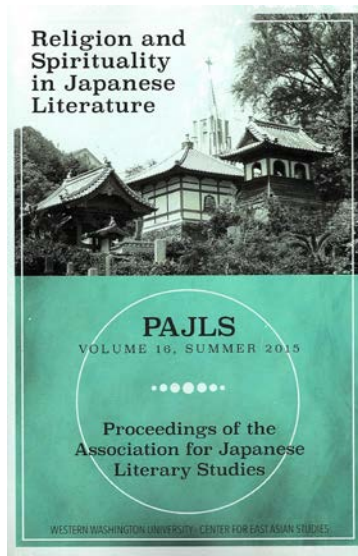


“The ‘Pure Novel’ of the Lost Home: Yokomitsu Riichi’s *A Traveler’s Sadness*”

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Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies 16 (2015): 99–113.



PAJLS 16:
Religion and Spirituality in Japanese Literature.
Ed. Massimiliano Tomasi.

*The “Pure Novel” of the Lost Home:
Yokomitsu Ri’ichi’s A Traveler’s Sadness*

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Introduction

Yokomitsu Ri’ichi’s (1898-1947) *A Traveler’s Sadness* [*Ryoshū*] (1937-1946) is an unfinished lengthy novel that began serializing when issues of modernity, Westernization, and Japanese identity were being hotly debated among authors and intellectuals under an increasingly imperializing Japan, perhaps most famously in the roundtable discussion entitled “Overcoming Modernity” (*Kindai no chōkoku*).¹ Yokomitsu was himself apprehensive about overwhelming importations from the West, fearing that they could destroy Japanese identity. As one of the leading writers in early 20th century Japan, he was also acutely concerned about the stagnation of modern Japanese literature. In his 1935 essay, entitled “Theory of the Pure Novel” (*Junsui shōsetsu ron*), he writes sarcastically: “The tradition of Japanese literature is French literature and Russian literature. If we cannot produce a pure novel written by the Japanese, writers should quit writing altogether.”² What he defines as the “pure novel” is a combination of “pure literature” and “popular novel,” and he believed that the only way to revive modern Japanese literature was to produce a Japanese “pure novel.”³ *Traveler’s Sadness* is Yokomitsu’s attempt to create his “pure novel,” in which he illuminates how the issues of religion, national identity, and art are

¹ This discussion was held in 1942 and was subsequently published in the literary magazine *Bungakkai* in the same year.

² Yokomitsu 1982, 245.

³ There has been a distinction between “pure literature” (*jun bungaku*) and “popular literature” (*taishū bungaku*) throughout the history of modern Japanese literature, where the former connotes highbrow, artistic literary works and the latter much more entertainment-oriented, popular works. This divide is still present today; the fact that there exist two very influential literary awards, the Akutagawa Literary Prize for “pure” literature and the Naoki Literary Prize for “popular” works, attests to this on-going divide. For more discussion on this “pure” versus “popular” division, see Strecher 1996.

intimately intertwined through the protagonist's search for his national identity in early 20th century Japan.⁴

The search for Japanese identity is clearly one of the most important themes of the novel. Its title, *ryoshū* (旅愁), refers to the feeling of longing for home while traveling. In the book the protagonist, the “traveler,” starts to miss home when he is on a ship to Europe. This sense of homelessness continues not only during his stay in Europe but also after coming back to Japan. In fact, Yokomitsu had travelled Europe in 1936 and written about it in *European Travelogue* (*Ōshū kikō*, 1936-1937), just before he started writing *Traveler's Sadness*. As Seiji M. Lippit (2002) observes, this travelogue reveals Yokomitsu's own reactions and observations about Europe, which seems to have served as the springboard for his ideas about national identity and the sense of lost home in *Traveler's Sadness*.⁵

