Aki Shimazaki,
the Chronicler of Inconvenient Aspects of Japanese Society

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Declaration of Authorship

I Maxton J Karamalla hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract:

This research looks at the work of Aki Shimazaki, the Japanese-Canadian author who writes about Japanese society and history through fictional narratives in French. The main aim of this research is to investigate the role of Shimazaki as a chronicler of 'inconvenient' aspects such as war memory, gender roles and the idea of 'otherness'. In her three pentalogies: *Le Poids des secrets* (1999-2009), *Au Cœur du Yamato* (2006-2013) & *L'Ombre du chardon* (2014-2018), Shimazaki explores these sensitive issues through the eyes of Korean residents, Japanese Christians as well as atomic bomb survivors and an array of marginalised protagonists thus shedding light on how these aspects of life are viewed from a perspective outside of mainstream/indigenous Japanese society.

This thesis sets out to examine the contribution of Aki Shimazaki to modern French literature. The main aim of this investigation is to analyse Shimazaki's three pentalogies *Le Poids des Secrets*: *Tsubaki* (1999), *Hamaguri* (2000), *Tsubame* (2001), *Wasurenagusa* (2003), *Hotaru* (2004), *Au Cœur du Yamato: Mitsuba* (2006), *Zakuro* (2008), *Tonbo* (2010), *Tsukushi* (2012), *Yamabuki* (2013), and *L'Ombre du chardon: Azami* (2014), *Hôzuki* (2015), *Suisen* (2016), *Fuki-no-tô* (2017), Maïmaï (2018).

This dissertation is divided into five chapters:
Chapter 1 - 'Aki Shimazaki in the context of Translingualism'
will analyse the role Shimazaki plays in the translingual literary genre vis-à-vis other Franco-Japanese writers;
Chapter 2 - 'The Legacy of the Second World War'
delves into questions surrounding the trauma suffered by the survivors of the war and the impact that this experience has had on their future;
Chapter 3 - '*Zainichi* Identity in Japan'
explores the sensitive topic regarding Korean residents in Japan and their experience traced through the life of the protagonist Yonhi-Mariko in *Tsubame;*
Chapter 4 - 'Aki Shimazaki's Japanese Otherness'

focuses on Japan's Christian minority and how Christianity plays a prevalent role in Shimazaki's narratives;
Chapter 5 - 'Suicide, Sexuality and Family: the presence of Dazai and Mishima in Shimazaki's novels'
examines the prominent influence of two well-known Japanese authors in Shimazaki's writing, and thematic parallels are drawn between their work and her novels.

By examining Shimazaki's unique binary role as an insider and an outsider, this research will evaluate the importance of Shimazaki's work on re-examining Japanese stereotypes and realities. In Chapter 1, Shimazaki's writing will be compared to other Franco-Japanese writers such as Akira Mizubayashi and Ryoko Sekiguchi in order to investigate whether there are any parallels and divergences that can be drawn in light of translingualism. Although these Franco-Japanese writers criticize Japanese society for being rigid, each writer has a very distinctive style and relationship with the French language thus setting Shimazaki's work apart. Furthermore, as a translingual writer Shimazaki occupies an unparalleled role because she deconstructs and reconstructs the French language to give it a uniquely Japanese flavour. In Chapter 2, questions regarding why a contemporary writer such as Shimazaki needs to write about the Second World War are raised. The effect that the war has left on Yukiko in *Tsubaki* (1999) and Tsuyoshi in *Zakuro* (2008) is profound and this continues to haunt the new generations in their families as intimate secrets are revealed. The third Chapter brings to light the suffering of the Korean-*Zainichi* residents in Japan and opens up the debate regarding this relatively unknown community to French-speaking readers. By so doing Shimazaki exposes shortcomings of Japanese society and opens the debate onto an international arena. Chapter 4 explores why Shimazaki decided to dedicate three of her novels (*Tsubame, Hamaguri* and *Tonbo*) to plots that revolve around Christianity in Japan. This analysis leads to the deduction that Shimazaki wants to alert us to the long and complicated relationship between the Christian minorities and Japanese society. The final Chapter looks at the links that can be made between the well-known Japanese authors Ozamu Dazai and Yukio Mishima to Shimazaki's novels. The role of secrecy and traditions in Japanese society are

examined through Dazai and Mishima's philosophies with regards to familial woes and suicide in Japan. Shimazaki, by openly mentioning these writers in her novels, pays homage to their literary contributions to Japanese literature and at the same time puts emphasis on the need to discuss suicide, sexuality and family ties in a repressive Japanese society. In conclusion, this thesis will examine the unique role that Shimazaki plays as a chronicler and mediator between Japanese society and the French-speaking world with her complex storylines that expose Japanese realities in order to open the debate about very sensitive topics that have been limited to Japanese literature and domestic deliberation.

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Introduction:

Aki Shimazaki is unique because she sheds light on perceived Japanese societal shortcomings and acts as a chronicler of Japanese society to a French-speaking audience. The term *inconvenient* in this thesis represents the issues that Japanese society, culture, tradition and government want to constrain within the Japanese sphere due to the disrepute that they might bring to the nation as a whole. Issues such as racism towards Korean residents, Christians, Burakumin (the 'contaminated' race) and homosexual minorities still remain prevalent in Japan today. Furthermore, generational suffering due to the Second World War, family rifts due to secrecy and involvement in the war, and suicide are also deep-rooted societal problems that are central in current day debate but they are confined to the Japanese language and nation. Philip Seaton explains why the Japanese are very reluctant to openly discuss war memories in particular by stating that '"Victim mentality" in Japan: portrayal of oneself as a passive victim is a relatively safe option when the actions of active agents can be judged in so many different ways'. [1] This explanation can help shed light on why the Japanese would rather take on the role of the 'victim' in order to shift the blame onto the 'aggressor' (an external agent such as the US or the nationalistic war leaders). In the same light, we see the Japanese people and Japan as a whole unwilling to expose such societal problems especially to a Western audience who might make connections to Japan's sordid past. The atrocities and the devastation caused by Japan during the Second World War remain to haunt the Japanese psyche and consequently it has become customary to avoid talking about any sort of nationwide shortcomings. This mentality seems to have overshadowed all *inconvenient* aspects of society and despite calls for national debates and necessary change the culture of face-saving remains predominant.

Aki Shimazaki through her novels brings to light Japanese issues that feature in modern day debate that are confined within the Japanese language such as *Zainichi* (Korean residents in

[1] Seaton, Philip, '"Do You Really Want to Know What Your Uncle Did?" Coming to Terms with Relatives'

Japan*)* literature.[2] Shimazaki gives the reader an exclusive opportunity to cross the cultural and linguistic divide and better understand issues such as 'otherness' in Japanese society and the haunting effect of the Second World War that has a direct impact on today's society and family ties. Furthermore, Shimazaki invites her readers to take part in the debate concerning Japanese identity and exposes the reality of Japan to those who are unaware of the status quo. The French-speaking reader is most likely aware of specific Japanese historical events such as the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, yet little is known about the generational impact that such events have had over the years on Japanese society.

Through her pentalogies, Shimazaki traces fictional family ties spanning several generations and examines the detrimental effect of silence, inherited trauma and the marginalisation of minority groups on individuals. The use of pentalogies is of great interest because of the connotations related to the number five in Japanese culture and traditions given that 'numbers are important not for their inherent properties, such as are the basis of any sort of arithmetic, but for what they connote, and this, far from being general, is highly particular'. [3] Shimazaki's three cycles (*Le Poids des secrets*, *Au Cœur du Yamato* & *L'Ombre du chardon*) have followed this formula with emphasis on the number five (*go* in Japanese), which emphasises an underlying meaning that Shimazaki wanted to highlight. Traditionally, the five elements of ancient Chinese science (wood, fire, earth, metal and water) have been named *Gogyō* in Japanese and have been used both in the metaphoric and literal sense. In addition '…we have *GOtoku*, the five virtues, *GOsai*, the five colours, of *GOjō*, the five passions, to give but three examples. The idea of there being five in such cases, may derive from *GOshi*, the five fingers of the hand'. [4] Therefore the three literary cycles could represent family connections like the five fingers of the hand; that is to say, the individual novels, which examine deep-rooted societal

[2] Chapman, David, *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 2.

[3] Crump, T, *Japanese Numbers Game: The Use and Understanding of Numbers in Modern Japan* (London: Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies, 1992), p. 2.

[4] ibid. p. 53.

issues could also be analysing the five passions and virtues whilst being united to one another like the five fingers in the form of a pentalogy. There are other connotations that could be linked to the number five:

> There are relatively few aphorisms containing the number 5. *GOho no shi* meaning, literally, a 'five step poem', means an astute answer, thought up on the spur of the moment. Yet more evocative is *GOri muchū*, literally 'in the middle of a five league fog', meaning to be completely at loss, unable to tell back from front. Here again one has the paradox that in the former aphorism, five essentially connotes a small number, while in the latter it connotes a large one. *Five steps* is nothing at all; *five leagues* is the whole countryside, but then of course there are a lot of steps in a league. Once again context determines the meaning, illustrating once again the principle of metonymy. [5]

There is undeniably a poetic element to Shimazaki's writing given that all the titles of her novels make links to nature. Perhaps when Shimazaki first started to write, she wanted to play with the idea of a 'five step poem' that is created on the spur of the moment: a whimsical desire to write about Japanese families in French. However, upon deeper reflection the idea of (五里霧中) *gori-muchū* seems more pertinent given that Shimazaki is at a loss with Japanese societal problems because of the sheer number of issues that remain to haunt current day society. The origins of this expression give further insight:

> *Gori-muchū* refers to a situation in which a person does not know what to do or how things will turn out. In China, there is a story about a well-known scholar who detested meeting people. In order to avoid them, he used sorcery to conjure up a fog which covered a radius of five *ri* (one *ri* is 2.44 miles). Originally, *gori-muchū* meant to conceal oneself, but this meaning has gradually altered to that of not knowing what has or will happen.[6]

The idea of conjuring a radius of fog could be a metaphor for Shimazaki writing in French because she remains unaware of her ability to write in this alien language. Since Shimazaki is

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[5] ibid.

[6] Sasaki, Mizue. *The Complete Japanese Expression Guide* (Singapore: Tuttle Publication, 2001) <https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Complete_Japanese_Expression_Guide.html?id=8gvRAgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false> [accessed 21 July 2019].

not very open about her personal life, the fog could be seen as a way for her to conceal herself and her woes concerning Japanese culture and society through the French-speaking world. Yet, the expression's quotidian use, which refers to being at a loss, best reflects Shimazaki's choice of pentalogies for her cycles. The notion of not fully understanding what has happened to Japan in the past and not knowing what will happen to Japanese society in the future resonates in all of Shimazaki's pentalogies. As her protagonists question the past to make sense of their present and continue to survive despite the unfolding of tragic family secrets, Shimazaki alludes to this idea of *gori-muchū*, a loss, which can be felt through her characters. In honour of Shimazaki's choice of writing in the form of pentalogies and the deep connection of Japanese culture with the number five, this thesis has also been divided into five chapters that examine profound societal issues which are made reference to in Shimazaki's novels. There is undeniably a sense of *gori-muchū* that can be felt through this thesis as well whilst we contemplate *inconvenient* aspects of Japanese society and wonder how these deep-rooted problems will be dealt with in the future.

Shimazaki's novels have Japanese titles that represent names of flowers, animals, insects and plants. The fact that all of the titles of her cycles can be related to elements of nature suggests a close link to Japanese poetry and specifically *haiku* poems, which must follow strict grammatical rules and 5-7-5 patterns (the number five is again prominent here and could be related to Shimazaki's use of pentalogies) but most importantly they have to express a 'seasonal feel' that can allude to the month or even the day the poem was written. [7] The covers of the novels along with the titles and references made to seasons in the novels evoke this sense of Japanese poetry. R. H. Blyth and Harold G. Henderson explain that 'a *haiku* is the expression of a moment of vision into the nature of the world, the world of nature. [A haiku is] a record of a moment of emotion in which human nature is somehow linked to all nature'. [8] As

[7] Higgins, William J., *The Haiku Seasons: poetry of the natural world* (Berkley: Stone Bridge Press, 2008), p. 19-20.

[8] ibid. p. 26.

a chronicler, Shimazaki uses these ideas of *haiku* poems in her writing as if to say to her readers that we must stop and contemplate human nature through her stories. By so doing, Shimazaki invites her French-speaking readers to think deeply about the situation in Japan and open the debate about aspects of Japanese society that are *inconvenient* to discuss. As explained in Jeffery Johnson's *Haiku Poetics in Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Poetry,* the French-speaking audience is somewhat familiar with this form of poetry due to the *Japonisme* wave (1850-1930), which meant that cultural and linguistic appreciation of Japan became common through the work of writers such as Emile Blémont (1839-1927) and Pierre Loti (1850-1923). In addition to this, the translations and adaptations of Paul-Louis Couchoud who was in Japan in 1900 helped disseminate *haiku* throughout Europe and the Americas, which in turn gave rise to great appreciation of this form of 'pure poetry'. The overarching idea became that *haiku* 'through evocation, suggestion, and silence wherein the reader carried the burden of ascribing the meaning' became commonplace. [9] Shimazaki's novels play with this concept of burdened characters that present an unbiased view of controversial events whilst allowing her readers to make their own speculations. Arthur Alan Watts explanation regarding *haiku* could be associated with Shimazaki's style of writing: 'a true *haiku* is a pebble thrown into the pool of the listener's mind, evoking associations out of the richness of his own memory. It invites the listener to participate instead of leaving him dumb with admiration while the poet shows off'. [10] One could easily replace the word listener for reader in relation to Shimazaki's writing which 'evokes associations' with her universal themes that any reader can relate to. *Haiku* poems are refined prose that might be deceptively simple but they accentuate moments of heightened awareness and impressions yet they do not draw conclusions. In the same manner, Shimazaki through her style of French and fictional plots

[9] Johnson, Jeffery. *Haiku Poetics in Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Poetry* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 103.

[10] Harr, Lorraine Ellis. 'Haiku Poetry', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 9-3 (1975), pp. 112-119 <www.jstor.org/stable/3331909>. [accessed 19 May 2019].

draws attention to moments in Japanese history that are deeply meaningful or life changing whilst expressing opinions, yet she does not arrive at a conclusion.

The use of nature as a central element in Shimazaki's writing could be deciphered through a different perspective:

> In the Canadian works analysed here, for example, nature tends to be depicted as a severe, demanding, and even brutalizing entity, its gods those of another race, its awesome scale rendering void all human endeavour. Yet, it is vitally important, for by struggling with it, an individual can gradually attain a form of autonomy and self-knowledge. If this sounds very much like the role of the father, then nature in the Japanese works comes across as an unmistakably maternal figure. Full of nurturing milk, she indulges, energizes, and restores, often providing a wounded hero with a healing respite from brutalizing civilization. Far from threatening man, she is posed as alluring enough to facilitate his "regression," thereby allowing him to "merge" with her, at least temporarily. [11]

This comparison between the connotations linked to nature in Canadian and Japanese literature is of great importance given the position of Aki Shimazaki as a Japanese-Canadian author who writes in Quebec about Japan whilst using nature as a theme in her novels. Nature is represented very differently in Canadian and Japanese literature and it is clear that Shimazaki employs Japanese interpretations of nature in her writing. In fact, Shimazaki personifies nature in her novels because she plays a nurturing figure, an omnipresent figure that reports on aspects of Japanese society from different timespans, generations, parts of the country and demystifies historical and socio-economical issues not only to her readers but to younger protagonists in her novels. It is clear that Shimazaki as a translingual writer attributes Japanese literary traditions to her novels whilst writing in French. Moreover, she incorporates elements of *haiku* and Japanese representation of nature to present a unique Franco-Japanese literary contribution in French.

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[11] Goossen, Theodore William & Kin'ya Tsuruta, *Nature and Identity in Canadian and Japanese Literature,* (Toronto: University of Toronto-York University Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1988) p. 6.

This dissertation aims to unpack and interpret important societal issues that come to light in the novels whilst paying attention to the effect these discussions have on the reader. In terms of critical approach, this thesis will examine the role that Shimazaki is playing as a *chronicler of inconvenient aspects of Japanese society,* by making Japanese societal, political, linguistic and cultural aspects accessible to a French-speaking reader who might be unfamiliar with such domestic problems. In other words, Japan to this day remains unknown, exotic and to a certain extent alien to Western and French-speaking readers, therefore through her plots Shimazaki opens the debate about profound problems that have been contained in the Japanese linguistic and cultural spheres. With regards to methodology, this thesis has put some emphasis on presenting historical and anthropological aspects specifically in Chapter 3 '*Zainichi* Identity in Japan' because Western readers are not fully aware of the complexity of the situation of the *Zainichi* community. The main objective of presenting detailed background information is to emphasize the gravity of the situation so that the struggles of the Korean-*Zainichi* community are not assumed to be a form of 'casual racism' between neighbouring countries or a superficial ethnic rift. The section entitled 'Why mention the war?' in Chapter 2 discusses how the war remains to be the subject of present day debate and examines Shimazaki's role as a post-war author who presents a new way to consider such Japanese authors. In Chapter 3, the section entitled 'Japanese-Korean historical background' contextualizes for the reader the complexity of the relationship between Korea and Japan and consequently the plight of second, third and even fourth generation Korean-*Zainichi* residents that strive to assimilate to forge an identity for themselves in a implicitly segregated nation. In a similar vein, '*Zainichi-Burakumin* Parallels' introduces the reader to the Japanese 'untouchables' and how the treatment of these two marginalised groups could be compared. The need to include background sections was necessary to set the foundation before the analysis of Shimazaki's work in these two chapters. In an attempt to assist the reader to contextualize these communities and current day debate regarding the war, the historical sections have been included to ensure uninterrupted reading of the entire dissertation without the need for secondary or supplementary research.

In addition to opening the debate on an international arena, Shimazaki's work allows for discussions about the role of translingual writers who consciously chose to write in French about their homeland and how this change should be welcomed as a way to enrich, diversify and invigorate French literature. Critics of Shimazaki might see her writing as a form of 'exoticism' a relatively pejorative term that has evolved to mean the domestication of the 'threatening' other into an acceptable norm. [12] There is a notion that Shimazaki is making her analysis of Japan more accessible to the French-speaking audience because her novels although 'exotic' on the exterior are not translations from Japanese. The fact that Shimazaki continues to entitle her novels in Japanese alludes to the idea that these are translations and consequently alluring the reader to a falsehood. Exoticism has recently been linked with the ideas of 'translation, transportation and representation',[13] which Shimazaki's novels cater for through the way they are represented to French-speaking readers. Although on the surface these ideas relating to 'exoticism' might be befitting, upon deeper examination it becomes clear that Shimazaki's writing is not 'domesticated' to suit any particular audience because she does not prescribe to French conventions in terms of colloquial usage (as discussed in Chapter 1) nor does she change her intention of unveiling *inconvenient aspects of Japanese society*. Moreover, Shimazaki's writing style is unique because, although she writes in French, her phrasing and sentence structures, along with the use of italicised Japanese words and Japanese characters, render her writing incomparable to that of other Francophone writers, given that it is simultaneously simple in style but with a certain unfamiliar Japanese flavour. Shimazaki's exclusivity in being able to communicate intricate Japanese issues in French means that her work is unparalleled.

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[12] Forsdick, Charles. 'Travelling Concepts: Postcolonial Approaches to Exoticism', *Paragraph*, 24-3 (2001), pp.12-29 <www.jstor.org/stable/43263653> [accessed 24 June 2019].

[13] ibid.

Who is Aki Shimazaki?

Aki Shimazaki is an enigmatic character and very little is known about her personal and artistic life. In a rare interview for *La Presse*, Shimazaki explains: 'Beaucoup d'écrivains rêvent d'être connus. Moi, c'est le contraire. Pour moi, un écrivain, ça écrit'.[14] Equally, in the academic world Shimazaki does not occupy a prominent role neither in Canada nor in France. Despite her works being widely read and receiving literary prizes, only sparse reviews can be found, amongst which are 'Le Fardeau des identités dans Tsubame d'Aki Shimazaki' by Fred Dervin and 'De la mémoire vive au dire attenue: l'écriture d'Aki Shimazaki' & 'Accablement, Distance et Consolation. Le Poids de la Mémoire Chez Marie-Célie Agnant, Mauricio Segura et Aki Shimazaki' by Lucie Lequin is also noteworthy.

Keiko Sanada's interview in 2005 entitled 'Littérature et révolte chez les écrivaines asiatiques d'expression française: Ying Chen et Aki Shimazaki', Linda Amyot's interview from 2007, along with Josée Lapointe's recent interview for *La Presse* in 2015, give insights into the life of the writer Aki Shimazaki. In intimate conversations with Sanada, Amyot and Lapointe respectively, Shimazaki reveals some of the reasons that drew her into writing in French. These interviews help piece together segments of Shimazaki's early life in Japan and latter life after her emigration to Canada. Shimazaki speaks candidly about her views on Japanese society, attitudes and literature, yet she rejects ideas that suggest her writing is socio-political in nature. Shimazaki's open critique of Japan has been linked to the Canadian-Chinese writer Ying Chen's criticism of China. The reason for this comparison is due to the fact that both Chen and Shimazaki have chosen to write about their homelands in French after emigrating and settling in Montreal. Unlike Chen's, Shimazaki's criticism is directed at specific cultural aspects of Japanese society and not Japan as a nation. In fact, Shimazaki strives to debunk ideas, which represent Japan monolithically, questioning racial homogeneity and 'Japanese uniqueness' through her plots and novels. By so doing, Shimazaki encourages the reader to

[14] Lapointe, Josée, 'Aki Shimazaki: La méthode Shimazaki', www.lapress.ca, 15/11/2015 < http://www.lapresse.ca/arts/livres/201511/13/01-4920544-aki-shimazaki-la-methode-shimazaki.php> [accessed 12 June 2017].

contemplate vital issues that directly affect Japan today. Shimazaki's past experiences, opinions of Japan, and rationale for writing in French help decipher the reasons why she chose to address issues such as war memory, Korean identity, bullying and suicide in her novels.

Shimazaki was born in 1954 in Gifu prefecture in Japan and, at the age of eleven, was given a novel as a present from one of her elder sisters. *A Little Princess* (Shōkojō in Japanese), written by Frances Eliza Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924) a British American author, served as an inspiration for Shimazaki to pursue her dream of becoming a writer. Between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, Shimazaki wrote short stories every now and again for her own amusement and shared these stories with a close circle of friends. Shimazaki began to read voraciously, devoting huge amounts of her spare time to reading a wide range of genres; however, novels and biographies of lives that were out of the ordinary particularly moved her. Shimazaki refers to Osamu Dazai's biography as an example of one that she found particularly noteworthy in 'Aki Shimazaki: Ce qu'on ne peut pas dire' by Linda Amyot. Ivan Morris, in a review of James A O'Brien's biography of Dazai, states:

> Dazai's short, restless, tormented life - as reflected in so much of his writing - continues, almost three decades after the original 'Dazai boom', to exert a profound fascination, especially among young Japanese readers, who most readily identify themselves with the quality and intensity of his malaise. After a turbulent career, dramatized by alcoholism, drug addiction, chaotic sexual involvements, repeated attempts at suicide (O'Brien's chronology records no less than three such efforts, occurring at the ages of 21, 26, and 28), he finally succeeded in bringing his life to an end in 1948 on his thirty-ninth birthday by drowning himself in the Tamagagwa Watercourse, thus joining that distinguished company of modern Japanese novelists who chose suicide as their ultimate solution.[15]

This brief summary of Dazai's life highlights the attachment Shimazaki has to tormented life stories, a fact which becomes apparent through her characters who are anguished by war memories, prejudice, and ultimately secrets. The impact of Osamu Dazai and Yukio Mishima

[15] Morris, Ivan, 'The Journal of Asian Studies', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 35-3 (1976) <www.jstor.org/stable/2053293> [20 September 2014].

on Shimazaki's writing will be thoroughly analysed in Chapter 5 'Suicide, Sexuality and Family: the presence of Dazai and Mishima in Shimazaki's novels'; however, it is worth mentioning some aspects of this connection to help contextualise Shimazaki's writing style.

In *Tonbo,* one of Shimazaki's novels that deals closely with suicide, the protagonist Nobu speaks of these writers:

> Je me rappelle un célèbre écrivain japonais qui lui aussi s'est suicidé avec son amante, alors qu'il était marié. Il avait déjà tenté de le faire à quatre reprises: deux fois avec une femme et deux fois seul. À sa première tentative, seulement la femme est morte. C'est un grand écrivain que les gens lisent toujours, comme un classique. Ma femme le déteste sans jamais l'avoir lu: 'Quel lâche! Même pas capable de se suicider seul'.[16]

In typical *Shimazakian* style, the reader is presented with opposing opinions to allow for open debate. The reference made to Nobu's wife Haruko represents a counterargument to the glorification of these writers. Shimazaki treats her readers respectfully by always allowing them to arrive at their own conclusions by presenting them with different viewpoints and ideas. In another conversation between Nobu and Jirô, precise reference is made to Mishima: 'C'est comme le fameux écrivain qui a écrit *Le disqualifié*'[17]. These two writers exemplify Maurice Pinguet's theory in *Voluntary Death in Japan,* which explains that there were waves of suicide in the 1950s as a direct result of the experience of loss and defeat in the Second World War. Pinguet underlines that those who committed suicide in the 1950s 'died not *in* war but *of* war, of the upheaval it had created in their childhood and the moral disruption it had inflicted'.[18] For Shimazaki's generation, the impact of the defeat was still raw during her childhood and to a certain extent her adulthood. This almost certainly explains why war memory plays a central part in her novels and more precisely the stories of those who have suffered as a consequence of war memory like Dazai and Mishima. Although Dazai committed

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[16] Shimazaki, Aki, *Au Cœur du Yamato: Tonbo* (Montreal: Leméac, 2010), p. 90.

[17] *Tonbo,* p. 109.

[18] Pinguet, Maurice, *Voluntary Death in Japan,* trans. by Rosemary Morris (Padstow: T.J. Press Ltd, 1993), p. 17.

suicide in 1948 and Mishima in 1970, their despair has been linked to war defeat and the aftermath as mentioned above. In essence, Shimazaki's writing resonates with profound Japanese cultural issues that relate directly to this specific time period.

Shimazaki goes on to say that, at the age of eighteen, she started to write essays for a literary review edited by the same sister who gave her *A Little Princess.* Shimazaki also highlights that her literary life would have continued in Japan had she not decided to emigrate to Canada. Also, Shimazaki draws our attention to a short novel that she wrote in Canada in 1994 (five years prior to her *Tsubaki*, the first novel in her first pentalogy) for *le journal japonais hebdomadaire de Toronto*; however, little is known about the content and the ideas behind it. When Shimazaki embarked on learning French at Katimavik (a language school for Canadian immigrants) her teacher encouraged her to read novels such as Agota Kristof's *Le grand cahier* (a translingual novel written by a Hungarian writer who resided in Switzerland and wrote in French), which deeply moved Shimazaki due to its linguistic simplicity and touching storyline. After reading Kristof's trilogy, Shimazaki began discovering the beauty of the French language, which she found to be more concise and clearer than both Japanese and English:

> J'ai été sauvée par la langue française! Elle a ce que ni l'anglais ni le japonais n'ont. Quand j'habitais au Japon, et parlait en japonais, je ressentais souvent de l'impatience, car je ne pouvais pas m'exprimer avec justesse en japonais. Je n'avais jamais éprouvé l'envie d'écrire un roman ni en japonais ni en anglais. Toutefois, quand j'ai rencontré le français, pour la première fois, j'ai voulu devenir écrivaine.[19]

After the discovery of the precision of the French language, along with the impact of Kristof's trilogy, Shimazaki started to write her first novel *Tsubaki,* which revolved around a love story between a half-brother and a half-sister in war-torn Nagasaki. Shimazaki states in her interview with Amyot that she was greatly influenced by Kristof, and she comments that her

[19] Sanada, K 'Littérature et révolte chez les écrivaines asiatiques d'expression française : Ying Chen et Aki Shimazaki', *Fédération internationale des professeurs de Français*, <http://fipf.org/sites/fipf.org/files/actes_quebec2008_livre2.pdf>, [accessed 14 November 2012].

novels were labelled 'en français des romans très très japonais'.[20] Shimazaki explains that the reason why her novels are seen to be very Japanese in style could be due to her having lived in Japan until the age of twenty-six without ever leaving her homeland. In other words, her writing style in French is involuntarily Japanese in character because she lived in Japan for the majority of her life at the time when she wrote her first novel. Interestingly, Shimazaki makes no reference to the fact that her mother tongue is Japanese and how unquestionably this has an influence on her literary style and modus operandi as a whole. It seems as though Shimazaki is proud of conserving her Japanese origins through her writing; yet she separates herself from mainstream Japanese writers:

> En même temps, quand j'écris un roman, ce qui est important, c'est que mon histoire touche le cœur du lecteur. Je raconte la vie d'individus, ce qui est universel. La société japonaise ou des événements historiques du Japon que j'utilise ne sont qu'une toile de fond ou bien un thème secondaire. J'ai lu une critique sur mes romans qui dit: 'C'est tragique et doux, léger et profond, universel et parfaitement japonais'. Je suis contente des mots: universel et profond.[21]

It is clear that Shimazaki, even though proud of her distinctively Japanese style of writing, seeks to be acknowledged for tackling universal topics that touch every individual rather than just dealing with Japanese concerns expressed through a classically Japanese writing style. The uniqueness of Shimazaki's position led Yukiko Kano to ask 'Comment définir l'orientalisme d'Aki Shimazaki? De quel côté la situer? Du côté du Japon, pays à jamais inassimilable dans une littérature à référence européenne? Où du côté monde pluriel à venir ?'.[22] Clearly, there is a dichotomy at play when considering Shimazaki's novels because, even though the settings and the titles are irrevocably Japanese, the usage of the French

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[20] Amyot, Linda, 'Aki Shimazaki: Ce qu'on ne peut pas dire', *Nuit blanche, magazine littéraire*, 108 (2007), <http://www.erudit.org/culture/nb1073421/nb1134386/19891ac.pdf> [accessed 4 April 2016], p. 45.

