隠), which combines the characters for "god" (神, *kami*) and "hiding" (隠し, *kakushi*) to convey a sense of being hidden or kidnapped by the gods. This connotation is preserved in the English translation “spirited away”.⁶²⁷

The story revolves around Chihiro, a 10-year-old who ends up working in an otherworldly bathhouse in the spirit realm (隠り世, *kakuriyo*) where she lives side by side with fantastical creatures in order to save her parents. It is noteworthy that albeit these creatures ‘may appear to be in the tradition of classic folklore, a hallmark of folkloric fantasy, they are, in fact,

⁶²⁵ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.212.

⁶²⁶ Ibid. p.220.

⁶²⁷ As opposed for example to the Italian translation ‘La città incantata’ (The enchanted city) which lacks any hint of the presence of folklore-inspired elements preferring to reference the whimsical dimension of the story.

almost entirely Miyazaki's creations.⁶²⁸ Furthermore, the movie's success influenced more the reception of this kind of stories across the Pacific than in Japan, where folkloric fantasy works and works centring around myths and legends were already popular. For example, Watase Yuu's *Ayashi no Ceres* (妖しのセレス) was published between 1996 and 2000 when an anime adaption was released, but Watase is perhaps better remembered abroad for her other work *Fushigi Yūgi* (ふしぎ遊戯, 1991-1996), which instead is set in a fantastical world reminiscent of imperial China. More recent works following the same trend are Suzuki Julietta's *Kamisama Hajimemashita*, Fujiwara Cocoa's *Inu x Boku Secret Service* (hereafter *Inu x Boku*), and Yuma Midori's *Kakuriyo no Yadomeshi*. Among these *Kakuriyo no Yadomeshi*, shares the most similarities with *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, since the story starts with a *kamikakushi*, as the protagonist, Aoi, a human girl who has an ancestral link with *yōkai*, is taken away to the world of the spirits (かくりよ) where she finds out that her late grandfather had promised her as wife to the Odanna, an *oni* (鬼) who is also the owner of an inn reminiscent of Chihiro's bathhouse both visually and thematically. As opposed to Miyazaki's movie, the inn in *Kakuriyo no Yadomeshi* is inhabited by actual mythological creatures, in addition to the *oni*, also *kitsune* (狐), *tanuki* (狸), *tengu* (天狗), *yuki onna* (雪女), and others. A common element in folkloric fantasy is that the two worlds interact with each other. Ultimately they function as mirror images, as one cannot exist without the other.⁶²⁹ In addition, 'the worlds of folkloric fantasy, be they reflections of reality or secondary worlds, are inextricably linked to a spiritual realm that shares the same characteristics as the other realm described in Shintō myth and featured throughout classic

⁶²⁸ Timothy Perper and Martha Cornog, *Mangatopia: essays on manga and anime in the modern world*. (Santa Barbara and Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2011) p.64.

⁶²⁹ Timothy Perper and Martha Cornog, *Mangatopia: essays on manga and anime in the modern world*. (Santa Barbara and Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2011) p.63.

Japanese folklore.⁶³⁰ For example, the narrative of *Kamisama Hajimemashita* is rooted into the Shintō as she focuses on the personal growth of Nanami, a human girl who accidentally becomes the god of a temple where she has to live with a *kitsune* named Tomoe and other mythological creatures such as a *tengu*. *Inu X Boku Secret Service* has a slightly darker tone which includes tragic deaths and reincarnations, as the story follows a group of young adults whose ancestors were *yōkai*. Thus, the main characters all show supernatural features which make it impossible for them to live among human beings. However, because of their human blood, they cannot survive among the *yōkai* either. *Inu X Boku* provides a significant example of the way the coexistence of human and spirit in folkloric fantasy is often used as a plot device to build up a narrative of loneliness and alienation. In addition, such elements are also present in *Kakuriyo no Yadomeshi*, even though is mostly intended as a light-hearted, slice-of-life story. Nonetheless, because of her ability to interact with *yōkai*, the main character, Aoi's childhood is marked by her mother's neglect and ultimately abandonment, and the constant struggle with the supernatural presence that she alone can perceive, while being unable to fit among the humans. Then, as an orphaned adult with no blood relatives, she lives as a human being among supernatural creatures where she is often discriminated against. Thus, even though she is aware of being human, to a certain degree she still is a hybrid experiencing an existence in a constant in-between.

In several speculative literary-adjacent media, the representation of mythological creatures in the human world refers to a heterogeneous society in contrast to the idea of social homogeneity. In this sense, *Tokyo Ghoul* is especially significant, since it follows Kaneki, a half-human and half-ghoul hybrid main character – referred to as *sekigan no gūru* (隻眼の喰

⁶³⁰ Ibid. p.63.

種, one-eyed Ghoul), –⁶³¹ as he grapples with his situation in a world in which ghouls and humans struggle to coexist. As this study mentioned in Chapter 3, Kaneki’s reality is rooted in a binary system opposing ghouls and humans on the basis that ghouls need to feed from human flesh to survive. As natural-born ghouls are rumoured to be incompatible with life, Kaneki acquires his status as a one-eyed ghoul after a medical procedure. Unbeknownst to him the ghoul organs implanted in his body permanently turned him into a hybrid. Upon realising that he is now dependent on feeding on human flesh, he has to acknowledge his loss of humanity and accept his new identity. Kaneki's first reaction to his condition is self-destruction as he attempts to remove himself from a world in which he feels that he has no place anymore. While such a reaction is reminiscent of Naoji's suicide in response to his inability to discard his aristocratic background, Kaneki also shares the experience of having to accept that he is not fit to be human anymore with Yōzō. Kaneki’s similarities with Dazai’s characters are foreshadowed in the first chapter of the manga in which Kaneki – who incidentally is specialising in Japanese literature – quotes *Shayō*. The mention of the particular line that represents the very essence of Kazuko – ‘私は確信したい人間は恋と革命の為に生まれてきたのだ’⁶³² – both anticipates Kaneki's attempt to live to defy the general idea that humans and ghouls cannot exist as allies as well as his struggle to hold on to what remains of his humanity. Meeting Mr Yoshimura, the owner of the café that he used to frequent as a human who is also a ghoul who was once married to a human girl, Kaneki expresses his despair at the thought that he is now neither a ghoul nor a human. As he states that ‘僕は孤独だ・・・つ。僕の居場所なんてどこにもない’⁶³³ it is noteworthy that –

⁶³¹ Sui Ishida, *Tokyo Ghoul*, I (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2012), p. 47.

⁶³² Sui Ishida, *Tokyo Ghoul*, I (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2012), p. 21, [‘I want to believe that humans are born for love and revolution.’] (my translation).