Immediately after the war, the novel was considered to be extremely nationalistic. The most typical critique of its “nationalism” stems from the nature of Yashiro, the protagonist, and his equation with the author; Yashiro repeatedly displays strong skepticism toward European values, instead giving high regards to Japanese traditions. In the 1947 article entitled “On Yokomitsu Ri'ichi: Regarding *A Traveler's Sadness*,” Sugiura Minpei fiercely attacks this novel for promoting imperialism and nationalism and supporting Japan's war effort through the ideas and actions of Yashiro, whom Sugiura believes to be the spokesperson of the author. Although there is in the novel a pro-European character named Kuji, Sugiura maintains that Kuji's role is only to emphasize Yashiro's nationalist sentiment. By portraying Yashiro's distrust of European science and rationalism, Sugiura argues, Yokomitsu was preparing the ground for the reader to support imperial Japan as well as the Emperor. Considering that the loss of Yokomitsu's “sophisticated” writing style – that is, his “highbrow” “pure literature” – was also the result of his desire to promote nationalist

⁴ The sense of cultural homelessness under the heavy influence of the West was one of the most discussed topics that occupied the minds of many intellectuals at that time. For instance, renowned Japanese literary critic Kobayashi Hideo (1902-1983) wrote the famous essay “Literature of the Lost Home” (*Kokyō o ushinatta bungaku*, 1933).

⁵ See Lippit 2002, 212-215, for more detailed information about Yokomitsu's trip to Europe.

sentiment, Sugiura asserts that Yokomitsu “sold his entire literature to the devil and blew the military trumpet triumphantly.”⁶

Sugiura's criticism was probably the most stringent one, but other prominent critics such as Odagiri Hideo and Nakamura Shin'ichirō were similarly reproachful of the novel's “nationalistic elements.” Yokomitsu was one of 25 writers, along with other prominent literary figures including Kobayashi Hideo and Kawakami Tetsutarō, who were publicly listed and accused of bearing responsibility for the war by the New Japanese Literature Association (Shin Nihon Bungakukai).⁷ In the immediate postwar climate, Yokomitsu's reputation fell from “god of literature” to “war criminal.”

Many later critics came to defend Yokomitsu, however, suggesting that such iniquitous reading of *Traveler's Sadness* must be seen within a very distinct post-war literary climate, where responsibility for the lost war was perhaps too fiercely pursued as a reaction to wartime oppression. As early as 1955, Yoshida Ken'ichi backed Yokomitsu by saying that, as reckless as it may have been, *Traveler's Sadness* was still a valuable attempt to accurately describe the reality of wartime intellectuals.⁸ The simplistic equation of author and protagonist has also been mostly rejected in later criticism. Lippit, for example, correctly points out that the embodiment of the author is not merely with Yashiro but also with Kuji and other characters; other critics such as Yoshida also consider that it is the relationship between the characters, and not individual characters themselves, that occupies the center of the novel. This is particularly true when we consider Yokomitsu's beliefs about what makes a good “pure novel.”⁹ In the early 1960s, Shinoda Hajime also defended *Traveler's Sadness*, saying that schematic opposition of Japan to the West cannot be taken as

⁶ Sugiura 1980, 52. For Sugiura and a number of other critics, Yokomitsu's abandonment of his modernist writing style in this work was strongly connected to his nationalist sentiment. Sugiura wrote critically, “Yokomitsu's persistent quest for psychological and character-based schematic structuring, with which he succeeded in conquering the Shōwa literary scene, has been sacrificed in this novel. What for? In order to show Yokomitsu's theory of the Eastern versus the Western cultural comparison, and to endorse Yashiro's claim of ‘my country is the happiest country in the world’ at all costs.” (45)

⁷ Shimada 1980, 167. Dower 1999, 237-238.

⁸ Yoshida 1955, 104-109.

