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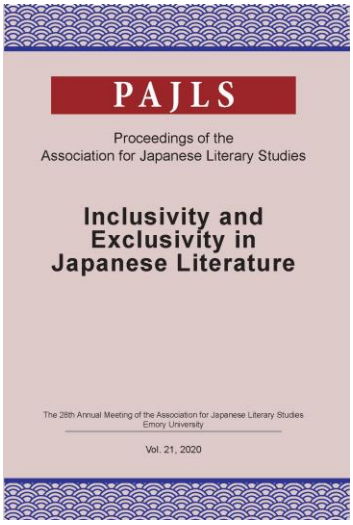

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VULNERABILITY OF WOMEN'S BODIES THROUGH POST WAR AND POST FUKUSHIMA LITERATURE

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The novelist Tsushima Yūko (1947–2016) sadly passed in 2016 but she left powerful post 3.11 literature for us. *Yamaneko dōmu* (2013) or *Wildcat Dome* is her first long novel depicting the Fukushima disaster within the lives of GI babies. Tsushima first depicted the Pacific War in her 2008 novel *Amari ni yaban na*, or *All Too Barbarian*, set in colonial Taiwan. In the words of Peichen Wu, *All Too Barbarian*, along with Tsushima's 2011 *Reed Boat, Flying* (*Ashibune, tonda*), and her *Wildcat Dome* can be seen as forming a "trilogy of the remains of the Japanese empire" (*teikoku zan'ei no sanbusaku*) that Wu characterizes as follows:

> *All Too Barbarian*, *Reed Boat, Flying*, and *Wildcat Dome*—each depict in unflinching detail the violent oppression that the nation-state has inflicted on those who straddle boundaries of nation or race and on those situated on the peripheries of empire. Borrowing the outlines of the Musha Incident uprising by the aboriginal people of Taiwan, *All Too Barbarian* foregrounds the underlying role played by a masculinist 'logos,' while *Reed Boat, Flying* exposes the dark history of the collective massacre carried out through the forced abortions imposed under the rubric of 'illegitimate pregnancies' during postwar repatriation.[2]

Tsushima Yūko's war novels highlight women's bodies, with particular focus on their potential of pregnancy. Considered within the history of postwar works written by women, it is useful to examine Tsushima's works alongside the "post WWII defeat trilogy" (*haisengo sanbusaku*) created by the novelist Saegusa Kazuko (1929–2003). Saegusa Kazuko focused on war and women as part of her commitment to feminism in the late 1980s and I argue that Tsushima Yūko drew from Saegusa in constructing her own trilogy.

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[2] Peichen Wu (translated by Michael Bourdaghs), "The Remains of the Japanese Empire: Tsushima Yūko's All Too Barbarian; Reed Boat, Flying; and Wildcat Dome," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 16:12 (Jun. 15, 2018).

I will begin with an introduction to Saegusa's feminist thought. According to Kurata Yōko, "In the 1980s, Saegusa began to talk more about women, especially after her first visit to Greece in 1983, when she developed a deep commitment to feminism and turned her novels into something that could be called feminism fabulations."[3] Saegusa took on a feminist stance by declaring that her novels would be written from a woman's point of view. But according to Kurata, "in the area of feminist criticism, Saegusa's novels are not necessarily highly regarded" and "Saegusa's feminism has been regarded as essentialist or 'female fundamentalist' [josei genriha] in the 1980s, and similarities to ecological feminism has been noted." However, the critique of Saegusa as a "female fundamentalist" is in fact based on comments made by the sociologist and feminist Ueno Chizuko at a 1985 symposium with Tomioka Taeko,[4] and thus Kurata's claim that Saegusa was regarded poorly as a feminist lacks sufficient proof.

However, Saegusa came in for unambiguous criticism once feminism embraced sex as a source not only for procreation but for women's pleasure. The women's lib movement since the late 60s has also been a fight for reproductive health and rights. Slogans such as "women decide whether or not to have a baby" and the legalization of abortion are based on the argument separating sexual and reproductive activities. For Ueno Chizuko, who supported this movement, the association of female sexuality with the impregnated body was seen as an anachronism. Kurata criticized Ueno's argument for failing to capture Saegusa Kazuko's intent, and sought to reread Saegusa Kazuko. Kurata reinterpreted Saegusa's novels as a reflection of 1980s feminism which tended to deny the physical contingencies and vulnerabilities of the female body and produce an illusion of women's autonomous subjectivity. In other words, Kurata criticized forms of feminism which proposed the self-determination of sex by women, including sex workers.[5]

The slogan of the women's lib movement, "women decide whether or not to have a baby" can be traced to the argument of sexual self-determination [sei no jikokettei] put forth by sociologist Miyadai Shinji in the mid-1990s, who interviewed high school and college girls who had entered the sex industry themselves. The idea of sexual self-determination