⁶³³ Sui Ishida, *Tokyo Ghoul*, I (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2012), p. 215. [‘I am utterly alone... I don’t have a place in this world’] (my translation).

to describe Kaneki's perception of his own situation as a newborn hybrid – Ishida uses the term *kodoku* with the furigana *hitori* (ひとり), meaning “alone”. This emphasises the different nuances between the two expressions further highlighting that the loneliness Kaneki experiences stems from not fitting into the human/ghoul binarism. However, he is shown an alternative path by Mr Yoshimura, who acknowledges that Kaneki is not “neither”, rather he is “both”. On the one hand, this dialogue is very reminiscent of Ichiro's monologue about his being only half-American when he used to believe that he was entirely Japanese, concluding that he is neither Japanese nor American. On the other hand, it also shares some similarities with the condition of the main characters in *Inu x Boku*, whose heritage makes them neither human nor *yōkai*. Thus, regarding speculative hybridity, such as that described by Ishida and Fujiwara as a metaphor for the theme of cultural hybridity addressed by authors such as Okada, emphasises that the speculative nature of the literary-adjacent media analysed in this work does not detract from them being relevant in studies on cultural hybridity.

6.4 A *Kitsune* Across the Pacific: the influence of the literature adjacent media in the rewriting of the Japanese myths in the US.

Narratives involving conflicts between human and supernatural creatures involving human hybrids are indeed not rare in Japanese speculative popular fiction from the 2000s onwards, and especially in literary-adjacent media. For instance, in addition to Kaneki in *Tokyo Ghoul*, Allen Walker the main character in Hoshino Katsura's manga series *D-Gray Man* (ディーグレイマン, 2004 -ongoing) is part *akuma* in a world where *akuma* are considered the enemies, furthermore in Hino Matsuri's *Vampire Knight* (ヴァンパイア騎士, 2004-13), after being bitten by a vampire as a child, the vampire hunter Zero struggles to keep himself

from feeding on human blood which would finally turn him into a complete vampire. The popularity of such stories confirms a deep appreciation from such narrative. In addition, since the three aforementioned works have all been translated into multiple languages and their anime adaptations licensed for streaming outside of Japan and/or available in DVD, it is clear that such appreciation is shared by the international audience. Anime's popularity increased in the US in the 80s with the help of VHS, then cable television and finally the internet.⁶³⁴ But, in the aftermath of the Occupation, the Japanese cultural scene in comparison has been showing a tendency to be more American-oriented for decades. For example, '[t]he Japanese media is notably America-centered, partly because U.S. military bases still occupy enormous plots of an already crowded archipelago, and partly because America has a position as role model for the postwar generation.'⁶³⁵ In this regard, Murakami Ryū discusses in *69 Sixty-nine*, how the presence of American military bases close to his hometown, Sasebo, influenced his adolescence. Having been a teenager in the 60s, Murakami mentions the way his generation was familiar with and fascinated by American music and American literature, such as Led Zeppelin and Kerouac. While in the 60s the Occupation had already ended, American military bases, together with the diplomatic personnel, still meant a large American presence in the archipelago. The US import from Japan instead began to increase from the late 70s with items such as cars – mainly Toyota and Honda – and in the span of three decades started including new technological items – such as the Walkman – Sanrio products – the most well-known of which is the Hello Kitty brand - and finally video games, manga and anime, such as *Power Rangers*, *Voltron*, *Pokemon*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and, *Sailor Moon*.⁶³⁶ The years following the burst of the bubble, the 90s, known as the lost decades, while damaging

⁶³⁴ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), p.206

⁶³⁵ Roland Kelts, *Japanamerica: How Japanese pop culture has invaded the US*. St. Martin's Press, 2006. p.4.

⁶³⁶ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), pp. 6-7.

the image of the miracle of the postwar Japanese economic and technological growth,⁶³⁷ also brought Japanese culture to ‘explode outwardly.’⁶³⁸ Thus, if from an exclusively economic perspective, the years after the burst of the bubble have been characterised by paralysis they also provided the cultural inspiration that led to the success of J Culture. During the “lost decades”, Japanese video games – for example, *Final Fantasy VII* – and store chains such as Muji and Uniqlo became more and more popular in the US. In the literary field, those years saw the international publishing market acquire the rights for translations of Murakami Haruki’s works.

The main difference between the technologies available in the 80s and those available today lies with the language of the anime exported abroad. VHS as well as cable television used to allow the audience to watch only English dubbed programmes.⁶³⁹ This changed with the internet and the diffusion of ADSL first and streaming platforms such as Netflix and Crunchyroll later. Subbed anime has become available for consumption on the internet since the 2000s, while it was not easy for non-Japanese speakers to access such products legally, streaming websites, which incidentally offered the option for download, were well-known among anime enthusiasts and Japanese language students, despite the safety risks and ethical dilemmas. Subs were usually provided by amateur translators who managed to apply the skills they were learning in order to gain some experience. Despite the issues with illegal websites, as Roland Kelts states ‘online translators, as bad as they may be, have helped ease the transition between languages on both sides, Japanese and non-Japanese.’⁶⁴⁰ In addition to making Japanese animation in Japanese more accessible to a non-Japanese audience outside

⁶³⁷ Alex Kerr, *Dogs and Demons The Fall of Modern Japan* (London: Penguin, 2001), p.100.

⁶³⁸ Matt Alt, *Pure Invention: How Japan's Pop Culture Conquered the World* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021), pp. 6-7.

⁶³⁹ Or in a different target language depending on which country the viewer was in. Furthermore, in the early 1990s, Italy for example, had a different history with anime. Already in the 80s and early 90s, it was common for even small TV broadcasters to show anime without the need for cable TV. However, they too used to be dubbed in Italian.

⁶⁴⁰ Roland Kelts <https://www.crunchyroll.com/en-gb/anime-feature/2020/09/15/interview-roland-kelts-on-fantasy-worlds-and-the-impact-of-streaming> accessed May 25, 2022

of Japan, streaming platforms also encourage the creation of a “hybrid space” that Kelts calls *JAPANAMERICA*. Furthermore, the international success of streaming platforms is influencing the market of animation to invest in the rebooting of older products, such as Nagai Go’s 1972 *Devilman*.⁶⁴¹ The access to a wider selection of anime and other audiovisual media in Japanese allows the non-Japanese-speaking audience to gradually become familiar with certain parts of the language. Honorifics, for example, are among the first fragments of the language that American English speakers memorise and use in a language contact situation, as Norman has discussed in his analysis of Bamboo English. As previously mentioned, he stated that Bamboo English acquired and preserved the pronunciation and usage of the ‘respectful title *san*’ as it was attached to English words creating a set of new terminology.⁶⁴² Other lexical items that are easily introduced to non-Japanese speakers are specific words whose translation is not always deemed necessary, such as the names of folklore creatures. For instance, the *kitsune*, or fox spirit.