⁹ In his “Theory of the Pure Novel,” Yokomitsu asserts that the “pure novel” should demonstrate the human reality by providing the viewpoints and thoughts of multiple characters, instead of just a single character's perspective (Yokomitsu 1982, 241).

endorsement of the war. Such juxtaposition was, after all, a key issue for all intellectuals at that time. Yokomitsu simply presented this opposition in the novel, which does not mean that he used it for political purposes of endorsing the war or nationalism. Shinoda further notes the importance of recognizing the very strong friendship between Kuji and Yashiro, which implies that besides antagonism there is a certain type of affinity between the West and Japan.¹⁰

Shinoda and Yoshida's points are particularly important in understanding the novel's organization. The majority of the first half of the story, set in Europe, focuses on the issue of rationality and knowledge through a number of intense debates between Yashiro and Kuji. The second half of the story takes place in Japan, evolving mostly around the development of a romantic relationship between Yashiro and a woman named Chizuko. The constant and heated debates between Yashiro and Kuji illuminate the author's apprehension about wholesale importation of Western knowledge, while the romantic relationship between Yashiro and Chizuko is symbolic of the possibility of the spiritual cooperation between the West and Japan. Notably, this scheme seems to suggest the opposite of the popular government slogan of *wakon yōsai*, "Japanese Spirit, Western Knowledge," indicating, perhaps, Yokomitsu's criticism of it. It also confirms that, despite certain elements of nationalistic sentiment, the purpose of the novel was not to promote government-endorsed nationalism but to depict the complex realities that many Japanese were facing in regard to their identities at that time, and to illustrate possible solutions for Japan's relationship with the West.

Yashiro and Chizuko: The Marriage between Ancient Shinto and Catholicism

At first sight, *Traveler's Sadness* almost looks like a "romantic" novel because the story centers around the development of Yashiro and Chizuko's romantic relationship. It is, however, extremely important to underscore that their love story is deeply connected to the issue of one's search for national identity: only when Yashiro successfully finds his national identity, and establishes his confidence with it, can he marry Chizuko, a Catholic girl. In other words, the arc of their love story is superimposed onto Yashiro's search for Japanese identity, the key to which lies in the dichotomy between Catholicism and Ancient Shinto. As the scholar of nationalism and ethnicity, Anthony D. Smith,

¹⁰ Shinoda 1981, 50-66.

persuasively demonstrates, religion is one of the most essential and powerful elements that can buttress the sense of national identity.¹¹ By situating the issue of religion – Chizuko's Catholicism – as the most prominent obstacle to their romance and marriage, Yokomitsu ensures that the quest for spirituality is tied to national identity. Their "love story" is simultaneously about Yashiro's search for how to accommodate Western and Japanese spirituality.

Yashiro and Chizuko had traveled together in Europe, where the love between them developed slowly but steadily. Trusting and caring for each other, "marriage" came naturally into both their minds. In the early stages of the relationship, however, Yashiro is doubtful that the affair will in the end bear fruit, since their families are of different social status; Chizuko is from a very wealthy and renowned family whereas he is middle class. Even though he is increasingly attracted to Chizuko, Yashiro often speculates that "it is better for them not to see each other once they return to Japan," because he fears that she will inevitably change when faced with "the central core of Japan – social status, rank, wealth, pedigree, family traditions."¹² Once they are actually back in Japan and start seeing each other again, however, Yashiro discovers that what he feared – the difference in their social standing – actually does not pose much problem. Instead, it is Chizuko's religion, Catholicism, that becomes a serious issue for Yashiro in considering their marriage, and he starts searching for something he can rely on as the source of his Japanese identity.

Why is Catholicism so problematic for him? Yashiro knew that Chizuko was Catholic from early on, but he did not pay much attention to it initially. After the trip to Europe, however, Yashiro, a semi-professional historian, becomes increasingly interested in the history of Japan as well as of his own family, and learns that the first Jesuits who came to Japan in the 16th century had played a fatal role both for the nation and for his own family. He was particularly disturbed by the fact that when the Jesuits attempted to convert Japan into a Christian nation, they completely rejected Japanese cultural heritage as heretical. Furthermore, his own ancestors – members of an old samurai family – were killed by the first Catholic-convert Lord, using the gunpowder artillery the Jesuits brought with them. "When Yashiro thought that he ... was finally going to marry Chizuko, he heard the groan of his ancestors from behind, who

¹¹ See, for instance, *Chosen People* (2003), *National Identity* (1991) by Smith.