[21] ibid.

[22] Kano, Yukiko, 'Le mythe de bilinguisme littéraire-cas d'Aki Shimazaki', 30/05/2011, www.scribd.com < http://www.scribd.com/doc/58854014/Mythe-du-bilinguisme-litteraire-%E2%80%93-cas-d%E2%80%99Aki-Shimazaki> [accessed 12 April 2013].

language as a medium, along with the subconscious influence of her newly adopted country, are at play. This idea of assessing Shimazaki's novels through a specific genre will be examined in Chapter 1 'Aki Shimazaki in the context of Translingualism' which compares Shimazaki to other Franco-Japanese writers and analyses her work in light of their writing. Moreover, this dissertation as a whole seeks to answer the questions raised by Kano because every aspect of this analysis implicitly or explicitly addresses ideas of cultural and linguistic dichotomy.

What is peculiar about writers such as Aki Shimazaki and Yen Chen is that they come from an Asiatic minority in Canada that is normally linked to the Anglophone community. Typically in the 1980s and early 1990s, Asiatic minorities departed from the western regions of Canada such as British Columbia to settle in the French-speaking eastern parts such as Quebec in order to escape discrimination.[23] Shimazaki, like other Asiatic minorities, spent around 15 years in Toronto and then Vancouver before moving to Montreal in 1991. There are no obvious reasons, which suggest that Shimazaki was escaping prejudice; nevertheless, she does associate Montreal with open-mindedness and tolerance, which suggests that Montreal offered something exceptional. Shimazaki explains:

> Quand j'habitais à Toronto, j'avais voyagé à plusieurs reprises à Montréal. À ces occasions, je m'étais tout de suite rendu compte du charme de cette ville. Quelque chose était fort différent ici… J'étais fascinée par son ambiance ouverte et tolérante. Ici, j'étais convaincue que je pourrais accomplir quelque chose.[24]

According to the 1991 Canadian Census, as quoted by the National Association of Japanese Canadians, it is estimated that there were 17,065 Japanese-Canadians living in Toronto and 19,845 Japanese-Canadians living in Vancouver. The figures decrease when compared to the Japanese-Canadian population of Montreal of 2,365. It is important to highlight that these figures are of only single-ancestry Japanese communities to emphasize the size of the Japanese community. Perhaps one of the appeals of Montreal was the smaller Japanese

[23] Sanada, p. 890.

[24] Sanada, p. 892.

community that allowed Shimazaki to be liberated from the Japanese-Canadian society, which dates back to 1877. As a new Japanese immigrant to Canada, Shimazaki's pragmatic attitudes and perceptions would have been distinctly different from those of first, second, third, and even fourth generation Japanese-Canadians. That is to say, Shimazaki's knowledge of Japan and her criticism of Japan come from first-hand experience, unlike that of the other Japanese-Canadians. Consequently, Shimazaki might have encountered two possible challenges: firstly, coming face to face with a community that held a romanticised and nostalgic image of Japan; or secondly, the Japanese communities were limiting free criticism and expression, which Shimazaki has escaped by emigrating to Canada. The true motives that enticed Shimazaki to move to Montreal and start learning French are no doubt very personal and only assumptions can be made. However, Montreal's literary circles welcomed Shimazaki with open arms and placed her highly among the respected *néo-québécois* writers. Also commonly referred to as *écriture migrante,* this genre probes issues of identity and newfound identity whilst gazing at the motherland. According to Sanada, the work of Shimazaki and Chen represent the cosmopolitanism of a city that embraced these two Asiatic writers: 'On pourra les considérer comme des preuves éloquentes du transculturalisme qui est en effervescence à Montréal'.[25]

Through her writing Shimazaki delves into profound political and historical themes such as the annexation of Korea, the Great Kanto Earthquake, the Second World War, and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Sanada highlights: 'Chen et Shimazaki représentent dans leurs œuvres le pays natal, chacune à sa manière. Ces représentations, toutefois, ne reviennent jamais à de la simple nostalgie. C'est même plutôt une âme de révolte contre celui-ci qui les incite à la création'.[26] A deep-rooted sense of revolt forms the rationale behind the intricate examination of sensitive topics, along with the author's personal interest in understanding her roots and '[…] porter un regard critique sur le Japon'.[27] Shimazaki's sense

[25] Sanada, p. 894.

[26] ibid., p. 889.

[27] Amyot, p. 47.

of engagement seems to be politically motivated but in her interview with Keiko Sanada of Hannan University in September 2005, Shimazaki, reveals that she emigrated to Canada in order to escape a sexist and repressing Japan:

> J'étais indignée par la société japonaise. Surtout, je sentais cette situation de soumission et d'oppression des femmes japonaises. On ne pouvait pas dire franchement ce qu'on pensait. Et si on en parlait, on était isolé… C'était le genre d'atmosphère. On ressent d'autant plus la contradiction quand on travaille. Je n'ai plus pu supporter une telle vie. Et je me suis dit que je devais sortir du Japon et aller ailleurs.[28]

Shimazaki's frustration with gender roles in Japan and the profound level of oppression that she felt seems to have propelled her to part ways with her homeland. Yet, she remains deeply connected to Japan through her writing, with the hope of raising awareness of such injustices and, even more, to open the debate with regards to all controversial Japanese-themed topics. Interestingly, despite her strong feelings with regards to female roles in Japan, the protagonists of her novels are not exclusively female. In other words, Shimazaki does not write from just a female perspective, which conflicts with the idea that one might have of Shimazaki as a feminist after reading her previous comments regarding sexism in Japan. In fact, seven of Shimazaki's novels are narrated by a male protagonist: Yukio in *Hamaguri* (2000), Kenji Takahashi in *Wasurenagusa* (2003), Takashi Aoki in *Mitsuba* (2006), Tsuyoshi Toda in *Zakuro* (2008), Nobu Tsunoda in *Tonbo* (2010), Mitsuo Kawano in *Azami* (2014) and Tarô Tsuji in *Maïmaï*. It is rather perplexing that Shimazaki chose to write from the point of view of male protagonists at all, given her experiences in Japan. Perhaps Shimazaki is implicitly drawing our attention to the female characters in these novels and highlighting sexism through the stories of these male protagonists; yet, there is no obvious evidence of machismo or female repression beyond common cultural practices in these novels. In fact, the internal dialogue of these male protagonists is at times synonymous in tone and points of view to that of their female counterparts in the other novels. It seems as though Shimazaki, as a writer, does not distinguish between male and female attitudes and psyche when creating

[28] Sanada, p. 891.

her main characters. On the other hand, it could be assumed that Shimazaki consciously strives to balance the gender scales through her writing in order to empower both men and women as Japanese figures that are victims of Japanese society thus highlighting the victimisation of individuals regardless of their gender.

Comparison between Shimazaki and Chen is valuable because both writers appeared on the Canadian literary scene around the same time and both adopted the French language to critique their homelands; however, Chen's criticism of China is unmitigated and severe at times.

> La civilisation chinoise a atteint son sommet il y a environ mille ans puis elle n'a cessé de se dégrader, de descendre la pente, de s'anéantir. Aujourd'hui elle n'est plus devant moi qu'un tas de ruines nostalgiques. Mes compatriotes n'ont que deux choses dans leur poche: le passé et l'avenir. Deux choses aussi insaisissables l'une que l'autre. Je suis donc à la recherche d'un présent […].[29]

The issues that are raised by Shimazaki are precise in nature and refer to particular shortcomings in Japanese past and present. Unlike Chen who sees China as one whole unit and criticises it accordingly, Shimazaki challenges foreign monolithic views of Japan whilst pinpointing specific inadequacies that only an insider would have access to. The two writers' viewpoints are clearly different with regards to their homelands; nevertheless, the sense of revolt is ubiquitous in their writing. There is a certain difference in approach that is no doubt linked to each writer's cultural background and experience; therefore, it is important to avoid classing both writers blindly under the 'Asiatic French-Canadian writers' without considering stylistic and thematic issues. In Chapter 1 'Aki Shimazaki in the context of Translingualism', Shimazaki's writing style and attitudes towards her protagonists will be examined in comparison to highly reputed Franco-Japanese writers to highlight parallels and divergences.

It is apparent that Shimazaki, even though proud of her Japanese roots, chooses to diverge from Japanese literary style. Shimazaki highlights:

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[29] Sanada, p. 891.

> Par ailleurs, mon style minimaliste, simple et direct est assez éloigné de la plupart des œuvres littéraires japonaises. Les écrivains japonais écrivent de manière plus détournée. On ne dit pas les choses directement au Japon. Une écrivaine telle Yoko Ogawa, par exemple, qui a aussi un style simple et très direct, se démarque tout à fait par rapport à l'ensemble de la production littéraire nipponne.[30]

Shimazaki's responses to Amyot's questions seem rather paradoxical because she suggests that her writing is closely linked to her Japanese origins yet she proclaims that her methods are significantly different and 'minimalist' as she revisits this topic in an interview with Lapointe in 2015. One could deduce that Shimazaki exhibits a dichotomy of positive and negative sentiments with regards to Japan and hence upholds a critical view of her homeland's political, societal, and literary systems. As she expresses below, Shimazaki has always criticised Japan and sees her criticism to be justified.

> Quand j'habitais encore au Japon, je condamnais constamment la société japonaise. J'envoyais des lettres aux journaux, par exemple, pour critiquer le système scolaire. Une fois, mon opinion a suscité un certain intérêt parmi des étudiants et des professeurs. Au Japon, à cause de la hiérarchie psychologique, on est très souvent confronté à de l'injustice. Je devais me battre constamment contre des traitements injustes, venant des gens au pouvoir. J'en étais très fatiguée. Bien sûr, le fait que je vis maintenant à l'étranger me permet de regarder la société japonaise plus objectivement. Pourtant, je ne peux pas arrêter de la critiquer parce que je n'y habite plus. En même temps, n'oublions pas que l'injustice est omniprésente, dans n'importe quelle société. C'est un thème universel, comme la plupart des thèmes que j'explore dans mes romans. En général, la plupart des Japonais sont réceptifs aux critiques négatives de leur société, provenant de qui que ce soit. À la différence des Américains, les Japonais sont curieux de savoir ce que les gens à l'étranger pensent d'eux. Tsubaki est traduit en japonais et j'ai reçu des lettres de certains lecteurs du Japon qui me félicitaient d'avoir écrit ainsi sur les problèmes du pays durant la guerre, d'avoir abordé la question de la bombe nucléaire de la façon dont je l'ai fait.[31]

Shimazaki's writing style, and themes raised through her novels, have been by and large highly commended. In fact, she was awarded Prix Ringuet de l'Académie des lettres du Québec

[30] Amyot, p. 46.

[31] ibid., p. 47.

in 2003, and the Prix du Gouverneur général du Canada in 2005.[32] Having said that, it would be unrealistic to assume that the literary community acquiesced wholeheartedly without criticising Shimazaki's work. Robert Chartrand, as quoted by Sanada, criticises Shimazaki's second novel *Hamaguri* and raises valid questions:

> [...] ce roman d'Aki Shimazaki, de même que le premier, *Tsubaki*, font partie de 'notre' littérature? [...] l'histoire qu'ils racontent ne parle d'aucune de nos 'réalités' bien à nous: ni mœurs, ni paysages qui nous seraient familiers... Alors, comment les étiqueter, ces romans aux coordonnées si hétéroclites? Devrait-on les dire internationaux, voire universels? [...](Quoi qu'il en soit) Aki Shimazaki, elle a choisi de vivre ici et d'écrire en français. [...] Comme il arrive à la plupart de ceux qui émigrent, elle a apporté avec elle une part de son pays d'origine: son histoire, ses coutumes, ses lieux. [33]

These criticisms are justified because Shimazaki, through her writing, creates a new and unique genre of Franco-Japanese writing. However, Shimazaki is not the first non-Francophone who has written in French about their culture and country of origin. Whether we consider Kristof, Chen, Nabokov, Kundera, Zeldin, or French writers that write in other languages as well as French such as Green or Littel, Shimazaki is one of many writers who have utilised French as their chosen medium of expression. In the case of Shimazaki, Kano argues that:

> [...] le français et le japonais, ce sont deux perceptions du réel et deux approches de l'imaginaire, irréconciliable pour Shimazaki; puis, que cette séparation, consommée avant toute chose entre l'écriture et la langue d'origine, fait une première majeure différence de Shimazaki par rapport à un bon nombre d'écrivains dans les mêmes circonstances qu'elle. Ces écrivains, ceux mêmes qui justifient jusqu'à présent la notion de francophonie littéraire, ont été souvent des traducteurs zélés de leurs propres livres, comme, Nabokov, Kundera, Nancy Huston.[34]

Kano highlights Shimazaki's inherent uniqueness because she does not subscribe to a group of writers that place their writing under the generalised theme of Francophone literature.

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[32] Laurin, Danielle, 'Du pur, du vrai Aki Shimazaki', www.ledevoir.com < http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/livres/232108/du-pur-du-vrai-aki-shimazaki> [accessed 18 October 2012], p.1.

[33] Sanada, p. 894.

[34] Kano, p. 3.

Perhaps these ideas help to contradict Chartrand's criticisms because Shimazaki's writing is multi-faceted and cannot simply be compared to that of other Francophone writers because it is translingual writing; yet, Chartrand's concerns are relevant because Shimazaki's novels are set in Japan and they recount stories of Japanese families which do not relate to Canadian history, culture or attitudes. In other words, apart from the French language, which is regionally bound to Quebec, Shimazaki's novels do not speak directly to every Canadian reader or the French-speaking reader because the issues discussed and the ideas brought forward are specifically Japanese in nature. Lapointe points out that Shimazaki's novels discuss an array of themes but, at the heart of them, is the relationship between individuals: 'Chacun de ses courts livres creuse un sillon différent dans le cadre très codifié de la société japonaise, souvent autour d'un secret du passé, la plupart du temps explorant la famille, mais surtout différents aspects du couple, sa «préoccupation de base»'.[35] Shimazaki also claims to write about 'la vie et l'amour' which form the basis of her work; that is to say, universal themes that can be understood regardless of culture or geography. The claims made by Chartrand are justifiable, however they are very restrictive because they confine writers to cultural and geographical prisons and constrain artistic liberty. In other words, writers are given carte blanche when it comes to their expression, especially in terms of fictional literature, and consequently these writers should not be given specific limitations. Therefore, if a Canadian-Japanese writer wishes to write specifically about Japanese society in French it is her prerogative to do so and the French literary scene should be more inclusive to such change. We as readers or critics should judge this work using other criteria that go far beyond whether the novels can be related to the readers but whether the readers choose to read these novels and what issues the novels bring to the table.

Although very little is written about Aki Shimazaki, her novels can be seen as a means to understand the author. Even though Shimazaki denies this idea by saying: 'Ce n'est pas moi

[35] Lapointe, 2015.

qui parle, mais je me mets à leur place. Qu'est-ce que je ferais si j'étais eux?'[36], it is easy to associate Shimazaki with her plots because Shimazaki remains mysterious about her writing and chooses to shy away from the limelight. Furthermore, her interviews with Amyot, Sanada and Lapointe emphasise the fact that she left Japan because of gender-related oppression, her dissatisfaction with Japanese societal injustice and her inability to express herself in a direct manner as she does nowadays in French. Despite her reservations, Shimazaki was an activist from a young age who fought against injustices whilst in Japan and this has clearly transferred into her writing about Japan. It would be unrealistic to say that Shimazaki is purely writing about love and life, as she claims, because the backdrop of her tales reveals fundamental shortcomings in Japanese society. The issues that take center stage, such as the marginalization of Christians or Korean residents, are difficult to ignore especially when they have a tormenting effect on the protagonists. Shimazaki prefers to play down the emotional turmoil that her protagonists experience: 'Je ne veux pas les minimaliser, seulement imaginer ce que les personnages vivent. Mais pas besoin de violons! Ici, on en dit en général beaucoup trop'.[37] It is clear that Shimazaki does not want to attract attention away from her novels by focusing on her political and societal agendas; however, by belittling the impact of her critique of Japanese society, she is doing her work a great disfavour, as what she is inviting the French-speaking audience to contemplate is highly commendable. Consequently, Shimazaki should celebrate the fact that her role as a critical *chronicler of inconvenient aspects of Japanese society* is so much more than that of a mere author of tales of love and life. To Shimazaki's credit, her writing does not represent a litany of criticism. Instead, her critique of Japanese society is objective and well-balanced because every opinion is counterbalanced by the presentation of the opposing argument. Thus, the reader is given a neutral representation and a blank canvas to colour with their own interpretation of events. Through her limited interviews, Shimazaki has revealed two very important facts about herself. Firstly, she empathises with human tragedy and is drawn to it, which in part explains why Japanese

[36] Lapointe, 2015.

[37] ibid.

writers such as Osamu Dazai and Yukio Mishima have influenced Shimazaki and why her novels discuss an array of human tragedy: parricide, incest, infidelity, deceit and racism. This could be the direct result of her generation's attitude to the war or the direct effect of the Second World War on Japanese society, which will be discussed in Chapters 2 & 5. Secondly, Shimazaki seeks to communicate to a larger audience by exploring universal themes. Even though her novels remain very specifically Japanese in character and style, they touch a larger audience because they deal with human tragedy through war, natural disasters, marginalisation, sexism and suicide, which transcend national boundaries and render them timeless.

The work of Aki Shimazaki is unparalleled because, through her labyrinthine plots and intricate characterisations, she is able to explore many perceived flaws in Japanese society. Shimazaki acts as an intermediary to the French-speaking audience and sheds light on the status quo of Japan and profound internal debates. As an active writer who has relentlessly written about the land of her birth since 1999, Shimazaki ought to hold a more prominent position not only as a fictional writer but also as a *chronicler of inconvenient aspects of Japanese society*. However, her work has not drawn much academic analysis and there is very little written about Aki Shimazaki. It does not help that she purposely shies away from interviews and public attention, although this enables her to devote greater time and energy to producing her numerous novels. Yet, the underpinning arguments of her novels are crucial in understanding today's Japan.

This dissertation seeks to analyse prominent themes such as: war memory, *Zainichi* identity, societal marginalisation due to Christian beliefs, the influence of leading Japanese writers on Shimazaki's novels by way of the themes of sexuality and suicide. Furthermore, this thesis highlights the contribution of a modern and unique writer who uses the French language as an outlet for her critique despite setting her novels in Japan. This study is similarly unique due to its intercultural nature because research has been conducted in English, French and to a certain extent Japanese to interpret the intentions of a Canadian-Japanese writer who resides

in Canada yet writes exclusively about Japan. This dissertation is the only in-depth academic work that has been written on Aki Shimazaki's entire body of work to date, a corpus which is worthy of analysis due to the profound insight it offers to the French-speaking reader about Japan and a new voice in French translingual literature.

'La littérature française est un grand ensemble dont les tentacules enlacent plusieurs continents'[61]
Alain Mabanckou

Chapter 1:

Aki Shimazaki in the context of Translingualism

In recent years there has been a shift regarding the role which non-Francophone and non-metropolitan writers occupy in French literature. Translingual research has attempted to change the monolingual traditions of the French language by allowing global access to it. This in turn means that 'the literary and otherwise verbally standardized elements of that language need to be relativized, historicized, provincialized, and understood in their complex interactions with other languages and cultures'. [62] Keith Gilyard in 'The Rhetroic of Tranlingualism' explains that 'translingualism incorporates the view that all language users, or *languagers,* are perpetually producing and experimenting with multiple varieties of language. Thus, translinguists grasp that the institutional enactment of language standards is repressive in some cases and restrictive in all'. [63] Translingual writers such as Joseph Conrad, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Andreï Makine, Agota Kristof and Nancy Houston to name but a few, have made huge contributions to world literature as a whole and French literature in particular through their adopted second or even third tongue in some cases. The first

[61] Hargreaves, Alec G., Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy (eds), *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and littérature-monde* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 16.

[62] Forsdick, Charles 'Global France, Global French: beyond the monolingual' *Contemporary French Civilization* 42-1, (2017), pp.13-29 <https://online.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/doi/pdf/10.3828/cfc.2017.2> [accessed 11 September 2019].

[63] Gilyard, Keith, 'The Rhetoric of Translingualism', *College English*, 78-3 (2016), pp. 284–289 <www.jstor.org/stable/44075119> [accessed 30 January 2020].

section of this chapter entitled 'French Literature vis-à-vis *Littérature-Monde* and Translingualism' maps a brief history of the rich literature than can be traced to Symbolist poets who revolted against the rigidness of traditional French poetry, writers such as Henri Troyat in the 1940s and ex-colonial Francophone writers such as Alain Mabanckou from the Congo, Anna Moï from Vietnam and Jacques Godbout from Quebec. In addition, this section seeks to highlight the fact that although all encompassing to a great extent, translingualism can be criticised for lacking defined boundaries and not offering a solution to pre-existing problems. The second section of this chapter, 'Franco-Japanese voices: world's apart yet intertwined', will analyse the work of Aki Shimazaki in the light of translingual studies and examine the work of other ethnically Japanese writers who write in French such as Akira Mizubayashi and Ryoko Sekiguchi. This comparison will both help to contextualise Shimazaki's writing and highlight its originality; furthermore, it will help analyse the work of Shimazaki who examines Japanese society through fictional characters that survive marginalisation, war and above all personal tragedies. Although there are differences in terms of approach and tonality between these Franco-Japanese writers, there is a certain air of commonality in the sense that they all examine deep-rooted collective issues with particular interest in the portrayal of Japanese society through the French language.

I. French Literature vis-à-vis *Littérature-Monde* and Translingualism

Constraining literature geographically and bounding it to strict national, cultural and linguistic norms have long been debated at length due to the fluidity and the changing nature of the very entities that define it. Consequently, as the world approaches the fiftieth anniversary of the postcolonial era and a post-*francophonie* identity, a newer perspective has evolved in the form of *littérature-monde* [64] with the aim to allow for more inclusivity. These new concepts in terms of French literature aim to see the work independently of the writer's nationality, geographical and cultural confines. In an effort to globalise 'French literature'

[64] ibid, p.18.

concepts such as Roger Little's 'Francographic', which considers French writing not on geographical basis but purely on its linguistic merits and 'French global', introduced by Christie McDonald and Susan Suleiman, have attempted to liberate literature in French from the hexagonal and the colonial spheres alike. [65] With the development of translingual studies, writers such as Shimazaki who consciously adopted the French language as a means for literary expression can be defined through a unique lens that does not conform to any preconceived concepts that adhere to French monolingualism.

The idea of redefining and reinvigorating the boundaries of French could be traced back to, the poetic revolt of the 1880s and 1890s led by Mallaramé, Valéry and Caludel known as the Symbolist movement, which 'embodied a desire for freedom and originality in verse, involving an emphasis upon the musicality of language and upon statement by allusion'. [66] A survey that was published in *Les Nouvelles littéraires* in 1940 also served as a focal point for further examination of the traditions of French literature. Following the award of the Prix Goncourt to Henri Troyat (a Russian born French writer), a search for the 'French Conrad' began.[67] This in turn unveiled a number of writers who have occupied a unique position of writing in French despite their diverse background thus alluding to the existence of a 'translingual' set of writers from that period. However, writers such as Joseph Kessel and Irène Némirovsky saw themselves as more 'bilingual' and preferred to be considered as deeply linked with French language and culture; thus, implying that they have fully adopted a new French identity rather than merging two or more cultures. This in essence could be associated to the idea of '*perte de soi*' highlighted by Akira Mizubayashi, which will be discussed later in this chapter. According

[65]Forsdick, Charles, 'Beyond Francophone postcolonial studies: exploring the ends of comparison', *Modern Languages Open,* (2015), pp. 1-24 <https://www.modernlanguagesopen.org/articles/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.56/> [accessed 12 December 2019].

[66] Swift, Bernard C., 'The Hypothesis of the French Symbolist Novel', *The Modern Language Review*, 68-4 (1973), pp. 776–787 <www.jstor.org/stable/3726044 > [accessed 2 February 2020].

[67] ibid, p.207

to Mizubayashi, one has to disengage and 'lose one's original identity' in order to be fully immersed in the new language and culture. If we take this idea into consideration, then we can understand why some writers find themselves forming an exclusive bond with the adopted language and obsessively guarding it from external influences even their own mother tongue or cultural background. However, this exclusivity diverges from the fundamentals of translingual theories, which uphold the ideas of cultural amalgamation. Despite political unrest and the limitation that the Vichy regime in France has caused to the development of the early stages of translingualism, Charles Forsdick highlights some key points:

> The identification of this group of authors suggests an awareness that the diversification of French literature through the external input of the translingual writer does not so much constitute a threat as a source of potential literary reinvigoration; what remains unclear is whether this manoeuvre represents (to adopt a colonial metaphor) an 'associationist' one, disrupting the boundaries of national literary production, or is rather 'assimilationist', reflecting the capacity of French literature to renew itself through the recuperation, absorption, and normalization of contributions perceived to be external.[68]

Although the 1940 survey had a different agenda (that of finding the 'French Conrad'), it can be seen as key for the historical context of translingualism; yet, questions arise as highlighted by Forsdick with regards to whether these writers chose to assimilate in order to be accepted by the French literary scene as opposed to reinvigorating French literature through their own unique multicultural point of view. These first steps towards translingualism were 'hindered' to a certain extent by the French colonial era which in turn gave rise to Francophone literature and *Francophonie*: trans-regional French-language literature which has its origins in the French colonial project and deeply-rooted in the French colonial and neo-colonial ambitions. [69]

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[68] ibid, p. 208.

[69] Hargreaves, Alec G., Charles Forsdick, and David Murphy (eds), *Transnational French Studies: Postcolonialism and littérature-monde* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 19.

It is almost impossible to differentiate between Francophone literature and the implications of the *mission civilisatrice* that went hand in hand with the instruction of the French language in the former colonies. The idea that French remained the language of the oppressor and equally the only medium to reach a wider audience has defined Francophone writing throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. Furthermore, regionalization of the French-speaking world has remained to be the main concern with *Francophonie* mainly because it prevents interregional and transregional comparative studies. It is important to consider that the Francophone regions can no longer be seen as fixed singular entities given that they are unstable because of their continuing connection with phenomena of migration, exile, diaspora and/or cultural exchange thus following new paths, which no longer trace the postcolonial migratory movements between ex-colonies and ex-colonizers. [70] In an attempt to liberate French Literature from the constraints of 'Francophone literature', the term *littérature-monde* was proposed by forty-four signatories of the manifesto 'Pour une "littérature-monde" en français' which appeared on 16 March 2007 in the journal *le Monde*.[71] The term is a combination of three phenomena: travel literature, *tout-monde* and *littérature-monde.* Travel literature and world writing developed since 1992 by Michel Le Bris is a form of literature which speaks of the real and the lived rather than turning in on itself in a state of narcissistic self-consciousness as expressed by Leservot. The second element being *Tout-monde*, a concept of cultural exchange coined by Glissant, which rejects unequal power relationships and finally 'world literature' an Anglo-American term which is charged with hierarchies between nations and cultures, like *Francophonie*, which *littérature-monde* aims to transcend.

The manifesto, despite being a move in the right direction, was met by opposing views. On the one hand, the supporters of the manifesto commended it for being inspirational, outward looking and visionary because it allows for an all-encompassing French literature that has

[70] ibid., p. 44.

[71] Hargreaves, p. 36.

evolved from the constraints of Francophone literature. However, critics of the manifesto highlight that the vision is utopian in nature, lacking in specificity with no clear purpose in mind and offering no solutions. Perhaps the most pertinent of criticisms relate to the groupings of the manifesto, that is to say, there tend to be essays from three distinctive camps: the metropolitan French writers, the extra-metropolitan thus those with ex-colonial ties, and finally those from an array of non-French-speaking nations. The first group, consisting of the organizers of the project Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud, could be criticised for having idealistic notions about opening up of French writing which 'draws on idealistic conceptions of the themes supposedly present in texts with a universal sensitivity, but they do not engage critically with the limits of these categories or with the complex forces that have led authors from outside France to write in French'. [72]

The next group, constituted of Alain Mabanckou from the Congo, Anna Moï from Vietnam and Jacques Godbout from Quebec, interact with the French language from a historical, geographical, linguistic and cultural point of view. Mabanckou argues not for the amalgamation of the French from France and French from Africa but for the creation of a 'new' French thus galvanizing an old language through the optic of *Francophonie*, which should encompass metropolitan French writing within it as a branch. The third group presents authors from Azerbaijan, Israel, Hungary and Slovenia with opinions coloured by personal struggles that they had to endure to master, conquer and write in French; ultimately, this fight to attain proficiency alludes to the myth, grandeur and prestige linked to the French language. The three groups as identified by Kleppinger tend to have very diverse ideas of the French language and what it means to write in French thus creating divisions within the manifesto's holistic agenda which the manifesto fails to address. Furthermore, the idea of universality becomes problematic the deeper we delve into the manifesto.

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[72] Kleppinger, Kathryn, 'What's wrong with the Littérature-Monde Manifesto', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies,* 14-1 (January 2010), pp. 77-84 <https://academic.oup.com/fs/article/70/3/404/1749342> [accessed 24 October 2019].

> If the French language, with its myth of clarity and precision, has historically been considered the epitome of French cultural universalism, then the French literary canon is the crown jewel of the philosophy that cultural production in France will enlighten the rest of the world. Thus any project involving the French language and literary canon necessarily touches upon these broader questions of cultural universalism, intentionally or not. [73]

This in turn raises questions about how regionalised literature written by a minority French writer can ever be accepted as universal in comparison to literature written by a native metropolitan writer. In other words, a French writer who writes from his native France is granted a 'right' for his/her writing to be considered as 'universal' in the French-speaking world; however, the same right is not granted to all. The manifesto fails to propose ways to break away from these constraints.