In the last years, the *kitsune* has become a popular character in manga, anime, and light novels where it is often referred to as a *yōkai*. Thus, it has become popular even across the Pacific, as it is attested by the success of Kagawa’s trilogy *Shadow of the Fox*. The trilogy presents an interesting case study in the field of trans-Pacific cultural studies, as it attests to a trans-medial interconnection between literary-adjacent media and literature. The narrative involves several characters directly inspired by Japanese folklore creatures – in addition to the *kitsune*, also *tanuki* and *yorōgumo* (絡新婦, *yōkai* who are part-woman, part-spider) – and a vivid setting inspired by popular anime or anime-based western animation. In terms of plot and structure, the trilogy balances Western fantasy elements reminiscent of the classics, such as J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* – for instance, the mission of destroying a

⁶⁴¹ Roland Kelts <https://www.crunchyroll.com/en-gb/anime-feature/2020/09/15/interview-roland-kelts-on-fantasy-worlds-and-the-impact-of-streaming> accessed May 25, 2022

⁶⁴² Arthur M. Z. Norman, ‘Bamboo English the Japanese Influence upon American Speech In Japan’, *American Speech*, 30 (1955), 44-48 (p.45).

dangerous artefact – with others more akin to the Chinese *Wuxia* and *Xianxia* novels, such as Jin Yong’s *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* (射鵬英雄傳), which tend to focus on revenge plots, politics, and cultivation.⁶⁴³ References to the *Wuxia* and *Xianxia* genres can be detected in the portrayal of Kagawa’s male protagonist, Tatsumi, a disciple of the Kage Clan.⁶⁴⁴ The structure and purpose of the clan are reminiscent of the “sections” upon which the societies in *Xianxia* and *Wuxia* novels are built. Tatsumi’s mission in Kagawa’s novel is to find the missing pieces of the “Scroll of a Thousand Prayers”, an artefact that is said to be able to grant the wish of whoever owns it. Unbeknownst to Tatsumi, the pieces are in possession of the main heroine with whom he ends up travelling around the Empire of Iwagoto.⁶⁴⁵ Yumeko, the main character is part-*kitsune* and part-human. She was raised by monks in a temple, isolated from the rest of the world, until, as the sole survivor of an attack, she has to step out into the world. As she struggles to succeed in her mission, Yumeko also struggles to come to terms with her hybrid nature. Not dissimilarly from Kaneki’s having to come to terms with his own hybridity after having been a human for most of his life, Yumeko – having been raised by humans – clings to her humanity to the point that she keeps telling herself that she is ‘still mostly human.’⁶⁴⁶ In the same way as Fujiwara’s main characters in *Inu x Boku*, Yumeko’s humanity causes her to be discriminated against by other supernatural beings on account of her being ‘just a pathetic little half fox.’⁶⁴⁷ However, humans who openly despise her *kitsune* heritage seeing it as a product of evil.⁶⁴⁸ Thus, it is clear that Kagawa’s narrative does not stray too far from the one popular in anime, from which the popularity of the *kitsune*

⁶⁴³ *Wuxia* and *Xianxia* refer to fantasy stories based on Taoism and Martial Arts. Broadly speaking, while *Wuxia* focuses more on human warriors with supernatural martial arts skills, *Xianxia* introduces characters who have cultivated enough to achieve immortality. Among the supernatural creatures present in the novels are gods, ghosts and demons.

⁶⁴⁴ *Kage* sounds like the Japanese term for Shadow ‘影’.

⁶⁴⁵ Compared to the names in Sullivan’s *The Mikado*, which did not sound Japanese in the least, Iwagoto sounds more similar to a Japanese word.

⁶⁴⁶ Julie Kagawa, *Shadow of the Fox* (London: HarperCollins, 2018), p.75.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 148.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p.75.

originates. Among the folklore creatures rewritten in literary-adjacent media, the *kitsune* is one of the most popular across genres. References to the kitsune are not only present in folklore-inspired anime, such as *Kakuriyo no Yadomeshi* and *Inu x Boku* but also in the reimagining of other supernatural creatures. For example, in Ishida's work, once his transition into a ghoul is complete, Kaneki shares several features with other characters that are instead introduced as *kitsune*. Much like Shinji in *Kakuriyo no Yadomeshi*, Kaneki is portrayed wearing silvery white hair, and the tentacles of his *kagune* (the ghoul predatory organ) are similar to the *kitsune*'s tails. In addition, Kaneki possesses several characteristics that can be found in old stories centred around fox spirits, such as their cleverness and ability to adapt to the external world through metamorphosis.

The *kitsune* was originally featured in many Japanese legends, sharing specific traits with the Chinese *Huxian* and the Korean *Gumiho*. The *Konjaku Monogatari* (今昔物語集) – which supposedly dates back to the transition period between the Heian era and the Kamakura period, around the XII century⁶⁴⁹ is one of the first written texts where the *kitsune* is mentioned.⁶⁵⁰ In its original form, the *kitsune* is a *yōkai*, even though Miyake considers it a *bakemono*, or a thing that transforms,⁶⁵¹ because of its shapeshifting abilities. It is also able to create illusions. In some of the old legends, it is portrayed as being able to change into a beautiful woman in order to trick men, as described by Lafcadio Hearn in his work *Glimpses of an unusual Japan* (1894), where he states ‘the favourite shape assumed by the goblin fox for the purpose of deluding mankind is that of a beautiful woman.’⁶⁵² On the

⁶⁴⁹ Boscaro, Adriana. *Letteratura giapponese. I. Dalle origini alle soglie dell'età moderna*. Torino, Einaudi, 2005. p.67

⁶⁵⁰ Nozaki, Kiyoshi. *Kitsune Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance & Humor*. Tokyo, The Hokuseido Press, 1961. p.22

⁶⁵¹ Toshio Miyake, ‘Mostri made in Japan. Orientalismo e auto-orientalismo nell'era della globalizzazione’, in *Culture del Giappone contemporaneo: Manga, anime, videogiochi, arti visive, cinema, letteratura, teatro, architettura*, ed. by Matteo Casari (Latina: Tunué, 2011), 165-97. (p. 170)

⁶⁵² Lafcadio Hearn, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, (Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing, 2011), chapter 15. Google Ebook.

other hand, the *kitsune* is also associated with Inari, the God of rice.⁶⁵³ Statues of white foxes, called Myobu, stand in the Inari Jinja in the Kyoto area and are said to represent the God Inari's messengers. The Myobu are not mischievous foxes (also referred to as *Nogitsune*), instead reining the misbehaving foxes in is one of their responsibilities.⁶⁵⁴

Arguably, Kagawa does not employ many elements from the legends, relying almost exclusively on the popular representation of the *kitsune* in manga and anime. Additionally, the trilogy introduces fantastical creatures which ultimately do not aim to portray Japan authentically, nor does the narrative rely on these creatures' ability to work as "deforming mirrors" to make non-Japanese audiences acknowledge the nature of their own projections of monsters, therefore on the 'Japanese other.'⁶⁵⁵ Indeed, as in the case of Miyazaki's *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, the anime inspired setting and vocabulary does not require a deep knowledge of Japanese culture or language to enjoy the narrative. Especially in terms of the Japanese lexicon, it mostly consists of words that are frequently used in anime, but that do not provide a helpful set of everyday expressions for Japanese learners. For example, when after a mission gone wrong, Tatsumi finds himself being scolded and hit by his superiors, they address him as "*Bakamono*."⁶⁵⁶ In this case, the Japanese element represented by the word *bakamono* (idiot, stupid) is emphasised only by the use of italics, there is no script alternation, and no translation is provided in the text. Regardless, words such as *baka* or *bakamono* – both sharing the same meaning in this case – are so often used in anime that even non-Japanese speakers can easily recognize it. For instance, in *Bungō Stray Dogs* season 1 episode 2, Dazai shouts 'ばか!' (*baka*) as Atsushi – his protegee – is potentially doing

⁶⁵³ Davis, F. Handland. *Myths and legends of Japan*. New York, Dover Publication, 1992.