¹² Yokomitsu 1967, 252.

were destroyed by it [Catholicism], attacking him much more strongly.”¹³ Thus, for Yashiro, marrying Chizuko feels like betraying his ancestors.

Yashiro’s apprehension about Catholicism, or, more broadly about Christianity, does not, however, stem only from these past histories.¹⁴ Yashiro is also an intellectual concerned about the issue of modernity and Japan’s position in the 1930s in relation to the West. He cannot separate Christianity, which is a foreign, Western religion, from other Western imports, including the guns that killed his ancestors and values like science. Despite his awareness that there had in Europe been a long history of contention between Christianity and science, they are still closely tied in his view, because, first, the spirit that engendered natural science had been fostered within the cultural and religious milieu of Christianity in Europe,¹⁵ and, second, Christianity and guns entered Japan together and his ancestors were killed by a combination of the two. Yashiro’s strong skepticism toward modernity, Western science, and rationalism, the basis of numerous, heated debates with Kuji, the pro-European Japanese, are not unrelated to his distrust of Christianity.

Another factor fueling Yashiro’s apprehension about Christianity is the fact that it is a religion based on strong monotheistic and exclusivist principles. He learns that the first Jesuits condemned Japanese cultural and religious heritage such as ancestor worship as evil, and demanded those who became Christian worship only their God. He fears that Chizuko’s Catholic faith will interfere with their relationship, although, ironically, in truth it is Yashiro, and not Chizuko, who pays excessive attention to their “religious differences.” While Chizuko never shows any concern for Yashiro being non-Catholic, even though Catholicism usually demands marriage partners also be Catholic, the

¹³ Ibid., 345.

¹⁴ Although several distinctive differences exist amongst different Christian traditions, such as Catholicism and Protestantism, in this novel sectarian difference does not seem to be an issue. The fact that Chizuko believes in a form of Christianity, rather than Catholicism per se, is important. Therefore, I use the terms “Catholicism” and “Christianity” interchangeably when comparing Yashiro and Chizuko’s religiosity.

¹⁵ The issue regarding the relationship between religion and science is a fascinating topic; a given religion’s compatibility with science seems to have been an important factor at that time. For instance, in *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent* (1992), Thomas Tweed argues that Buddhism appealed to some Americans in the early 20th century precisely because Buddhism was seen as much more compatible with science than Christianity. In the novel, too, Yashiro often postulates that Ancient Shinto has some scientific value.

agnostic Yashiro has to come up with something to help him overcome this anxiety.

[Yashiro] didn't particularly believe that Catholicism was bad. Yet, considering the history of his house, he had misgivings that it might interfere with their marriage. Yashiro felt like he needed some appropriate power from outside in order to get rid of his qualms. Where could he find such an outside power? Indeed, he really wanted a peaceful, generous, supportive power that would allow, or even justify Chizuko's Catholicism. But, Buddhism wouldn't do. Shinto was even worse. Yashiro could not find anything but Ancient Shinto [Koshintō] among things available in Japan. In this way, Yashiro began to shop for the books related to Ancient Shinto here and there whenever he had time.¹⁶

Like the majority of Japanese people both in the past as well as in the present, Yashiro himself is not particularly "religious"; he does not specifically think about Japanese religion or identity until he goes to Europe. But as the prospect of their marriage becomes more and more real, he begins to feel a certain amount of fear for Christianity, and that is why Yashiro has to find an "outside power" in order to confront Catholicism and that is how he becomes interested in Ancient Shinto.¹⁷

Emphasizing how it is "different from Shinto" and that it is "not a religion," Yashiro explains Ancient Shinto to Chizuko in the following way: "In my opinion, [Ancient Shinto] is a peaceful wish of the Japanese people from the ancient times that doesn't allow any oppositions. So, unlike Christianity or Buddhism, for example, it doesn't have any prejudice against other religions nor reject them."¹⁸ Yashiro stresses the non-exclusivist nature of Ancient Shinto in contrast to Christianity and Buddhism because it resolves his dilemma and allows for his peaceful marriage with Chizuko. And "Shinto" as an institution is disqualified as especially ill-suited for his needs ("Shinto was even worse").