In 2009, Marie NDiaye was the first black woman to win the Goncourt Prize but she did not want her novel *Trois femmes puissantes* to be labelled 'Francophone' or 'African' due to her Senegalese father; furthermore, NDiaye's lack of connection to the African culture and diaspora meant that her writing was disconnected from her 'roots'. This is a prime example of how a French writer due to their background or colour of their skin could be relegated to the exotic margins of *Francophonie*. [74] NDiaye's win brought to light issues outlined in the manifesto, which was published two years prior. This highlights that the manifesto managed to outline the problems faced by such writers but failed to propose solutions to the most basic of issues relating to the greater French literary identity. Abou Diouf, the Secretary-General of the *Organisation internationale de la francophonie*, addressed these concerns in his response to the manifesto: 'He tells the authors that they have mixed francocentrism and francophonie and have confused cultural exceptionalism and cultural diversity, since their project remains

[73] ibid.

[74] Migraine-George, Thérèse, *From Francophonie to World Literature in French: Ethics, Poetics, and Politics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), p. xiii-xiv.

fundamentally French and does not consider the true dynamics of French as an international language'. [75]

Although the main objective of this introduction is to examine to what extent Shimazaki as a Japanese writer who writes exclusively in French can be considered in the translingual context, there are clearly many factors that need to be acknowledged due to the ambiguity of the terms such as Francophone/*Francophonie*, *littérature-monde* and ultimately translingualism given the regional dilemmas of 'Francophone' writers in particular and equally that of metropolitan writers such as NDaiye. Having said so, Quebecois women writers are highly respected by and large in the French-speaking literary scene and this is an empowering factor for Shimazaki because the stage was already set for experimentation with the French language and equally for a new 'Franco-Japanese' voice.

II. Franco-Japanese voices: world's apart yet intertwined

Even though Aki Shimazaki occupies an unparalleled position in French literature as a translingual writer because she addresses numerous socio-economic and cultural issues that are at the centre of debate in Japan and overseas, there are other Japanese writers who have chosen to express themselves in French. The conscious decision that drove Akira Mizubayashi and Ryoko Sekiguchi to write in French is of interest because parallels and diversions can be drawn between them and Shimazaki as translingual Franco-Japanese writers. Despite the generational gaps, there seems to be consensus with regards to some ideas concerning how Japan is viewed as patriarchal and archaic with reference to censorship and the inability of a writer to fully express oneself in the Japanese language. This notion further supports the reasons why these Japanese writers have sought literary freedom through the French language and to a certain extent Francophone culture. Akria Mizubayashi's *Une langue venue d'ailleurs* and Ryoko Sekiguchi's *Ce n'est pas un hasard* give the reader an insight into intimate

[75] ibid.

disclosures that are at times blunt and other times intertwined with self-doubt and a yearning to understand the complexity of being trapped within two diverse cultures.

For the love of the French language: Mizubayashi and Shimazaki's journeys

Akira Mizubayashi, born in 1951 in Sakata a city in the northern part of Yamagata prefecture, is an academic and translator who dedicated the greater part of his life to the French language. *Une langue venue d'ailleurs,* a highly acclaimed novel, which has won awards such as *le prix de l'Académie francaise* and *le prix Littéraire de l'Asie*,[76] is a biography that takes us through Mizubayashi's journey with the French language. Even though anecdotal at times and intimate, it is not surprising that it has won so many awards; namely, because of the quality of French language which speaks volumes of Mizubayashi's accomplishments in this adopted language. Mizubayashi decided at the age of 19 to start learning French at the *Université des Langues et civilisations étrangères* in Tokyo.

> Le français, c'était purement et simplement une langue étrangère, totalement étrangère au départ. Ma vie se divise en deux portions de durée inégale: mes dix-huit premières années *monolinguistiques*, même si j'ai appris l'anglais au collège et au lycée (l'anglais chez moi a toujours gardé le statut de langue étrangère, c'est-à-dire *extérieure à moi)*; la suite de mon existence, de la dix-neuvième année à aujourd'hui, placée sous la double appartenance au japonais et au français…Depuis lors, je n'ai pas arrêté de naviguer entre la langue qui est la mienne, le japonais, parce qu'elle vient de mes parents, et le français qui est également la mienne parce que j'ai décidé de me l'approprier pour m'y installer, pour vivre en pleine conscience ma progressive accession à cette langue aimée et choisie.[77]

Mizubayashi's profound and autonomous link with the French language which he speaks so passionately of sets him apart from Shimazaki who alludes to learning French as coincidental to her move to Canada. In 1973, Mizubayashi left for Montpellier and set foot on the land of his dreams after being granted a scholarship by the French government. After years of self-study, highlighted by recordings of French language radio programmes, which he listened to

[76] Mizubayashi, Akira, *Une langue venue d'ailleurs* (Barcelona: Gallimard, 2011).

[77] Mizubayashi, p. 19-21.

repeatedly, Mizubayashi embarked on a two-year course at Paul-Valéry University to become a teacher of French as a second language.

Mizubayashi highlights his frustrations as a language learner through episodes of miscommunication and moments of being lost in translation. However, Mizubayashi was aware from the beginning of the huge impact that learning a language can have on his life.

> Ce choix implique donc l'acceptation d'une perte, ou plutôt de pertes, d'une série de pertes: perte d'une situation confortable, perte de temps, perte de tout un passé, perte de tout un avenir, perte d'une identité stable, sécurisante, perte d'honneur, perte de relations, perte peut-être de ce que lui était le plus cher aussi: la famille.[78]

These powerful sentences resonate with the reader because nowadays language learners are motivated by new cultural and linguistic discoveries and consequently little attention is paid to the extent of loss of identity that one could suffer through the acquisition of a new language. This idea of loss that Mizubayashi eloquently expresses sheds light on two distinct concepts. Firstly, one cannot help but wonder whether this loss of oneself is what drove Mizubayashi, Shimazaki and Sekiguchi to write in French in the first place. In other words, this extreme and painful *'perte de soi'* could only translate to a strong need to find oneself in the new linguistic sphere. Even though Shimazaki and Sekiguchi have stated that they wrote in Japanese before starting to write in French, there is little doubt that writing in the newly acquired language helps establish one's new linguistic identity. Furthermore, through the act of writing these French-learners were able to prove to themselves that they have perfected their linguistic skills and simultaneously filled the void of losing their native identity. This struggle to master the French language could be related to the group of non-Francophone writers who expressed these sentiments in the manifesto 'Pour une "littérature-monde" en français' as outlined by Kleppinger in the first part of this chapter. This struggle in turn leads to the second point that can be deduced from the above quotation which is that of 'reclaiming the loss'. In other words, after undergoing a certain period of rigorous studies and establishing a 'new forged' identity in the new language a sense of re-establishing these lost links with one's native identity seems

[78] ibid., p. 29.

to resurface. Despite mastering the French language, Mizubayashi's Preface to *Une langue venue d'ailleurs* is entitled '*Comment dire? Nanto ittara iika?*' The fact that Mizubayashi chose to translate the title of the Preface into Japanese gives the notion that after all these years of establishing a self-identity in French and writing a biography of his linguistic journey, there is a part of him that wants to reclaim his lost Japanese-self. This is evident as well with Shimazaki's work, which she has entirely entitled in Japanese. Similarly, Ryoko Sekiguchi's *Ce n'est pas un hasard* is followed by the words '*Chronique japonaise*' as if to say: be aware this is a novel written in French but it is not detached from my true identity. This idea of '*double étrangéité'* that is mentioned in *Une langue venue d'ailleurs* is clearly prevalent in Shimazaki and Sekiguchi's work as well.

Mizubayashi's sense of loss seems to return time and time again during his first stay in France whenever he was betrayed by his inaccuracies in French such as calling a young female student '*monsieur'* or when he misspells 'introduction' by writing 'int*o*roduction'. These instances seem to emphasise his sense of loss and self-hate: 'une petite douleur liée au sentiment d'une perte irrémédiable et une grande honte génératrice d'une haine de soi'. [79] Even though these episodes diminish with time, Mizubayashi's novel gives us a profound insight into the frustrations of a Japanese individual navigating their way in the wilderness of the French language. These intimate moments of unveiling of oneself help the reader build a closer bond with Mizubayashi and appreciate his linguistic development. Yet, with Shimazaki we are deprived from this intimacy, which she guards close to her heart. In fact, by setting her novels on Japanese soil, Shimazaki does not allow the reader to empathise with her linguistic journey in Canada as she learns French and starts to write in this language. Having said that, Shimazaki alludes to a sense of nostalgia as someone who writes from 'exile' about her homeland. In an exchange between Takashi and Yuko in *Mitsuba*, Shimazaki compares Montreal to Kobe and highlights the similarities between the two cities.

Elle m'apprend que Montréal est une ville semblable à Kobe…

[79] ibid., p. 98.

> - Quand j'étais là-bas, j'ai eu une sensation de déjà-vu, dit Yûko.
> Elle avait gravi une pente qui menait au belvédère du Mont-Royal. « C'est Kobe ! » s'était-elle écriée.[80]

These remarks evoke nostalgia for Japan and they resonate with Shimazaki's voice and experience. The link made between Kobe and Montreal alludes to the idea that Shimazaki whilst in Canada is still searching for a lost part of her identity; that is to say, her homeland. As mentioned above, it seems as though the strong sense of loss expressed by Mizubayashi can lead to reconnecting with one's homeland as we see with the above example. However, at the same time the comparison made between the two cities could mean that any given writer in 'exile' could assimilate to their surroundings by finding similarities to their motherland. This idea suggests that whilst in 'exile' writers are more consciously and subconsciously preoccupied with this search for the missing piece, which makes them always connected to their native country. This exaggerated yearning for assimilation can also be sensed in Sekiguchi's writing when she addresses the idea that Japanese expats see a return to their homeland as inevitable.

> Les japonais qui partent vivre à l'étranger ne se pensent pas et ne se disent pas immigrés. Notamment, s'ils sont riches: « Nous ne sommes pas comme ces pauvres immigrés…» C'est surtout qu'ils supposent toujours que ce sera provisoire et qu'ils finiront par rentrer au Japon. [81]

Refusing to accept that they are *immigrés* could be comforting in the sense that these Japanese expats do not entirely feel the loss of identity that Mizubayashi experienced whilst learning French. On the other hand, such 'self-preservation' tactics prevent Japanese expats from truly integrating and feeling one with their newly adopted homeland, culture and ultimately language. Although Mizubayashi only spent two periods of his life in France (1973-1976 in Montpellier and 1978-1983 in Paris), he sought total immersion and integration to the land of Rousseau, whom he adores. Mizubayashi's sense of loss coupled with self-loathing because of his inability to fully integrate in turn makes him strive to form a stronger identity in French.

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[80] *Mitsuba,* p. 70.

[81] Sekiguchi, Ryoko, *Ce n'est pas un hasard: Chronique japonaise* (Paris: P.O.L, 2011), p. 60.

With the passing of time, Mizubayashi's academic involvement with French became even more personal after marrying Michèle his French partner and mother of their daughter Julia-Madoka. Despite persevering for years to get his daughter to speak in his native tongue, Mizubayashi decided after being addressed by Julia-Madoka in French during a conversation in Japanese that it is time for him to address her in the language he uses with his wife. By doing so, Mizubayashi was able to fully integrate the French language not only as the language of instruction at Meiji and Sophia University respectively since his return to Japan in 1983 but also as a language of his existence:

> Ma vie est en effet constituée, je le rappelle, de deux époques différentes : l'époque du monolinguisme japonais et l'époque plus tardive et plus longue qui se caractérise par ma double appartenance linguistique, par mon choix délibéré de ne pas faire du français le simple objet ou le simple instrument de ma vie professionnelle d'enseignant, par ma ferme décision de demeurer *double*, intentionnellement et obstinément *double*, jusqu'aux plus petites ramifications de mon être, mon arbre de vie. Il était important que je parle à Julia-Madoka de ma mère, de mon frère, de mes grands-parents, de mon *père* surtout qui a joué un si grand rôle dans la manière dont je me suis investi dans la langue française, et finalement de toute ma vie d'enfance et d'adolescence qui s'est construite sans aucune intervention de cette langue, même si celle-ci est devenue plus tard ma principale langue de travail et de ma vie pour *interpréter* tout mon passé d'avant son apparition. [82]

Interestingly, this quotation contradicts ideas brought forth by Mizubayashi regarding the sense of loss as a consequence of acquiring a new language. Mizubayashi puts emphasis on the loss of familial ties and one's past and future but it is clear from the above quotation that one's monolingual past can be revived and relived through the new language. In other words, the loss of identity, which Mizubayashi expresses early on in his journey, was triggered by the sense of alienation that he felt in Montpellier and that state of mind seems temporary and ephemeral. This point is of great importance when we consider the relationship between the writer, their adopted language and their homeland. It is clear that adopting the French language does not necessarily mean that one has to do away with one's past and sever ties

[82] Mizubayashi, p. 225-226.

with one's homeland or family. In fact, it seems as though the longer the disconnection from Japan or the Japanese language, the more likely these writers are drawn to their past and a yearning to revisit the land of their birth. There is ample evidence of this when considering Shimazaki's novels that revisit the past and the effect of this on current generations. Similarly, we see this desire to unfold and understand the tragic events that transpired during the Fukushima disaster by Sekiguchi. In the case of Mizubayashi, we get a sense of profound connection to the French language that surpasses that of an aficionado or *francophile.*

> Je me considérerai comme mort quand je serai mort en français. Car je n'existerai plus alors en tant que ce que j'ai voulu être, par ma souveraine décision d'épouser la langue française. [83]

Mizubayashi's devotion to the French language is deep-rooted in his very essence and he goes to extreme lengths to intertwine his existence with his language of choice. However, despite his love for the French language and high command of the language, he sheds light on his shortcomings that remain to haunt him even to this day: 'je parlais comme un livre…c'est que mon français oral manquait de naturel, qu'il ne se coulait pas dans les formes propres au registre oral'. [84] There is a sense of resignation that can be observed here. In effect, despite his Herculean efforts, Mizubayashi alerts us to the fact that the French language that he exists in still lacks a sense of familiarity that a native speaker might utilise when addressing a fellow countryman and a sense of inability to fully engage in the use of the argot, which is forever evolving.

Mizubayashi's intimate revelation regarding his inability to fully engage with the intricacies of the French language rings true with the writing of Shimazaki. If we consider an episode between Mitsuo and his wife Atsuko when he declares that he has decided to abandon his profession in *Fuki-no-tô*, we get a sense of the ideas alluded to by Mizubayashi:

> -Comment peux-tu abandonner ce métier que tu adores? En plus, tu es bien payé. Que veux-tu faire après?

[83] Mizubayashi, p. 9.

[84] ibid., p. 242.

> -Je n'abandonne pas mon métier. Je vais fonder ma propre revue. Tu sais bien que c'est mon rêve depuis longtemps, n'est-ce pas?
> -Oui, mais pourquoi si subitement?
> -J'ai trente-six ans déjà. C'est le temps. Si je ne le fais pas maintenant, je ne le feria jamais. Cela a été ma conclusion.
> -Où veux-tu faire ça? Ici, à Nagoya?
> -Non, à M., ta ville natale qui me plaît beaucoup. Là-bas, tout est beaucoup moins cher, et c'est à moins d'une heure de voiture de Nagoya.
> -Tu veux que nous vivions à M.?
> -Non, au village! Tes affaires se développent. Ce sera mieux de vivre là-bas, surtout pour les enfants.[85]

This life altering discussion between Mitsuo and Atsuko is extremely matter of fact and it lacks both emphatic and endearing language simultaneously. If this exchange were between two French-speaking natives one would assume that the words used would be significantly different and coloured with vernacular language. That is to say, the person who is trying to convince their partner would be likely to utter an endearing expression such as *mon amour* to help ease the tension or equally a retaliatory expression such as *j'en ai marre* or something more colloquial. The lack of banal linguistic expressions render this conversation rather neutral and to a certain extent 'un-French' because it seems forged and concocted. Mizubayashi offers an explanation by highlighting his struggles with the use of *les appellatifs*.

> …«Veux-tu un peu de vin, *ma chérie*?» «Ne t'inquiète pas *ma grande*, je t'aiderai.» Avec ma propre fille, avec qui il m'arrive maintenant de converser en français, je n'ai jamais utilisé, jamais pu utiliser ces formules additives. Ce sont là, diraient les linguistes sourcilleux, des appellatifs à valeur affective ou hypocoristique. Ce n'est ni un obstacle phonatoire quelconque ni la difficulté liée à des traits syntaxiques particuliers qui m'empêchent de procéder à ce type d'insertions. Je dirai qu'en dessous de la surface de la langue, quelque chose qui relève de la pudeur ou même de la peur me retient…Et sans doute faut-il penser qu'entravé par le noyau dur de ce que je suis *d'abord* en tant qu'être parlant japonais, je ne parviens pas à aller jusqu'au bout de ce passage…Mon incapacité à placer des appellatifs en est la preuve certaine.[86]

[85] Shimazaki, Aki, *Fuki-no-tô* (Quebec: Actes Sudes, 2017), p. 16.

[86] Mizubayashi, p. 164-166.

It is clear that for Mizubayashi, his native language impedes him from fully engaging in the use of such colloquial expressions and consequently despite his admirable linguistic achievements he sees his French as lacking and incomplete.
The lack of phrases such as 'j'ai un bordel pas possible dans ma bagnole' and 'ça ne casse pas trois pattes à un canard!' which Mizubayashi understands perfectly well but struggles to produce are precisely the language that is lacking from Mizubayashi's lexicon and equally Shimazaki's writing. Perhaps Shimazaki's French that is 'unrealistic' and 'unfamiliar' in such a context is what makes her writing original because there is a sense of '*double étrangéité',* which Mizubayashi addresses in *Une langue venue d'ailleurs.* In other words, Shimazaki's writing lacks colloquial French, which renders it unique yet representative of the Japanese language. Even though Shimazaki denies the idea that her thoughts are formed in Japanese and then transformed into French, the mere fact that her French is unparalleled serves as a case of code-switching, as described by Steven Kellman:

> Code-switching is common among bilingual speakers, and authors who would represent speech as it is actually spoken create internally translingual texts, often between colloquial and formal or between regional and standard forms of the same language. [87]

There is clear evidence of this 'internally translingual' features when considering Shimazaki's work because the norms of the Japanese language are somewhat (somewhat-because there are different degrees of politeness that surpass the *tu* and *vous* forms in French, which would be too complicated to mirror) observed in her writing. For instance in *Maïmaï*, there is reference to both casual and polite forms of the words used for older siblings within the glossary: *onêchan (onêsan)-soeur ainée, onîchan (onîsan) frère aîné.* By remaining loyal to the authenticity of the Japanese language, Shimazaki writes from a translingual stance even if she is not aware of this. Returning to the point with regards to the lack of finer French or Canadian-French formulations alerts the Francophone reader that despite being written in French, there is a clear linguistic discrepancy because Shimazaki is ultimately a Japanese

[87] Kellman, Steven G., *The Translingual Imagination* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 15.

writer who does not fully renounce her native language. This idea further supports the notion that literature in French can no longer be constrained to classifications such as Francophone literature because 'world literature in French is transnational and transcultural'[88] and ultimately 'internally translingual'. Moreover, one could argue that Shimazaki maintains the authenticity of her French-written Japanese novels because she is a *chronicler* or a silent observer who is reporting on what is transpiring before her eyes.

Shimazaki in a way makes the idea of '*double étrangéité',* as highlighted by Mizubayashi, work in her favour because she writes in a language that she has mastered yet she does not use vernacular expressions, which in effect renders her French a foreign form of French: it is grammatically accurate but uncolloquial. By writing in this way, Shimazaki holds on to the essence of what she is portraying: a conversation in Japanese between a Japanese couple. By so doing, Shimazaki untangles the French language and reconstructs it to serve this purpose. A short passage in Sekiguchi's *Ce n'est pas un hasard* can shed some light on the usage of colloquial French in her writing which helps us understand Shimazaki's possible stance in light of Mizubayashi's explanation.

> Je sens que le Japon est en train de virer. De pauvre victime qu'il était, le voilà qui prend des allures de fauteur de trouble avec ses putains de centrales nucléaires (et voilà, c'est la première fois que j'emploie le mot « putain » dans un texte; mais je crois que c'est le mot).[89]

There are two important ideas that can be deduced from this passage. Firstly, the use of the word *putain* makes Sekiguchi's remark very strong and realistic. The simple use of this word has expressed her dismay and frustration but also it has made her expression more 'French', more passionate and more fluent to a certain extent. Needless to say, this form of colloquialism is appropriate in a casual, less academic register but the word carries with it the

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[88] Dutton, Jacqueline, 'World Literature in French, *Littérature-monde,* and the translingual turn', *French Studies*, 70-3 (2016), p.404-418 < https://academic.oup.com/fs/article/70/3/404/1749342> [accessed 13 November 2019].

[89] Sekiguchi, p. 43.

power of truly delving into the French language, an issue that Mizubayashi highlights when comparing his academic and written French to his spoken and casual French usage. What is surprising or at times frustrating is the absence of such emphatic language in Shimazaki's novels. On the one hand, this absence as discussed above gives Shimazaki's novels something uniquely 'Japanese' or 'Franco-Japanese' because they do not acquiesce to the linguistic norms of spoken French and equally gives them a sense of a 'social study' rather than just reporting on daily happenings. In other words, it seems as though Shimazaki's motive is not just to report but to make the reader conscious that what is being reported is not the familiar and the quotidian but more the unfamiliar and the unspoken. By so doing, Shimazaki's novels take a new shape, that of social reporting or documentation of what is happening in current day Japan as opposed to merely transcribing what is being said. Secondly, what seems as Sekiguchi's apology for using the word *putain* is very telling. The fact that she has not used this word in her nine preceding works in French goes to say that there is still a sense of distance between the writer and the language. Equally, there is a sense of great shame in using this word, which can be seen as an apology for using French slang in a credible piece of writing, or perhaps for a sense of uncertainty over whether it was used appropriately and correctly. On the other hand, Sekiguchi might have explained her usage of this word to highlight her cultural sensitivity. That is to say, Sekiguchi possibly wanted to apologise for any offence her 'fluent French usage' might cause to Japanese speakers or in case her novel is translated into Japanese and her usage of this word is misinterpreted. Without doubt, such interjection and offensive words exist in Japanese but their usage can be significantly different in terms of nuance. Mizubayashi comes to the conclusion that despite his efforts, 'C'est une langue d'autrui, de l'autre, qui n'est pas à ma portée, qui me restera toujours extérieure et étrangère'.[90] This fatalistic point of view is rather shocking because as an advocate and a teacher of the French language he is stating that despite all efforts a native Japanese speaker can never perfect their French and consequently turns Shimazaki, Sekiguchi as well as himself into imposters for writing in a language that will never truly belong to them. In "Dedication,"

[90] ibid., p. 246.

the opening poem in the volume *Bilingual Blues: Poems, 1981-1994,* the bilingual Cuban-American Gustavo Pérez Firmat states:

> The fact that I
> am writing to you
> in English
> already falsifies what I
> wanted to tell you [91]

The idea of 'falsification' proposed by Firmat rings true with Mizubayashi's declaration that there will always remain a distance between his mother tongue and the French language.

Interestingly, Mizubayashi's devotion to the French language has also allowed him to better analyse the Japanese language from a rather unique position like Shimazaki who writes about Japanese societal issues and Sekiguchi who writes particularly about the events in 2011 in *Ce n'est pas un hasard*. Mizubayashi highlights the musicality of languages, which resonates with him in the Japanese language, yet he alerts us of peculiarities of what he calls his *langue paternelle.*

> Dans toutes les langues du monde sans doute résonne de la musique: des tremblements d'émotions se font entendre en elles à travers les mots prononcés dans l'infinie variation des inflexions vocales…Le japonais est une langue fort musicale. En deçà ou au-delà de l'art poétique ou dramatique qui opère une prodigieuse intensification musicale, les paroles sont empreintes d'un chant particulier jusque dans les zones les plus obscures de la vie quotidienne…Et dans tout cela, comment ne pas le souligner, il y a, ou il y avait quelque chose de profondément mélancolique dont on retrouve l'équivalent renforcé dans les chants populaires traditionnels…Ma mère me chantait souvent…je me souviens encore de la tristesse indéfinissable qui m'envahissait…Elle m'avoua même qu'elle avait été émue à son tour par mon chagrin, cette douleur que j'avais ressentie à ses côtés, blotti dans sa berceuse. [92]

[91] Kellman, p. 31.

[92] Mizubayashi, p. 156-158.

These sorrowful lullabies to which Mizubayashi refers are exemplified in Shimazaki's *Azami.*

> Ce soir encore, ton oreiller est baigné de larmes.
> À qui rêves-tu? Viens, viens vers moi.
> Je m'appelle Azami. Je suis la fleur qui berce la nuit.
> Pleure, pleure dans mes bras. L'aube est loin encore.[93]

These beautiful yet mournful verses support Mizubayashi's claims regarding a deep-rooted melancholy in the Japanese language. Upon reading these verses, the reader naturally wonders why the protagonist of the poem is crying and what is causing this pain. The explicit link made with the flower of the night *azami* and the tears draw our attention not only to the melancholic mood of the lullaby but equally to the reasons why Shimazaki included this in the opening pages of the novel entitled *Azami.*

The main character of *Azami* and the childhood sweetheart of the narrator Mistuo Kawano is Mitsuko Tsuji. After 25 years, the two protagonists' paths cross in a gentlemen's club where Mitsuko works as *entraîneuse* using the pseudonym 'Azami', the same name that Mistuo adopted when referring to Mitsuko in his journal entries as a child. Having a storyline revolve around the name of the flower 'azami' is significant when the abovementioned verses of the lullaby are considered. Mitsuo explains after seeing Mitsuko at bar X: 'L'*azami*. Je trouve cette fleur unique, avec sa forme particulière et sa couleur violette. On n'en offre pas en cadeau à cause des épines pointues sur ses feuilles. Une fleur d'un abord difficile'.[94] These physical characteristics of the flower are intertwined with Mitsuko's character and we see an example of 'des épines pointues sur ses feuilles' in the exchange between Mitsuo and Mitsuko regarding her work at Bar X:

> -Je suis surpris que tu travailles dans des endroits pareils.
> Ses yeux s'écarquillent. Son ton devient agressif:
> - Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, « des endroits pareils »?
> Je m'excuse aussitôt:
> -Désolé si je t'ai vexée. Tu étais une élève si brillante que j'ai du mal à croire…

[93] Shimazaki, Aki, *Azami* (Montreal: Actes Sud, 2014), p. 8.

[94] *Azami*, p. 55.

> Elle m'interrompt:
> -Serveuse ou entraîneuse, ce sont des métiers comme celui de rédacteur. Je paie mes impôts comme tout le monde. En plus, mes métiers sont probablement plus utiles que le tien.
> Je ne réagis pas. Elle continue:
> -Écoute, Mitsuo. Je t'ai donné mes coordonnées parce que je voulais te remercier à nouveau. L'argent que tu as récupéré était très important pour moi. Mais, si tu es venu ici pour me faire la morale, sors tout de suite, s'il te plaît.[95]

This exchange highlights Mitsuko's position as a strong woman who does not comply with the expectations of a sexist society. Thus Mitsuko exemplifies the characteristics associated with the flower in the words of Mitsuo's daughter: 'Pour l'*azami*, c'est «l'indépendance», «ne me touche pas», «la vengeance»'.[96]

Despite the fact that Mitsuko is linked with the flower 'azami' and the melancholic lullaby, we see that Mitsuko is independent and she is not troubled by Mitsuo's opinion towards her lifestyle or occupation. However, in the novel, the name '*Azami*' represents all the hardships, which Mitsuko encounters in life due to her parents' divorce, being a single mother to a deaf child and working in a disreputable bar. In effect, the melancholic verses of the lullaby define Mitsuko's life and resonate with Mitsuo as they embark on an amorous affair away from the eyes of his wife Atsuko and their old classmate Gorô. Yet, with the passing of time the affair is exposed and consequently Mitsuo breaks up with Mitsuko but when he returns to Mitsuko's neighbourhood a few months later he realises that Mitsuko has moved out of her apartment without leaving any trace. Mitsuo's realisation that '*Azami*' is no longer part of his life resonates with the verses of the lullaby and 'his pillow soaked with tears'. Although *Azami* in principle exposes the realities of *sexless* couples, the unspoken world of *pink salons, love hotels,* extramarital affairs and *fûzoku-ten* (établissements de services sexuels)[97], the link made between *azami* and Mitsuko is pivotal. The suffering of this flower is personified by the life of

[95] *Azami*, p. 77-78.

[96] ibid., p. 100.

[97] ibid., p. 133.

Mitsuko and 'son regard mélancolique', and reiterated through the sorrowful lullaby in support of Mizubayashi's ideas regarding the melancholy that is deeply engrained in Japanese language, society and culture through traditional songs.

Furthermore, the musicality of Japanese comes as no surprise to anyone familiar with this language particularly in terms of *haiku* poetry as discussed in the introduction of this thesis and the link that one can trace between this poetry and Shimazaki's choice of seasonal themes for the titles of her novels.
Mizubayashi's deductions regarding the deeply melancholic nature of the Japanese language could be linked to the expression of fatality in all the Franco-Japanese writers being analysed in this thesis. In other words, if they cannot rid themselves of their deep-rooted 'melancholic tongue' (and in this case it is the Japanese language as stated above) then does this sorrowful rhetoric seep through even if another language such as French is used?