⁶⁵⁴ Nozaki, Kiyoshi. *Kitsune Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance & Humor*. Tokyo, The Hokuseido Press, 1961. p.15.

⁶⁵⁵ Toshio Miyake, 'Mostri made in Japan. Orientalismo e auto-orientalismo nell'era della globalizzazione', in *Culture del Giappone contemporaneo: Manga, anime, videogiochi, arti visive, cinema, letteratura, teatro, architettura*, ed. by Matteo Casari (Latina: Tunué, 2011), 165-97. (p. 168)

⁶⁵⁶ Julie Kagawa, *Shadow of the Fox* (London: HQ, 2018) p.59.

something unwise and ultimately risking his life.⁶⁵⁷ In another instance, one of the monks tells Yumeko that ‘[t]he path to Jigoku is lined with honorable intentions.’⁶⁵⁸ This is easily recognizable as a slightly modified version of the popular saying “the path to hell is lined with good intention”, which is strongly rooted in Christian morals. Indeed, the Japanese word *jigoku* (地獄) can be translated as “hell”. Because the original saying is so popular, it is easy for a reader who does not speak Japanese to understand the general meaning. By alternating Japanese words with their English translations and replacing English words with their Japanese translations, occasionally using exclamations that are frequently used in anime such as the impolite *bakamono* (バカ者) or the popular *itai*, (痛い), Kagawa creates the illusion of a bilingual narrative. However, as a stylistic device, the use of Japanese expressions helps the author to make the setting more vivid and recognizable for the reader. It is noteworthy that – since this lexicon is borrowed from audiovisual media – this is arguably more effective when the novels are listened to rather than read, as in the case of audiobooks. In fact, by providing the listener with the sound of the Japanese words embedded in the novels, audiobooks make use of a more familiar way for non-Japanese speakers and Japanese learners to comprehend Japanese words. Even when watching subbed anime, the audience is not exposed to the written language as much as to the spoken language, this has been also seen in academic environments with students learning Japanese as a second language. For example, Sugihara Saki and Kiso Miyako claim that students taking part in the advanced-level reading program at the University of Hamburg in 2014 show that ‘they have had little opportunity to analyse spoken language in written form, more specifically, to deduce a character’s profile from a certain sentence-ending style or review grammatical rule of spoken Japanese.’⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁷ *Bungō Stray Dogs* S1 ep.2, dir. by Igarashi Takuya 2016 (scene starting at 00:17:20). Crunchyroll.

⁶⁵⁸ Julie Kagawa, *Shadow of the Fox* (London: HQ, 2018) p.41.

⁶⁵⁹ Saki Sugihara and Miyako Kiso, ‘Reading Lessons for Advanced -Level Learners Using Modern Japanese Literature’, in *New Steps in Japanese studies: Kobe University Joint Research*, ed. by Nobuo Kazashi and Marcella Mariotti (Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, 2017), pp.99-130 (p.113).

Ultimately, *Shadows of the Fox*, similarly, to works like *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, rather than being inspired by “Japan”, is instead inspired by the merging of Japanese culture with the American view of Japan that appeals to – in Matt Alt’s words – the “Japanese fantasies” of the American audience. Thus, Yumeko is never a 狐, because she is always a *Kitsune*. Such dissonance in the graphic aspect of the word anticipates that, even though Kagawa’s character reminds of the representations of the *kitsune* in older anime and manga, she subverts certain aspects. For example, in Japanese folklore, the fox’s human form is a disguise,⁶⁶⁰ but in Kagawa’s work, Yumeko’s truest form is that of a human girl with fox-like ears and eyes. Thus, it is significant that Kagawa does not transfer the Fox Spirit from Japan to the West, instead, it rewrites the myth so that the *kitsune* can be recognized alongside other popular shapeshifters in the Western fantastical imaginary, such as the *werewolf*.

6.5 Globalising Japanese literature through media: Asagiri Kafka and the literary stray dogs.

In recent years, popular culture has played a central role in exporting certain aspects of Japanese culture and language abroad through the increasing popularity of manga, anime, and light novels. This study has previously addressed the point that the portrayal of Japan provided by such media is the product of the combined forces of western neo-*Japonisme* and Japanese self-orientalism. Nonetheless, it paradoxically offers a measure of authenticity precisely because of this. For example, Akihabara in Tokyo is built around the imaginary created by those same media whose representation of Japan relies on the imagined construct

⁶⁶⁰ Nozaki, Kiyoshi. *Kitsune Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance & Humor*. Tokyo, The Hokuseido Press, 1961. p.26

originated by neo-*Japonisme* and self-orientalism thus it provides an example of the metafictional paradox of authentic representation. Certainly, in recent years, the dismay that the Nobel prize laureate Ōe Kenzaburo shared about the fact that ‘[Japanese] cultural life is unknown [to the world]’⁶⁶¹ has been consistently addressed among academics in the field. Japanese nuanced culture is being progressively acknowledged and acknowledged by the world; however Japanese literature has not yet been given its rightful place in the world literary canon. In particular, its interconnections with other literary canons, and other languages have yet to be fully acknowledged.

The expression “world literature”, originally introduced by Goethe in 1827, has an ambiguous connotation, as ‘the term itself does not state whether it encompasses all the literature of the world, or only a certain kind of literature’.⁶⁶² Thus ‘it tends to be construed as dominated by writing in English, and, to a lesser extent but still significantly, by a few other hegemonic European languages (particularly French and Spanish)’,⁶⁶³ therefore the corpus of world literature has been traditionally intended as a literature written in English either by default or through translation.⁶⁶⁴ This explains at least in part why studies on Japanese literature as world literature are so underrepresented. However, the increasing appreciation and academic interest for multilingual and translingual literatures show that the traditional ‘monolingual’ national approach, on which the very university system is based, is fairly quickly becoming outdated favouring a comparatist approach.⁶⁶⁵ This is affecting the very

⁶⁶¹ As quoted by Iwabuchi in Kōichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.2.

⁶⁶² Thomsen, Mads Rosendahl. *Mapping world literature: International canonization and transnational literatures*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008) p.2.

⁶⁶³ Jane Hiddlestone and Wen-chin Ouyang, ‘Introduction: Multilingual Literature as World Literature’, in *Multilingual literature as world literature*, ed. by Jane Hiddlestone and Wen-chin Ouyang (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 1-10 (p.3).

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.3.