¹⁶ Yokomitsu 1967, 298-299.

¹⁷ Yashiro's fear of Catholicism, or more generally Japanese people's fear of foreign invasion, can be placed within a much wider historical perspective. For instance, National Studies (*Kokugaku*) emerged and flourished in the middle of the Edo period (1600-1867) because scholars such as Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) became anxious about the domination of Confucian and Buddhist teachings. The bans placed on Christianity in the 16th and 17th centuries were clearly the result of the fear of Christian invasion. Maxey (2007) suggests that there has been constant fear of Christianity since it was first introduced because "Christian conversion posed a threat precisely because 'religious' identities and practices were deemed inseparable from political loyalties and boundaries" (4).

¹⁸ Yokomitsu 1967, 338.

Although Yashiro does not specifically explain why in the novel, considering the time period in which the novel was written, it is easy to surmise that the reason was probably because of the infamous early 20th century use of State Shinto (*Kokka shintō*) as an imperialist ideology of the government. By saying that Shinto is particularly inadequate, Yashiro attempts to disassociate his Ancient Shinto from both State Shinto and the political ideology it entails. He also rejects Buddhism as a bad fit, because, as his mother's Hokke Buddhism exemplifies, Buddhism has an exclusivist side to it. More importantly, however, Buddhism "wouldn't do" because, after all, it is a foreign religion and cannot fulfill Yashiro's need to find something "Japanese." Although sounding contradictory, Yashiro looks for something "purely Japanese" that would be tolerant of foreign religions, including Chizuko's Catholicism.

Ironically, however, Yashiro's notion of an "Ancient Shinto" resembles the political, imperialistic ideology of State Shinto in the early Meiji period precisely because of his assertion that Ancient Shinto is not a religion; in other words, Ancient Shinto transcends "religion." Yashiro reassures Chizuko that "Ancient Shinto is also within you," making it sound like it is a racial attribute, as if it was something physiologically contained in the blood of the Japanese "from the ancient times."¹⁹ From the late 19th century, State Shinto was declared as a non-religion but a government institution; it was a strategy employed by the Meiji state in order to conveniently make it obligatory for all Japanese subjects to observe and attend shrine rites without violating the Western ideologies of "freedom of religion" and the "separation of church and state."²⁰ "Shinto" at that time was more a political ideology, and it is precisely for this reason that Yashiro distinguishes "Ancient Shinto" from "Shinto" and rejects the latter as a candidate to be Yashiro's ally, the "supporting power," in his attempt to face and embrace Chizuko's religion of Catholicism. Still, Yashiro's idea of Ancient Shinto ends up showing a strong nationalistic conception similar to State Shinto,

¹⁹ Ibid., 338-339.

²⁰ The Meiji era Japanese government did not want the West to consider Japan a backward nation, so it was important to display that Japan followed the ideas of "separation of church and state" and "freedom of religion," but at the same time they did not want anyone to refuse to participate in Shinto rites because of their personal religious beliefs. By making Shinto a non-religious entity, they could make it obligatory for even Christians to participate in the Shinto rites, because Shinto rites were not "religion." For a more detailed account of the government's strategy to re-establish "Shinto" as a government institution in the early Meiji period, see Hardacre 1989.

because, even though Yashiro does not mean to be “political,” by suggesting that Ancient Shinto is a biological attribute of the Japanese and therefore transcendent of religion, the logic resembles the way the state was asserting that the Emperor was the source of Japan’s national unity. Despite this similarity, however, we still need to remember that Yashiro’s motive for relying on Ancient Shinto is to bridge the gap between himself and Chizuko; he never, even once, considers asking Chizuko to give up her religion throughout the story. Thus, even though Yashiro’s Ancient Shinto unwittingly becomes similar to a certain aspect of State Shinto, his purpose was never to reject or destroy foreign spirituality but to accommodate it. It is the means by which Yashiro conceives the spirit of Japanese identity. Through the unity of Yashiro and Chizuko, through their marriage, it is quite likely that Yokomitsu intended to show the possibility of the peaceful cooperation between Japanese spirituality represented by Ancient Shinto and Western spirituality by Catholicism.²¹