Is it this very notion that is permeating Shimazaki's French novels? There is undoubtedly something unique in the tales recounted by Shimazaki yet there is a sense of inevitability and morbidity in them. Sekiguchi offers an explanation to this through her analysis of Japanese writers and their use of seasonal themes:

> La nature ne guérit pas de tout, surtout quand la catastrophe a été causée par les hommes. La réflexion, cela va sans sire, s'applique aussi bien aux catastrophes dites «naturelles», en définitive toujours trop humaines, elles aussi. Dès lors qu'on range un évènement historique, qui doit s'inscrire dans une temporalité linéaire, dans un tel genre littéraire, avec ses «mots de saison», il se voit compté au nombre des phénomènes naturels, comme un accident qu'il faudrait accepter et endurer, et puis oublier à la saison suivante. [98]

In addition to the melancholic tone of her novels, Shimazaki by using elements from nature as titles of her novels is perhaps asking the Japanese society and equally the French-speaking reader to consider these troubled 'seasons' and move on with the arrival of the 'new season'. By reconstructing the French language to represent the authenticity of her mother tongue in

[98] Sekiguchi, *Nagori* (Paris: P.O.L, 2018), p. 82.

her novels along with the use of Japanese titles for her novels, Shimazaki transfers the melancholic nature of the Japanese language when writing in French. Similarly, Mizubayashi's autobiography and journey with the French language bring to light these melancholic elements of his native tongue through his struggles with the language coloured by 'perte de soi', '*double étrangéité'* and his self-identity. It becomes evident that, as Raja Rao puts it, 'The important thing is not what language one writes in, for language is really an accidental thing, what matters is the authenticity of experience, and this can generally be achieved in any language'. [99]

Chroniclers of a different kind: Sekiguchi and Shimazaki

When considering the role of Aki Shimazaki as a *chronicler of inconvenient aspects of Japanese society*, we need to understand that she sets out to uncover troubling elements of Japanese society, which the Western world is unfamiliar with. Shimazaki untangles the realities of her homeland and presents them to the French-speaking reader in a series of convoluted fictional tales that revolve around family ties spanning over many generations. Ryoko Sekiguchi's *Ce n'est pas un hasard* in the same light introduces the reader to the mixed emotions felt by a native Japanese citizen residing in Paris as she watches the tragic events surrounding the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and tsunami unfold. Both Shimazaki and Sekiguchi recount events that have shaken the very core of Japanese society thus serving as chroniclers of Japanese realities; yet, there is a clear distinction between the two writers, namely, the fact that Sekiguchi writes a first-person narrative whilst Shimazaki recounts Japanese societal issues from a fictional perspective. Furthermore, Sekiguchi's writing can be blunt and unapologetic whilst Shimazaki tends to openly discuss sensitive matters in an unbiased but poetic manner. In addition, Shimazaki presents her readers with both sides of the argument and allows her audience to make their own judgment. Despite the difference in writing style, the two writers give the French-speaking reader access to a Japanese point of view that is unparalleled and

[99] Kellman, p. 23.

ask fundamental questions that are at the heart of current debates in Japan. It is important to consider the work of both these female Japanese writers who reside in French-speaking countries and write about controversial issues in their homeland because this in-depth examination will allow us to better understand the role of Shimazaki as a *chronicler* and the implications of this term in light of translingual debate.

Concepts concerning 'exoticism' proposed by Jean-Xavier Ridon could be extrapolated to Shimazaki because she 'uses the other as a pretext for representing an image of the same, the other is neutralized/sterilized in a form of appropriation that renders it palatable for a Western readership'.[100] There are several examples of this process of 'neutralization' in Shimazaki's work; for instance, the references she makes to ethnic diversity in Japan: Yonhi Mariko's Korean origins and 'Western' father, Kenji Takahashi's assumed Russian father etc. There is no doubt that Shimazaki is making Japanese society, culture and language accessible to her French-speaking audience to allow for open debate regarding a country that remains unfamiliar to most Francophone readers; however, there is a sense of appropriation that seeks to connect the diversity of the Francophone world to a country that is predominantly homogeneous. The arguments in favour of considering Shimazaki as a translingual writer start to falter when we consider other claims by Ridon regarding this notion of exoticism and *littérature-monde*:

> Of course they are connected to their culture of origin, but they are also already elsewhere and reside in a distance that allows them at times to reinvent their place of origin from the new horizons they find themselves in. It is this elsewhere as a space of displacement rather than a dream of the other that allows for an understanding of what a *littérature-monde* rid of its exoticism might look like. [101]

Shimazaki by trying to appeal to the French-speaking audience begins to lose the authenticity of the message she is trying to convey. Similarly, as a Japanese writer who relates tales of Japanese past and present whilst residing in Quebec, there is the possibility that she is

[100] Hargreaves, p. 197.

[101] ibid., p.202.

romanticizing the image of Japan and representing a reinvented reality. Having said this, it is important to recognize that Shimazaki takes on an 'autofictional' approach thus blurring the lines between what the reader assumes as personal first-hand experiences and fictional biography. The term 'autofiction' which has been coined by Serge Doubrovsky and has been defined as:

> […] false fiction which is the story of a true life; by the motion of its writing the text is instantly expelled from the patented register of the real. Thus, neither autobiography nor novel in the strict sense, it operates in a no-man's-land, in a ceaseless cross-reference, in a space which is impossible and elusive everywhere but in the operation of the text itself.[102]

Shimazaki's novels experiment with this genre from a variety of contexts. Each novel is narrated from the perspective of a protagonist and their personal interpretation of the events surrounding them. The narrators, which Shimazaki embodies, are both male and female characters thus giving the reader an array of perspectives whilst considering a variety of plots. This in turn allows the reader to acquire a seemingly more comprehensive understanding of Japanese society; in other words, Shimazaki alludes to the idea that both male and female voices are critical of Japanese society because of their personal circumstances, which are intertwined. This is a focal point in Shimazaki's writing because unlike the writing of Sekiguchi who interprets her experience from personal encounters, Shimazaki by embodying different genders allows for a more thorough study of society. In this '*jeu de je*' as described by Doubrovsky, Shimazaki does not clearly withhold a feminist stand; that is to say, it is difficult to categorise Shimazaki as a feminist writer or a meninist writer as a matter of fact because each protagonist be it male or female is a victim to a certain extent of the circumstances that Japanese society has enforced on them: saving face, withholding of secrets, marginalisation of minorities, war etc. Moreover, Shimazaki also gives voice to younger characters by allowing them to question their elders regarding Japanese beliefs and thoughts in her novels. This technique of examining societal 'norms' through the eyes of the younger generations is very

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[102] Spear, Thomas C., 'Celine And 'Autofictional' First-person Narration', *Studies in the Novel*, 23-3 (1991), pp. 357-370, <www.jstor.org/stable/29532800> [accessed 27 January 2017].

effective because by doing so Shimazaki answers any doubts that the reader might have about the origins of certain Japanese beliefs; furthermore, this method allows for an impartial examination of the issues at hand be it the American bombing of Japan or the marginalisation of Korean residents in Japan. Shimazaki herself as a child might have posed these questions or they might be questions that are commonly asked by children nowadays in Japan; in any case, the characterisation of Shimazaki's protagonists is unique because the perspective from which she addresses vital societal issues is varied and wholesome despite doubts that might arise due to her inward view of Japan as a resident in Canada.

Whether we consider Nobu in *Tonbo* whose suffering is propelled by the suicide of his father or Yukiko the survivor of the atomic bomb in *Tsubaki,* each protagonist begs for the reader's empathy. Although many personal triumphs are celebrated in the novels such as Yonhi-Mariko's reconnection with her Korean identity after having repressed her ethnic origins for decades in *Tsubame,* most protagonists are fragile, burdened with secrets and helpless. Parallels could be drawn between Shimazaki's personal dissatisfaction with Japanese social order and her character's helplessness. Lejeune states that in 'autofiction' there is no expectation of honest representation[103]; however, in the case of Shimazaki's novels this interpretation is blurred by the use of actual historical facts, mentioning of real-life Japanese figures and the disguising of certain facts. Shimazaki deliberately uses initials at times when tackling certain names of towns, companies and individuals. This technique alludes to the idea that she is protecting individuals and the reputations of specific groups thus suggesting that what she is narrating is real and would have direct repercussions if revealed. This veiling of 'facts' is problematic because in a sense it leads to the misconstruing of fiction to seem autobiographical. Hence, the reader is compelled to assume that the family histories expressed in her novels are genuine life events, which the author had 'experienced' through her family and those around her. Yet the complexity of the plots suggest that it is almost impossible to believe that certain families could be burdened with so much misfortunate and

[103] ibid.

secrets. Equally, by obscuring fact and fiction Shimazaki disables her writing from being a powerful critique of Japanese society. In other words, if there is an element of truth in her writing, by disguising names, the purpose of exposing the reality is contradicted because the revelation of these names forms an integral part of unmasking the reality. Shimazaki therefore further complicates her narrative by disguising these names because it suggests that she is burdened by Japanese societal norms hence as expressed by one of her characters: 'Le mieux, c'est de garder le silence'.[104] Shimazaki's technique of disguising names in her writing in turn could be linked to cultural values because she has expressed that Japanese writers tend to write in an indirect manner due to the fact that people do not say things directly in Japan.[105] Hence, even though Shimazaki attempts to critique Japan, she is not fully capable of escaping her Japanese identity, which forces her to address issues in an indirect manner.

Ryoko Sekiguchi's approach is very different when she chronicles what had transpired between the 10th and the 30th March 2011 in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake in *Ce n'est pas un hasard*. This unique and intimate account of the horrific events that took place in Japan is narrated from the perspectives of a Japanese community residing in France and that of a Japanese expat returning to her homeland to experience the despair and chaos of the situation although from afar. Sekiguchi clearly states in her novel: 'ce que je suis en train d'écrire, ce n'est pas de la littérature. C'est un «rapport». Je dresse un rapport, le plus sincère possible'. [106] This declaration in itself sets Sekiguchi's work apart from Shimazaki's because there is no sense of 'appropriation or neutralization' of these events to please the Francophone audience. In fact Sekiguchi highlights her frustration with a French friend who does not understand the position she is in:

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[104] Shimazaki, Aki, *Le Poids des secrets: Tsubame* (Montreal: Babel, 2001), p. 33.

[105] Amyot, 2007, pp. 46.

[106] Sekiguchi, p. 39.

> Un appel. Je décroche. Un ami français. «Je suis devant la télé, il me dit, les tsunamis sont impressionnants…» Là, je m'emporte. C'est plus fort que moi, brusquement, je lui coupe la parole: «Impressionnants ou pas, je m'en fous! Pour nous, ce n'est pas une image, c'est la réalité qui nous tombe sur la tête». [107]

The comment made by Sekiguchi's French friend brings to life an uncensored reaction fuelled by frustration and dismay at the same time. Perhaps Sekiguchi's reaction is merited but it is clear that her frustration is based upon the fact that Japan remains alien and misunderstood, as she herself might feel at times. This short exchange between Sekiguchi and her friend gives us a sense of what Ridon makes reference to when he highlights the need for *littérature-monde* to rid itself of the 'appropriated and sanitised' writing that serves to please its audience. It is important to highlight that Sekiguchi is aware of the impact of distance as she observes the events unfold in Japan.

> Mais dans la distance, loin du drame, ici à Paris, c'est autre chose que je ressens soudain, au milieu de mes amis japonais rassemblés dans mon petit appartement, comme des petits animaux cherchant à s'abriter.
>
> Il m'apparaît tout à coup qu'il y a des gens qui ne connaissent pas cela, qui n'ont jamais de leur vie été confrontés à une telle situation, comme les Français, debout sur la terre ferme- c'est une chance inouïe.
>
> Nous-mêmes, dans cette angoisse, nous ne pouvons pas nous empêcher de penser que nous sommes, nous aussi, des Parisiens bien à l'abri. [108]

This internal dialogue is pertinent because it allows the reader an insight into Sekiguchi's dilemma as a Franco-Japanese writer observing tragic events in her homeland unravel before her eyes whilst in Paris. Furthermore, by alerting the reader of her displacement, her writing becomes more endearing, realistic and relatable. Clearly, Sekiguchi is writing a 'chronicle' whilst Shimazaki is writing fiction; yet, Shimazaki seems guarded about her unique position as a Franco-Japanese writer through her writing and even in her interviews she withholds her woes and frustrations concerning her '*double étrangéité*'.

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[107] Sekiguchi, p. 10.

[108] ibid., p.14.

Ryoko Sekiguchi was born in Tokyo in 1970 and moved to Paris in 1997 to study History of Art at the Sorbonne whilst continuing her work as a poet, translator and writer. Armed with a doctorate in Comparative Literature from the University of Tokyo and having spent a year in Italy, Sekiguchi is very open about her linguistic and personal journeys that are easy to trace. Sekiguchi, unlike Shimazaki, does not shy away from the spotlight and clips of her interviews can be easily found along with interviews and articles about her literary accomplishments. Sekiguchi's media exposure goes on to highlight that her personality and attitude are very different from that of Shimazaki, which could be attributed to generational differences given that Shimazaki was born in 1954. Equally, *Ce n'est pas un hasard* is written in a way that invites the reader to live and relive a personal journey with Sekiguchi. Moreover, Sekiguchi raises questions not only about controversial issues such as the atomic bomb and inevitably the war but also about the very essence of being a writer.

> Mais en tant qu'écrivain, mes interrogations sur l'écriture ont changé; ce n'est plus «que faut-il écrire après une catastrophe» mais «qu'est-ce que les gens ont besoin de lire». Quels mots voudront-ils voir, entendre? Que peut-on leur offrir? [109]

These important questions raised by Sekiguchi alert the reader that the events of 2011 have changed her as a writer because she is preoccupied and aware of the importance of the authenticity of what she is recounting. In effect, we see an open transformation of Sekiguchi to becoming more of a translingual writer whose main objective is to convey to her audience a credible narration:

> Translinguals move beyond their native languages, but for many, particularly in the twentieth century, theirs is an aspiration to transcend language in general, to be pandictic, to utter everything, Impatient with the imperfections of finite verbal systems, they yearn to pass beyond words, to silence and truth. [110]

With this in mind, one could assume that the language being used to express these ideas becomes irrelevant because the message and the delivery of what the readers need to know is

[109] Sekiguchi, p. 169.

[110] Kellman, p. 16.

by far more crucial. Sekiguchi makes it clear that she is preoccupied with delivering the truth frankly to her readers whilst Shimazaki masks the truth in an auto-fictional plot that is unbiased and balanced. Having said that, in Shimazaki's novels, the act of revealing secrets is central to her plots. In fact, most of Shimazaki's storylines are propelled by the discoveries that her protagonists make throughout their lives, which will be analysed in great detail in the following chapters of this thesis. Another very important aspect of Shimazaki's writing is the concept of silence that is mentioned frequently in all her novels. This contemplative silence at times echoes of the past and the conscious decision to refrain from volunteering information. Although these reoccurring episodes of silence could be connected to Japanese culture, the above quotation draws our attention to how silence is a phase that sits between words and the truth. In other words, silence in Shimazaki's writing could be seen as the ultimate tool of a translingual who wishes to surpass the confines of language and move on to the quintessential truth.

Ce n'est pas un hasard begins with the unfolding of the events in Japan and the reader is immediately thrown in the deep end without much introduction, historical contextualisation or build up. The aforementioned conversation between Sekiguchi and her French friend speaks volumes of her frustration with how the West sees Japan and how her close French friends cannot understand her woes. The fact that Japanese tragedy is seen as something difficult to conceptualize, distant geographically and mentally from the West unnerves Sekiguchi because links could be made to the atomic bomb and other natural disasters that are palpable concepts for the Japanese people which remain incomprehensible to those who have not experienced Japan socially, historically, linguistically or culturally:

> C'est alors que je suis saisie par une étrange sensation: j'ai déjà vécu ça. Je me souviens, mon frère et moi étions restés jusqu'à trois ou quatre heures du matin à regarder brûler la ville de Kôbé, rongée par les flammes comme après un bombardement. Je me souviens, j'étais collégienne quand un quartier de l'île de Miyake fut détruit par la lave à 70% ...Tant d'images me reviennent, de tremblements de terre et de typhons, que je ne parviens plus à les distinguer. [111]

[111] ibid., p. 12-13.

The fragility of the Japanese people becomes apparent because current events can be related to other horrific events that they have experienced in the distant and recent past. Even though Sekiguchi was not living in Tokyo at the time, she was transported to her childhood and her previous memories came flooding in. Sekuguchi goes on to explain how Japanese people see images of disastrous events in Japan under a different guise:

> Lorsqu'on est concerné, l'image n'est pas une image, c'est la réalité; mais quand on n'est pas directement touché, l'image conserve en quelque sorte son statut d'image, et ce sont ces réalités-images qui nous assaillent chaque fois que le Japon est victime d'une catastrophe, et qui se superposent devant nos yeux quand nous sommes rivés devant la télévision. [112]

Sekiguchi's explanation highlights the detachment that a non-Japanese person might feel when seeing such images thus emphasising the importance of what she has written because it allows Western readers an exclusive Japanese point of view. In other words, Sekiguchi is giving a unique opportunity for her readers to understand the profound link Japanese people have between current disasters and their past.

Despite the fact that Sekiguchi is writing about her experience of the devastating effects of the earthquake and tsunami that took place on 11th March 2011, which gave rise to a nuclear accident in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, the images and emotions that had surfaced resulted in Sekiguchi revisiting Japan's troubled past:

> Je me demande ce qui est le plus cruel, de mourir dans une catastrophe naturelle ou dans une catastrophe humaine. Mourir dans un tsunami ou sous l'effet des radiations? Je préfère de loin la catastrophe naturelle. D'accord, toutes les morts sont terribles quelle qu'en soit la cause, mais en détruisant tout sur mon passage, la catastrophe naturelle n'est pas animée par la haine. La catastrophe humaine tue par bêtise, par ignorance, elle discrimine les individus et je ne veux pas de cette mort-là, que l'on aurait pu, toujours, éviter. [113]

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[112] ibid.

[113] Sekiguchi, p. 62.

This passage linking the events in Fukushima to Hiroshima reminds the reader of the strong connection between the past and the present in the Japanese psyche which will be discussed in Chapter 2, 'The Legacy of the Second World War'. What is particularly interesting is how this passage is reminiscent of Shimazaki's writing regarding the war. The following exchange between Aïko Toda and her father-in-law, Monsieur Toda, in *Yamabuki* is an example of how Shimazaki's protagonists contemplate the past as they talk of the present:

> -On a presque tout perdu. Je crains que les Américains nous gardent à jamais sous leur domination. C'est un pays puissant. La question pour nous sera de trouver comment survivre.
>
> …Je demande à monsieur Toda:
>
> -Pourquoi les vainqueurs jugent-ils les vaincus, comme s'ils étaient eux-mêmes innocents? Si le Japon avait gagné, la situation serait inversée.
>
> -Tout à fait, répond-il. Notre armée a entraîné le peule dans une guerre sans espoir. C'est nous qui devons juger nos responsables. Sinon, qui respectera vraiment le jugement?
>
> En l'écoutant, je pense: «Notre pays, combien de temps lui faudra-t-il pour regagner sa souveraineté? [114]

This exchange echoes the ideas that Sekiguchi discusses regarding whether she prefers to die as a result of a natural disaster or a manmade disaster thus alluding to the atomic bomb. The above conversation could be seen as controversial because the Americans are seen unfavourably and equally questions regarding Japan's sovereignty are posed. Furthermore, Aïko's question regarding how things would have been different had Japan won the war could be seen as nationalistic and damming given the atrocities that Japan was responsible for in neighbouring Asian countries; however, Shimazaki balances the scales through Monsieur Toda's words that blame the Japanese army for drawing the nation into a hopeless war. Despite the differences with respect to the topics at hand, it is clear that both Sekiguchi and Shimazaki boldly want to discuss sensitive and controversial issues that are at the heart of

[114] Shimazaki, Aki, *Au Coeur du Yamato: Yamabuki* (Montreal: Actes Sud, 2013), p. 98.

Japanese debate today. Having said so, Shimazaki has a tendency to present an unbiased stance by giving opposing points of view so that readers can reach their own judgement; however, Sekiguchi as a non-fictional writer is not afraid of voicing her opinions:

> J'aurais souhaité que le nom de Fukushima ne figure pas à côté de celui de Hiroshima. Parce que, ça y est, c'est déjà trop tard, la superposition est en train de s'accomplir. En un sens, comme le dit Ôé, cela peut nous aider à comprendre ce qu'ont vécu les populations de Hiroshima et de Nagasaki. Mais je crains surtout que cela ne pénalise les gens de Fukushima, sans qu'opère la réflexion qu'il appelle de ses vœux. Ce télescopage, je le savais inéluctable. J'aurais souhaité simplement, irrationnellement peut-être, qu'il ne se produise pas tout de suite. [115]

When comparing the two writers, it is clear that Sekiguchi is taking more risks by expressing her opinions openly and being forthright whilst Shimazaki tends to contemplate the implications of what her characters are saying. In fact, even in Sekiguchi's *Nagori: La nostalgie de la saison qui vient de nous quitter* (2018), we see her making references to Hiroshima and life after the events in Fukushima. This goes to say that Sekiguchi's writing is deeply intertwined with Japanese societal issues even when she is not setting out to chronicle any particular events.

In both instances, nonetheless, as translingual writers the process of writing in French allows them to deliberate about what they are writing. To this effect, the Puerto Rican writer Rosario Ferré explains: 'English makes me slow down, I have to think over what I'm going to say twice, maybe three times-which is often healthy because I can't put my foot, or rather my pen, in my mouth so easily. I can't be trigger-happy in English because words take too much effort'.[116] Following Ferré's comment, even though Sekiguchi might seem more liberal with her expression, just by being a non-native French speaker her writing and her thoughts would have been considered very carefully when voicing her opinions just like that of Shimazaki's characters.

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[115] Sekiguchi, p. 63.

[116] Kellman, p. 30.

As *chroniclers* Shimazaki and Sekiguchi occupy a very different stance. Firstly, Sekiguchi is reporting from 'ground zero' so to speak, she is recounting a reality that she has first hand experience of unlike Shimazaki who is narrating realities through her protagonists and presenting us with unbiased understanding of the events. Secondly, Sekiguchi gives the reader a raw account that seems uncensored, unapologetic and unpoetic:

> Je comprends de mieux en mieux pourquoi j'écris. Me voici devenue chroniqueur au sens premier du terme, comme autrefois les chroniqueurs de guerre, les chroniqueurs d'un règne. Ils fournissaient une description la plus précise possible pour autant qu'ils ne pouvaient être au plus près de leur sujet qu'en étant séparés du lui. Le nom de l'auteur peut disparaître, ce qui compte, c'est de rapporter tout ce que je peux comme traces de l'événement. Je ne cherche pas les belles phrases, je me l'interdis. [117]

There are several key points to consider here when analysing Sekiguchi's ideas. Once again her words resonate with the concepts associated with *littérature-monde* and translingualism, which promote expression that is rid of 'appropriation' and the confines of the language being used, in this case being the French language. Furthermore, Sekiguchi suggests that the role of a chronicler is one that surpasses the poetry of language. Although Sekiguchi claims that she forbids the use of *les belles phrases*, the passage above is not totally lacking of this. Perhaps, what Sekiguchi is referring to is her bluntness of expression. When considering Shimazaki it is clear that her writing is founded upon the idea of linguistic elegance and we see her literary style evolve throughout her pentalogies. Shimazaki's writing is fictional and literary yet it is honest and brings to light numerous issues that are sensitive and *inconvenient* to the Japanese public. This, in turn, makes Shimazaki's writing unprecedented because it fulfils the role not only of fictional excellence but also that of a chronicler. In this light, we can return to Sekiguchi's comments regarding the message being more important than even the writer's name. This is a valid point especially in the case of Shimazaki because her profound analysis of Japanese societal issues remains not only as a work of excellent fictional storytelling but as chronicles of Japanese past and present.

[117] Sekiguchi, p. 46.

Mizubayashi, Sekiguchi and Shimazaki: three voices, three experiences

The linguistic experience of Akira Mizubayashi, Ryoko Sekiguchi and Aki Shimazaki could blindly and monolithically be categorised as: Japanese writers who express themselves in French. This categorization although factual does not take into account the differences in their relationship with the French language. For Mizubayashi the French language is a way of reinventing himself:

> […] si j'ose dire, dans la langue française, toute la joie profonde que je puisais dans l'acte de *sortir* de moi-même pour devenir quelqu'un d'autre, pour rejoindre un autre monde, l'autre du monde, bref pour me mettre à la place et dans la peau de ceux qui respiraient cette langue, vivaient cette langue, sentaient et se sentaient dans et par cette langue. [118]

The French language is idealised and glorified for its mythical prestige and the grandeur. In a sense, Mizubayashi does not attempt to assimilate his writing because he wants to guard the 'purity' of the language and literature. Unwilling to reinvent the French language, we see Mizubayashi abandon his native tongue when talking to his daughter and totally immersing himself in the French language. Yet, Mizubayashi remains perplexed about his Franco-Japanese self:

> Quel est en effet ce *moi* qui parle en français, qui écrit en français, qui réfléchit en français, qui aime en français, qui souffre en français, et qui va jusqu'à rêver en français…? Peut-on le qualifier de français? Je l'ignore…À la limite, il n'est attaché à la France que par ce lien à la fois ténu et puissant qu'est sa *langue*. Est-il d'expression française? Oui, sans nul doute. Le français ne le quitte jamais. Il habite profondément le français… [119]

Mizubayashi understands that his ties to France are merely linguistic despite being married to a French citizen. The above series of interrogations highlight the internal conflict that Mizubayashi experiences on a daily basis even though he has dedicated his life to the French language. Mizubayashi's internal debate regarding where to place himself and his writing

[118] Mizubayashi, p. 196.

[119] Mizubayashi, p. 260-261.

within French linguistic categorisations could be stemming from the fact that he falls under both camps of translingual writers as identified by Anne-Rosin Delbert: 'sedentaries' who learn French in their domestic environment and 'nomads' who interact with French due to resettlement. [120] Although Mizubayashi would mainly be considered as 'sedentary' because he initially acquired French in Japan, given that he resettled in France even if temporarily he occupies the nomadic category as well. In effect, Sekiguchi would be considered under both camps as well but Shimazaki is the only one who learnt French after her resettlement in Canada. Mizubayashi's writing is translingual French literature because he speaks of his unique experience with the French language and he goes on to analyse not only the intricacies of French but his *langue paternelle* through French whilst residing in Tokyo. The situation is clearly different when we consider Sekiguchi who, through *Ce n'est pas un hasard*, attempts to express her sentiments concerning the earthquake in 2011 and the debate regarding the Fukushima nuclear power plant which in turn brought to light memories of the atomic bomb and Hiroshima. Unlike Mizubayashi, Sekiguchi's internal dilemmas seem to be revolving around the catastrophe that transpired and her role as someone who is expressing these realities to a Francophone audience. In the same light Shimazaki exposes realities about Japanese shortcomings through her novels; however, Shimazaki's interviews as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis reveal that her stories are not socio-politically motivated but instead they are tales of individual lives that have universal themes.

Despite the differences with regards to these writers' relationships with French literary expression, there is one unifying factor, which is that of criticising Japan for being oppressive and unyielding. Shimazaki speaks of her frustration with Japanese society due to the oppression of women. [121] Similarly, Mizubayashi reiterates this sense of oppression when he sheds light on French language instruction in Japan:

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[120] Forsdick, Charles, 'French literature as world literature: reading the translingual text', in John Lyons (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.204-21.

[121] Sanada, 2008, p. 891.

> Les élèves avaient toute la liberté, mais ils ne savaient pas que cette liberté était l'autre nom de l'aveuglement esclave. On leur disait: «Vous écrivez *librement* ce que vous en pensez.» Mais on ne leur donnait aucun outil pour être libres, pour penser, c'est-à-dire pour penser *contre*, pour penser par soi-même, autrement dit pour se libérer de l'emprise des forces obscures qui les empêchaient d'être libres, de penser, ou, cela revient au même, qui les obligeaient à *ne pas penser*; bref on ne leur donnait aucun moyen qui leur permît d'accéder à l'*autonomie*. [122]

This critique of the overbearing and rigid educational system resonates with Shimazaki's sentiments concerning Japanese society, which Mizubayashi alludes to in this description. Sekiguchi also makes reference to her dismay with the Japanese mentality and systematic oppression when she mentions 'une société dominée pas l'autocensure'. [123] However, Sekiguchi's disenchantment with Japan is expressed emphatically and unreservedly when she discusses the shortcomings of the Japanese government in preventing the Fukushima disaster:

> Je me sens violée. Comme il faut un temps infini à la victime d'un viol pour ne plus se rejouer le film en boucle, pour pouvoir penser à autre chose, je sens ce pays violé- ou plutôt non, parce qu'il n'a pas été agressé par un individu ou par un pays ennemi, il s'est agressé tout seul et les habitants du pays ont été violés avec lui.
>
> Ce mot « violé », me vient à cause des réactions suscitées par la catastrophe. La fille violée, on est gentil avec elle. On lui témoigne de l'attention. Mais on parle aussi beaucoup, derrière son dos, et à la fin, on ne l'épouse pas. [124]

Sekiguchi by personifying Japan and using such emotive words such as *violé* goes beyond the role of a chronicler who wants to report on the events of this tragedy.
The French language in a sense has enabled these Japanese writers residing in Tokyo, Paris and Quebec to express their disillusionment with Japanese society and equally they were able to present to the French-speaking reader a unique insight into the Japanese psyche.

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[122] Mizubayashi, p. 192.

[123] Sekiguchi, p. 97.

[124] ibid.

