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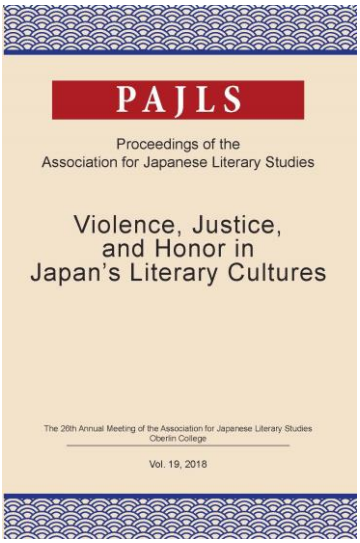


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# VIOLENCE, ASSIMILATION AND OTHERNESS IN COLONIAL MANCHURIA

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During the 1930s and 1940s, bandits (*hizoku* 匪賊 or on horseback, *bazoku* 馬賊) frequently appeared in Japanese representations of Manchuria. Literary texts, films and popular songs set on the continent portrayed these figures as posing a threat to the safety of Japanese soldiers and settlers alike.[2] Whether kidnapping travelers or attacking Japanese settler outposts, bandits were portrayed as groups of men, usually Chinese, who were part of the foreign terrain of Manchuria along with its vast, open landscape and unforgiving climate.[3]

As the embodiment of the dangers of the continent, bandits thus represented one example of colonial otherness for Japanese in Manchuria. Japanese media often juxtaposed images of violent, threatening bandits with innocent Japanese settlers or brave Japanese soldiers fighting for the cause of colonizing Manchuria. These contrasting portrayals of a violent colonial other and a brave Japanese self framed the Japanese presence on the continent as vital in the project of building the new nation of Manchuria. According to these depictions, the Manchurian countryside rife with bandits required the civilizing assistance of Japanese subjects. Moreover, such images framed the colonial other as the instigator of unprovoked violence, and implicitly identified the force enacted by imperial Japanese subjects as a defensive (and implicitly justified) response.

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[2] Bandits appear in a number of different media during this period. See Tanaka and Baskett for discussion of different films with images of bandits in Manchuria. For examples of references to bandits in popular songs of the time, see Oka. By contrast, bandits in Chinese literature at this time were romanticized, often portrayed as fighters in the anti-Japanese resistance movement or protecting local authenticity from the corrupting influence of urban capitalism. See Duara 232–234. Because of the association of bandits with Manchuria, the terms *bazoku* and *hizoku* often carry an implicit identification of the subjects as Chinese.

[3] Otani Henry's 1922 film "Village at Twilight" depicts a young Japanese man being kidnapped by a group of bandits and his eventual romance with the daughter of the bandits' leader. See Baskett 28. Ushijima Haruko's short story "Fukujusō" depicts a group of Japanese villagers fighting off bandits with only a small police force. Ushijima.

This paper examines Korean writer Imamura Eiji's "Fellow Traveler" (Dōkōsha 同行者, 1938), a short story that invokes the trope of bandits as colonial other, even as it explores how the violence of empire entangles identity in questions of complicity and resistance.[4] This story, which appeared in the first issue of Xinjing-based literary journal *Manshū rōman*[5] in 1938, depicts the journey of a Korean man, Shin Chung-hum, from the capital city of Xinjing (known as Shinkyō in Japanese, present day Changshun) to rural Manchuria. While living in Dalian, Shin Chung-hum immersed himself in the Japanese language and culture but has grown dissatisfied with city life. On a whim, he decides to travel to the countryside to visit his estranged older brother. Through arrangements made by a Korean innkeeper, Shin embarks upon his journey with an unnamed Japanese farmer going in the same direction. The threat of bandits shapes the interactions between the two travelers and even their preparations for their journey. After some revealing conversations, the story comes to a close with the travelers being intercepted by what appear to be the dreaded bandits.

As the colonial other, bandits represent a figure against which the two main characters, one Korean and one Japanese, define themselves. However, unlike other narratives set on the continent, the alleged bandits do not actually emerge in "Fellow Traveler" until the end of the narrative. Nevertheless, the image of bandits is so powerful that their imagined threatening presence influences the interactions of these two characters. Despite being strangers, these two men choose to travel together based on assumptions about each other. In particular, each man assumes that due to the other's ethnic identity, the other man will serve as protection against the imposing threat of 'bandits' on the journey. Through the absent presence of bandits, Imamura's story reveals the role of violence in the production of colonial identities—"Japanese" selves and colonized others—in Manchuria.