Endless Debates and Friendship – Yashiro and Kuji

While Yashiro’s relationship with Chizuko’s illuminates his attempts to create a Japanese spirituality which can marry the imported western religion of Catholicism to Japan’s native religion of Ancient Shinto, Yashiro and Kuji’s debate over how modern Japan should accommodate western knowledge while retaining Japanese cultural values can never find a point of reconciliation. Kuji repeatedly insists that European science and rationalism are universal and Japan should readily adapt these, whereas Yashiro never agrees with him but keeps showing a strong skepticism toward such “universal values.”

For instance, when Kuji attempts to persuade Yashiro by saying that science offers a “universal principle” and that the current prosperity of Paris is the result of valuing science, Yashiro disagrees, saying “science only means no one knows anything yet” and that it can be the cause of wars.²² When discussing “humanism,” while Kuji asserts that there should be no difference between the Western and Eastern varieties, Yashiro continues to believe that there are differences and that Japan should follow its own version of humanism rather

²¹ Although the novel does not include their wedding because Yokomitsu passed away before completing the novel, the couple completes the formal ceremonial exchange of betrothal gifts called *yuinō*, strongly indicating their eventual successful marriage.

²² Yokomitsu 1967, 41-42.

than borrowing the western model.²³ Kuji also regards rationalism highly and often insists that the Japanese should understand its importance as well. To this, Tōno, another character who shares similar opinions with Yashiro, points out that modern Europe also has Skepticism (*kaigi shugi*), denying Kuji's insistence that "rationalism" should be treasured universally.²⁴

Do the different outcomes of the two relationships mean that the author, Yokomitsu, considered it important to accept Western spirituality but not Western science or rationalism? The answer is not that simple. Even when Yashiro displays "nationalistic" sentiment by praising Japan's virtue, he also admits science and rational thinking have some degree of importance. For instance, when the group of Japanese travelers receives a compliment from a foreign reporter that Japan is healthy in contrast to France, at first Yashiro feels very pleased with the comment but he also thinks, "we do need to incorporate natural science" (229). Yashiro further notes in a letter to Chizuko that despite the fact that his ancestors were killed by the first artillery, the importation of western weapons was an important and necessary sacrifice for modern Japan.²⁵

In contrast with Kuji, who submits completely to the supremacy of Western science and rationalism, Yashiro's position is more equivocal. He does not necessarily deny the importance of these entirely, but is very cautious of adapting everything from the West because he believes that the West and Japan (or the East) are fundamentally different based on their own unique historical and cultural backgrounds. In the face of Kuji's enthusiastic admiration for Western values, he fears that Japan is excessively and recklessly importing and adapting Western knowledge, and that is why he can never agree with Kuji.

The juxtaposition of these two relationships – Chizuko and Yashiro's romance versus Kuji and Yashiro's debates – makes it very clear that Yokomitsu was critical of the popular Meiji slogan of *wakon yōsai*, or "Japanese Spirit, Western Knowledge." Contrary to the *wakon yōsai* slogan, which represents the idea that Japan should eagerly learn Western "knowledge" but refrain from being tainted by Western "spirit," Yokomitsu demonstrates that reconciling Japanese and Western spirituality is the key to constructing a viable national identity in 1930s Japan.

²³ Ibid., 95.

²⁴ Ibid., 47-48.

²⁵ Ibid., 447.