⁶⁶⁵ See: Eike Sturm-Trigonakis, ‘Comparative Cultural Studies and Linguistic Hybridities in Literature’, in *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*, ed. by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India, 2013), pp. 178-191 (p.180). Jane Hiddlestone and Wen-chin Ouyang, ‘Introduction: Multilingual Literature as World Literature’, in

definition of world literature by introducing more varied forms of literary traditions in the global canon. In fact, as Steiner mentioned, '[m]uch of what became comparative literature programmes or departments in American academe arose from marginalization, from partial social and ethnic exclusion. [...] Comparative literature therefore carries within it both the virtuosity and the sadness of a certain exile'.⁶⁶⁶ Hence, from a comparative angle, world literature should aim to 'decenter the nation'.⁶⁶⁷

It is, however, necessary to acknowledge that the field of Japanese literary studies is still trying to juggle between the increasing success of a transnational corpus of works and a traditional national/monolingual approach to the subject, which stubbornly denies that 'what emerges through the process of globalization is not a uniform 'Global Culture', but increasing differences and complexity of locally inflected meanings due to hybridization and indigenization, which often contain conflicts and contradictions.'⁶⁶⁸ The fact that Shimada's writing style – which attempts to convey the fragmented nature of the global world – has been criticised in Japan for being 'as nebulous as an artistic nude that has been thrown in the shredder'⁶⁶⁹ resulting into just 'an empty sparkle'⁶⁷⁰ confirms that works that do not fit into the traditional national paradigm still inspire some confusion in both critics and scholars. Furthermore, the frequent references to non-Japanese cultural elements are seen as detracting from the impact that the novel might have on the audience. For example, Nibuya states that because 'Japan does not have a Catholic background' then Katagiri's discourse on God being

Multilingual literature as world literature, ed. by Jane Hiddlestone and Wen-chin Ouyang (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 1-10 (p.3). Thomsen, Mads Rosendahl. *Mapping world literature: International canonization and transnational literatures*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008) p.1.

⁶⁶⁶ George Steiner, *What is comparative literature?: An inaugural lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on 11 October, 1994* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p. 7.

⁶⁶⁷ Goyal, Yogita. 'Introduction: The transnational turn', in *The Cambridge companion to transnational American literature* ed. by Yogita Goyal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 1-13. (p. 1).

⁶⁶⁸ Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 'Introduction: Inside-out Japan? Popular culture and globalization in the context of Japan', in *Popular culture, globalization and Japan*, (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1-12 (p. 2).

⁶⁶⁹ Takshi Nibuya 'Kaisetsu', in Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), pp.432-440 (p. 434).

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 434.

nothing more than a friend falls flat when compared to Max Jacob's statement that God is just an aspirin.⁶⁷¹ But ironically, most of the religious references in *Yumetsukai* have been erased in Gabriel's 1992 translation, included the one about Matthew being a *kodukuna kami*, Gabriel instead translate the passage as 'he must be an open-minded sort of guy. But also, a lonely one.'⁶⁷² What instead is maintained in the translation is the expression *shikata ga nai* in the passage 'Kubi could only sigh and reach the stoical Japanese conclusion – shikata ga nai. "What choice do I have?"'.⁶⁷³ Except that in the original, the expression is used in the substantivised form *shōganasa* (しょうがなさ), originating from a different register, *shōganai* (しょうがない) rather than *shikata ga nai* (仕方がない), as the whole passage only says 'クビタケは "しょうがなさ"をもっと追求することはできるはずだった'⁶⁷⁴ without mentioning any sort of 'stoical Japaneseness' inherent to the expression. Indeed, Gabriel's translation is clearly still seeking the Japanese fantasies that were popular in the 1990s when Japanese culture was becoming popular in the US through alternative media such as manga, anime and games. Occurrences such as this one confirm Tatsumi's claim that 'the logic of hypercapitalism [...] requires us to throw away our bullshit ideas about causal relationship and to be confronted with the multinational synchronicity between "literature" and "paraliterature."⁶⁷⁵ Indeed, the success of anime and manga abroad contrasts with the virtual invisibility of literature. As Japan started being recognised as an economic superpower without cultural influence, in the late 1970s, the role of the so-called paraliterature – which I

⁶⁷¹ Ibid. p. 436.

⁶⁷² Masahiko Shimada, *Dream messenger*, trans. by Philip Gabriel (New York: Warner Books, 1994), p.35.

⁶⁷³ Masahiko Shimada, *Dream messenger*, trans. by Philip Gabriel (New York: Warner Books, 1994), p.52.

⁶⁷⁴ in Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p.82 ('All that Kubitake could do was resign himself to the fact that he "didn't have a choice"' [my translation].

⁶⁷⁵ Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full metal Apache: transactions between cyberpunk Japan and avant-pop America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 200), p. XV.

prefer to refer to as literary-adjacent media – gradually became central in popularising Japanese subcultures and language abroad.⁶⁷⁶

Scholars like Gergana E Ivanova rightfully refer to manga as ‘one of the most influential media’⁶⁷⁷ in this sense, but the practice of expanding the franchise of popular manga series to also include additional media such as light novels has become common enough that limiting this claim to manga is reductive. In her study Ivanova addresses the role of literary-adjacent media in ‘disseminating knowledge about Japan’s literary heritage’, however, she mainly refers to the practice of rewriting seminal works in the Japanese canon as manga.⁶⁷⁸ While she especially focuses on Sei Shōnagon’s *Makura no sōshi* (枕草子, XI century), it is worth mentioning that Murasaki Shikibu’s *Genji Monogatari* also has had several successful manga adaptations., and more recently between 2017 and 2018, horror manga author Junji Itō released his rewriting of Dazai’s *Ningen Shikkaku*. Although these are all notable works which certainly once translated have cooperated to familiarise international audiences, especially younger generations, with fundamental texts of Japanese literature, they do not serve the purpose of reassessing the position of the Japanese literary traditions in the global. This is instead the approach that Asagiri Kafka uses in his series *Bungō Stray Dogs*. As opposed to manga rewriting of literary classics, Asagiri centres his narrative around popular literary masters, *bungō* (文豪), whom he reimagines as heroes and villains clashing together, solving political conflicts, and saving the world from apocalypse. His characters share names and quirks with the authors they are named after. For instance, Dazai Osamu's favourite hobby is finding new ways to commit suicide and he even carries a book titled ‘完全自殺’,

⁶⁷⁶ Kōichi Iwabuchi, *Recentring globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.2.

⁶⁷⁷ Gergana E Ivanova, ‘Beyond “In Spring, the Dawn”. in *Japanese Language and Literature* 55, (2021), 243-274 (p. 243).

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 243.

'The Complete Guide to suicide'.⁶⁷⁹ Furthermore, in a speculative turn, the characters have supernatural abilities which are usually referred to by the titles of their real counterparts' most well-known works. For instance, Sakaguchi Ango's ability is named *daraku-ron* (墮落論, *On Decadence*) based on Ango's 1946 essay, while Yosano Akiko's ability's name is *Kimi Shinitamō Koto Nakare* (You Shall not die) based on Yosano's 1904 poem dedicated to her brother on the eve of the Russo-Japanese war, and Natsume Sōseki's ability that allows him to shapeshift into a cat is unsurprisingly named *Wagahaiha neko de aru* (吾輩は猫である, I am a cat) after his 1906 novel, moreover his cat form is called *sensei*, similarly to one of the main characters in his 1914 novel *Kokoro*. Asagiri's characterisation is not limited to the authors' biographies or anecdotes related to their lives, instead, he sometimes merges literary characters with the imaginary picture of the writers, this is the case of both Dazai Osamu and Nakahara Chūya. While the first is based on both the actual Dazai Osamu and his character Yōzō, with whom he shares a penchant for fake smiles and buffoonery, in the manga reimagining of Nakahara Chūya similar elements as Naoji from *Shayō* can be recognised. This is especially evident in the way the author conveys the character's speech patterns that move between extremely coarse language such as 'は・・・っ何云ってやがる！手前がこんなところで・・・'⁶⁸⁰ and more formal ones as in the case of '癩ですが...太幸の木偶が詛いを無効化してなければこの十倍は被害が出ていたかと.'⁶⁸¹ This is reminiscent of the way Naoji switches from his crass language to the posed one he uses in his suicide note.