The contributions of these three writers remain on the fringes of French literature despite the profound message they convey and the ability for them to transcend the geographical divide. There is the danger that the contributions of Mizubayashi, Sekiguchi and Shimazaki remain as 'French interpretations of Japanese events'; that is to say, reports of Japanese events in the French language but instead they need to be considered as a shift towards Japanese translingual literature in French. The linguistic migration of these translingual Franco-Japanese authors to the French language should be celebrated and seen as a means to diversify and strengthen their adopted language as opposed to a way to fragment or deinstitutionalize the French language. It is by honouring and allowing for this unique Japanese perspective that the French language will be reinvigorated and elevated to a truly multilingual global language. Robert Jouanny highlights the importance of such marginal writers in the process of an evolving French language:

> Le recours à la géographie comme mode de détermination de l'identité littéraire méconnaît un phénomène, statistiquement négligeable, et amène la critique littéraire à ignorer ou à assimiler ces inclassables qui, pour des raisons diverses, tantôt momentanément historiques, tantôt familiales, politiques, morales, psychologiques, culturelles ou simplement fortuites, ont réellement choisi de proposer une ouvre littéraire d'expression totalement ou partiellement française. Cette diaspora mérite d'être pise en considération car, marginale, elle échappe à nos clivages, catégorises et rivalités nationales; optionnelle, elle s'inscrit dans une démarche plus individuelle que collective, indépendante ou moins dépendante des contraintes de la tradition et de l'histoire. [125]

These Franco-Japanese writers support the idea that French literature can no longer be confined to linguistic categorizations and geographical limitations as described at the beginning of this chapter given that there is room for this translingual Franco-Japanese symbiosis.

In conclusion, this chapter set out to contextualise Shimazaki in a translingual context and through this analysis it has become clear that Shimazaki occupies an unparalleled position in

[125] Jouanny, Robert, *Singularités francophones, ou choisir d'écrire en français* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), p. 6.

comparison to other Franco-Japanese writers due to her unique contributions to French translingual writing. In linguistic terms, unlike Mizubayashi who is concerned about his inability to truly express himself in a near native French, Shimazaki is not afraid of deconstructing and reconstructing the French language to represent the rapport between her Japanese protagonists. Shimazaki infuses her novels with Japanese words and eliminates French colloquialisms to a certain extent to present a truly unique French experience of the Japanese language. This resonates with Alain Mabanckou's notion regarding an amalgamated 'new' French that is neither confined to France nor Francophone nations. By reinventing this form of globalized French, Shimazaki is in effect making a great contribution to *littérature-monde*. Secondly, Sekiguchi serves the role of a chronicler of tragic events that transpired in 2011; however, her experience is limited to these events with an emphasis on her point of view. By contrast, Shimazaki's novels go beyond what Sekiguchi attempts to do because Shimazaki discusses an array of *inconvenient aspects of Japanese society* such as marginalization of minorities and religions, sexism, homosexuality, war etc. Shimazaki presents the French-speaking reader with historical facts that are coloured by individual experiences and family ties. What Shimazaki offers to her readers are in-depth examinations of the realities of Japan through different generations and perspectives and most importantly she presents unbiased points of view that allow for an open debate across geographical, cultural and linguistic spheres. Thirdly, Shimazaki writes about Japan but her plots travel around the country, which gives the reader further insight into geographical tensions and change within the Japanese landscape. This sense of mobility, growth and change within her novels renders them doubly translingual because as she writes from Canada her novels travel within Japan over time and are presented through the French language. With this in mind, it would be difficult to categorise Shimazaki as just a translingual writer because what she is doing is unique and hence cannot be compared either to other Franco-Japanese writers as we have seen in this chapter or to other translingual writers. Given that the main objective of the ideas revolving around *littérature-monde*, 'global French' and translingualism are to allow for more inclusivity in the French language, there is a danger of wanting to label and categorise writers such as Shimazaki under such headings. Perhaps what needs to be considered is the

individual experience of these writers and the merits of the work that is being written in French thus forging new horizons for 'fluid translinguals' such as Shimazaki who bring something new to French language and literature.

Chapter 2:

The legacy of the Second World War

> Politicians and political scientists, economists, journalists, opinion makers, and poll takers all form their conclusions according to some 'objective' criteria, but rarely, if ever, is literature consulted. Yet literature is the seismography of people's dreams and nightmares, hopes and apprehensions. Even when it pretends it revels.[164]

Why mention the war?

The legacy of the Second World War has profoundly affected the political, economic and societal circumstances in Japan particularly due to the failure of the Japanese government to come to terms with the end of the war and the aftermath. This had a tremendous impact on the generations that survived the war and even more so on the generations born thereafter. As a result of the guilt, shame and victimization felt due to the war, some Japanese individuals and communities have tried to re-examine the past through intellectual debate and fictional work. As explained by David Jonathan Hughey, there are two types of fictional writers: those who have experienced the war and write in a nostalgic fashion thus longing for the stability and the norms of a long lost era; and there are the younger generations of writers who see the war as 'a second-hand inheritance, a hand-me-down of memories which they feel compelled in some way to chronicle'.[165] Aki Shimazaki through her novels could be seen to assume the role of the chronicler and specifically so through her reference to the role of war memory in current day Japanese society. *Le Poids des secrets* (1999-2004), *Au Cœur du Yamato* (2006-2013), and *L'ombre du chardon* (2014-2018) address numerous issues such as racism

[164] Schlant, Ernestine and J. Thomas Rimer (eds), *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 1.

[165] Hughey, David Jonathan, *Confronting Japan's War in China in Modern Japanese Literature: Takeda Taijun, Murakami Haruki and Inoue Yasushi* (Michigan: UMI, 2002).

towards Korean residents in Japan, family relationships but most importantly all these sensitive topics are coloured by Japanese war memory. Shimazaki's novels '[…] parlent essentiellement de l'humain accablé par la mémoire de ses ancêtres, une histoire qui est la sienne sans toutefois l'être tout à fait, d'où la rentrée en soi pour se trouver au-delà de cet héritage'.[166] Shimazaki's novels emphasise Japanese war history and the tragic effects of these memories on the status quo; however, the protagonists are not just bystanders, they play a crucial role in changing their destiny through their actions thus changing their course in life and influencing the greater dynamic of their family. In addition, 'Aki Shimazaki place aussi au centre de son écriture, l'être humain qui aimerait être au monde, soit "agir" dans le monde et à partir des choses du monde […] mais en changeant dans une certaine mesure le monde!'.[167]

Before embarking on the analysis of Shimazaki's work, it is important to briefly contextualise the war in historical terms. As Asia's most modern state, Japan took upon itself the role of both the hegemon and liberator of Asia; as expressed in *The Greater East Asia War as seen from the End of the Century* (1991); 'Liberation and hegemony-this ambiguous character expresses the difficult task borne by Asia's first modern state which had to traverse the course of modernization amid conflict and confusion between Asianism and Westernization'.[168] This self-imposed role oscillated between a move into Indochina as an extension of the China war thus resulting in direct encounter with Western powers, and the maintenance of Japan's colonial empires in Korea, Taiwan and southern Sakhalin. Japanese leaders were at times locally criticised by Japanese citizens for not understanding the international political arena, which consequently resulted in their moral misjudgements. The Japanese occupation of Asia between 1931 and 1945 has been heavily criticised domestically and internationally because

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[166] Lequin, Lucie. 'Accablement, Distance et Consolation. Le Poids de la Mémoire Chez Marie-Célie Agnant, Mauricio Segura et Aki Shimazaki', University of Pitești <http://www.upit.ro/upload/fisiere/18/eli/2010%202.pdf> [accessed 20 October 2011].

[167] ibid.

[168] Hicks, George, *Japan's War Memories: Amnesia or concealment?* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1997), p. 80.

it resulted in over 15 million Asians perishing.[169] Casualties are an unavoidable outcome of war; however, what made Japanese expansionist policies particularly controversial were the 'massacres of civilian, gruesome medical experiments on prisoners-of-war (POWs), random rape, systematic rape of tens of thousand of young women forced into sexual slavery, looting, famines, ethnic cleansing and forced labour […]'.[170] Although Japan upheld a unifying Pan-Asian ideology as a façade, it was clear that Japan's main intention was to inherit Western control in the region and reign as a superior power. However, what clearly distinguished Japanese expansionist ideology from its Western counterpart is that:

> Le 'fascisme' japonais présente donc caractéristiques : d'une part il ne nécessita aucune transformation institutionnelle pour s'établir et, en outre, malgré la répression et la propagande, -renforcées au début de la seconde guerre mondiale-, il ne s'apparenta que lointainement au totalitarisme: le régime était autoritaire mais il ne constituait pas une monopolisation du pouvoir par un homme ou un parti […] on note une absence de réaction des masses à la confiscation progressive des libertés […] cette tolérance a autorisé l'usurpation du pouvoir par les militaires.[171]

These unique features of Japanese political change that took place distinguish the Japanese involvement in the Second World War from their counterparts, particularly when we examine Yukio's contestation to power in *Hamaguri* and the reaction of her commander. The catastrophic end of war brought Japan to its knees through the atomic bombings and the American occupation (1945-1952), which meant that Japan would face dramatic socio-economic change thereafter.

Japanese involvement in the Second World War is very much a current day debate, which scrutinises Japan's role as perpetrator and victim in the same instance. The overshadowing idea that the Japanese were the victims of this war is a prevalent idea; however, there are those who justify the expansionist policies and claim that Japan's actions were exaggerated at

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[169] Kingston, Jeff, *Japan in Transformation 1945-2010* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2011), p. 40.

[170] Tanaka, Y, *Japan's Comfort Women* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 41.

[171] Bouissou JM & Faure, Guy, *Japon le Consensus: Mythe et Réalités* (Paris : Economica, 1984), pp. 59-60.

times. In 1986 the Education Minister Fujio made claims that were backed two years later by Okuno Seisuke, Director-General of the Land Agency; Fujio claimed that Japan was forced into a contest of supremacy by Western powers. These proclamations were made to rebuke China's allegations that described Japan as an aggressor. Furthermore, in October 1990 the former Minister of Transport, Ishihara Shintaro, who was interviewed by the American magazine *Playboy,* stated that the Nanking massacre which is said to have claimed 300,000 lives (according to the Chinese in 1982) was a Chinese fabrication. Shintaro reiterated the same sentiments in the Japanese edition of the magazine a month later and added that pistol and machine gun aggression was not comparable to atomic bombs in terms of atrocity. These outlandish statements were met with great opposition and particularly so by Katsuichi Honda who wrote an open letter in the pages of *Asahi Journal* challenging Ishihara and requesting a reply.

As a reaction, Honda who had previously researched the Nanking massacre for his book *Travels in China*, quoted extensive research conducted in Fukushima Prefecture by a young businessman who studied the 65th Regiment which was recruited there. The study was supported by diary entries concluding that approximately 14,777 executions took place during two days. Honda's article resulted in a comment by Ishihara who claimed errors in interpretation by the magazine that misinterpreted his opinions. This episode is an example of numerous exchanges that Japanese intellectuals and those who hold a position of power have been engaged in recently. Moreover, to mark the fiftieth anniversary since the end of war in 1995, the National Diet (bicameral legislature) deliberated over issuing an apologia in an attempt to make peace and forget the past. Prime Minister Murayama's apology on 15 August 1995 although remorseful was not well received by Asian countries because it rationalised 'mistaken national policy' and highlighted Japanese victimization: '[…] only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis'.[172] Thus the issues surrounding the war are very much a current day theme that new generations are familiar with and have direct contact with on a

[172] Bouissou, p. 129.

daily basis. However, it is crucial to stress that war memory is entering a new era because it is mainly represented through second-hand experience.[173] In other words, although the war has been documented through archives, films and stories, the number of those who experienced the war even as children is diminishing. Consequently, the way the war era is seen today and in the future by forthcoming generations is dramatically changing; therefore, our current interpretation of the war is crucial not only to understand and connect with those life-altering events had grave impact on the future of Japan as a nation but, equally, on relationships and family politics on a microscopic scale.

It is important to emphasise this current day dialogue concerning the war because it highlights that Shimazaki's recounting of the war period is a reaction to current day debate and equally a criticism of the past. During the 1960s and 1970s Japan underwent a phase of socio-political activism expressed through mass demonstrations such as the protest against the US-Japanese Security Treaty in May and June 1960.[174] Also, citizen movements were common especially against Japanese support of the American involvement in the Vietnam War between 1965 and 1973. It must be noted that these Japanese demonstrations were not synonymous with the Western '68 generation that delved into idealistic and socialist issues because they were issue-oriented and subsequently dissipated with the issue at hand. These issue-related movements were gaining much ground along with the interest in Tokyo war crime trials and the re-examination of issues such as the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and equally the US' role in Vietnam. These debates paved the way for the publications of documentary novels such as *Yamamoto Isoroku* (*The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy*) in 1965 by Agawa Hiroyuki and *Rakujitsu Moyu* (*War Criminal: the Life and Death of Hirota Koki*) by Shiroyama Saburo in 1974 that were highly acclaimed and won prizes in Japan.[175] This politicised climate of retrospection that Japan was going through

[173] Rosenfeld, David M., *Unhappy Soldier: Hino Ashihei and Japanese World War II Literature* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002), p. ix.

[174] Schlant, p. 104.

[175] Schlant, p. 105.

undoubtedly affected Shimazaki (born in 1954) as a young adult living in Japan at the time. Philippe Pons explains: 'Pour beaucoup, la participation à de tels mouvements relevait de la recherche d'une identité nouvelle dans une communauté détruite par la vie des grands ensembles et de la tentative d'avoir une action: une aspiration à une existence au nom d'un statut de citoyenneté'.[176] In essence, these movements had a profound influence on diffusing ideas linked to plurality and homogeneity (which will be discussed in great detail in Chapter 3 '*Zainichi* Identity in Japan' when considering the case of Yonhi-Mariko and minorities in Japan) and highlighting the role and duty of the citizen. Therefore, it can be assumed that Shimazaki became politically aware and '*engagée'* at a very young age and began examining how the war had directly affected Japan today.

Shimazaki examines the war through presumably fictional families that had first-hand encounters with the war. By so doing, Shimazaki plays on two very important issues. Firstly, Shimazaki alerts the reader to examine the war from a different angle: that of an individual's experience rather than that of a political stance. By not openly appearing to be in favour of any given political ideology and by focusing on personal experiences, Shimazaki gives the reader a new way to interact with war memory. In other words, Shimazaki prevents us from examining the war monolithically as 'Japan's experience' and encourages us to investigate the war on a tangible scale because we as readers can relate better to personalised human episodes. Secondly, Shimazaki, by not making direct reference to the plethora of archive documents, newspaper articles and statistical facts, highlights the importance of first-hand experience. That is to say, Shimazaki, through the voices of her protagonists, creates a thorough presentation of the war era; nevertheless, Shimazaki does not speak from the perspective of those who witnessed war in the battlefield. Instead, she tells the story of the ordinary people who were affected by the war but who remain in 'the shadows' of what is documented. Shimazaki goes against the grain by avoiding the 'temptation to aggregate

[176] Bouissou, p. 63.

individual experience and to generalise'[178] the Japanese war experience of the Second World War.

Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit highlights that Japanese post-war literature and writers are classified on generational models. Hashikawa Bunzo's model that identifies four 'generations' that classify the issue of war forms the basis of Hijiya-Kirschnereit proposal of the fifth generation and three correlated paradigms (first, established writers who symbolized authority during and after the war; second, generation that finished higher education during the war and saw Japan's defeat as liberation; third, known as *war generation* dealt with the war in a factual manner and as a result became 'unconscious nationalists'; fourth, no direct relationship with the war but took initiative in the students' movement).[179] Before we analyse the proposed model, it is necessary to stress that this is a model that was developed for Japanese writers who use the themes of war in their writing in Japanese. This model does not address writers in a unique cultural and linguistic juxtaposition such as Shimazaki. As a Japanese-born writer who uses themes of war in her novels, the same model will have to be used regardless; however, Shimazaki cannot be monolithically placed under the fifth generation subgroup because she writes in French (despite the fact that her books have Japanese titles and revolve around Japan) and is published in Canada for a predominantly non-Japanese audience. Hijiya-Kirschnereit re-examines Bunzo's model and introduces a fifth generation:

> The generation born after the war does not figure at all in Japanese generational models dealing with writers' attitudes toward World War II. It is presupposed that, for this generation, the war is of no immediate concern and interest. In fact, Japanese literature appears to contain no works of this generation in which they question their fathers about what they did during the war or about 'how it all could happen,' as is common in the German context. Writers of this generation, such as Murakami Ryu, treat the topic of war abstractly […].[180]

[178] Rosenfeld, p. X.

[179] Schlant, p. 105.

[180] Schlant, p. 110.

Undeniably, Aki Shimazaki would be solely classified under the fifth generation purely based on the facts that she was born in Japan and specifically after the war. Furthermore, unlike the writers mentioned by Hijiya-Kirschnereit, Shimazaki does question the actions of her forefathers. The line of questioning might be indirect but there is clear evidence of this in the words of Yukiko's grandson in *Tsubaki*: 'Pourquoi on ne peut pas laisser l'autre tranquille? Pourquoi on n'arrête pas la guerre?'[181], 'Qu'est-ce qu'il y a dans la tête de ceux qui nous conduisent à pareilles catastrophes? Ça doit être la haine, ou le racisme, ou la vengeance'[182], and 'Selon le destin? Même la mort de mon arrière-grand-père?'.[183] These questions and comments relate directly to the actions of the primogenitors during the time of war. In fact, by using Yukiko's grandson as *port-parole*, Shimazaki addresses the concerns of the generation after hers. In other words, Shimazaki does not only question for herself but for the new generations alike. In effect, Shimazaki is embodying a sixth generation born to a parent who was born after the war and only has second-hand contact with the war. Shimazaki could be categorised under the broad generational subheading of the fifth generation proposed by Hijiya-Kirschnereit; however, by directly questioning the actions of the previous generations and by using a younger mixed-race Japanese boy from a 'sixth generation', Shimazaki encourages us to re-examine the post-war generational model. In effect, Shimazaki creates a subgroup to the fifth generation that openly questions the past and writes from the same perspective as fifth generation-Japanese writers, but in French. Shimazaki explains: 'Par ailleurs, mon style minimaliste, simple et direct est assez éloigné de la plupart des œuvres littéraires japonaises. Les écrivains japonais écrivent de manière plus détournée. On ne dit pas les choses directement au Japon'.[184] Shimazaki makes a pertinent point about the difference in her style when compared to other Japanese writers and this is supported by her

[181] *Tsubaki*, p. 16.

[182] ibid., p. 18.

[183] ibid., p. 19.

[184] Amyot, p. 46.

uncomplicated writing style, which at the same time addresses profound questions about the past. Having said this, Hijiya-Kirschnereit assumes that writers in the fifth group have 'no immediate concern or interest' in the war which is not the case when considering Shimazaki's novels. In effect, as we continue to examine the themes relating to war it becomes evident that Shimazaki is deeply concerned about the effects of the war on Japanese society.

In addition to the above model, Hijiya-Kirschnereit proposes other paramount paradigms that need to be considered with regards to post-war literature. A subject related paradigm highlights four different areas:

> 1.War, especially battlefield experience overseas and in Japan; 2. Civilian life during the same period overseas and at home; 3. The end of the war and the capitulation with the large subgroup of so-called A-bomb literature (*genbaku bungaku)*; 4. The aftermath of war in post-war everyday life as experienced in physical hardship and value reorientation, generational conflicts because of the war, and the war crimes trials, among other things. Needless to say, this paradigm can be further differentiated.[185]

This paradigm is very important when considering Shimazaki's work particularly because there is no evidence of direct battlefield experience in the novels. The most prominent mention that closely relates to the battlefield experience would be Kenji Takahashi's account in *Wasurenagusa*:

> Dix ans plus tard, en 1943, on m'a muté en Mandchourie. Je devais travailler dix mois dans le laboratoire d'un hôpital à des recherches sur des médicaments de guerre. Mon collègue, Monsieur Horibe, est venu me remplacer à Nagasaki avec sa famille et je suis parti. Pourtant, j'ai dû demeurer en Manchourie plus d'un an. La situation du Japon dans les îles du Pacifique se détériorait de plus en plus. Et peu avant la fin de la guerre, j'ai été capturé par les Russes, lorsque je visitais un village tout près de la frontière. On m'envoyé dans un camp de travaux forcés situé près de la ville d'Omsk en Sibérie…Je souffrais de la faim, du froid, de la mauvaise nourriture. Je me suis senti plus mort que vif pendant deux ans.[186]

Although Kenji was not a soldier and did not directly engage in battle, this passage could be loosely correlated to a documentation of 'battlefield experience' because it recounts the

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[185] Schlant, p. 111.

[186] Shimazaki, Aki, *Le Poids des secrets: Wasurenagusa* (Montreal: Babel, 2003), p.90.

experience of someone in the front lines. We could assume that Shimazaki does not make direct reference to battlefield experience because she wants to highlight that her writing is fictional and wants to divert from turning her writing into a documentary novel, which can be found in abundance in Japan. Apart from the lack of representing battlefield experience, Shimazaki satisfies all the requirements of the other subtopics of this paradigm as a post-war novelist as proposed by Hijiya-Kirschnereit.

Through a third paradigm, Hijiya-Kirschnereit proposes three main categories that distinguish post-war literature: '1. War as the central topic; 2. War as a secondary or side aspect; and 3. War as omission or ellipsis (*Ausblendung)'.*[187] Shimazaki can be specifically placed in the second group because even though the war is a fundamental topic that influences the future of her fictional families, it is presented as secondary. For instance, when examining the parricide committed by Yukiko in *Tsubaki* we realise that she was angry with her father for being an adulterer and not forthcoming about the true identity of her half-brother Yukio. However, further analysis in the subsequent section identifies that the 'war mentality' ultimately brainwashed Yukiko into thinking that murder is the only solution. In addition, the war was a viable pretext to avoid coming to terms with or addressing the parricide. Yukiko's daughter Namiko explains:

> Quant à la guerre et à la bombe atomique tombée sur Nagasaki, ma mère refusait d'en parler. De plus, elle me défendait de dire à l'extérieur qu'elle était une survivante de la bombe. Malgré toute ma curiosité depuis mon enfance, j'étais obligée de la laisser tranquille. Je croyais qu'elle souffrait toujours de la perte de son père, emporté par le carnage.[188]

This passage underlines that the war was a central topic in Namiko's life because she justified her mother's silence and refrained from telling others that Yukiko was a survivor. Equally, the war was secondary because we discover through Yukiko's confessional letter that the war was a backdrop to familial problems. Interestingly, this passage also accentuates how war was

[187] Schlant, p. 111.

[188] *Tsubaki,* p. 10.

omitted from their everyday lives yet remained a prominent part of their lives from the shadows. In this case, the ellipsis of war resulted in its overemphasis even if subconscious. Therefore, we can assume that Shimazaki's writing can fall under all three groups when addressing the topic of war in her writing. However, Shimazaki brings our attention to the fact that 'En même temps, quand j'écris un roman, ce qui est important, c'est que mon histoire touche le cœur du lecteur. Je raconte la vie d'individus, ce qui est universel. La société japonaise ou des événements historiques du Japon que j'utilise ne sont qu'une toile de fond ou bien un thème secondaire'.[189] Perhaps Shimazaki's main intention is to narrate moving tales that are universal in nature; however, this claim is highly debatable. In other words, if Shimazaki just intended to recount a heart-rending tale, why does she stay true to historical facts and make references (even if loosely) to well-known documentary narratives? An imaginary war and a historically untraceable tale of suffering would undoubtedly have the same effect on the reader. Shimazaki might choose to alienate her novels from political agendas but it is impossible to claim that she does not want to raise questions about Japanese realities. Hijiya-Kirschnereit reminds us that:

> […] It is important to note carefully the possible gaps between an author's intention and the work's intention, the critic's interpretation of the work (which may be a projection of the declared author's intention) and the critic's own bias, or countless other factors besides it, and the actual impact the work leaves with the typical reader or several representation groups of readers.[190]

Shimazaki's intentions were to narrate tales that readers can relate to even if they were unfamiliar with Japanese culture, history or people. Subsequently, we can assume that she found it easier to place these tales within a historical context such as the Second World War in order to have preset events to work with rather than creating a new history. Shimazaki's naïve and rudimentary explanations might have served at the planning stages before writing but as the novels came to life it is evident that the work's intention has manipulated and in turn evolved the author's original intentions. In other words, Shimazaki's novels can no longer

[189] Amyot, p. 46.

[190] Schlant, p. 112.

be seen as moving tales that happen to have Japanese context; instead, they represent a profound examination of the interaction of Japanese society with the Second World War and equally the effects of this war on Shimazaki as (ultimately) a Japanese writer born after the war who chose to deal with the war in her writing. While Hijiya-Kirschnereit's paradigms shed light on the role that Shimazaki plays in post-war literature, fundamental questions about why a writer such as Shimazaki would engage with the themes of war remain unanswered.

Philip A Seaton's *Japan's Contested War Memories* decipher the position of war memory in current day Japan and his theories can be related to Shimazaki in order to contextualise the usage of war themes in her narrative. Seaton proposes that Japanese war memory has been explained mainly from political and anthropological theories: war memory is represented in a state-centred fashion which highlights nationalism as a means to justify the aggression and consequently place less emphasis on war atrocities committed by the Japanese army; war memory is seen from a socio-anthropological view that highlights Japanese homogeneity and conformity as a source of reluctance to challenge controversial governmental views.[191] According to Western views, Japan committed grave atrocities and did not take full responsibility for the war and equally failed to sufficiently address the past. These views have been labelled as the 'orthodoxy' which in turn assumes that, with regards to the Asia-Pacific War, Japan should have a joint 'correct' approach to war memory which is directly related to the acknowledgment of guilt and assumption of a humble apologetic stand. Shimazaki diverges from the points of view of the 'orthodoxy' by individualising war memory through personalised experiences of the war. In other words, Shimazaki emphasises that even though the war played a big role in the lives of those who experienced it, there were other personal quotidian issues that took place simultaneously. For instance, Yukiko in *Tsubaki* was troubled by her father's adultery and discovery of Yukio's true identity as her half brother whom she had romantic feelings for before this discovery. Shimazaki in turn sheds light on individual

[191] Seaton, Philip A, *Japan's Contested War Memories: The 'Memory Rifts' in historical consciousness of World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p.3.

dramas such as the parricide committed by Yukiko under the backdrop of the bombing of Nagasaki.

According to Seaton '[…] what the Japanese "should" say ultimately focus on what the writer believes the Japanese "do not say", or the writer's own views of World War II'.[192] This theory can be directly related to Shimazaki because she introduces the Western-Francophone reader to a new way of considering war memory that diverges from the generalised view of the 'orthodoxy' (as referred to by Seaton). Why would Shimazaki want to challenge such ideas? The main reason could be that the 'orthodoxy' has proven to be dominant in Western media and despite contradictory evidence and findings it has also proven to be dominant in popular Western culture. Secondly, the bulk of translated materials in the international press seem to embody the views of the Japanese government. Thirdly, at times of dispute and controversy, the international media sensationalises Japanese war memory by correlating these clashes between mainland Japan and other countries to correspond to a new wave of Japanese nationalism.[193] Furthermore, Shimazaki introduces the reader to Japanese cultural codes that distinguish between public behaviour (建前 tatemae) and private feelings and attitudes (本音 honne). Kingston explains the difference in this juxtaposition:

> […] conformity is not unique to Japan and group or peer pressure remains powerful in most societies […] For many Japanese, *tatemae* is essentially common sense, doing what is proper and expected, but this should not be confused with *honne*. Here too, Japanese behaviour differs little from people elsewhere who also do what is expected of them in public. Paradoxically, it is possible for Japanese to express their individuality and assert themselves within their conformity. If one plays by the rules sufficiently, one can get away with quite a bit of individualism and society will look the other way.[194]

Shimazaki sheds light on *honne* by emphasising that personal experiences and attitudes are significantly important when considering war memory because essentially it is not possible to convey Japanese war experience and in turn war memory monolithically. Shimazaki narrates

[192] ibid., p. 4.

[193] ibid.

[194] Kingston, 2011, p. 4.

tales from the point of view of victims thus upholding the idea that '[…] Japanese people defend their actions or deal with the past through "victim mentality"'.[195] Shimazaki's protagonists remain victims of the war itself either by experiencing it first-hand or by proxy through war memory. The strong grip of this memory can be seen in the lives of Yukiko's daughter Namiko in *Tsubaki* and equally Tsuyoshi Toda in *Zakuro,* who discovers that his assumed-to-be-dead father is in fact alive and has returned to Japan soon after the war. However, Shimazaki alerts us to the fact that war memory is coloured by subjective experiences through personal relations and psychological stability. In the case of Yukiko, it is evident that the act of parricide is more significant to her than the traumatising experience of war: '[…] le parricide commis par Yukiko, qui a découvert la liaison de son père, les mensonges des uns et des autres, l'obligation de mettre fin au sentiment amoureux entre frère et sœur, et, d'autre part, celle de l'histoire de la guerre relatée par Yukiko, une vision personnelle d'un drame collectif'.[196]

For Yukiko, the war was secondary to the parricide because she had to live with the burden of killing her father and hiding this fact all her life. Although the war had subconscious effects on Yukiko, which led her to commit parricide as we see in the following analysis, in Yukiko's mind her crime was by far the most heinous act during that period. Perhaps this could be due to the guilt and shame that Yukiko had to live with as an atomic bomb survivor who is constantly reminded of the atrocities committed at the time, which in turn highlight her unjustifiable act. Furthermore, by individualising war memory through *honne,* Shimazaki also upholds the ideas that '[…] it is unrealistic to expect *hibakusha* (A-bomb victims) to prioritise collective memories of Japanese atrocities (that they may have had no personal involvement in) over their personal experiences of the A-bombs'.[197] We can therefore deduce that Shimazaki writes about the war because she wants to emphasise that Japanese war

[195] Seaton, p. 5.

[196] Lequin, 2005, p. 90.

[197] Seaton, p. 6.

memory should not be understood in collective terms because personal experience of war could be affected by other factors. In other words, individual memory is coloured by what the person in question had experienced at the time of war in conjunction with their loved ones and those around them. This in turn brings us to question the validity of first-hand accounts of war. That is to say, we need to take into account all the factors that might shape individual experiences of war to have a truly objective representation. This is precisely what Shimazaki intends to do when emphasising personal dramas with the backdrop of national and domestic catastrophes.