Art As the Savior

Although Yashiro discovered Ancient Shinto and thought it would help him overcome his anxiety about Chizuko being Catholic, it does not help as effectively as he hoped. Even after extensively studying it and explaining to Chizuko their shared native heritage of “Ancient Shinto,” Yashiro’s uneasiness continues, and one day he becomes extremely disheartened when he learns the words of Chizuko’s Catholic prayer. In particular, he is struck by the word “heretic” (*itansha*) in it. “As he was called a heretic for the first time, the ominous feeling thrust his heart like a blade and never disappeared.”²⁶ Even though it was upon Yashiro’s repeated request that Chizuko had transcribed her prayer in a letter, he is in agony for an entire day upon receiving it. Various efforts to dismiss it from his mind, or to rationally persuade himself that he should not be affected by a mere word all fail. Yashiro keeps thinking about the word “heretic” as if Chizuko was personally and directly pointing at him; he even becomes uncertain if he can marry her. Ancient Shinto, which he has been studying, proves to be no help for Yashiro as it never even enters his mind during this state of agony. What saves him at this critical moment is a simple sound of the *tsuzumi*, a traditional Japanese hand drum.

It happened exactly when he was suffering from his heartache. Dull and heavy sounds of the *tsuzumi* came from the direction of the inn. Although the sound simply continued for a while ... eventually, it functioned to push out the bad fluid accumulated in his stomach ... and as his stomach felt lighter, the sound also became more crystallized. ... Yashiro felt peculiarly uplifted. It was surely a prophetic sound, like the sound of salvation for Yashiro now.²⁷

It is very significant that while Yashiro’s chosen religion of Ancient Shinto cannot subdue the agony created in him by the Catholic prayer, the sound of the *tsuzumi* does. The sound of the *tsuzumi* is clearly the embodiment of an artistic power. It is the actual “sound” that “function[s] to push out the bad fluid accumulated in his stomach,” as a result of which Yashiro feels “peculiarly uplifted.” The stimulus, the sound, works directly upon his physical body, which in turn also affects his spirit positively. The sound of the *tsuzumi* underscores the power of sensory stimulus produced by a musical – artistic – instrument, to directly affect the human body as well as the spirit. This interpretation particularly makes sense when we consider the fact that Yokomitsu was well

²⁶ Ibid., 344.

²⁷ Ibid.

known for his writing style as a New Sensationalist (Shinkankaku-ha) author. He was a craftsman capable of creating prose that directly appealed to the senses of the reader, and was praised for his “highly polished style marked by careful attention to rhythm and imagery, by conscious use of symbolism, and by ways of looking at and describing things that were startling to the Japanese readers of his day.”²⁸ Even though Yokomitsu did not employ this particular writing style in *Traveler’s Sadness*, the way Yashiro is affected by the sound of the *tsuzumi* attests to Yokomitsu’s continued faith in the sensory power of artistic production.

Furthermore, the fact that Yashiro considers that the *tsuzumi* “must probably be the only musical instrument that has passed down from ancient times, without any interruption”²⁹ indicates the importance of this particular musical instrument’s tie with national history: the art serves as a means of providing a sense of national identity.³⁰ This does not mean, however, that religion does not participate in rescuing Yashiro, because the *tsuzumi* can also be seen as an instrument of rituals. The sound is described as that “of revelation” by Yashiro. The word “revelation” (*keiji*) has a very strong religious flavor; it means a divine revelation, suggesting that the sound of the *tsuzumi* possesses a divine power. After hearing the sound of the *tsuzumi*, Yashiro starts to think that he should perform another ritual, the *misogi* (purification ritual) and walk around Japan before marrying Chizuko.³¹ The *misogi* is a Shinto ritual and even his desire to “walk around Japan” can be seen as performing some kind of pilgrimage; the sound of the *tsuzumi* prompts him to conduct ritualistic activities in preparation for his marriage.