Furthermore, in Asagiri's series Nakahara Chūya addresses Ōzaki Kōyō – portrayed as a

⁶⁷⁹ *Bungō Stray Dogs* S1 ep.1, dir. by Igarashi Takuya 2016 (scene starting at 00:14:20). Crunchyroll.

⁶⁸⁰ Kafka Asagiri and Harukawa Sango, *Bungō Stray Dogs*, VIII (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2013-), p. 62. ['**What the bloody hell are you idiot saying in a situation like this...?**'] (my translation).

⁶⁸¹ Kafka Asagiri and Harukawa Sango, *Bungō Stray Dogs*, VIII (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2013-), p. 9. ['**I might hate to say so, but if that mannequin Dazai had not nullified the curse the damage would have been ten times as bad**'] (my translation).

female character in the story – as *anesan* (姉^{あね}さん), similarly to how Naoji calls Kazuko, *nēsan* (姉さん). It is necessary to clarify that both expressions, 姉さん and 姐さん, share the same readings, both *anesan* and *nēsan*, but that Asagiri adds the furigana *ane* to the character 姐.

The combination of both direct and indirect references to literary works in the series is similar to those in Dazai's and Shimada's novels. For example, in *Shayō*, in addition to Japanese literary works such as the *Sarashina Nikki* and the *Genji Monogatari*, Dazai also mentions non-Japanese authors such as Rosa Luxemburg,⁶⁸² whose works Kazuko is reading, and Anton Chekhov,⁶⁸³ whose initials she uses in her letters hinting at the fact that she is familiar with his literature. Similarly, in *Yumetsukai*, Matthew's relationship with Katagiri shares a similar undertone to the relationship between the main character and *sensei* in Sōseki's *Kokoro*. Moreover, Urashima Tarō quite explicitly refers to the *Heike Monogatari* (平家物語),⁶⁸⁴ while Kubi refers to Macbeth after having his fortune told.⁶⁸⁵ Thus, already since Dazai's time, authors have attempted to put Japanese literature outside of the vacuum and into the global space, but in the case of Dazai this attempt has instead been interpreted by the American critics as 'a cultural prototype, an amalgam of nineteenth-century European literary figures (from Balzac and Chekhov to Dostoevsky, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Verlaine), the mere mention of whose names in a Dazai text is enough to evoke the cultural pedigree of the author-hero and conjure up the paradigm of modern Japan itself' thus limiting Dazai's literature to the Japanese national dimension.⁶⁸⁶ Asagiri's narrative, instead, opposes

⁶⁸² Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p.37.

⁶⁸³ Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), p. 96

⁶⁸⁴ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p. 326.

⁶⁸⁵ Shimada Masahiko, *Yumetsukai Rentaru Chairudo no Shin-Nitomonogatari* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1995), p.293.

⁶⁸⁶ Alan Stephen Wolfe, *Suicidal narrative in modern Japan: The case of Dazai Osamu*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 193.

such a national approach by apparently directing the character's interaction on the basis of the fixed comparison made by the critics only to subvert the status quo. For example, the parallels between Dazai's and Dostoevsky's works in the manga take the form of Dazai Osamu and Fyodor Dostoevsky facing each other as nemesis of equal intellect destined to have one best the other. Nakahara Chūya's poetry being influenced by Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine⁶⁸⁷ is reimagined as Rimbaud being the only person to know about Chūya's past as the product of a scientific experiment aiming to seal the god Arahabaki inside of a human shell.⁶⁸⁸ Upon facing each other in battle, Rimbaud admits that ‘「君が何者で、どこから来たたのか……知る術はもはやない」」.⁶⁸⁹ It is certainly relevant for this study that Asagiri chooses to introduce the character named after Nakahara Chūya, whose poems already showed signs of heterographic patterns at the beginning of the 20th century, as a hybrid. Such details emphasise how, as opposed to the manga rewriting of fundamental texts of Japanese literature, Asagiri's series not only popularises literary works -both Japanese and non-Japanese - from different periods both in Japan and abroad but most importantly through the metaphor of speculative fiction, presents Japanese literature in its fragmented and multicultural nature as part of the world literary scene.

⁶⁸⁷ Luisa Bienati, *Letteratura giapponese. Dalla fine dell'Ottocento all'inizio del terzo millennio*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2005), p. 134.

⁶⁸⁸ Kafka Asagiri, *Dazai, Chūya, jūgo-sai* (Tokyo, Kadokawa: 2009), p.106.

⁶⁸⁹ Kafka Asagiri, *Dazai, Chūya, jūgo-sai* (Tokyo, Kadokawa: 2009), p.141. [“**There is no way to know what you are or where you came from ...anymore.**”] (my translation).

Conclusions: Next Stop, Japanese literature as World Literature

It should be evident now that the narrative of the disqualified rooted in loneliness, hybridity, and multilingualism which this study has been referring to is intended as a metaphor to describe the location that has been assigned to Japanese literature in the global canon by focusing on the national approach rather than a transnational one. In regard to this context, the literary canon of Japan has been traditionally imagined as the ‘other’, a *shikkaku* among literary traditions, and a *kodokuna kami* left to silently acknowledge its own hybrid nature. Such an element has sparsely been acknowledged by scholars such as Sakamoto, Yiu, and Young but it has more often been dismissed in favour of a familiar homogeneous national portrayal. Similarly to the way in which Yōzō labels himself as a *ningen shikkaku* that does not fit in society and only shows the mask of the buffoon, contemporary Japanese literature has been affected by the paradoxical postwar balance of Western representation and national self-representation (or self-portrayal) that led to the lack of an acknowledged multilingual literary tradition. Furthermore, this also created the illusion of a homogeneous monolingual *kokubungaku* whose function is to othering alternative, multilingual literary traditions into categories such as *ekkyō* or *Nihongo bungaku*.