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[4] This essay uses the version of "Dōkōsha" in *"Gaichi" no nihongo bungakusen 2: Manshū, Uchimōkō, Karafuto,* edited by Kurokawa Sō (Tokyo: Shinjuku shobō, 1996), 183–197.

[5] *Manshū rōman* was established by Kitamura Kenjirō in 1938, the year after he moved to Xinjing. Influenced by his previous participation in the Japan romanticism movement (Nihon rōman-ha), Kitamura expressed a desire to bring about an artistic "renaissance" in Manchuria through *Manshū rōman*. Between 1938–1941, *Manshū rōman* published poetry, short fiction, essays and literary and artistic criticism, mainly by writers of different ethnicities based in Manchuria. For more on Kitamura, see Han and Kawamura, 1998.

Postcolonial theorists, such as Frantz Fanon, have discussed the ways that physical violence is associated with the colonized other and used as justification for a variety of imperialist and colonial projects. In his essay "Concerning Violence," Fanon describes the depiction of the "native" as "a sort of quintessence of evil."[6] This demonizing of colonized subjects as "evil" or "violent" implicitly frames colonizing subjects as "good" or "civilized," providing justification for different colonial projects. At the same time, Imamura's "Fellow Traveler" also shows how this focus on the threatening other has overshadowed other forms of violence, particularly those mobilized by Japanese subjects. Through analysis of different examples of force in this story, I will argue that the association of certain forms of violence with otherness reinforces colonial identities and obscures the brutality of assimilation. In his story "Fellow Traveler," Imamura considers the destructiveness of imperial demands for assimilation, itself a facet of the maelstrom of violence in which colonized subjects find themselves.

Imamura Eiji was a Korean writer active in Japanese-language literary circles in Manchuria between 1932–1945, including the Manchukuo Literary Academy (*Manshū bunwakai*) and the Xinjing Manchukuo-Japan Cultural Council (*Shinkyō Man-nichi bunka kyōkai*). He published stories in a variety of journals and newspapers in Manchuria including *Dai Shinkyō nippō, Manshū rōman, Geibun* and *Manshū gyōsei*.[7] "Fellow Traveler" is his best known work, having been included in anthologies both during the colonial period as well as in recent years.[8]

Critics have interpreted the story in different ways. At the time of publication in 1938, Japanese writer Akihara Katsuji described the work as a "splendid product of Manchuria" that reveals the increasingly frequent dilemma of individuals torn between ethnic and "national" affiliations.[9] In contrast, 21st century readings of the story reflect debates over complicity and resistance in colonial Korea. Literary scholar Nishida Masaru lauded Imamura's portrayal of the "psychological complications of a pro-

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[6] Fanon 41.

[7] Biographical information from Okada 279–282; Kawamura, 2001, 4–7; Akihara 187–190. Imamura 183–197.

[8] In addition to its publication in June 1938 in *Manshū rōman*, this story appeared in *Manshū bungei nenkan* in 1939, the 1996 Kurokawa Sō anthology of *Gaichi no nihongo bungaku*; and the 2012 volume*, Manshū no hikari to kage,* of *Korekushon Sensō to bungaku*; as well as the 2001 *Nogawa Takashi, Imamura Eiji, Hanawa Fusao sakuhinshū.*

[9] Aoki 10.

Japanese (*shinnichi-ha*) intellectual" as unique.[10] As Yu Sujeon notes, other critics, like Kim Changson read the work as a reflection of the false promise of "ethnic harmony." Not all critics wholly embraced the work. Korean scholar Chae Hun observed that some scholars were critical of the complicit tendencies of the protagonist, but also pointed out the ways that the work depicts the anti-Japanese resistance emerging from the growing divide between Koreans and Japanese in rural Manchuria.[11] Nishida and Kim Changson have read this story as parallel to the author's own life, pointing to the similarity between the protagonist and author Imamura's Korean background and participation in Japanese literary circles. By contrast, this essay will follow Yu Sujeon's argument against an autobiographical reading of the story.[12] Yu's analysis of the complex narrative structure persuasively argues that Imamura's conscious structuring of the narrative points toward this piece as a work of fiction. Consequently, this chapter will examine different kinds of violence in the text and the role that bandits play in the assertion of colonial identities in the story.