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[3] Kurata Yōko, "Saegusa Kazuko ni okeru fujiyū no suimyaku: 'Hachigatsu no shura' kara 'Sumidagawara' e," *Komazawa kokubun* 53 (2016), 152.
[4] Tomioka Taeko, Ueno Chizuko, Saegusa Kazuko, "Otoko ga kawaru toki," *Shinchō* (Dec. 1985), 236–272.
[5] Kurata Yōko, "Saegusa Kazuko to 1980 nendai feminizumu; 'Oni domo no yoru wa fukai' o chūshin to shite," *Kindai bungaku* 91 (2014), 140–141.

assumes that all individuals have free will, and that it is a simple matter of free will for a woman to engage in the sex industry. In this way, the opportunity to address the gender disparity and violence that is pre-structured in the sex industry has been lost. Thus, the feminist aspect of Saegusa Kazuko has been overlooked until Kurata's rereading.

In her 1972 novel *Hachigatsu no shura*, or *The August Demon*, Saegusa writes about defeated Japan from the perspective of a man who returned from the war blind. She has noted elsewhere that war novels tend to borrow a male point of view and are difficult to write from a woman's perspective. In 1987, Saegusa published *Sono hi no natsu*, or *Summer That Day*, which describes female high school students in the ten days following Japan's announcement of surrender at the end of WWII. The focal point of the novel is the question of whether forcible sexual relations with a man who has been summoned to serve at the front should be considered violence. It was rumored that the protagonist's classmate, Maruo Sumi, attempted suicide. "She was pregnant and tried to drown herself in a pond in her hometown, but she was pulled up and revived, but miscarried."

Three days after Japan's surrender in World War II, rumors began to circulate that "When enemy soldiers land, all women will be raped" or "There is an order that all women should die in protest as *yamato nadeshiko* (literally, "Japanese dianthus" flowers) rather than be raped." The narrator, Yoshii, says, "I hate the idea that if you are assaulted, you must bite off your tongue and die, or drink potassium cyanide. Why don't you tell us to kill the American soldiers and then die?"

Her roommate Uda Noriko says, "You idiot. Japan lost. We lost and we signed a ceasefire. How can we kill them?"

The narrator implies that violence against women should not be allowed under any circumstances, and that it is wrong for women to be blamed for Japan being beaten in the war.

During this exchange, pregnant rape survivor Maruo Sumi calmly states: "You don't have to die; it doesn't matter if you were raped." Maruo Sumi begins to describe her experience. She says she was relieved to know the soldier who had forced her into sexual relations died in the war. Before going to the front, he asked her to stay with him for a night as a memory of his life and she felt she could not say no. He said he would not do anything. "But it was impossible for him to do nothing. War is bad," she says.

When Maruo Sumi left the room, Uda Noriko asserts, "That was the same thing as an American raping us." She suggests that even Japanese soldiers being sent to war, should not have been allowed to have sexual relations without their partner's consent. If Japanese society permitted

such conduct during the war, then women had always been at the risk of being raped, even before the arrival of US soldiers. In other words, war itself exposes women to vulnerabilities of the female body. Because it was a war, women were expected to offer sexual comfort to soldiers leaving for the front, and even to bear their children if they became pregnant as a result.

At the end of the novel, the narrator is humiliated inside a crowded train. As the transfer station approaches, she feels as though "I had a strange sign on my back. There came a violent blast of hot breath behind my ears," and "a light laugh broke out among the demobilized soldiers" as I got off. An elderly man tells her, "Nē-chan, you've got some nice stuff on the back of your *monpe* (work trousers)—you should wash quickly." All the men in the train laugh together. When she looks at the back of her *monpe*, she sees that they are stained with sticky semen.

The final scene shows the physical experience of a woman placed under the double standard of both having to accept a man's sexual desire and being humiliated in by doing so. Pregnancy and childbirth may take place within sanctioned marriage but outside this, as a result of nonconsensual sexual intercourse, these same processes are stigmatizing. In the novel these are linked to Japan and the war, but Saegusa notes the broader implications. When Saegusa was asked by Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit if she was using rape as a metaphor, she replied that it was a "metaphor of masculine society itself, not only Japan." She added, "If we look at war from ancient times onward, we can see that rape has been carried out as a systemic practice" According to Saegusa, she was eager to ensure that the victims within aggressor nations were not overlooked and it was from this broad perspective that she was thinking about war.[6]

The second novel in Saegusa's "post WWII defeat trilogy," the 1989 *Sono fuyu no shi*, or *Death that Winter* is set four months after the broadcast of the Emperor's announcement of the war ending, and the story describes the rape of a female student by American soldiers. This is in the immediate aftermath of women being told that they should bite off their tongues and die if humiliated by the enemy.