At the core of this research sits the premise that, as the arguments in favour of a national approach to literature wane and the paradigms of history, language and literature and ‘language = race = culture = nationality’⁶⁹⁰ begin to show its untenability, the claim that ‘[n]ational literatures shares no common space with new world literatures, since they are

⁶⁹⁰ Angela Yiu, ‘National literature and beyond: Mizumura Minae and Hideo Levy’, in *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese Literature*, ed. by Rachel Hutchinson and Leith Morton (London and New York: 2016), pp. 227-240 (p.232).

generated by excluding any form of cultural or lingual alterity and are based on a homogenizing and essentialist discourse',⁶⁹¹ becomes no less untenable. To support this argument this study compared the production of four main authors belonging to different times, and whose works have been labelled differently: Dazai Osamu, arguably the most popular of the *buraiha* whose longest novels have been published during the American Occupation of Japan, hence they have likely influenced the Japanese American *nisei* literary production, Shimada Masahiko, who is considered part of the postmodern generation of Japanese writers whose production is often compared to that of Murakami Ryū, and finally Levy Hideo, considered the most popular among the *ekkyō bungaku* writers by the few academics who wrote about foreign-born writers in Japan. The common theme connecting these three authors' body of works is what I referred to as *shikkaku* narratives, which is carried out by focusing on repeating elements such as loneliness, multilingualism, and hybridity.

Dazai's literature, which critics and scholars alike have often dismissed as an expression of despair basing their arguments on the author's chaotic lifestyle which ended in an apparent suicide, shows that his interest in language can be employed by the writer as a means to express feelings and by society to label people's status and belonging. While the first point is evident in the 'startling freshness'⁶⁹² of Dazai's language even decades after his death, the second point is clarified by the way the character Naoji in *Shayō* purposefully learns to speak crassly to be accepted by the non-aristocratic society. In addition, Dazai, who studied French at the Imperial University of Tokyo, also read non-Japanese authors such as Dostoevsky and

⁶⁹¹ Eike Sturm-Trigonakis, 'Comparative Cultural Studies and Linguistic Hybridities in Literature', in *Companion to Comparative Literature, World Literatures, and Comparative Cultural Studies*, ed. by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Tutun Mukherjee (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press India, 2013), pp. 178-191 (p.185).

⁶⁹² Mizuyo Kakuta, 'Sakuhin Kaisetsu', in Osamu Dazai, *Shayō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2023), pp.211-217 (p.215).

Pushkin,⁶⁹³ and his interest in foreign languages transpires in the several works he published whose titles consist of or contain transliterations of foreign words, such as *Das Gemeine* (ダス・ゲマイネ, 1935), *Hashire Melos* (走れメロス, 1940), *Shin Hamlet* (新ハムレット, 1941), *Pandora no Hako* (パンドラの匣, 1945), *Merry Christmas* (メリイクリスマス, 1947), and *Goodbye* (グッド・バイ, 1948). Furthermore, Kazuko, the narrator in *Shayō*, also shows an interest in foreign languages, especially English, and foreign literature throughout the novel. There are several examples of the way Dazai's literature has been discussed exclusively from a national perspective, interpreting the main characters' failure and consequent sense of isolation as either a metaphor for the struggle of postwar Japan, or a projection of the feelings resulting from the fall of the old Japanese aristocracy of which Dazai was a heir, or even as a critique of the loss of the traditional values in light of the American ruling during the Occupation. But this work analyses Dazai's texts from a transnational perspective which raises the point that Dazai's cultural influence might not have been limited to Japan, but it might have been relevant to the creation of the Japanese American literary canon. Additionally, this research diachronically focused on the similarities between Dazai's *shikkaku*, Shimada's *kodokuna kami* and Levy's *gaijin* as rebelling characters who choose to embrace their hybridity and isolation to oppose a society they refuse to become part of.

Shimada's novel *Yumetsukai* echoes Dazai's postwar novels on several levels. While the author expands on Dazai's use of language by alternating Japanese and English to convey a narrative that moves between Japan and the US, he also refers to several other literary works – both Japanese and non-Japanese – in the same way Dazai does in both *Shayō* and *Ningen*

⁶⁹³ Alan Stephen Wolfe, *Suicidal narrative in modern Japan: The case of Dazai Osamu*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 6.

Shikkaku, linking his novel to a wider literary international corpus. In terms of narrative, *Yumetsukai* shares with *Shayō* the same concept of *kakumei*. If in Dazai's novel it is Kazuko who claims that revolution is what humans were born for, in Shimada the one carrying this revolution is Matthew who chooses to live as a rental child disregarding societal expectations and taboos. However, in both novels, the ultimate embodiment of the change is an unborn child. While in *Shayō* it is Kazuko's and Uehara's child that Kazuko plans on raising alone and that embodies her revolution, in *Yumetsukai* it is Matthew's and Maiko's child whom, similarly to Kazuko, Maiko will probably raise mostly alone considering Matthew's attitude to never stay in one place for too long, but whose upbringing will reflect the ideal of freedom upon which the rental child ideology is based.

Similarly to Dazai and Shimada, the sentiment of *kodoku* sits at the core of Levy's literature, as the bittersweet sense of loneliness and nostalgia for the unknown permeates both his novels and his memoirs. The feeling is clearly expressed in both *Seijōki* and *Tenanmon*. On the one hand, in the case of Ben, he struggles to communicate in Japanese for most of the novel, and because of this and his physical appearance he is easily identified as a *gaijin*. Thus, in addition to being unable to empathise with his Jewish American father, he is also isolated from the world he is living in, leading him to question the very meaning of 'home'. On the other hand, in the case of the main character in *Tenanmon*, the author raises the same point already addressed by Okada in his novel *No-No Boy* and focuses on the dissonance between legal status and personal identity, as shown when the main character struggles to find the right words to explain where he is from.

Thus, by comparing these three authors' works this thesis supports the argument that the divide between *kokubungaku* and *ekkyō bungaku* is outdated, and while this research does not intend to disprove the need to acknowledge different literary traditions, it intends for those traditions to be equally accepted as part of the Japanese literary canon. In fact, only by

accepting that Japanese literature is neither monocultural nor monolingual it is possible to then introduce it on the global scene.

However, after discussing the influence of Dazai's literature both nationally and, arguably, internationally this work intends to discuss the impact of Levy's and Shimada's literature on the Japanese cultural scene. In 2001, Alex Kerr claimed that 'very few foreigners visit [Japan] and even fewer live there [...] their effect on Japan is close to zero.'⁶⁹⁴ Kerr's argument was triggered by a scene he witnessed in 1996 at the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok, where 'German businessmen were discussing a new satellite system for Asia, next to them was a man reading an Italian paper, and across the way a group of young Thais and Americans were planning a trip to Vietnam',⁶⁹⁵ Kerr, who grew up in Tokyo and Yokohama, noticed that 'the scene [...] had no counterpart in the Japan we know today.'⁶⁹⁶ Kerr's today's Japan is a Japan from more than twenty years ago now, but it is the same Japan which in 2002 Iwabuchi Kōichi noticed that, regardless of its economic power, it 'is culturally and psychologically dominated by the West.'⁶⁹⁷ Even more significant is that in the same 1996 mentioned by Kerr, Levy Hideo published his novella *Tenanmon* which was later nominated for the prestigious Akutagawa Prize.⁶⁹⁸ Additionally, *Seijōki* was also awarded the Noma Literary Award for New Writers 'thus establishing [Levy] as an up-and-coming writer in Japan.'⁶⁹⁹ Furthermore, in 1992, the Nobel Prize laureate Ōe Kenzaburō, who once expressed his dismay that Japanese culture was not globally recognized as much as Japanese economic power,⁷⁰⁰ praised *Seijōki* as 'a superior symbol of mutual understanding between

⁶⁹⁴ Alex Kerr, *Dogs and Demons The Fall of Modern Japan* (London: Penguin, 2001,) p. 4.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid. p.3.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid. p.3.