Yukiko's war

Shimazaki's novels are heavily influenced by war memory and the effect of war memory on her protagonists is a central aspect of her writing. Moreover, understanding the reasons why Shimazaki chose to set her novels in that particular period and equally why she chose for her protagonists to reflect on their past is of crucial importance. Undeniably, there are several representations available of what is understood as 'the experience of war' in present-day Japan and overseas. These versions range from mainstream narrative of victimization to critique of policies and militarism along with individual accounts, which at times corroborate and at other times contradict one another. However, the rise and fall of popularity in war memory can be directly related to political interest of the present, which requires re-examination of the past. As quoted by Rosenfeld, Andreas Huyssen states that 'the temporal status of any act of memory is always the present and not, as some naïve epistemology might have it, the past itself'.[198] Although Huyssen's ideas are categorically related to national engagement with memory, we can extend his thoughts to encompass Shimazaki's reasons to include war memory in her novels. That is to say, the debate that surrounds the war nowadays is the reason why she might have wanted to propose a new perspective for examining the war. Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* suggests (through his analysis of the representations of British World War experience) that literary representations

[198] Rosenfeld, p. 4.

are based on real life experiences whether first-hand or second and consequently 'these literary works help their readers and the general public shape, organise, and control their memories'.[199]

David Jonathan Hughey's categorisation of fictional writers that write about the Second World War is particularly related to China and the complicated relationship that Japan has with it. However, Aki Shimazaki's novels, which follow a non-linear temporal route manage to move from the war era to the present day. Shimazaki represents protagonists that are living the war, have lived the war and generations that were born after the war in her novels. Shimazaki's characters do not exhibit any nostalgia for the war or the era of Japanese military expansion. On the contrary, characters from the war era seem to openly criticise that particular period. In *Tsubaki*, Yukiko paints a dreary picture of the time through her words:

> Hitler se suicida, L'Allemagne renonça à la guerre. On entendait le mot *gyokusaï*, mourir vaillamment, combattre jusqu'à la mort. En effet, déjà beaucoup de soldats se faisaient *gyokusaï* au champ de bataille, dans les îles du Pacifique.
> La plupart des villes au Japon furent détruites par les bombes des B-29 américains. Mes grands-parents maternels et paternels s'étaient réfugiés dans la campagne près de Tokyo.
> Il n'avait plus d'études. Nous devions travailler dans une usine réquisitionnée par l'armée. Notre travail était tous les jours le même. On s'essayait devant le tapis roulant et on assemblait des morceaux en métal : des parties d'avions de combat. Ce travail était ennuyeux et fatigant.[200]

The reader through this description could begin to visualise the dire state of affairs in Nagasaki towards the end of the Second World War.

It is important to highlight that this account is presented in a letter from Yukiko to her daughter Namiko after her assumed suicide later in life. Therefore, we can suppose that Yukiko's exposure to the aftermath and debates concerning the war in the years since the Second World War could have affected how she saw her past. In other words, Yukiko might have seen things differently at the time of war; however, her attitudes could have been

[199] ibid.

[200] *Tsubaki,* p. 51.

influenced by the criticism that Japan received after the war as in the case of the aforementioned 'orthodoxy' hence why her memories might have been altered. In fact, many intellectuals and writers of the time of war took one of two stances after the defeat. Some denied their wartime sentiments as in the case of Ito Sei's protagonist *Narumi Senkichi* in the satirical portrait of post-war Japanese intellectuals: 'When Japan was fighting the Pacific War, I pretended that I had never once been a liberal individualist [...] and in post-war liberal society I now pretend that I never fell in line with the militarists'.[201] Other writers decided to edit their previous writing to exclude anything that seemed embarrassing to a post-war society. For instance, the writer Hirano Ken, who wrote a regular column for *Fujin Asahi* during the war, omitted nationalistic passages when his work was published after the war. Some writers also argued that their wartime writing contained subtle messages that criticised the war and advocated democracy. Therefore, we can argue that Yukiko's memory of war could have been manipulated on a subconscious level by the media and the discussions of war to see the war era in a negative light like the case of the above-mentioned writers. Alternatively, it could also be said that Yukiko could have reanalysed her true sentiments during the war and influenced them to seem more liberal. In other words, Yukiko at the time of war could have been pro Japanese expansion but her experience of the post-war era that deemed Japan to be in the wrong resulted in her assuming now that she was anti-war.

This sentiment is supported by Yukiko's grandson, who accuses his grandmother of defending the American bombing: 'Vous n'êtes pas fâchée contre les Américains? Vous et votre famille êtes des victimes de la bombe atomique. Il semble que vous les défendez. Je ne comprends pas'. [202] The reader is led to believe that Yukiko's residence in America and her grandson's mixed European and American heritage might have shaded her memory of the realities at the time of war. Yukiko's words further support this notion:

[201] Rosenfeld, p. 3.

[202] *Tsubaki,* p. 17.

> Sais-tu, dit-elle, comment certains militaires japonais se comportaient dans leurs colonies des pays asiatiques? 'Violents, cruels, brutaux, inhumains, sadiques, sauvages…' Voilà les mots utilisés par leurs victimes. Cela aurait été peut-être plus terrifiant si le Japon avait reporté la victoire. Beaucoup de gens devaient être contents de la défaite de l'empire japonais. Je te rappelle que les Japonais ont massacré plus de trois cent mille personnes avant d'occuper Nankin, en Chine. Ils ont tué non seulement des soldats et leurs prisonniers, mais aussi des gens ordinaires, des civiles sans armes. Ils ont violé des femmes et les ont toutes tuées par la suite. Même de jeunes enfants de sept et huit ans ont été leurs victimes.[203]

Undoubtedly, Yukiko's insightful account of the atrocities of the Second World War indicate her exposure to both Japanese and foreign criticisms of Japanese expansion and war crimes. In effect, Yukiko's memories of the time of war cannot be realistic because the rigour of debate and dispute that took place after the war must have jaded her memory of the events. Yet, Yukiko utters: 'tout cela ne justifie pas l'utilisation des bombes atomiques. Ce n'était vraiment pas nécessaire. Les Américains auraient pu éviter cette catastrophe'.[204] Yukiko's words resonate with the reader because she openly criticises the bombing and equally confuses our understanding of where she places her loyalties. On the one hand, we could assume that Yukiko's memory was affected by the criticism that Japan received after the war thus justifying why she would want to expose Japan's shortcomings. However, denouncing the American bombing leads us to think that Yukiko is either sympathetic to her compatriots despite their wrongdoings or that Yukiko demonstrates an objective point of view. Since the defeat in the war, the Japanese tend to recall the war 'to dwell on their own suffering'[205] by emphasising the American attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and in turn obscure their role as victimizer.

In recent years attitudes have started to change in order to situate American aggression in context as direct correlation to Japanese expansion. That is to say, rather than viewing Japan

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[203] ibid., pp. 17-18.

[204] ibid., p. 18.

[205] Kingston, 2011, p. 16.

just as a victim of the American bombing without much emphasis on Japan's heinous crimes during the war, Japan's expansionist war atrocities are highlighted as a prelude that resulted in the atomic attack. By so doing, Japan has attempted to introduce a more balanced account and has tried to replicate this attitude throughout Japan. Therefore, Yukiko's words in effect represent this balanced view, which seeks to contextualise the bombing in direct correlation to Japan's wrongdoing. This 'fair' representation that Yukiko recounts to her grandson is also a sign that to a certain extent Yukiko has progressed in the way she viewed the war. That is to say, Yukiko was able to detach herself from the position of the victim of American attacks to someone who fully understands that Japan played a role in bringing this suffering on itself. By so doing, Yukiko distances herself from the ideas that '[…] the Japanese people, and by implication the emperor as well, were innocent because they never wanted the war in the first place'.[206] Yukiko's objective views prove that she was exposed to Japanese post-war discussion and, equally, non-Japanese assessment of Japan's role in the war. According to Ian Buruma (1994),[207] when compared to Germany, Japan has made very little attempt to acknowledge responsibility for the Asia Pacific War. Buruma deduces that Germany dealt with the nation's wrongdoing in terms of collective guilt whilst Japan operated within a paradigm that highlighted the sense of shame for past wrongdoings. Consequently, and as a direct result of this way of addressing the past, shameful episodes were downplayed in history education. Furthermore, Dierkes (2010) highlights that post-war literature especially in the 1950s and 1960s seem to focus on 'Japanese victimhood' rather than the atrocities committed in Asia. Since the reader is to assume that Yukiko was exposed to Japanese historical accounts of the war, we can deduce that her approach is unorthodox because she is not scared of highlighting Japan's past wrongdoing.

[206] Seaton, p. 41.

[207] Dierkes, Julian, *Postwar History Education in Japan and the Germanys* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 104.

The notion that Yukiko's memory might have been jaded by the debates concerning Japan's involvement in the Second World War is contested by Yukiko's words: 'Maintenant, Namiko, je vais tenter de décrire ce qui, selon moi, est arrivé dans notre famille. Ça s'est passé il y a plus d'une cinquantaine d'années. Mais le temps n'a pas affaibli ma mémoire. Je me souviens de tous les détails'.[208] It is apparent that Yukiko wanted to affirm that her memory is intact because her daughter might not believe what Yukiko was confessing to. This affirmation contradicts the idea that Yukiko's memories were altered or influenced by life after the war. Cathy Caruth highlights that trauma survivors undergo a period during which the effects of the traumatic experience are not apparent; this period of latency gives rise to re-evaluating the experience through a radically altered self or even a second self.[209] Therefore we can assume that Yukiko underwent a period of latency before writing her confessional letter but as she wrote her confessional she was 'back there reliving the event, and the distance between here and there, then and now, collapses' as expressed by LaCapra.[210] This leads us to conclude that Yukiko's portrayal of the state of affairs towards the end of the war is true and realistic because she lived through a latency period and, when she wrote the confessional letter, time had elapsed thus leading her to write an accurate representation of the past that was not influenced by post-war re-examination. The negative representation of the period is further elaborated upon by the words of Yukiko's brother Yukio who states: 'On ne pourrait pas gagner la guerre même en faisant travailler les enfants. Il n'y pas de liberté. Pas du tout. On n'a pas le droit de dire ce qu'on pense […] On ne fait pas la guerre pour la liberté'.[211]

The exasperation of Japanese society at the end of the war as expressed by Yukiko could be contrasted to that of Yamada Futaro (1922-2001) a writer who was convinced of the victory

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[208] *Tsubaki,* p. 31.

[209] Caruth, Cathy, 'Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History', *Yale French Studies*, 79 (1991), pp. 181–192 <www.jstor.org/stable/2930251> [accessed 15 July 2014], p. 187.

[210] ibid.

[211] *Tsubaki,* p. 52.

of Japan despite all the signs that were indicating otherwise. Even someone like Futaro who was a firm believer of Japan's victory could not hide the crumbling state of affairs in Japanese morale. In his diaries he writes:

> In 1942 conversation was mainly about the war. In 1943 talk about factories and food shortages took first place. In 1944 it was the black market and, toward the end of that year, the air raids. Now, no matter how devastating a raid people may have suffered, nobody says a word about it. People in the bath silently stare at the ceiling in exhaustion. Their expression is not especially one of fear or weariness with the war. They seem to be aware that it is the fate of anyone born in this country to fight, to fight, to fight to the end … From the women's bath on the other side of the partition, one used to hear chattering and laughter, voices calling and children bawling, noise as frogs on a June night in the countryside. But now there is only a silence like death. The women are also exhausted. No the women are the ones who are totally exhausted.[212]

This sense of utter despair that Futaro highlights could be contrasted to the nationalistic fever that was prevalent simultaneously. In July 1944 Ito Sei writes:

> This will be the year when the Yamato race comes face-to-face with a genuine crisis. I believe in the eternity of the Divine Land, and there has been no change in my absolute confidence in the invincibility of the Imperial soldiers, but we face increasing hardships; the bombing of our capital can be foreseen; and our allies in Europe are little by little being subjected to pressure on all sides, causing us further problems. How can we break through this impasse? Yamato race, bestir yourself! This is the moment to use our full strength, carrying our lives to their ultimate objective of ensuring the honour and destiny of the land of our ancestors.[213]

Ito also states: 'We must kill every last man in the American landing force' and;

> There is definitely something in the blood of the Americans that delights in such irrational utterances. It is the blood that the people acquired and perfected when they slaughtered the natives in the process of opening up the New World.[214]

Both Futaro and Ito describe the status quo during the war, which was on the one hand exasperating and causing the civilians to feel a sense of numbness towards the war; yet, at the

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[212] Keene, Donald. *So Lovely a country will never perish: Wartimes Diaries of Japanese Writers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 24-25.

[213] ibid., p. 51.

[214] ibid., p. 48.

same time, we realise that this sense of apathy was accompanied by a bloodthirsty patriotic fever that could not comprehend defeat. This binary between despair and patriotism is what Yukiko eloquently depicts in her descriptions of the state of affairs at the time of war in the opening passage of *Tsubaki*.

The exchange between Yukiko and Yukio in *Tsubaki* with regards to the Japanese mentality at the time of war is very important because not only does Shimazaki highlight the situation at the time but also she criticises the mindset of the government through the voice of her protagonists. Yukio shows Yukiko a bruise on his arm and explains to her the story behind it. Yukiko recounts that his Japanese colleague in the factory accused a Korean worker of stealing some food, an accusation that seemed to be untrue and unfair according to the Korean worker. Yukio attempted to rationalise with his Japanese counterpart but to no avail and, consequently, Yukio was summoned by his *commandant* who reprimanded him by highlighting that Yukio should have sided with the Japanese worker who was older than Yukio and had been working for a longer period of time. When Yukio tried to dispute this point, the commander told him: 'Nous nous battons contre les Américains pour l'unité et la paix en Asie. Pour l'unité, l'ordre est très important'.[215] The comment made by the commander with regards to Japan working for Asian unity is absurd considering the fact that anti-Korean sentiments are apparent in this episode. As a result of further contestation from Yukio, the commander hit Yukio on the arm using his baton whilst interjecting: 'Ce n'est pas le temps de chercher la vérité. C'est l'unité qu'on doit chercher. Pour l'unité, il fait obéir aux ordres. Si tout est bien ordonné et bien respecté, la paix arrivera automatiquement. Donc tu dois obéir aux ordres. C'est tout. Va-t'en!'.[216] Ironically, Yukio's mother, Madame Takahashi (Yonhi-Mariko), was in fact of Korean origin and had to hide her true identity because of the way the Koreans were persecuted in Japan, as we see in the analysis of *Tsubame*. However, Yukio was oblivious to this fact and he only wanted to support his Korean colleague who was wrongly accused.

[215] *Tsubaki*, p. 53.

[216] ibid.

In the 1990s, new lawsuits against the treatment of the Koreans at the time of war revealed that approximately 90,000 Koreans were drafted for labour in Japan. These Koreans were paid at rates below that of Japanese labourers and, consequent to the end of war and repatriation, they were owed severance pay by the Japanese government.[217] Concerns regarding the Korean labour draft resurfaced in May 1990 when the South Korean President Roh Tae-Wu made a state visit to Japan where the new Emperor expressed his regret by stating: 'I cannot contain my sense of remorse in recalling the suffering undergone by your people in that unhappy period precipitated by my country'.[218] Although the new Emperor's words and sentiments were seen as a clear improvement on the attitudes of his father, a Korean survey found that only 8 per cent were satisfied with this apology while 79 per cent were dissatisfied because they proclaimed that the Emperor's words appeared to be forced and somewhat bizarre. In essence, Yukio's reaction to the maltreatment of the Korean worker could have been an outcry against the way all Korean draftees were treated at the time. Perhaps Yukio saw many more injustices towards Korean workers therefore he could no longer withhold his opinion and sentiments. The commander's reactions and indifference to the ill-treatment of the Korean worker represent the Japanese attitude towards Korean residents and labourers past and present. These negative sentiments highlight that the Japanese occupation 'was more a matter of exploitation than liberation or "co-prosperity" as the war time government claimed'.[219] Moreover, the resurgence of debate in the 1990s with regards to the Korean workers and allegations that classified wartime comfort women under Korean labour force have highlighted these topics in mainstream Japanese and international media; this in turn can clarify to the reader why Shimazaki has decided to include this specific episode when recounting wartime memories. Shimazaki alerts the reader to the complication of the Japanese-Korean relationship through such episodes from different time periods (The

[217] Hicks, p. 74.

[218] ibid., p. 75.

[219] ibid., p. 79.

Great Kanto Earthquake, the Second World War and exhumation of Korean bodies in the 1980s) to highlight the injustices that the Koreans have suffered; specifically through the story of Yonhi-Mariko Kim, the mother of Yukio, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 '*Zainichi* Identity in Japan'.

Although Yukio was unaware of his mother's Korean origins, he felt the need to protect the Korean worker. There are several reasons why Yukio took this stance. Firstly, Monsieur Takahashi's letter from Manchuria did not express any resentment towards the Chinese; in fact, he states as recounted by Yukio: 'Il dit que lui et ses voisins chinois s'entendent très bien, qu'ils s'invitent à dîner, qu'il est en train d'apprendre le chinois'.[220] These words must have resonated with Yukio because they go against the superiority that the Japanese army exhibited towards other Asian countries and races at the time of war. In other words, Monsieur Takahashi's positive attitude towards the Chinese could have planted a seed of doubt about how Japanese racist sentiments and propaganda were unjust. Secondly, Yukio was introduced to Communist literature through Monsieur Horibe:

> Un jour, il me montre trois livres, intitulés en japonais: *Manifeste du parti communiste, Le Capital* et *La guerre civile en France.* Je lui demande: 'Vous êtes communiste?' Il me répond: 'Non mais lire ce genre de livre est aussi important pour acquérir des connaissances. La lecture enrichit l'esprit. Il ne faut pas arrêter de lire à cause de la guerre. Je les ai déjà lus dans les éditions originales. C'est intéressant.' Il me les passe en me rappelant d'être discret au sujet de ces ouvrages.[221]

These books would have had a subconscious effect on Yukio thus justifying his willingness to protect the Korean worker. It is rather intriguing that both male figures in Yukio's lives seem to promote justice and equality even if in contrasting manners. Monsieur Takahashi (the stepfather) as someone patriotic who did not resist his deployment to Manchuria: 'Le *Manshûkoku* n'est pas une terre étrangère, c'est notre pays maintenant […] Dangereux ou non,

[220] Shimazaki, Aki, *Le Poids des secrets: Hamaguri* (Montreal: Babel, 2000), p. 53.

[221] ibid., p. 54.

je dois y aller. C'est l'ordre de l'armée. C'est la guerre'.[222] Despite M Takahashi's patriotic sentiments, the *commandant* in the factory where Yukio worked from the previous episode with the Korean worker seems to highlight his discontent with Yukio purely because he suspects M Takahashi and, in turn, Yukio to be communists:

> Je suis souvent giflé par le commandant qui dit que je n'ai pas l'air sérieux quand il parle. Il me soupçonne même d'être *aka* (rouge, communiste). Il me dit :
> -On a appris que ton père avait disparu en Mandchourie. Il se peut qu'il prenne part aux activités de parti communiste là-bas.[223]

The words of the *commandant* support the idea that at that particular time there was a sense of paranoia that led even those in command to behave in an irrational manner. Ironically, M Horibe is the one who gave Yukio Communist literature to read so if anyone were to be accused of being a 'communist' then M Horibe is the most likely suspect instead of Monsieur Takahashi. This proves that the state of war clouded people's judgment to an extent where those who hid their true sentiments managed to escape the wrath of the unforgiving government but those who were defending the ideology of the time were wrongly accused. This state of affairs highlights the corruption in society at the time of war that Shimazaki wanted to expose.

The aforementioned reprimand by the *commandant* highlights to the reader the brutality of the time where there was no time for logic, truth or fairness. Yukio exclaims 'Oui, quelle logique. On est tous fous' to which Yukiko replies 'Mais fais attention! Tu deviendras aussi fou en te battant avec les fous'.[224] Yukiko's comment resonates with the reader because consequent events lead us to believe that Yukiko was subconsciously brainwashed by the 'mentalité fermée' of the time. It is evident that the *commandant* could not tolerate the suggestion that a fellow compatriot could have lied with regards to the Korean worker; furthermore, the commander could not comprehend Yukio's rebellion even though it was

[222] ibid., p. 46.

[223] ibid., p. 68.

[224] *Tsubaki,* p. 53.

justified. The commander's natural reaction that is incomprehensible and inexcusable was to hit Yukio. This reaction speaks of the brutality and violence that Japanese society was accustomed to at the time of the Second World War. In other words, the only way of expressing oneself was through violence, be it illogical or irrational. The hostility and aggression of the time in effect could have been the reason that led Yukiko to commit parricide. In a society that was utterly consumed by violence, Yukiko's frustration with her father could only be dealt with in a fashion similar to that of the commander. Furthermore, after discovering that her father was having an affair with Madame Takahashi (Yukio's mother) and that Yukio, whom she fell in love with, was in fact her half-brother, Yukiko arrived late at the *usine* where a similar episode to that of Yukio and his commander transpired. The *chef d'équipe* reprimanded Yukiko for her tardiness by saying 'Comment oses-tu arriver si tard? Pense aux soldats qui combattent pour l'Asie, pour notre nation, pour nous et pour toi!'[225], and this was followed by a slap. Yukiko explains 'Pourtant, je ne sentis pas la douleur'.[226]

Yukiko was preoccupied by the affair and most importantly Yukio's true identity as her half-brother; however, we can read more into Yukiko's numbness because it supports the idea that Yukiko had grown accustomed to the despicable, violent state of affairs of the time which justified aggression. Both the *commandant* and the *chef d'équipe* used violence to express their frustration although the circumstances were undeniably different. In the case of Yukio, one could possibly understand that he might have been seen as defiant and rebellious at a time where solidarity was the only uniting bond between the Japanese in the face of their enemies. However, Yukiko's tardiness was met with a similar form of reprimand although in her case the scenario was mundane and quotidian. The desperate situation that Japan was in, meant that anything which could upset the smooth running of the nation and any form of inefficiency were seen to directly affect the soldiers and cost the country the war. The military's rage had

[225] ibid., p. 75.

[226] ibid.

created a state of panic thus affecting and to a certain extent 'brainwashing' the civilians to only see violence as an answer for any inappropriate action. Kuno Osamu highlights: 'As Haniya Yutaka has pointed out, although the political sphere should be only a small segment of people's lives, politics like a malignant cancer-the rampant cell growth caused by authority, ideology and other powers - until it completely controls our lives. From the instant we allow politics to resolve those broad and complicated problems beyond the scope of our homes, neighbourhoods, and occupations, we are in peril'.[227]

In addition to the political strain, the community seems to have been functioning within a web of deceit and lies that highlight the breakdown of society at the time of war. The complicated love triangle that the father of Yukiko and Yukio was involved in emphasises the sense of corruption within the home. Madame Takahashi, the mother of Yukio, in a discussion with the children's biological father says:

> Je voulais seulement fonder ma propre famille, avec toi et avec nos enfants. Mais tu t'es marié soudainement avec une autre femme. Tu m'as dit que tu devais satisfaire tes parents en te mariant avec elle et que tu divorcerais après la mort de tes parents. Et maintenant, tu as une enfant de ta femme, et je forme une famille avec mon mari et Yukio. Je resterai toujours avec mon mari comme tu resteras toujours avec ta femme.[228]

This exchange brings to light how Madame Takahashi got married to protect herself and her son, Yukio, whilst the father, Monsieur Horibe, remained true to his parents who would not approve of his marriage to her and his declaration that Yukio was a son out of wedlock. It is clear that Yukiko's father (M Horibe) had been making promises that would never be realised. Furthermore, both parties are equally at fault for lying to their children and partners about the true connections between the families. Madame Takahashi explains: 'Si tu la (vérité) lui révélais, cela nous causerait beaucoup d'ennuis : à ta femme, à mon mari, à Yukio, à Yukiko, même à toute la parenté'.[229] This comment seems to strike a nerve which pushes Monsieur

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[227] Osamu, Kuno, 'Much Said, Little Done', *The Japan Interpreter: a journal of social and political ideas,* 8 (Spring 1973), p. 231.

[228] *Tsubaki,* p. 76.

[229] *Tsubaki,* p. 78.

Horibe to confess : 'C'est moi qui me suis arrangé pour que ton mari aille en Mandchourie. Je me suis fait remplacer'.[230] These confessions stress the levels of deceit and lies that these two families were involved in. Furthermore, Monsieur Horibe explains that he did not want to be part of the war and criticises Monsieur Takahashi (his old friend whom he betrayed) for willingly wanting to be part of the army and the deployment to Manchuria. This complex scenario can reflect to the reader that the society was on the verge of breakdown.

Madame Takahashi plays a vital role in this web of deceit because she withholds the identity of Yukio's biological father. A few days after Yukio's seventh birthday an exchange concerning this topic takes place between Madame Takahashi and Yukio in *Hamaguri* which include some mutual episodes from *Tsubaki*. Yukio deduces that the man visiting them in Tokyo with his daughter and who was only referred to as *ojisan* (uncle), must be his real father: 'Je me souviens de mon amie et de son père à Tokyo. L'homme qui je appelais *ojisan* est mon vrai père, n'est-ce pas?'.[231] The accurate deduction throws Madame Takahashi into a state of shock yet she confesses that *ojisan* was in fact Yukio's real father and that the little girl (who Yukio referred to only as 'ELLE') was his younger half-sister. Yukio then reacts by saying: 'Alors, pourquoi tu m'as menti en me disant que mon vrai père avait disparu avant ma naissance? Pourquoi je devais appeler mon vrai père *ojisan*?'. To which Madame Takahashi simply replies by saying: 'Parce qu'il n'aimait pas que les gens sachent qui tu étais'.[232] This would have been the opportune moment to reveal his father's real identity given the fact that Monsieur Horibe and his daughter Yukiko were now their neighbours. Madame Takahashi wanted to protect Yukio from the truth because it would have caused him anguish; interestingly, Yukio also withheld information from his mother in order to protect her in the same manner:

> Les enfants des voisins ne jouent jamais avec moi. Au contraire, ils me lancent des pierres, ils me barrent le chemin quand je rentre à la maison, ils m'entourent et me bousculent. Ils crachent sur moi. Tout le monde est plus grand que moi. Personne ne

[230] ibid.

[231] *Hamaguri,* p. 41.

[232] ibid., p.42.

> leur dit d'arrêter. J'attends qu'ils s'en aillent. Ils me crient des mots que je ne comprends pas : '*Tetenashigo!*' (enfant sans père, illégitime, bâtard) ou 'Enfant de *baïshunfu* (prostituée, putain) *!*' Mais je n'en parle jamais à ma mère, car je suis sûr que ces mots la rendraient triste.[233]

It seems as though both the mother and child seek to protect one another by withholding information from each other. Madame Takahashi whose story is disclosed in *Tsubame,* had a complicated past that led her to change her Korean name from Yonhi to Mariko due to racism that she encountered along with her mother after the Great Kanto Earthquake. Therefore, Madame Takahashi is no stranger to lies and lives her entire life pretending to be Japanese to fit into a society that would reject her because of her Korean origins. During her childhood, Madame Takahashi (Yonhi-Markio) experienced a sense of isolation similar to that of Yukio: 'Dans la maison du patron, il y avait des enfants. Je ne jouais jamais avec eux. Les parents leur interdisaient de m'adresser la parole'.[234] Both mother and son encounter sentiments of resentment from those around them, for reasons of racism in the case of Madame Takahashi and because of the absence of a father in case of Yukio. Shimazaki seems to highlight that there is a tradition of lies in Japanese society that seem to manifest itself through generations. In both scenarios these webs of deceit were created due to the circumstances as a form of self-protection. With respect to the Second World War and the situation involving Yukio and Monsieur Horibe, we can assume that Madame Takahashi knows from her own experience that lying and withholding information is the only way of self-preservation. Similarly, given the circumstances that Madame Takahashi had endured until that moment her limited confession to Yukio about his father could be seen as an admirable attempt to break with this tradition.

Although fifty years have passed since the atomic bomb changed the lives of the Takahashi family, Yukio remains uncertain of some facts about his life and his mother does not break with the tradition of secrecy:

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[233] *Hamaguri,* p. 10.

[234] *Tsubame,* p. 14.

> Je me demande : 'Où est ma petite sœur? Où est mon vrai père ? Sont-ils encore vivants?' Ces questions me reviennent, sans cesse. Je ne me rappelle plus leur visage. Je ne sais toujours pas leur nom. Ma mère est la seule personne qui puisse répondre à mes questions. Pourtant, elle garde le silence même maintenant que mon père adoptif est mort il y a treize ans.[235]

In essence, we see that the secrecy for self-preservation, which Madame Takahashi (Yonhi-Markio) had grown accustomed to had become a tradition in itself. In other words, despite the monumental change that Japan had undergone after the war, the effects of the war remain deep-rooted in the psyche of the individuals, consequently affecting future generations. That is to say, Yukio's ignorance in effect results in his children not being able to know the truth about their father's past. Equally, Yukio's wife Shizuko and his three daughters (Natsuko, Fuyuki and Tsubaki) never got the chance to discover the truth about Madame Takahashi's Korean origins nor the identity of their biological grandfather. The circumstances that led to the creation of this complicated web of lies originated in the war era but remain very much a reality of today's generations thus supporting the idea that even if not experienced on a first-hand basis the war still has a strong grip on the here and now.

Shimazaki through her novels alerts the reader to the complex webs of deceit that are formed due to secrecy in Japanese society. As we attempt to decipher the impact of the war on families, it becomes clear that the war has caused ambiguity in terms of societal moral codes. Joëlle Cauville makes the point that: 'Le secret familial constitue le nœud de chacun des romans shimazakiens et ce secret, révélé seulement à la fin, est toujours détenu par la mère'.[236] Cauville implies that secrets in the works of Shimazaki can be linked to the matriarchal figures. Even though this is true especially in the case of Yukiko and Yonhi-Mariko (Madame Takahashi), the male protagonists also take part in withholding secrets or avoiding

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[235] *Hamaguri,* p. 82.