In the black market depicted in the novel, the group known as the "Tokkō kuzure" or "surviving suicide squad" commits robbery; other gangs sell women who were raped by occupation forces to the military brothels, threatening them by telling them that anyone raped by GHQ

[6] Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit, ed., *'Joryū' hōdan: Shōwa o ikita josei sakka tachi* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2018), 146.

would be unmarriageable and that those already married would be divorced.

When Chikako, a female high school student, makes her way to the station to meet a cousin, demobilized soldier Seiichi, she is raped by two black American soldiers while Seiichi is arrested on suspicion of robbery. When Chikako's mother learns about the rape, she urges Seiichi to assume responsibility and marry Chikako. Seiichi has been dreaming of marrying Fujiko, the daughter of the owner of his rooming house. After Seiichi returned from war, the first place he visited was his rented room to see Fujiko, even before confirming the safety of his own family. Fujiko was absent because she was working as a telephone operator in the occupation forces.

Seiichi goes to the brothels in search of Chikako, since raped women would be expected to turn to prostitution in order to survive. There he meets Yuriko, a former so-called "comfort woman," or sex slave, for Japanese soldiers who met Seiichi during the war. However, he doesn't remember her. When Seiichi learns that Chikako was not killed, he thinks that she may have committed suicide. In his mind, a raped woman would choose to die. Hearing this, Yuriko, says, "Hey, it sounds like you don't want your cousin to live without dying after being raped by the occupation forces. So then it's better not to look for her" (178).

Seiichi states that he has been asked to assume responsibility and marry Chikako and says, "I think I must humiliate myself because we lost the war."

Yuriko replies, "A humiliation?" and adds "Who will be humiliated?" but Seiichi does not understand her intention and assumes that, "Suicide is the best way to go, but I'm not sure if she is will make that choice."

After Seiichi leaves the brothel he goes to Fujiko's workplace and finds her on a date with a GHQ soldier. Having been caught up in the experience of his cousin's rape by a member of the GHQ, Seiichi now finds that his lover has sold herself sexually to GHQ. To Seiichi, this represents the "humiliation" of a man within a defeated country. Seiichi is finally murdered by Fujiko's American lover. The literary scholar Yonaha Keiko has pointed out that "Violence against women in defeated countries is caused as a result of men having lost the war. Yet men attempt to hold women accountable for it by asking them to 'die.' Saegusa criticizes such a male mode of discourse and the failure to protect women during the war."[7]

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[7] Yonaha Keiko, *Kōki 20 seiki josei bungaku ron* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 2014), 189.

In Saegusa's *Sono fuyu no shi*, the character of Chikako reveals that sexual violence by men is not a problem limited to the occupying forces. Chikako's friend says, "They say that Japanese did such terrible things while they were winning. They were no different." At another point Chikako ponders, "There have been reports of violence committed by the Japanese military against local women in Philippines—is this a characteristic of soldiers? For a woman, does losing the war mean being assaulted by an enemy soldier?" As Yonaha has noted, "the rape of Chikako symbolically illustrates the situation of women in every defeated country."[8]

Chikako worried that she might have been impregnated during the rape and if so, she hopes that being a prostitute may facilitate her introduction to a hospital where she can obtain an abortion. But she later learns that because she was menstruating at the time, she did not become pregnant. Even so, she could not return home and instead decides to work as a clerk at a facility for the occupation forces. In *Sono fuyu no shi*, rape does not lead to pregnancy, but it is framed as an act of violence against a woman's body with the potential for pregnancy.

Another path that would have been open to Chikako is described in an episode of a woman disposing of her baby on the outskirts of a US military camp. The baby apparently had been choked to death immediately after birth. Rumors whispered afterward say that it was the child of a prostitute or a woman raped by a member of the GHQ. Since the episode is set only four months after the arrival of the occupation forces, the issue of "mixed race children" (those born to Japanese women and GHQ men) had not yet arisen. Instead, it points to an ominous future for women, one that would be the main theme of the final work in Saegusa's trilogy, *Sono yoru no owari ni* or *At the End of the Night.*

Sono yoru no owari ni (1990) depicts the lives of women working at a brothel. Someyo is employed at a bar in Ginza and describes herself as a former Shinbashi geisha, but she actually applied during the wartime "recruitment of special nurses" and served in Singapore. The term "special nurse" was used to refer to sex slaves. She served as a so-called "comfort woman" for a senior officer. After Japan's defeat in World War II, she worked as an "Only" in the comfort facilities for the US military. Women designated "Only" had sex with just one American soldier. Once the occupying troops returned to the US, Someyo was left pregnant. She gave birth and then worked as a street prostitute (or "pan-pan"). She abandoned her blue-eyed daughter at an orphanage.