⁶⁹⁷ Kōichi, Iwabuchi, *Recentering globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.2.

⁶⁹⁸ Christopher D. Scott 'Translator's Introduction' in Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-Spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) pp. VII-XII (p.X).

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid. p.X.

⁷⁰⁰ As quoted by Iwabuchi Kōichi in Iwabuchi, *Recentering globalization: Popular culture and Japanese transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.10.

two languages and two nations [*kokumin*].⁷⁰¹ In the early 2000s, the novels *Chiji ni Kudaketa* and *Kari no Mizu* were respectively awarded the Ōsaragi Jirō Prize and the Itō Sei Prize.⁷⁰²

While taking into account the fact that Kerr's work is a more economics-oriented one, it appears that the wide recognition of Levy's literature in Japan discredits Kerr's statement, instead, confirming that, in the last three decades, 'foreigners in Japan' indeed started to affect the Japanese cultural scene.

Finally, it is necessary to note that, even though several scholars such as Tatsumi have mentioned that Japanese literature is invisible on the global market, echoing Ōe's critique that the world does not know about Japanese culture, literary-adjacent media such as manga, anime and light novels are fundamental in the spread of Japanese culture, literature, and literature. While streaming platforms such as Netflix and Crunchyroll provide international audiences with easy access to media in Japanese, increasing the interest in and familiarity with Japanese vocabulary outside of Japan, works such as Asagiri's *Bungō Stray Dogs* not only are popularising Japanese literature outside of the academic world, but also present it as part of the global canon rather than an isolated portion of literature in the world.

While this study argues for the acknowledgement that a new transnational, diachronic and transmedia approach to Japanese literary studies is necessary in order to subvert the narrative of homogeneity that has often deprived the Japanese canon of the academic and popular attention it deserves, I am aware that this is only the first step towards the recognition of a new scholarship focusing on Japanese literature as world literature.

⁷⁰¹ As quoted by Scott in Christopher D. Scott 'Translator's Introduction' in Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-Spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) pp. VII-XII (p.X).

⁷⁰² Christopher D. Scott 'Translator's Introduction' in Hideo Levy, *A room where the Star-Spangled Banner cannot be heard*, trans. by Christopher D. Scott (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) pp. VII-XII (p.X).

Thus, my research will proceed in this direction by maintaining a focus on the role of language change and representation in the development and canonisation of a Japanese multilingual, transmedia literary tradition. My aim is to further explore the opportunities that a comparative study between Japan and Finland, which I hinted at in this thesis, open to support this argument.

Indeed, as I mentioned, the two countries share several similarities in the way their standard languages and contemporary literary canon was established. Even more relevant to my field of study are the similar ways in which both are perceived abroad, in particular what role translation and popular culture played and keep playing in influencing such perception. Thus, considering the works of Finnish authors such as Tove Jansson, Aino Kallas, and Mia Kankimäki together with some of the authors whose production I analysed in this thesis, such as Dazai, Levy, Mizumura Minae, and Asagiri, I propose to interrogate the role of translation in the building of a monolingual ideal of literary and literary-adjacent media in the national canons. In order to do so, I propose that two main strategies, which I named cosmetic monolingualism and functional multilingualism are often employed in both the writing and the interlingual translation processes.

The ultimate aim of my research is to acknowledge that the idea of monolingualism has traditionally been used to overlook linguistic phenomena and literary strategies, that, consequently, have been left unnamed for a long time. By naming them and addressing the issue of the traditional monolingual approach to the study of national literature in Japan and Finland, and its influence on the introduction of these two literary traditions in the world literary discourse I intend to return its quintessentially transnational role to Comparative Literature in order to overcome the Eurocentric stigma that has been influencing the discipline for too long.

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Web resources

On the popularity of Asagiri Kafka's *Bungō Stray Dogs* on social media:

- <https://honoursreview.com/blog/2019/2/15/bungo-stray-dogs-a-101-crash-course-in-world-literature>
- <https://www.michigandaily.com/arts/digital-culture/how-bungo-stray-dogs-introduces-literature-classics-to-fans-worldwide/>

On Levy Hideo:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hideo_Levy
- <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E3%83%AA%E3%83%BC%E3%83%93%E8%8B%B1%E9%9B%84>

Roland Kelt's interview about the increasing popularity of Crunchyroll and streaming platforms among anime watchers:

- <https://www.crunchyroll.com/en-gb/anime-feature/2020/09/15/interview-roland-kelts-on-fantasy-worlds-and-the-impact-of-streaming>

Julie Kagawa on the inspiration behind *Shadow of the Fox*:

- <http://www.adventuresinyapublishing.com/2018/10/julie-kagawa-author-of-shadow-of-fox-on.html#.X8YcBdGTK3B>.

On Anna Tsuchiya and Kaze Fujii:

- <https://lyrics.lyricfind.com/lyrics/anna-tsuchiya-rose>
- <https://saniyachan.medium.com/the-rise-of-fujii-kaze-why-shinunoga-e-wa-was-just-the-beginning-48c2b5dfd442>

Acknowledgments

Perhaps the most common piece of knowledge ever imparted to a new PhD student – usually right before or right after the caveat that the job market is awful – is that doing a PhD is a lonely experience, at least in the humanities. Well, in my experience this is a lie. I personally would have much preferred not to be graced with the constant presence of my anxiety, my impostor syndrome, and my ability to catastrophise. Indeed the latter has been proven useless when it failed in predicting a global pandemic striking not even six months into my PhD, but this is an entirely different story, and maybe another reason why my PhD did not feel like such a lonely experience, because, you see, I was not the only one having to face my thesis and one lockdown after the other at the same time. And don't get me wrong, I count myself lucky, this is why I will not mention this part of my experience again, I had it as easy as possible, and this is all I can say about it.

Isn't it funny though that my thesis pays so much attention to the feeling of isolation? I am sure many may believe that the isolation I describe in my research has something in common with the proverbial loneliness of the PhD student. It does not. I have known 孤独 in my life, maybe this is why that was one of the first words I memorised when I started studying Japanese at 18. Maybe this is what drew me towards two languages that my linguistics textbook in university defined as 'isolated languages', Japanese and Finnish. But as I said in my experience doing a PhD was not a lonely experience, in fact, I owe many thanks to the people who supported me through this process.

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I owe my thanks to the friends I have known for most of my life and to those I made along the way. Especially to Apoorva Dohroo who helped me over and over to see when my eyes were too tired to make sense of my own words. Thank you for your encouragement... and thank you for the book recommendations, my shelves didn't need them, but I surely did!

As I said, my PhD was not a lonely experience, but I will say, it was certainly an experience, and it is precisely because of this that I have one last person to say thank you to: myself.

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