[236] Cauville, Joëlle, 'L'Univers symbolique et mythique de l'œuvre romanesque d'Aki Shimazaki : L'Archétype de la mère', *Dalhousie French Studies*, 79 (Summer 2007), pp. 83-92 <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp> [accessed 3 February 2013], p. 85.

the truth. As we can see from the analysis of Yukio, it is evident that Yukio was withholding secrets from his mother. However, the tradition of secrecy in that particular case started with his mother therefore we can assume that Yukio only took part in what he saw as common practice since his childhood. Although both parties wanted to protect one another by withholding secrets, it can be said that secrecy is not strictly a female trait in this specific mother-son scenario. Another example of how male characters are privy to secrecy can be seen in *Wasurenagusa* where Kenji Takahashi is told by his childhood friend Kensaku that: 'Tu as été adopté à ta naissance' and goes on to explain that:

> Ton grand-père ne croyait pas en la stérilité masculine il a forcé ton père à avoir plusieurs maîtresses l'une après l'autre. Mais cela n'a pas résolu son problème. Un jour, mon père, le supérieur du temple à l'époque, lui a parlé d'une femme enceinte qui devrait abandonner son enfant à cause d'une maladie cardiaque. Aussitôt, ton père a sauté sur cette occasion en disant qu'il prendrait l'enfant, sans distinction de sexe. Mon père comprenait une situation pareille, car pour mes parents, ça n'a pas été facile non plus d'avoir un enfant.[237]

This exchange highlights that there were many male figures that took part in withholding this secret from Kenji: his father, grandfather, the father of Kensaku and his friend Kensaku. Even though the emphasis appears to be on the male protagonists and bizarrely a confession comes from a male character, the end of the novel focuses on the role of Sono (Kenji's biological mother and nurse) and the secrets that she kept. Kensaku explains:

> Est-ce que tu te rappelles que, dans les années 1920, beaucoup de musiciens russes sont venus au Japon et qu'ils ont enrichi le domaine de la musique classique? À Tokyo, Sono a rencontré un violoncelliste de l'orchestre symphonique de Harbin. Il est revenu plusieurs fois au Japon. En 1933, Sono est allée à Harbin en croyant que ce serait sa dernière chance de le revoir. Il semble qu'elle ait vécu sa vie de son mieux.[238]

As in the case of Yonhi-Markio and her son Yukio, Sono, in an attempt to protect her son Kenji Takahashi, withholds the truth about her identity and that of his father the Russian musician who she went to visit in Harbin in 1933. Perhaps Sono wanted to guarantee Kenji's future as hereditary of the Takahashi dynasty by not identifying herself as his mother in order to

[237] *Wasurenagusa,* p. 113.

[238] ibid., p. 115.

prevent him from suffering racism due to his Russian father. In any case, had Sono revealed the truth about Kenji's Russian father perhaps the Russians in Manchuria would not have captured Kenji in later life after the Japanese defeat?

Shimazaki's female protagonists seem to maintain secrets and refuse to trade secrets even when the right situation presents itself. For instance, when Kenji Takahashi in *Wasurenagusa* says to his future wife Yonhi-Markio: 'Je dois vous confier une chose très importante à mon sujet'[239] and goes on to confess his probable sterility, Yonhi-Markio does not take this opportunity to clear her conscience and confess her Korean origins. Instead, they remain silent ('nous nous taisons longtemps') until Kenji proposes adopting Yukio to which Yonhi-Markio replies: 'Je comprends ce que vous m'avez dit, mais c'est trop pour aujourd'hui'. Once again we see Yonhi-Markio withholding her secrets and withdrawing from the conversation. This example along with Yukiko and Sono's examples places emphasis on Cauville's ideas regarding the 'mother' figure as the withholder of secrets. However, the mother figure is also the one that confesses her secrets in the novels.

Yukiko confesses in a letter to her daughter Namiko:

> Je confesse maintenant la vérité. Ce n'est pas la bombe atomique qui a tué mon père. C'était moi qui l'ai tué. C'est une coïncidence que la bombe atomique soit tombée le jour de sa mort. Il semble qu'il serait mort ce jour-là d'une manière ou d'une autre. Je n'ai aucune intention de me défendre du crime que j'ai commis. Dans les circonstances, je n'avais d'autre choix que de le tuer, même si c'était un parent exemplaire et qu'il n'y avait rien de mal entre nous.[240]

Yukiko's confession needs to be unpacked and inspected from different angles. On the one hand, Yukiko's crime could be justifiable because of the psychological trauma that she was undergoing at the time of war. Parallels could easily be drawn between Yukiko's wartime living conditions to that of Nakamoto Hiroko, a survivor of the war who was put to work in an

[239] ibid., p. 58.

[240] *Tsubaki,* p. 25.

airplane factory after her school in Hiroshima ceased to function in 1943. Hiroko expresses the dreadful working conditions due to the lack of heat and lunch consisting of a bowl of broth and a few noodles. Furthermore, Hiroko was not told what the steel she was measuring was used for and by 1944 when the parts grew scarce she was made to stand around without being permitted to read.[241] In addition to the dire working conditions, the great American bombardments in late 1944 meant that sleep was also scarce because of the air raids that resulted in fear and restlessness. The unsettling environment along with fatigue, malnourishment ('on manquait de plus en plus de nourriture'[242]) and pressure from the government and superiors alike could have clouded Yukiko's judgement. In other words, the parricide that Yukiko committed does not directly reflect on Yukiko as a person but a person that the circumstances have created. Yukiko's words 'Dans les circonstances, je n'avais d'autre choix que de le tuer'[243] in a sense defend the idea that Yukiko was acting due to the circumstances. In a state where violence and murder were commonplace, Yukiko's crime can be justified because it can be assumed that Yukiko was acting out of character. Yukiko's world was crumbling down before her eyes: the father she loved had uncovered a selfish, cheating and unpatriotic side to his personality in addition to continuing his liaison with Madame Takahashi; Yukio the boy she got close to and loved was in fact her half-brother; her new home also saw her and her family as *yosomono* (outsiders); the war took a tighter grip on the community and as a result her school was closed, and she had to work under terrible conditions. All these factors combined caused Yukiko to commit parricide in a rage caused by undecipherable circumstances.

Having said that, what is deeply troubling is that Yukiko after all these years could not rid herself of the guilt of having killed her father. In other words, Yukiko could not justify her crime in light of the aforementioned dire violent circumstances that surrounded her. In fact,

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[241] Havens, Thomas, R. H., 'Women and War in Japan, 1937-45', *Women and Women's Issues in Post World War II Japan,* ed. by Edward R Beauchamp (London: Garland Publishing, 1998), p.76.

[242] *Tsubaki,* p. 61.

[243] ibid., p. 25.

the burden of the crime followed Yukiko to the grave thus not allowing for open discussion or evaluation of what had transpired. Yukiko ends her letter to Namiko by asking for forgiveness:

> Namiko, pardonne-moi d'avoir gardé le silence depuis des années sur mes parents et la bombe atomique. En fait, je voulais faire enterrer avec mon corps la vérité que je cachais. Cependant, questionnée sans cesse par ton fils, je m'oblige maintenant à ne plus fuir. Après avoir terminé ma lettre, je répondrai à ses questions. Cela veut dire, peut-être, te répondre aussi. Autrement, il faudrait plus de temps pour mourir. J'en ai assez. Si je n'étais pas capable de manger toute seule un jour, il vaudrait mieux que je meure. Me comprends-tu ? [244]

Although the apology at the end of the letter implies that Yukiko is asking for forgiveness for her parricide it is not clearly stated. In fact, it seems as though Yukiko is apologising for not having told her daughter the truth about the past and keeping secrets from her. It is also apparent that Yukiko was planning on taking her secret to the grave. There are two aspects of this confession that we need to consider. On the one hand, Yukiko seems to equally imply that she was going to take her life. This is supported by the fact that Namiko found a bottle of her sleeping pills empty in the drawer. If that were the case, what pushed Yukiko to take her life? 'Pourquoi ce lien entre la mort et la mise à nu de soi ? Est-ce que la parole tuerait?'[245] Could it be assumed that Yukiko's secret was the most important aspect of her life and by losing this secret she felt empty and purposeless? Namiko states:

> Je crois maintenant que ma mère s'est libérée de la douleur du crime en choisissant la mort pour elle-même, comme elle avait choisi la mort pour son père. Quand même, il me semble qu'elle n'a eu aucun regret de mettre fin à la cruauté de son père.[246]

Namiko's opinion coincides with LaCapra's notion of acting out:

> Acting out is related to repetition, and even the repetition compulsion […] This is very clear in the case of people who undergo a trauma. They have a tendency to relive the past, to be haunted by ghosts or even to exist in the present as if one were still fully in

[244]ibid., p. 101.

[245] Lequin, 2005, p. 96.

[246] *Tsubaki,* p. 111.

> the past, with no distance from it … For people, who have been severely traumatized, it may be impossible to fully transcend acting out the past.[247]

In this instance, Yukiko seems to have acted out the trauma of parricide by committing suicide. Hence what killed her was not the actual act of confessing but the act of coming to terms with her traumatic experience. This highlights once again that the parricide overshadowed the atomic bomb in the case of Yukiko. Alternatively, could Yukiko have subconsciously suppressed the trauma of war by selectively emphasising the trauma of killing her father? The confessional letter could be seen as a form of 'working through' but the fact that 'qu'elle n'a eu aucun regret de mettre fin à la cruauté de son père' leads us to believe that Yukiko was mentally catapulted to the past and did not deal with her demons. By committing suicide, Yukiko thus prevents Namiko from working through her sentiments about the past and her mother's confession of parricide. On this personal scale, Shimazaki could be alerting the reader that Japan's past has not been sufficiently dealt with or 'worked through' hence new generations could possibly feel the need to act out the unresolved issues of the previous generation. Namiko questions herself and suggests a solution by expressing:

> L'empoisonnement, les bombes atomiques, l'Holocauste, le massacre de Nankin […] Etait-ce nécessaire? C'était, selon elle, une question inutile après une pareille catastrophe. Ce qu'on peut faire, peut-être, c'est essayer de connaître les motivations des gestes.[248]

Furthermore, Shimazaki highlights that if the Japanese do not address questions and issues of the past directly there is a likelihood that Japan will never rid itself of the haunting effect of its past. In fact this is highlighted by Yukiko who states: '[…] ton fils a tout à fait raison de poser des questions sur ses ancêtres. […] Il est encore jeune mais assez mûr pour comprendre mon

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[247] Goldberg, A., *An Interview with Professor Dominick LaCapra*, <https://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203648.pdf> [accessed 17 June 2014], p.2.

[248] *Tsubaki,* p. 111.

histoire. Un jour, tu pourras lui montrer ma lettre';[249] thus alluding to the idea that new generations will have to confront the tragic past and in turn be affected by it.

Tsuyoshi's loss

In *Zakuro* Shimazaki introduces the reader to Tsuyoshi Toda a forty-nine years old protagonist who is deeply affected by the absence of his father as a result of the Second World War. In the opening pages Tsuyoshi is presented as a well-settled seemingly happy man in a loving relationship with his wife Haruko. Even though he does not have any children of his own, his nephew Satoshi fulfills that role, and his family ties with his mother Yoshiko, brother and two sisters are strong. His career in an import-export company seems to be stable although he expresses some anxiety about Japanese-American politics that might have a direct influence on his work. Although Tsuyoshi's life is painted in a positive light, there seems to be a hollow in his life for the last twenty five years caused by the absence of his father: 'Et quant à mon père, il a disparu en Sibérie après la fin de la guerre, en 1945'.[250] We are quickly made aware that his father's absence is very much a part of his current life. Tsuyoshi's mother who suffers from senile dementia is also attached to the memory of the father despite the years that have past:

> Dans la boite se trouvent aussi un chandail, une parka, des pantalons, des ceintures…Ce sont les vêtements de mon père que ma mère garde précieusement depuis trente ans. Chaque année, ma mère les aère deux fois, au printemps et en automne.[251]

We can decipher this physical attachment to the past in several ways. On the one hand, the safeguarding of the father's clothes could signify that the mother has not come to terms with the father's loss and by keeping his clothes she is keeping a piece of him alive. Equally, by going through the ritual of airing the father's clothes twice a year, Yoshiko is demonstrating her fidelity to the man she loved. On the other hand, by openly demonstrating to the world

[249] ibid., p. 101.

[250] *Zakuro,* p. 8.

[251] ibid., p.10.

that she still remembers her husband, Yoshiko is highlighting the importance of the past to her children, her neighbours and beyond but ultimately re-examining the past. In essence Yoshiko's actions could be related to the trauma that she had undergone due to the war. Although no direct reference is made to the mother's experience of the war in *Zakuro*, we could extrapolate that she is suffering from trauma for having survived the war and for having 'lost' her husband. The latter bears a heavy weight on her life because she never comes to terms with the disappearance of her husband and his assumed death. Terrence Des Pres' theory highlights how individuals integrate and respond to trauma:

> Horrible events take place, that is the (objective) beginning. The survivor feels compelled to bear witness, that is the (subjective) middle. His testimony enters public consciousness, thereby modifying the moral order in which it appears, and that is the (objective) end. Conscience, in other words, is a social achievement. At least on its historical level, it is the collective effort to come to terms with evil, to distil a moral knowledge equal to the problems at hand. Only after the ethical content of an experience has been made available to all members of the community does conscience become the individual 'voice' we usually take it for.[252]

It can therefore be assumed that the mother, by airing the father's clothes, is bearing witness and wants to re-engage in discussion with regards to post-war exiling of Japanese citizens to Siberia under Stalin's orders that went against the Potsdam agreement. The father, *contremaître d'une entreprise de travaux publics,* was originally posted to Manchuria when it was a Japanese colony and therefore should have been repatriated soon after the war. Although many Japanese citizens were repatriated, Banzô Toda (or Banzô-san as referred to by Yoshiko) never returned home and consequently as explained by Tsuyoshi:

> En 1960, le gouvernement du Japon a demandé à ma mère de reconnaître le décès de mon père. Il s'agissait d'effacer son nom du *koseki* (état civil fixant le domicile légal de la famille dont tous les membres portent le même nom). Elle a refusé net en disant: "On n'a jamais appris la nouvelle de sa mort. Il est toujours vivant, quelque part en Sibérie![253]

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[252] Des Pres, Terrence 'Survivors and the Will To Bear Witness', *Social Research*, 40:4 (1973), <www.jstor.org/stable/40970160> [accessed 24 November 2016], p.668-690.

[253] *Zakuro,* p. 26.

Prior to the Japanese government's orders, Tsuyoshi and his mother had participated in demonstrations in Tokyo demanding that the USSR reconsider their decision and initiate the repatriation process. We can see that the mother was politically engaged for a decade before her husband was declared dead. Therefore, the safeguarding of his clothes and the airing ritual could be seen as an expression of a political stance and equally as a form of 'acting out' the mother's traumatic experience of losing her husband and possible hardships that she had experienced during her time in Manchuria.

Although it is tempting to blame Yoshiko's dementia for her actions, it is clear from Tsuyoshi's words that this ritual had been taking place for nearly thirty years hence before the dementia started manifesting itself. The mother's actions also emphasise her pain for not having seen the father's corpse. Yoshino states: 'Tsuyoshi, mon intuition me dit que ton père est toujours vivant. Quand je verrai son corps de mes propres yeux, alors j'accepterai la réalité de sa mort. Jusqu'à cet instant, je ne m'y résignerai jamais'[254]. It must be highlighted that Tsuyoshi's mother lived in Manchuria from 1942 to 1945 with her husband and children. Tsuyoshi had to stay behind in Tokyo because of his studies so he can only rely on his family's account of life in Manchuria. Yoshiko returned with her children to mainland Japan with the expectation that Banzô-san (the father) would join them in September of the same year. Even though there is no reference to the mother's memory of her time in Manchuria in the novel, we can speculate that she must have encountered a lot of hardship during her stay. According to testimonials, Japanese emigrants in Manchuria experienced a sense of resentment from the locals which in effect made their lives much harder. An anonymous Japanese resident in Manchuria makes reference to how their lives changed with time:

> When I first visited Manchuria in 1938, the Manchurians always let us cross the street first. At the train station, we did not have to wait in line at the ticket counter, the Manchurians let us buy tickets first. […] When I returned to Manchuria and finally settled [in the branch village of Ōhinata] in 1943, it was a different story. The Manchurians told me to go to elsewhere [to buy train tickets] because, they said, it was

[254] *Zakuro,* p. 21.

> their train station. Looking back, I think they already sensed Japan's imminent defeat. I said to myself that I had come to the wrong place at the wrong time.[255]

Although the Todas were not farmers they must have experienced hardships like other Japanese emigrants. Another testimonial highlights the state of affairs at the time the Todas moved to Manchuria:

> Our life got harder and harder toward the end. Particularly after 1942, the state sharply increased the quotas for this or that agrarian product that we had to deliver to local authorities. Since we had to rely on Chinese and Korean farmers to deliver us their quotas, I guess their lives must have been much harder than ours. You say that we were expected to become "self-sufficient farmers". But we never became such farmers in Manchuria.[256]

It can be assumed that Yoshiko, having lived through the distress of Manchurian life, felt guilty for leaving her husband behind which justifies her attachment to Banzô-san's memory expressed through the airing of his clothes. Furthermore, Yoshiko could relate to the deteriorating state of affairs having had first-hand experience and could clearly visualise how her husband might have suffered before and after being captured by the Russians.

Yamamuro Shin'ichi in *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion* states that:

> For the great majority of Japanese who have since lived through more than half-century longer than the thirteen and one-half years that Manzhouguo existed, that land has become little more than a historical term which conjures up no particular image of any sort. To be sure, the past half-century has been sufficiently long for many matters to pass from experience to memory and from memory into history, long enough perhaps for even the experience of hardship to be refined into a form of homesickness, for the crimes that transpired all around them to be forgotten as if the whole thing has been a daydream.[257]

Once again, the airing of Banzô-san's clothes could be seen as a form of re-visiting the reality of Japanese expansion and equally a nostalgic connection with Manchuria. The memory of Manchuria lives on in Tsuyoshi even though he did not live in Manchuria with the rest of his

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[255] Tamanoi, Mariko Asano, *Memory Maps: The State and Manchuria in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), p. 48.

[256] ibid.

[257] Yamamuro, Shin'ichi, *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion,* trans by Joshua A. Fogel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 1.

family due to his studies and being drafted to fight in the Philippines two years after their departure. For Tsuyoshi his 'experience' of Manchuria is romanticised through his connection to his father:

> Mon père m'écrivait régulièrement de Mandchourie. En fait, quand j'ai reçu sa première lettre, j'ai été étonné que ce ne soit pas ma mère qui écrive. J'avais fermement cru qu'il avait la plume paresseuse. [...] Une fois, il m'a envoyé une carte postale de Harbin, où il s'était rendu pour affaires. Il a écrit : 'Harbin me plait beaucoup ! C'est une véritable ville cosmopolite. Des Russes, des Japonais et autres étrangers vivent ensemble avec les Chinois.' Il souhaitait que je puisse un jour visiter cette ville qu'on appelait 'Paris d'Orient' ou 'Moscou d'Orient'.[258]

The fact that Banzô-san was the main point of contact with Tsuyoshi while he remained in mainland Japan without his family undeniably left a big impression on him. As a result, Tsuyoshi felt a greater connection with his father and consequently agonised over his loss. Although the situation in Manchuria was worsening at the time of the family's arrival, Banzô writes as if life in Manchuria was problem-free. As we see from the testimonials, interaction between the locals and the Japanese started to become precarious. Similarly, Banzô paints a picture of harmony and fairness in Harbin although testimonials from the time suggest that there was racism between the Japanese, Koreans and Chinese.

> Take the ration of cotton fabric, for example. The Manchurians and the Koreans received only a third of our share or perhaps none at all. So we occasionally gave away some of our share to those Manchurians or Koreans who delivered us soybeans or *kaoliang* [sorghum] over the quota. I was a kid then, but even a small child like me notices [such discriminatory practices].[259]

Could it be that Banzô was totally oblivious to the reality surrounding him? Perhaps Banzô wanted to reassure Tsuyoshi that Manchuria was safe and consequently his family was in no imminent danger. This unrealistic portrayal of the state of affairs could be justifiable because Tsuyoshi was alone in Tokyo and his father wanted to protect him. However, this representation of the status quo must have created a romanticised image of Manchuria in Tsuyoshi's mind and in turn this seemingly ideal 'second home' was destroyed by the war and

[258] *Zakuro*, p. 23.

[259] Tamanoi, p. 41.

the events that followed. In addition, Tsuyoshi's contact with his family was interrupted after he was deployed to the Philippines so this romanticised image of Manchuria must have stayed with him as a beacon of hope in the front lines. Although very little reference is made to Tsuyoshi's experience in the Philippines, we know that he was very lucky to have survived the war. Tsuyoshi says:

> Quant à moi, je suis revenu à Tokyo quelques mois après la fin de la guerre. C'était un miracle que je sois encore vivant. J'avais été au front et la plupart de mes camarades avaient été tués dans l'île de Luçon. Ma mère a pleuré de joie en me revoyant. "Quel bonheur !" Mon frère et mes sœurs avaient tellement grandi que je ne les ai pas reconnus tout de suite. J'ai demandé à ma mère où était mon père. Elle m'a dit attendre son retour de Manchourie, qui était alors sous le contrôle de l'Union soviétique.[260]

Tsuyoshi's war experience is not described in detail, but we understand that he was extremely lucky to have returned home unscathed. Yet, the joy of his return was overshadowed by the absence of his father. Even though the father's unknown fate was very distressful, this absence brought Tsuyoshi and his mother closer and the fight for the return of the father became a source of hope for them after the war. After all, Banzô was not a soldier and he was victimised by the Soviets for the mere fact that he was Japanese. This detachment from the military must have made it easier for Tsuyoshi to sympathise with his father's disappearance after Japan lost the war because he did not partake in the war and therefore was not responsible for any of the Japanese atrocities. After years of uncertainty, in 1968 the embassy of the USSR replied to Tsuyoshi's enquires and confirmed that Banzô Toda '… été décédé au moi de février 1946, dans un camp d'Irkutsk, situé tout près de la Bajkal; il était mort d'une maladie de poitrine et son corps avait été enterré dans une fosse commune'.[261] Due to Yoshiko's deteriorating mental state, Tsuyoshi had to take it upon himself to declare the death of his father to the Japanese authorities after receiving a statement from the USSR embassy. This act proved difficult for Tsuyoshi because he had to abandon any hope of his father's return; equally, Tsuyoshi felt great disappointment because he had to refrain from

[260] *Zakuro,* p. 24.

[261] ibid., p. 27.

notifying his mother due to her illness and because she continued to honour Banzô-san's memory for years in the hope that he would one day return to her.

Tsuyoshi's fond memories of his father came tumbling down one day when his friend Kôji told him: 'J'ai vu ton père à Los Angeles'.[262] With this unexpected turn of events, Tsuyoshi's life is devastated and as a result the father's glorified image suffers:

> Je me rapproche de la maison. Dans le noir surgit le visage de mon père, plus jeune que moi. L'homme qui a aimé sa femme, l'homme qui a adoré ses enfants, l'homme qui a eu un grand sens de la justice, l'homme qui a été têtu mais très honnête. Malgré tout, cet homme ne rentre pas chez lui, où sa femme attend son retour depuis vingt-cinq ans. Au contraire, il envisage maintenant d'émigrer à l'étranger avec sa nouvelle épouse.[263]

Tsuyoshi's world is turned upside down by the discovery that his father is alive and that he has been living in Yokohama for many years only a few miles away from Tsuyoshi's home in Tokyo. After great anguish and consideration, Tsuyoshi finally arranges to meet his estranged father only to discover that the reason why Banzô did not contact Tsuyoshi and his family is because he killed a Japanese solider on the ship back from Siberia. Parallels could be drawn between Tsuyoshi's experience to that of Namiko's in *Tsubaki* even though the circumstances are different. Tsuyoshi reacts to this revelation by saying: 'Je suis abasourdi. […]"Mon père a tué un soldat japonais…"'.[264] This reaction is comparable to Namiko's words when she discovers the crime that her mother committed: 'Mon Dieu…Ma mère a tué son père. Ma mère a tué mon grand-père à Nagasaki le jour où la bombe atomique est tombée. Comment?'[265] Both Tsuyoshi and Namiko held Banzô and Yukiko respectively in great respect because they encountered a lot of hardship in the past due to the war. In the case of Banzô, his unfair capture by the Soviets and subsequent disappearance turned him into a heroic figure in Tsuyoshi's eyes. Yukiko having survived the bombing of Nagasaki meant that Namiko was

[262] ibid., p. 52.

[263] ibid., p. 52.

[264] *Zakuro,* p. 94.

[265] *Tsubaki,* p. 27.

sensitive to her mother's past. Namiko highlights that despite her curiosity '[…] j'étais obligée de la laisser tranquille. Je croyais qu'elle souffrait toujours de la perte de son père, emporté par le carnage'.[266] Yukiko's confession later in life must have hurt Namiko profoundly because they shared a lifetime together, yet they skirted around the topic of the war, unlike Tsuyoshi and Banzô who had lost contact since 1944. However, it can be argued that Tsuyoshi had been living with the glorified memory of his father for many years so the disappointment must have been equally as distressing for Tsuyoshi as it was for Namiko.

There is yet another similarity between the two storylines; both confessions were expressed through letters. Banzô explains to his son: 'Comme je ne sais pas toujours bien m'exprimer, j'ai écrit ce que je voulais te raconter'.[267] In the case of Yukiko, the confessional letter was inevitable because she was found dead the next day (as a result of assumed suicide) but Banzô could have told Tsuyoshi of his crime face to face. Although Banzô blames his inability to express himself as an excuse for having written the letter, we can assume that he is ashamed of his crime and therefore could not confess directly to Tsuyoshi. Ayako Kurahashi narrates a similar episode in *My Father's Dying Wish:*

> In the hospice, father's health continued to fail. He was moved from a ward to a private room for two people. One day when I was visiting him, he reached out and took out a small scrap of paper from his bedside table … 'Hey', he said, 'when I die I want you to put this on my gravestone. Do that for me won't you?'
> He said it calmly. I glanced back at him and without thinking said, 'Yeah, OK.' Whether it was the innocuous way that my father said it, or whether it was because I am not the type of person to resist in such a situation, the exchange was no more than that. Father looked relieved and went back to sleep.
> On the paper father had written the following: 'I served in the Imperial Army for 12 years 8 months, ten of those as a Warrant Officer in the military police in China, including Tianjin, Beijing, Shanxi Province, Linfen, Yuncheng, Manchuria and Dongning. I participated in the war of aggression, I am for sorry for my actions against the people of China, and apologise unreservedly'.[268]

[266] ibid., p. 10.

[267] *Zakuro,* p. 94.

[268] Kurahashi, Ayako, *My Father's Dying Wish,* trans by Philip Seaton (King's Lynn: Paulownia Press, 2009), p. 5.

Although the circumstances are divergent from one another especially because Ayako's father was a soldier, we see a pattern of avoidance. It can be argued that the father's health was deteriorating and therefore writing down this apology was the only way he could guarantee that Ayako would get it. This is true but Philip Seaton alerts us to the role of silence in family interactions with regards to war. Seaton explains:

> However, the common theme is that as far as is possible the war must be narrated in a way that does not generate *unacceptable* levels of conflict between family bonds and historical consciousness. Silence is most probable in close-knit families with incompatible historical consciousness among relatives, but high levels of disagreement over the war may be no barrier to speaking out if relationships are distant.[269]

Silence and consequently the confessional letter could be justified in the case of Yukiko and Namiko because they never addressed this topic openly; however, Banzô hardly knows Tsuyoshi after all the years of separation, therefore he could not have been able to foretell what Tsuyoshi's reaction would have been. It could be deduced that the confessional letter was necessary in this instance because Banzô is ashamed of talking about his crime directly to his son. Yet, Banzô sits opposite Tsuyoshi as he reads the letter. It is as though words on paper carry a higher value for Banzô and Yukiko. Could it be that the written word serves as a more reliable source of confessional because it can serve as a biographical document for future generations? Yukiko supports this idea by saying:

> En tout cas, ton fils a tout à fait raison de me poser des questions sur ses ancêtres. Sans eux, sans moi, et même sans mon crime, il n'existerait pas, et toi non plus. Il est encore jeune mais assez mûr pour comprendre mon histoire. Un jour, tu pourras lui montrer ma lettre.[270]

It is apparent that the written confession serves as a historical document, which Yukiko would like to share with future generations. Although nothing as such is mentioned by Banzô, his detailed confessional letter can equally serve the same purpose as Yukiko's letter; thus documenting the past for his family members. The dialogue between Tsuyoshi and his

[269] Seaton, p. 200.

[270] *Tsubaki,* p. 101.

nephew Satoshi (who plays the role of a son more than a nephew) in the last pages of *Zakuro* also alludes to the idea that new generations need to know the truth about the past.

> Je lui demande:
> -Veux-tu visiter un jour Los Angeles ?
> Il répond, l'aire un peu étonné :
> -Los Angeles ? Je ne sais pas. Je n'ai jamais été là-bas. Pourquoi ?
> -Je compte y aller l'année prochaine ou dans deux ans. Là-bas, il y a quelqu'un que je voudrais voir.
> -Qui est-ce ?
> -Une sorte d'ami …
> -Comment s'appelle-t-il ?
> Je réponds avec hésitation :
> -Il s'appelle Eiji Satô
> […]
> -Cet homme est en train d'acheter un restaurant japonais à Los Angeles.
> Ses yeux brillent :
> -Un restaurant japonais ? Bien sûr que je veux la visiter avec toi ![271]

Tsuyoshi on the one hand suggests to the reader that he intends on introducing Satoshi to his grandfather Banzô to expose the past and like the case of Yukiko pass on the truth to future generations. However, by referring to Banzô by his adopted pseudonym 'Eiji Satô' we are made to think that Tsuyoshi also wants to partake in the tradition of lies that has been passed on to him by his father. In other words, this would have been the opportune moment to start divulging the truth about Banzô but he chooses not to do so. Similarly, in the end of *Tsubaki* Namiko's son tells her: 'Le destin? Tu parles comme grand-mère maintenait'.[272] The son's observation suggests that Namiko will inevitably withhold her mother's crime as a secret because she is accustomed to living with Yukiko's world of secrecy and she cannot escape it. However, the son's questioning that rendered Yukiko to confess also had the same effect on Namiko:

> -Qui est-ce, 'lui'?
> Les yeux ronds, il me regarde et je lui dis :

[271] *Zakuro,* p. 149.