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[8] Yonaha Keiko, Ibid., 188.

After becoming a hostess at a high-class bar in Ginza, she had to hide her past being a sex slave and "pan-pan." But Someyo does not regret having served as a "comfort woman" as she feels that her work in Singapore was meaningful and nobody despised her.

One day, a young, blonde "mixed race" hostess joins the bar, and Someyo worries that her abandoned daughter may have returned. Someyo believes that Midoriko, the Madam, would disapprove of having a former prostitute working at her high-class bar. Fearing that her past may be revealed, she quits the bar and becomes a street prostitute again.

Midoriko, however, has her own hidden past. She applied to be a dancer in a cabaret for GHQ forces but then discovered that being a dancer meant acting as a prostitute for an American soldier. Feeling it was justified, she stole money from the cabaret and escaped. Midoriko suspects that Someyo was a manager for the cabaret and worries that her theft might be discovered. The success of her business has been built on the stolen money.

Although Someyo fears her, only Midoriko seems capable of understanding Someyo's position. Both women still struggle in the shadow of the war two decades after its end. Their fears persist even in the 1960s as memories of the wartime are fading and people can no longer imagine that time. Common to those fears is the possibility of pregnancy. For example, when the women in the bar discuss the issue of mixed race children, Midoriko says that from a woman's point of view, whether one is comforting Japanese soldiers or those of the GHQ"

> "It's a man's idea that a woman should comfort Japanese soldiers before they leave for the front line because they are serving our country, and that a woman must protect her purity and ensure she is not raped by an enemy soldier. From a woman's point of view, we are only afraid of getting pregnant in either scenario." (203–204)

This mode of thinking is a common thread throughout the trilogy. *Sono hi no natsu* depicts a female student having a sexual encounter with a soldier before he went to war based on his desire to spend a night together because he believed he was entitled to do so even though it might have led to pregnancy. In *Sono yoru no owari ni*, Midoriko argues that whether her partner is Japanese or the enemy, for women, unwanted sexual relations have the same result in that both may lead to pregnancy. For Midoriko, the violence of rape is not limited to intercourse itself, but is inherent in the threat of a consequential pregnancy; thus it doesn't matter if the woman

consents or doesn't. Whether willing or coerced, voluntary or forced, the damage to the victim's body caused by a resulting pregnancy is the point where sexual violence occurs.

We see the link between sexual violence and conception in Chikako's relief at realizing she was menstruating when she was raped by a member of the Occupation forces in *Death that Winter*; and in Someyo's fear that her own "mixed-race" daughter might recognize her mother and that the Madam would thereby know that Someyo had a past as a sex slave in *At the End of the Night*. Sexual violence against women is only identifiable to others when its result—conception—becomes obvious. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is a mere embarrassment for women even if it is physically painful or unwanted; it is only transgressive violence when it brings the physical disorder of pregnancy into the external world.

Saegusa Kazuko began publishing her trilogy on women and war in 1986 after a discussion with Ueno Chizuko and Tomioka Taeko. Despite Ueno sharply criticizing Saegusa by stating, "People who claim reproduction is natural are anachronistic" and proposing "We're living in a time when reproduction is no longer natural," Saegusa responded by stubbornly insisting upon the need to reconsider this time when reproduction is no longer natural in light of the perspective of a time when it was natural. With this comment, Saegusa helps us see that her focus in her "post WWII defeat trilogy" is the vulnerable body of women.

In 1989, when Saegusa finished writing the trilogy, no charges had been filed related to the Korean comfort women issue. However, from the postscript of the third part, it seems that Saegusa foresaw the future. She writes as follows:

> Having written this trilogy, I have made a discovery. It is the truth that the true story of war cannot be written by the people who experienced it.… I was startled. What I have written is, in a sense, a story of shame. It is impossible to tell from mother to daughter.… Stories of defeated countries and of women are not of a nature that can be told. Therefore, if I leave books as such closed communication, women in the future may be able to reconstruct it and create a great story. I hoped my novel would become a part of it, and I finally calmed down. (216–217)

Although Saegusa wrote about a war whose true stories could not be shared by those who experienced it, especially "A story of a woman from a defeated country," she does not think that all the stories have been told. Saegusa positioned her work as a relay point, hoping that the next

generation would take up the baton, and indeed about twenty years later, Tsushima Yūko did so in in *Yamaneko dōmu*'s GI babies (2013). Saegusa's exploration of the vulnerabilities of women's bodies founded a lineage of feminist novels that would carry over into the next generation.