In "Fellow Traveler," the fear of "bandits" so deeply affects both the Korean protagonist and his Japanese travel companion that, without consulting one other, they each wear disguises for protection. While Shin Chung-hum exchanges his Japanese suit for the dirty, tattered clothing of a Chinese coolie, the Japanese farmer garbs himself in Korean clothing. Through their choice of garments, each character attempts to "pass" as another identity and in doing so, subtly reveals their assumptions about the victims and perpetrators of colonial violence.

Their acts of disguise underscore a belief in their own vulnerability to the threat of violence along their journey. In identifying as potential victims, each character differentiates himself from the dangerous colonial other. This move also highlights the characters' stake in identifying the perpetrator of violence as a subject distinct from themselves—notably, one of a different ethnicity. By locating the origins of violence in a colonized other, these two characters implicitly align themselves with Japanese subjects, who are framed in colonial discourse as the innocent victims of such violence.

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[10] Nishida 191. The terms *shinnichi-ha* or *shinnichi-teki* were used to label Korean subjects as pro-Japanese collaborators. Christina Yi notes that these terms "overwhelmingly connote postwar ethnonational judgments of colonial collusion with imperial Japan and therefore betrayal of the Korean nation." Yi, 123.
[11] Yu 58.
[12] Ibid.

The travelers' disguises also reveal differences in whom these men perceive as a threat. Shin Chung-hum's efforts to wear the clothing of a Chinese worker is based on the assumption that the danger would come from Chinese bandits, who, he assumes, would not victimize someone who seemed to be of a similar background. In his mind, trying to masquerade as a Chinese person will somehow allow him to escape the threat of bandits who would view a Korean-identified subject like Shin as a potential target. The association of Chinese subjects with violence is introduced from the very beginning of the story, when Shin casually references several actual historical incidents where Chinese subjects engaged in acts of violence against Japanese and Koreans: the Nakamura Incident, the Wanpaoshan Incident, and the Manchurian Incident.

The Nakamura Incident occurred on June 27, 1931, with the killing of Imperial army captain Nakamura Shintarō and three other Japanese officers by Chinese military on the orders of the warlord Zhang Xueliang. Nakamura and his companions were on a reconnaissance mission in Manchuria. The Wanbaoshan Incident was a clash between Koreans and Chinese in rural Manchuria over land rights on July 2, 1931. It was in this fraught context that, two months later on September 18, 1931, the Kwantung army instigated what came to be called the Manchurian Incident (also known as the Mukden Incident) by exploding part of the track of the South Manchurian Railway near Mukden. Kwantung leaders blamed the Chinese military, and used this incident as justification to invade and engage in military action in Manchuria and beyond.[13] It is notable, however, that at the time these events occurred, Japanese imperial discourses represented all of these instances as resulting from Chinese aggression and, in turn, incited anti-Chinese sentiment among Japanese and colonial Koreans. Thus, combined with the image of bandits in the popular media, the reference to these significant historical incidents early on in the story reinforces the association of violence with the Chinese colonial other.

The Japanese traveler's choice of Korean clothing as a disguise reflects a different set of assumptions—in particular, identifying the potential threat on their journey as, not Chinese, but Korean. This assumption conflicts with both Shin's image of the dangerous colonial other as Chinese and Shin's own ethnic identity as Korean. Troubled by his fellow traveler's Korean masquerade, Shin confronts the Japanese man.

[13] Barbara Brooks notes that 1900 Koreans were killed and 4500 reported missing in the wake of the retreat of Zhang Xueliang's troops in the aftermath of the Manchurian Incident. Brooks 40.