That the *tsuzumi* is an artistic instrument with some connection to religious ritual is also confirmed with Yashiro’s mentioning of the Noh drama in relation to the *tsuzumi*. Later in the story, there is a scene where Yashiro and Chizuko take a walk side by side after attending a social gathering. Because of the uncertainty surrounding their prospective marriage and relationship, they are both feeling a little melancholic. Then, as he listens to the sound of their footsteps, Yashiro suddenly recalls the sound of the *tsuzumi* that he heard in the

²⁸ Kodansha Encyclopedia (Japan Knowledge).

²⁹ Yokomitsu 1967, 345.

³⁰ As Stalker (2008) discusses, there has been “the broader discourse on art as an important means to enhance and embody Japanese spiritual identity” (117).

³¹ Yokomitsu 1967, 345.

mountain. The sound of their footsteps and the *tsuzumi* in his imagination overlap, and it again works to dissolve Yashiro's anxiety. Markedly, Yashiro also imagines the Noh stage in this instance, and "he waits to see when the sound of their footsteps would change into the sound of footsteps on the Noh stage."³² The *tsuzumi* has been one of the traditional musical instruments often used in the Noh and kabuki plays, and the Noh play traditionally has a strong link to Zen Buddhism. Indeed, the Noh play is often referred as the best example epitomizing how religious ritual and art have been tightly connected in Japanese cultural tradition.³³

There is yet another instance in which art, this time the act of production rather than reception, is shown to have a purgatory function: haiku composition. Many members of the trip to Europe learned how to compose haiku during their travels, led in this by one of the participants, Tōno, a former writer. Even Kuji, the pro-European representative, comes to like haiku composition and becomes well versed in it. When a group of people are walking to Notre Dame, they almost start a discussion about politics, noticing that the cafes on the street are closed due to the strike occurring in Paris. Kuji then deliberately brings up the topic of haiku because, by this time, he has learned that conversations about politics always create a hostile atmosphere, and by changing the topic to haiku, he knows that he can divert people's attention and maintain a friendly conversation, which he indeed succeeds in doing. "But Kuji wonders why everyone becomes cheerful and soft whenever talking about haiku, even though they may not realize it. Now and again, he feels puzzled by such an odd predisposition of the Japanese."³⁴ In this instance, notably, it is Kuji – the very pro-European figure who at one point (much to Yashiro's annoyance) even exclaims "why wasn't I born in Paris?" – who recognizes the soothing, purgatory effect of composing haiku. In each of these cases, therefore, art functions almost like "religion" in the sense that it gives peace to the confused or agitated mind, and acts like the savior.

³² Ibid., 352.

³³ As Ueda (1967) explains, however, the Noh should be considered not merely derived from Zen but a mixture of various elements; the Noh "had absorbed many heterogeneous elements from the outside, such as Chinese operatic drama and Japanese folk dance, Shinto rituals and Buddhist ceremonies, and popular mimetic shows and aristocratic court music, eventually integrating them all into a single, harmoniously unified art" (55).

³⁴ Yokomitsu 1967, 167-168.

Conclusion

Traveler's Sadness was written from 1937 to 1946, over nearly a decade during which Japan's imperialism and nationalism peaked and were followed by devastating defeat. The dichotomy of the West versus Japan, and the question of how and where to find, and protect, Japanese national identity was undoubtedly a pressing issue for many intellectuals. Yokomitsu was not an exception. *Traveler's Sadness* is a novel about one modern man's earnest search for national identity in which, through the romance with his Catholic girlfriend and the endless debates with his pro-European friend, the protagonist eventually comes to realize the sadness and, perhaps, futility of such a journey. There is no solution for the search for national identity, nor does he offer any answer to the question of how best to handle the imported "modernity." Religion and art are shown, however, to have potential as saviors for those who undertake such a journey. And ultimately, it is the power of art that the modern intellectual most needs, as it provides a relief from their intellectual entanglements and leads to a realization of the futility of their pursuits. Like the sound of the *tsuzumi* drum or the lines of a haiku, Yokomitsu himself might have attempted to unravel his own anxieties by the very act of writing *Traveler's Sadness*. With no final destination for Yokomitsu's journey to his lost home, it may in fact be appropriate that *Traveler's Sadness* was never completed.

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