> (Shin:) Since they're saying that in Heijō (Pyongyang), many Chinese are being killed by Koreans, **why in the world are you wearing Korean clothing? In times like these, don't you think it's dangerous to do so around here?**
> (Japanese farmer:) Well, I was gonna wear Chinese clothing, but I thought you'd be wearing Korean clothing...To tell you the truth, you probably are aware, but no matter where you go, **there are 'unruly Koreans' (*futei senjin* 不逞鮮人) all over.** (boldface my emphasis)[14]

In the passage above, Shin's purpose in noting the tension between Chinese and Koreans in Korea is to suggest that Chinese might feel animosity toward and pose a threat to Korean subjects in Manchuria, indicating the danger in the farmer's wearing Korean clothing. The farmer misreads the intention behind Shin's comment, instead interpreting it as a citation of violence wielded by, not against, Korean subjects. The farmer then continues on to cite numerous reports of "nests" of "unruly Koreans"[15] in the countryside and several incidents involving such "unruly Koreans," which, according to the farmer, show that they are a greater threat than rural Chinese who "don't know anything about Sino-Japanese relations."[16] While the farmer seems to be making a distinction between his Korean travel companion and the "unruly Koreans," Shin reacts with unease at the framing of the dangerous colonial other as Korean.

These differing ideas of the dangerous colonial other as Chinese or Korean highlight the multiple discourses of self and other in the Japanese colonial context as well as the different agendas embedded within these diverse discourses. Part of Shin Chung-hum's shock at the traveler's Korean disguise is the man's view of Koreans as a danger to Japanese subjects. Even more so, Shin's astonishment is also related to how the Japanese man identifies and aligns Shin Chung-hum with Koreans rather than Japanese. The Korean protagonist has "surrounded himself with Japanese" to the extent that Korean "feels like a foreign language" and he has become alienated from his family as well as other Koreans. Under the assumption that his efforts included him as a subject of the Japanese

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[14] Imamura 192. All translations by the author, unless otherwise noted.
[15] For an in-depth analysis of the term "unruly Koreans" (*futei senjin*), see Jinhee Lee, "'Malcontent Koreans (Futei senjin)': Towards a Genealogy of Colonial Representation of Koreans in the Japanese Empire," *Faculty Research & Creative Activity 36* (2013). https://thekeep.eiu.edu/history_fac/36
[16] Ibid.

empire, Shin initially sees no differences between himself and the Japanese traveler. Yet, the farmer's preoccupation with "unruly Koreans" makes Shin "painfully aware" that despite Shin's attempts to assimilate, he is left standing between "threatening" (*fuonna* 不穏な) Koreans and ethnically Japanese people.[17]

Shin's attempts to identify as "Japanese" are understandable in light of what Barbara Brooks calls the "rhetoric of inclusion" that identified Koreans as Japanese "compatriots" in the development of rural Manchuria.[18] Both Brooks and Hyun-Ok Park have discussed the ways that Koreans were identified as Japanese compatriots in particular moments convenient to Japanese officials, but, at other times were excluded from claims to the status of "Japanese" subjects. In the previously mentioned Wanpaoshan Incident in 1931, for example, a clash between Chinese and Korean peasants over land rights led to the intervention of local Japanese authorities protecting the rights of "Japanese" subjects, the Korean farmers.[19] At other times, however, Koreans were subject to harsh discrimination and violence differentiating them from ethnically Japanese subjects.

In the case of Imamura's story, it becomes clear that the Japanese traveler does not fully view Shin as a Japanese compatriot. At one point, the farmer offers Shin money to say, if they are intercepted, that the farmer is his mute uncle. Feeling humiliated, Shin brusquely says he didn't ask for money to help the man, and cautions him against "lumping people together" (*ningen o taba ni shite kangaecha ikemasen yo).*[20] Shin seems to view the man's offer of payment as indication of the man's view that any Korean person would be unwilling to help a Japanese person. This interaction reveals the instability of Shin Chung-hum's claim to Japanese subjecthood. Despite Shin's efforts to assimilate to Japanese language and cultural practices, the Japanese man clearly does not see him as a compatriot, a fact made clear by the offer of payment for his aid. Following this incident, Shin silently broods over the money, ethnicity, and "unruly Koreans," further emphasizing the difficult dilemma he faces.

Shin's angry response reflects a growing awareness that he can never be fully accepted as Japanese especially in light of the ever-shifting nature of the position of Koreans in the Japanese empire. His dilemma is reflected

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[17] Ibid., 193.
[18] Brooks 35.
[19] Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka notes that the Wanpaoshan incident eventually escalated into anti-Chinese riots in Korea, which ended with as many as 190 ethnic Chinese killed. Matsusaka 377.
[20] Imamura 193–194.

in the notion of mimicry as discussed by postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha. The colonized subject's attempts to take on the culture of the colonizer result in the ambivalent position of being "almost the same, but not quite."[21] Bhabha's explication of mimicry reveals, however, that this ambivalence affects both the colonized and the colonizing subject by revealing their interdependence. The colonizer needs the colonized subject to remain different and "othered" in order to maintain their empowered position within colonial hierarchy. The Japanese farmer, by maintaining a difference between himself and Shin, asserts his claim to Japanese identity and its accompanying privileges—implicitly denying such access to Shin.

In the same way the colonizer needs the colonized for affirmation and maintenance of their identity and power, Shin's focus on the dangerous Chinese other served as a way for him to affirm his desired inclusion as a Japanese subject. By fixating on the threat that a Chinese bandit might pose, Shin locates himself as a potential victim and thus, implicitly affiliates with Japanese subjects. Ironically, his preoccupation with the Chinese other has blinded him to the effects of his attempts at taking on Japanese identity. It is only when these efforts are rejected by the Japanese farmer that Shin realizes that he has already been a victim of another kind of violence: that of cultural assimilation.

Near the end of the story, a group of eight men appear in the distance, blocking their path. The Japanese farmer immediately accuses Shin of colluding with the men, identifying them as "unruly Koreans." Although the men are wearing Chinese clothing, they seem to be yelling to each other in Korean. Realizing that this potential threat is embodied by Korean men, Shin wonders if the Korean innkeeper who arranged his journey was in cahoots with these men. It is in this moment that the first instance of actual violence in the narrative occurs. The Japanese farmer grabs Shin by the throat and threatens him with a pistol, yelling "You're in on it!" (*Kisama, kusaizo!* literally, "You stink!").[22] The language use reveals a dramatic shift in their relationship. The farmer's use of the disrespectful pronoun *kisama* contrasts with his previous use of the more polite *anata* when speaking to Shin. The description further expands upon the moment, where the farmer's lips trembled with rage at this betrayal and his eyes reflected a "thirst for blood" (*me wa sakkidatte iru*). The violence that has been attributed to the colonial other is suddenly being wielded by the Japanese subject. This turn of events challenges the usual portrayal of Japanese as victims and colonized subjects as perpetrators of colonial violence.

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[21] Bhabha 86.
[22] Imamura 195.

Upon being accused by the Japanese man, Shin roughly grabs his Japanese travel companion and shakes him, yelling, "What! Do you suspect me? Why don't you trust me?" (*Nandatte, boku o boku o utagau n desu? Anta wa naze boku o shin'yō shinai n desu?*).[23] This instance powerfully reveals the protagonist's shock upon realizing that not only have his efforts to assimilate been for naught but his Japanese companion views him as a threatening "other." Moreover, we see that the identification of the other is reserved for the colonizing subject, a group from which Shin, despite his best efforts, is ultimately excluded. The farmer's accusations induce Shin to recall his own path of assimilation. When Shin was young, his father declared that since Korea had become part of Japan, Koreans were all now Japanese (*Mō wareware wa minna Nihonjin ja)* and encouraged Shin to learn Japanese and become a "splendid Japanese" (*rippana Nihonjin*).[24] The father's actions reflect the thoroughness of Japanese colonial assimilation policy in Korea, which began soon after Japan's colonization of Korea in 1910.[25] Shin continued following this path, studying Japanese language and history as a child and eventually priding himself on being a Japanese citizen (*Nihon kokumin*).[26] All of these efforts eventually chiseled away the Korean protagonist's ties to his family, his birthplace, and his culture.

Colonized subjects, like Shin, may find themselves being labeled by colonizing subjects as the perpetrators of violence, when in fact, they are actually the victims of an all-encompassing violence. As Frantz Fanon asserts, the violence of colonialism is not simply the imposition of rule by "guns and machines," but is also the "destruction of native social forms and [breaking] up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life."[27] Throughout the Japanese empire, various efforts through both official policies and informal pressures compelled colonized subjects to learn the Japanese language and take on other cultural practices. At the same time, other efforts undercut the continuation and preservation of cultural traditions, cutting colonized subjects off from their own indigenous traditions. This pressure to assimilate and accept Japanese language and cultural practices as the norm results in the destruction of the language, culture and communities of the colonized and serves as another form of colonial violence. The damaging effects of assimilation are evident in the alienation

[23] Ibid., 196.
[24] Ibid.
[25] For more on Japan's colonial assimilation policy in Korea, see Caprio.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Fanon 40.

of the Korean protagonist. Not only have his efforts to identify as "Japanese" been unsuccessful, but his transformation has further diminished his claim to a Korean identity as well, ultimately distancing him from his Korean heritage and Japanese society.[28]

This realization of the cause of his own victimhood leads to a deciding moment, where he responds to the Japanese man's violent accusations with violence of his own.

> ...(S)tanding between these two sides, he could not simply remain suffering and gasping for air. At least, at this moment, he must stop hanging in limbo and clearly ground his own position. Shin Chung-hum, gripping the man's wrists, violently shook him and repeatedly yelled, "What did you say? Do you suspect me?"[29]

From the Japanese character's perspective, Shin Chung-hum's violence could be read as the expected behavior of a colonial other, confirming that such violence had lay dormant under a seemingly assimilated surface. Yet, when we interpret this scene within the context of other representations of bandits, the protagonist's violence is transformed into a brave confrontation with his conflicted position in the colonial context.

As mentioned earlier, the appearance of bandits in colonial narratives often provided an opportunity for settlers and soldiers to assert their loyalty to the Japanese empire through acts of bravery. For example, Ushijima Haruko's 1943 short story "Fukujusō" (Pheasant's Eye) depicts a village of Japanese settlers fighting off an attack of bandits. Detailing the ways that the settlers express their support for the war effort and prove their loyalty to Japan, the story represents a propagandistic testament to the bravery and commitment of the Japanese women and men living on the continent. In contrast, the bandits emerging at the end of Imamura's "Fellow Traveler," provide both travelers with the opportunity to gain perspective on the complexities of identity in this colonial context, and in the case of Shin, to "ground his own position."

The ending of the story does not show the travelers' interactions with the "bandits" nor do we discover what Shin Chung-hum decides to do. Does he protect the Japanese man or join the Koreans? What would the choice to defend himself and his fellow traveler say about Shin's ties to empire and to his Korean identity? On the other hand, in light of his efforts to assimilate and take on a Japanese identity, is it even possible for Shin to

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 197.

join the Koreans? Would they accept him as a fellow Korean? At the very least, the ending seems to lead to the idea that the protagonist will make a decision and take a stand. After yelling at the farmer for suspecting him of being a conspirator with the group of men, he tells the man to hand over his pistol and be still.

> With his fists, Shin Chung-hum wiped aside the tears streaming down (his face), and then, forcefully gripping the pistol, glared at the approaching eight men.[30]

Whatever Shin decides, whether to fight the Koreans or join them, he is asserting his identity. This open-ended conclusion allows readers to ponder Shin Chung-hum's dilemma, and create their own endings for these characters. Yet, within this ambiguous ending, the final line above with Shin "gripping the pistol" seems to suggest that taking a stand requires him to engage in violence. This ending begs the question: can the colonized escape from the violence of the colonial system? Speaking at the height of colonialism, Frantz Fanon advocates that colonized subjects take violence into their own hands in order to resist colonial violence. He describes colonialism as "violence in its natural state (that) will only yield when confronted with greater violence."[31] What exactly is that greater violence? Tearing apart the ideas that support and justify colonialism? Destroying the platitudes about assimilation for the good of the colonized subject by revealing the violence at the heart of this enterprise; demolishing the assumptions about the colonial other? Each of these actions chafe away at the ideological foundations of empire. If such actions can be seen as part of that "greater violence," I would argue that Imamura's story reveals possibilities for resisting the violence of exploitative and oppressive regimes of power.

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Fanon 48.

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