[272] *Tsubaki,* p. 106.

> -C'est la personne que ta grand-mère m'avait demandé de rechercher. C'est son demi-frère.
> -Son demi-frère ? J'avais toujours cru que c'était son amoureux. Ah, je me suis trompé, dit-il d'une voix déçue. Alors où est-il maintenant ? J'espère qu'il nous rendra visite.[273]

Soon after this exchange, Yukio Takahashi, the man in question arrives at the door thus proving to us that Namiko will break with her mother's silence and share the truth regarding Yukiko's past with her son. Perhaps, Tsuyoshi will eventually share the truth about Banzô with the other members of his family; that is to say, in addition to his mother and wife. Shimazaki, by mystifying Tsuyoshi's behaviour, allows us to understand that families interact with confessions in different ways and equally alerts us to the burden that confessional letters leave behind.

It is slightly troubling that even after all these years Banzô could not completely be open with Tsuyoshi, even in his confessional letter. Banzô writes: 'Tsuyoshi, je ne veux pas te dire le nom de cet homme, parce que c'est lui que j'ai tué. Je l'appellerai simplement H'.[274] It seems as though Banzô is protecting Tsuyoshi from knowing all the details so that Tsuyoshi does not feel the burden of his father's crime. It could be argued that after all these years of guarding secrets it is difficult for Banzô to be truly open. Similarly, in *Tsubame,* Yonhi-Mariko only confesses to her true Korean origins to Madame Kim who has no direct connection with her family or quotidian life. Yonhi-Mariko visits Madame Kim after their first encounter at a Korean rally and presents Madame Kim with her mother's journal. Madame Kim proceeds to decipher the Korean characters as Yonhi-Mariko confesses her origins. However, when Madame Kim questions Yonhi-Markio about the true identity of her father (Monsieur Tsubame) as referred to in the mother's journal, Yonhi-Mariko responds by saying that she does not know who Monsieur Tsubame is. At the same time, Yonhi-Mariko remarks to

[273] *Tsubaki,* p. 114.

[274] *Zakuro,* p. 102.

herself: 'Quoi? Monsieur Tsubame? C'est le prêtre étranger de l'orphelinat!'[275] This episode highlights that, even when confessing, these protagonists can no longer divulge the whole truth because they have become accustomed to withholding the truth. Although a few exchanges between Banzô and Tsuyoshi follow concerning the letter and Banzô's crime, it seems as though Tsuyoshi keeps to his original plans of refraining from asking too many questions: 'Il faut que je m'abstienne de lui poser des questions si je veux en savoir plus'.[276]

As we start to unpack Banzô Toda's crime we come to the realisation that Banzô like Yukiko was a victim of circumstance hence his crime is to a certain degree 'justifiable'. Could it be that both protagonists manipulate the truth to gain the sympathy and compassion of their children? In the case of Yukiko, her father's affair with Madame Takahashi, along with some sinister discoveries that were made, propelled Yukiko to commit parricide. Yukiko defends her actions by stating: 'Dans les circonstances, je n'avais d'autre choix que de le tuer, même si c'était un parent exemplaire et qu'il n'y avait rien de mal entre nous'.[277] Yukiko's words are contradictory because on the one hand she emphasises that killing him was inevitable, and on the other hand she highlights that her father was a good parent. Previous analysis of Yukiko's state of mind at the time of war highlighted that she was acting in character with the violent state of war-torn Japan.

In the case of Banzô Toda, his crime is glorified through his confession because it becomes apparent that he was defending his good friend Ken and ridding the world of a ruthless traitor. Banzô recounts how H proudly told the other men on the ship repatriating Japanese war hostages from Nakhodka to Japan about his role: 'Je travaillais dans un hôpital… Non, je ne suis pas médecin. Ma tâche consistait à surveiller nos soldats maladies. Je devais négocier

[275] *Tsubame,* p. 109.

[276] *Zakuro,* p. 93.

[277] *Tsubaki,* p. 25.

avec les officiers russes afin d'obtenir suffisamment de nourriture pour nos compatriotes'.[278] However, in reality H was a callous man who followed Russian orders with little sympathy for his compatriots. Banzô explains: 'Notre tâche consiste à transporter au cimetière les dépouilles de nos compatriotes utilisées pour les recherches des Soviétiques'.[279] Banzô and Ken were made to work before fully recovering from their health problems, which was the main reason why they were transferred to the hospital in the first place. The following exchange between Banzô and H reminds us of an episode that took place between Yukio and his commander with regards to the Korean worker in *Tsubaki.*

> H. a crié à tout le monde :
> -Montez tout en haut ! Un camion viendra bientôt les ramasser.
> J'ai cherché de quoi couvrir les cadavres et trouvé plusieurs tissus blancs accrochés au mur. J'ai demandé à H. :
> -Peut-on envelopper les corps dans ces tissus, au moins ?
> Il a répondu sèchement :
> -Non, Les tissus sont précieux, on ne peut pas en gaspiller pour eux.
> J'ai dit :
> -Mais ce sont nos compatriotes …
> Trop tard. H. m'a frappé au visage :
> -Tais-toi![280]

Banzô was trying to conserve the dignity of the corpses of his compatriots, which is highly admirable; however, H's physical reaction emphasises that Banzô's words infuriated him. In *Hamaguri* the *commandant* reacted in the same way when Yukio tried to defend the Korean worker. H's reaction alerts us to the fact that Japanese men in authority reacted in the same violent fashion regardless as to whether they were in mainland Japan or abroad. Furthermore, H's response took place after Japan had lost the war and, equally, H was not a soldier, yet he handled Banzô's criticism in the same vein as the *commandant*. According to Ken: 'H. est un vrai sadique. C'est le fils d'un politicien et il souhaite aussi le devenir, à son retour. Je

[278] *Zakuro,* p. 103.

[279] ibid., p.108.

[280] ibid., p. 109.

m'inquiète pour l'avenir de notre pays'.[281] It is evident that violence was still rife after the war and also that H was feeling guilty for collaborating with the Russians to use his compatriots' bodies for Soviet scientific advances. The fact that H is the son of a politician helps us understand that he was behaving in the same manner as the *commandant* because he was upholding the Yamato spirit of the time. In other words, he was emulating the ideas of wartime Japan. Furthermore, H goes on to punish Banzô: 'Toi, tu sauteras un repas, C'est ta punition pour avoir répliqué à mon ordre'.[282] This interaction between Banzô and H is particularly important because it helps us understand that Banzô, resembling Yukiko, was engulfed by violence and consequently could only react in a manner similar to his superiors through violence and even murder. Moreover, Banzô like Yukiko was surrounded by a dire state of affairs: 'Je ne sais combien de soldats japonais sont morts autour de moi. Les souffrances dues à la faim, au froid rigoureux en hiver et même à la chaleur suffocante en été'.[283] Subsequently, Banzô refocused his negativity to target H: 'Pourtant, ce qui me déprimait le plus, c'était l'existence de H., qui n'avait aucune compassion pour ses compatriotes'.[284] In a sense, Yukiko channeled the evil around her and personified it in her father and similarly Banzô did the same by targeting H.

On further analysis, we come to the realisation that although Banzô harboured a lot of hatred towards H because of his ignominious ways, the true culprit behind the crime is Ken. Banzô explains to Tsuyoshi:

> Comme je l'ai mentionné au début, j'ai rencontré Ken dans un camp de la région de S. Nous y avons travaillé entre le début de 1946 et la fin de l'été de la même année.
> Ken est né la même année que toi, Tsuyoshi. Il habitait à Harbin, en Mandchourie, et travaillait dans un restaurant. À la fin de la guerre, il a été déporté en Sibérie comme moi alors qu'il n'était pas soldat. Son œil droit était atteint de cécité.[285]

[281] ibid., p. 110.

[282] ibid., p. 112.

[283] ibid., p. 104.

[284] ibid., p. 113.

[285] ibid., p. 100.

It is clear from this passage that Banzô cared for Ken because he was captured after the war like himself and was targeted even though he was not a soldier. Moreover, Ken reminded Banzô of Tsuyoshi, especially because at the time Banzô was uncertain of what had become of his eldest son Tsuyoshi who was left behind in mainland Japan. The return of Banzô's wife and three children to Japan before he was captured could mean a reunion with Tsuyoshi and that must have brought some solace to Banzô. However, Banzô's attachment to Ken must have been comforting for Banzô because he could experience the role of being a father figure for Ken. This paternal instinct led Banzô to kill H to protect Ken. In other words, Ken was constantly whispering venomous words concerning H into Banzô's ears: 'Quel menteur! Je hais cet homme à mort, je n'oublierai jamais ce qu'il a fait à ses compatriotes'.[286] Furthermore, Ken instigated Banzô to confront H on the night of the incident by saying: 'Monsieur Toda, donnons-lui un coup de poing au moins une fois'.[287] This remark sparked Banzô's anger and reminded him of the inhumane way the cadavers of his compatriots were treated under the orders of H. In a state of rage, Banzô and Ken confronted H to remind him of the dishonourable way he conducted himself in the Soviet camp. Even though Banzô was only exchanging words with H, Ken continued to provoke him by saying: 'C'est un imbécile! Frappez-le!' and 'Espèce de salaud! … Tu es crétin !'[288] As Banzô retreated from the heated conversation, H grabbed hold of Ken, which left Banzô with no choice but to hit H over the head with a wooden staff thus killing him. In a state of panic, both men quickly threw H's body overboard before being seen by others.

Banzô's crime was undeniably provoked by Ken, which makes us reconsider Banzô's culpability. Banzô was vulnerable at the time because he was detached from his family and he

[286] ibid., p. 103.

[287] ibid., p. 116.

[288] ibid., p. 118.

saw Ken as a son. Also, Ken proved to be a confidant and ally. When H punished Banzô for disobeying his orders, Ken was the first person to side with Banzô even if covertly.

> Ken m'a apporté plus tard des morceaux de pommes de terre qu'il avait cachés sous son vêtement. J'en ai été très ému. Chacun recevait une quantité de nourriture limitée et personne ne voulait partager sa ration. Néanmoins, Ken m'a dit : 'Je suis désolé, monsieur Toda. Ce ne sera pas assez pour vous, mais prenez-les'.[289]

This act of kindness along with the paternal feelings that Banzô felt towards Ken resulted in Banzô being susceptible to Ken's opinions and provocation. In fact, the ties between Banzô and Ken solidify when Banzô adopts Ken's deceased father's name. This unique bond between the two could be the result of the experiences that they had shared. That is to say, due to the experience of the Soviet labour camp and H's murder, the bond between them became stronger than that of Banzô and Tsuyoshi (his biological son). Tsuyoshi explains:

> Un jour, Ken est venu voir mon père à Osaka. Il lui a suggéré une combine inhabituelle : utiliser le nom de son père. 'Monsieur Toda, a-t-il dit, je comprends que vous voulez protéger votre famille en portant un faux nom, mais vous ne pouvez pas vivre ainsi longtemps, je veux dire sans papiers officiels. Avec l'identité de mon père, vous n'aurez pas à vous cacher des autorités. C'est ce que j'ai proposé à ma mère qui voudrait vous aider à sortir de cette situation. Elle est d'accord avec moi. Vous pourrez rester seul comme maintenant. Si vous souhaitez habiter avec nous, j'en serais heureux.[290]

This proposal by Ken could be deciphered in many ways. On the one hand, it seems as though Ken reciprocated the parent-son sentiments and therefore wanted to replace his father figure with Banzô (be it his biological father who died when Ken was young or the adoptive father who Ken's mother remarried when Ken was 14 years old). By adopting Banzô as a father, Ken intended on recreating a family for himself after the chaos of war. Alternatively, we can see that the 'war bond' due to the experience that the two men shared in the labour camp created an unbreakable connection between them. Similarly, Ken is indebted to Banzô for saving his life and therefore he had to repay the favour in whatever way possible. What is particularly alarming is the fact that Ken does not encourage Banzô to reunite with his family;

[289] ibid., p. 124.

[290] ibid., p. 124.

furthermore, Ken does not question the killing of H and the effect it has on both parties concerned and equally on H's family. It seems as though due to the horrors of the war, lies and silence were acceptable norms in the new post-war society because 'tout le monde était occupé à survivre'.[291]

Both Banzô's and Yukiko's crimes are justifiable because they are consequent to the mind frame of the war era. However, the bigger crime it seems is the web of deceit that Banzô fabricated upon his return to Japan. By taking on Ken's deceased father's name when he disembarked the ship, Banzô started a new life based on secrecy and deception. Perhaps the crime that Banzô committed was not murdering H but refraining from alerting the authorities on the ship to the dispute that took place with H. By throwing H's corpse overboard and not confessing to the events that led to this incident, Banzô entrapped himself in a web of lies that he could no longer escape. Banzô explains to Tsuyoshi that when he saw H's children waiting for their father's return he decided not to go back to his family: 'Quand j'ai vu ces filles, dit mon père, j'ai décidé de ne pas rentrer à la maison'.[292] In essence, Banzô decided to punish himself by not seeing his family because of the pain he caused H's family. The words that Banzô uttered when confronting H resonate with how the past has complete hold of the present and future: 'Oui, tu es capable d'oublier ton passé, mais pas moi'.[293] We can contrast these words with Yukiko's words in *Tsubaki*, 'Il n'y a pas de justice. Il y a seulement la vérité'.[294]

On the one hand, the reader is forced to empathise with Yukiko and Banzô because the circumstances pushed them to commit murder. Furthermore, Namiko and Tsuyoshi's non-judgemental attitude towards Yukiko and Banzô after the initial shock of the confessions leads

[291]ibid.

[292] ibid., p. 123.

[293] ibid., p. 118.

[294] *Tsubaki,* p. 16.

us to justify the crimes that have been committed. Yet, by withholding their secrets, Yukiko and Banzô highlight their culpability and in turn seek remorse after confessing. Yukiko writes: 'Namiko, pardonne-moi d'avoir gardé le silence depuis des années sur mes parents et la bombe atomique. En fait, je voulais faire enterrer avec mon corps la vérité que je cachais. Cependant, questionnée sans cesse par ton fils, je m'oblige maintenant à ne plus fuir'.[295] Yukiko's words underline the confusion and, to a certain extent, her internal struggle with whether or not to carry her secret to the grave. Yukiko claims that she was obliged to confess because of her grandson's questions; yet by leaving a second letter for her half-brother Yukio, it seems as though Yukiko was more invested in confessing to Yukio rather than Namiko. In fact, Yukiko highlights that 'ce qu'on peut faire, peut-être, c'est essayer de connaître les motivations des gestes'.[296] Could we see Yukiko's confession as a selfish act although seemingly selfless? Both Yukiko and Banzô took full advantage of the circumstances to escape justice for their crimes. Banzô explains: '… à l'époque, tout était encore chaotique'[297] thus allowing him to forge his name upon arrival in Japan and continue a normal life despite the crime he committed. However, Banzô also experienced a certain sense of guilt as explained by Tsuyoshi: 'Il m'a dit que même si H. méritait d'être puni, personne n'avait le droit de le tuer'.[298] Yukiko and Banzô represent different circumstances in the post-war history of Japan, that of the bombing of Nagasaki and the occupation of Manchuria; therefore, the reaction of their children could be affected by their parents' past more than the crimes they committed. It is clear that both Tsuyoshi and Namiko struggle with the confessions that they are privy to. Namiko's analysis of Yukiko's suicide could seem unsympathetic:

> Je crois maintenant que ma mère s'est libérée de la douleur du crime en choisissant la mort pour elle-même, comme elle avait choisi la mort pour son père. Quand même, il me semble qu'elle n'a eu aucun regret de mettre fin à la cruauté de son père.[299]

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[295]ibid., p. 101.

[296] ibid., p.111.

[297] *Zakuro,* p. 122.

[298] ibid., p. 137.

[299] *Tsubaki,* p. 111.

Namiko also links Yukiko's parricide to the atomic bombing whilst questioning herself as to whether either one of the acts was necessary and even equating them to one another. By so doing, Shimazaki invites the reader to reflect upon the nonsensical acts of the time, the terrible rage that justified the unjustifiable and, to a certain extent, Shimazaki urges us to sympathise with Yukiko because she was acting out of character to protect herself against 'the enemy' even if it was her own father. Similarly, we find Tsuyoshi introspecting about Banzô's crime and all the parties that were involved.

> Je murmure: 'Sottise…' Je pense au sort des trois hommes : H., Ken et mon père, qui étaient presque arrivés au japon après avoir passé deux ans en Sibérie. Qui était le plus sot parmi eux ? H., qui restait seul, isolé des autres, en sachant qu'il était haï par ses compatriotes ? Ken, qui l'a injurié si grossièrement que H. a voulu le tuer ? Ou bien mon père, qui a donné à H. un coup de poing, incité par Ken?[300]

Perhaps in the case of Tsuyoshi it is easier to spread the blame between the three men involved and not judge Banzô as the sole responsible party. Tsuyoshi, however, insists that his father visit his amnesiac mother Yoshiko before his departure to Los Angeles. This in turn could be seen as an act of justice in favour of the long-suffering Yoshiko who tirelessly waited for the return of Banzô-san rather than an act of forgiveness on the part of Tsuyoshi. In other words, Tsuyoshi's insistence that his parents reunite, might allude to the idea that Tsuyoshi has forgiven his father despite neglecting them for all those years and for murdering H. In fact, it could be that Tsuyoshi wants to bring closure to his mother hence having Yoshiko's best interests at heart. The fact that Banzô continues to live after his confession allows Tsuyoshi to re-examine Banzô's past and suggests a possible future for them. Although Yukiko is no longer there for Namiko to reconsider the past with, the arrival of Yukio (the long-lost half-brother) at her doorstep suggests that the past will be revisited through the two letters that Yukiko has left to each one of them thanks to the grandson's inquisitiveness. Both storylines allow us to understand that Japanese present and future are undeniably linked to the past and more specifically the impact of the war on every family's past; even though the truth had

[300] *Zakuro,* p. 147.

come to light in the latter parts of Namiko's and Tsuyoshi's lives, it remains to have a very strong grip on their respective families.

Conclusion:

Shimazaki, through two distinct storylines in *Tsubaki* (1999) and *Zakuro* (2008), highlights the importance of the legacy of the Second World War on Japan today. Although the tales diverge in terms of location, circumstances and consequences, the reader soon realises the depth of despair that the war has caused two different families. Yukiko's confessional letter to her daughter Namiko reveals how and why she committed parricide. Equally Tsuyoshi's world is perturbed by the discovery that his assumed-to-be-dead father (Banzô) is still alive after serving two years in a Soviet labour camp and killing a compatriot on the repatriation ship. As a chronicler, Shimazaki sheds light on two distinct war-related histories of Japan: the bombing of Nagasaki and the colonisation of Manchuria. These dire times in Japanese history serve as a backdrop to personal dramas that unfold before the eyes of new generations. Shimazaki allows the reader to re-examine Japanese history through detailed personal accounts and we begin to understand that Japanese society at the time of war was on the brink of moral breakdown. Irrational violence along with the need to keep secrets caused Yukiko and Banzô to act out of character and commit murder. Similarly, we discover that both protagonists carry the burden of their crimes all their lives throughout monumental changes in the Japanese political and socio-economical arenas until they divulge the truth through confessional letters to their children, and only because the circumstances pressured them into doing so.

Shimazaki impartially presents both Yukiko and Banzô's crimes and allows the reader to experience the confusion and trauma that Namiko and Tsuyoshi experience through their respective mother and father's confessional letters. Although the stories are fictional, convergences can be made with biographies such as Ayako Kurahashi's *My Father's Dying Wish* and historical data such as the writing of Yamada Futaro. This in turn highlights that Shimazaki invites the Francophone reader to interact with Japanese past and present in a

completely unique way through personalised histories and family relations. Shimazaki's writing style, however, cannot be placed under any paradigm. Although parallels could be drawn with Hijiya-Kirschnereit's theories concerning Japanese writers born after the war who engage with the war through their writing, Shimazaki does not rigidly fit any of the proposed criteria because she writes in French and questions the past through the voices of her protagonists that belong to different generations and time frames. The emphasis in *Tsubaki* and *Zakuro* is equally divided between family ties, secrecy and ultimately the impact of the war on Japanese society. Hence, through her profound re-examination of the effect of the war on post-war generations, Shimazaki echoes the words of Haruko in *Tonbo*: 'Continuer à vivre est en soi une chose incroyable'[301]; thus emphasising that Japan has to live with the profoundly disturbing and haunting memories of the Second World War which continues to shape Japan's present and future.

[301] Shimazaki, *Tonbo,* p. 132.

Chapter 3:

Zainichi Identity in Japan

The third novel *Tsubame* of the pentalogy *Le Poids des Secrets* sheds light on the status quo of the *Zainichi* (resident Korean in Japan) community in Japan. This novel exposes the rifts in present day Japanese society as a direct consequence of Japan's colonial past. The protagonist Yonhi-Mariko symbolises the struggle of this community through her silence and inability to speak up against deep-rooted social prejudice. Chapman highlights that, 'as past colonial subjects living in the former Imperial metropolis, they (the Koreans) have been treated as an unwelcome legacy of Japan's wartime Imperial ambition'.[302] This chapter seeks to analyse the complicated relationship between Japan and Korea, and uncover the reasons why Japan choses to avoid dealing with the *Zainichi* issue. Through *Tsubame*, Shimazaki challenges institutionalised racism and opens the debate concerning this marginalised group.

Yonhi-Mariko's story begins to unfold around the time of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 when Koreans were prosecuted for crimes that they did not commit due to the frenzy caused by the earthquake, and the novel concludes in Kamakura in 1982 after the exhumation and reburial of Koreans who were wrongfully murdered. Shimazaki not only exposes Japanese wrongdoings to a Francophone audience that is unaware of these atrocities but makes the reader aware of a culture of silence that is prevalent in modern day Japan. Through the protagonist Yonhi-Mariko we begin to understand the dangers of refusing to openly discuss these apparent social issues, which have resulted in rifts in Japanese society and the grave suffering of the *Zainichi* community. In order to understand the intricacy of the relations between the two communities, it is essential to understand the historical context and the socio-economic framework of Korean residents in Japan to be able to conceptualise the suffering of Yonhi-Mariko in particular and the *Zainichi* community in general. The following

[302] Chapman, p. 2.

sections trace Japanese-Korean relations throughout history and emphasise the negative effect of the annexation of Korea. In addition, comparison between the *Zainichi* and the *Burakumin* is made to further understand the depth of institutional and cultural marginalisation of these two minority groups. In conclusion, *Tsubame* will be analysed as a form of *Zainichi* writing that encourages debate concerning modern day Japanese attitudes.

I. Japanese-Korean historical background*:*

The relationship between Korea and Japan has been intricate and consequently it has oscillated between cooperation and conflict in political, historical and sociological terms. In a broad sense, Korea served as the primary conduit by means of which Japanese race and culture came into being; that is to say, the modern Japanese race which is predominately derived from Mongol origins came to populate the Japanese islands via the Korean peninsula from China.[303] Japanese-Korean interrelationship could be seen through fundamental institutions such as religion, philosophy, art, literature and politics that originated in China, modified in Korea and passed onto Japan. These theories were supported through the discovery of the Takamatsuzuka Tomb in the 1980s on the island of Honshu in present-day prefecture of Nara, which is known as the central axis of the 'Yamato' (Japanese) kingdom. The ornamental burial chambers and nobility dress discovered were identical to that of Korean aristocracy thus suggesting that at the heart of Japanese imperial lineage the relation between the two cultures was profoundly interconnected to the possible dismay of patriotic Japanese that uphold the ideas of 'Japanese uniqueness' today.[304]

Research conducted by Cornelius Kiley highlights that around the mid-fifth-century, prior to the introduction of Buddhism and writing, entire Japanese villages were populated with Koreans; furthermore, by the seventh century Korean war refugees who claimed asylum in

[303] Lee, Changsoo and George De Vos, *Koreans in Japan: Ethnic Conflict and Accommodation* (London: University of California Press, 1981), p. viii.

[304] ibid., p. 4.

Japan were welcomed with open arms due to the fact that the royal administration of the time recognised Koreans for superior cultural tradition.[305] Although Japanese-Korean religious and cultural exchange was endorsed by the rulers of seventh century Japan, the Heian period (eighth to tenth century) sought the unification of Japan through the preservation of Shintōism despite the strong influence of Buddhism. Thus promoting the importance of ancestral typologies and equally a distinctive lineage from the Sun Goddess that promoted a sense of Japanese uniqueness that has survived ever since. However, this did not have a detrimental effect of how Koreans were viewed in Japan. The genesis of prejudice crystallized during the obstreperous years of Meiji Restoration in the early part of the twentieth century.[306]

A century long self-imposed isolation during the Tokugawa period until 1868 meant that Japan and its people had very limited views of the world around them; however, this period of isolation allowed for limited trade with Korea and China in addition to contact with a Dutch company on the island of Deshima thus allowing restricted contact with the West. Japanese frontiers were penetrated by Western powers in the early eighteenth century and eventually by an American flotilla a few decades later, which demonstrated the overshadowing power of the West and equally the vulnerability of Japan against foreign aggression and invasion.[307] The restoration of imperial rule in turn propelled debate and support for ideas brought forward by Yoshida Shōin and Katsu Rintarō who endorsed unification under the Emperor and fortification through territorial expansion.[308] An Asian alliance with the view of constructing a modern navy that would confront any possible Western invasion sought the cooperation of Korea and China thus paving the way for Meiji foreign policy.

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[305] ibid., p. 12.

[306] Weiner, Michael, *The Origins of the Korean Community in Japan 1910-1923* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 2.

[307]ibid., p. 2.

[308] ibid., p. 7.

In 1868, the Meiji government decided that the transformation of Japan into a modern industrial nation was crucial for the survival of the country hence allowing for renegotiation of the previous isolation treaties. The relationship with Korea started to worsen due to the fact that Korean officials in Pusan failed to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Meiji government, which led to many years of diplomatic intervention starting in 1870. The inflexibility of Korea along with alleged mistreatment of Japanese officials consequently resulted in the discussion of war with Korea - also known as *Seikanron.* Eventually, by 1875 Japan decided to send a fleet to survey the Korean coastline with the intention of demonstrating the power of Japan as experienced twenty years prior through the American fleet.[309] By 1882, Korea permitted Hanabusa Yoshimoto to reside in Seoul and serve as a representative of the Japanese court. Korea's eventual 'surrender' to Japanese demands negatively resulted in Japan concluding that it is *Tōyō no Meishu* (the leader of Asia) and in turn assuming an elitist view of neighbouring nations in general and Korea in particular. Equally in Seoul, this forthcoming attitude is said to have led to the 'Imo Mutiny' which resulted in Korea seeking help from China to restore the calm caused by domestic revolt and consequently allowing for Chinese influence and control over Korea. Meanwhile, Fukuzawa Yukichi's ideas that glorified the power and intellectual dominance of the Meiji period also highlighted that any form of Asian alliance was only fruitful if it were to uphold Japanese national interest that led the way for the Korean reform movement. The 'Imo Mutiny' humiliated Japan because the Japanese delegation had to flee Seoul and in turn gave China more control over the Korean peninsula to the dismay of Japan.

Growing frustration with both Korea and China led to the change of Japanese public opinion which was motivated by Fukuzawa's views that 'geographical proximity did not warrant special treatment, and Japan should therefore emulate the West in its relations with both

[309] ibid., p. 10.

Korea and China'.[310] With the victory of the First Sino-Japanese War, Japan's elation was soon relinquished by the threat of Russian expansionism. By the end of the century, the visions of Korea worsened as highlighted by the description of *Tōyō Keizai Shimpō* (Asia Economic Bulletin):

> By and large, when people look at Korea, they think of it as an infirm and weak country whose sources of wealth have already all been exploited, but in fact it is rich in minerals and cereals and other natural resources […] The only reason why Korean industry is today not greatly flourishing is that the Korean people are on the whole weak and lazy, and lacking the spirit of enterprise.[311]

The Russo-Japanese war in 1905, which concluded in a peace treaty, once again fuelled pejorative views of Korea for being a weaker country with no direct role in controlling its fate and consequently resulted in the establishment of the Japanese protectorate administered by a *Tōkan* (Resident-General). Animosity between the Koreans and Japanese residents propelled by Japanese superiority and the forced abdication of Emperor Kojong along with heavy censorship by the Japanese *Tōkan,* led to the annexation of Korea on 22nd August 1910 and the appointment of Terauchi Masatake as *Chōsen Sōtoku* (Governor-General of Korea) under the guise of 'civilising' Korea and protecting Japanese national interest.[312] The annexation of Korea along with the colonization of Taiwan empowered Japanese Imperial control, and even though 30 per cent of the population of the Empire was non-Japanese, this minority was viewed as nothing but *teikoku shinmin* (subjects) of the Empire thus having no political influence until the end of the Second World War.[313]

Agricultural Assimilation

Japan's influence over Korea and its predominantly farming population started after the signing of the 'Protectorate Treaty' in 1905 through the establishment of the Tōyō

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[310] ibid., p. 16.

[311] ibid., p. 18.

[312] ibid., p. 21.

[313] Chapman, p. 16.

Development Company in Korea without Korean consultation.[314] The main goal of the company was the introduction of farming techniques through the settlement of Japanese farmers in Korea. Seen as a bilateral venture, both parties had to fund this project but due to insufficient funds, Korea started to allocate land to the Japanese as compensation. Although the enterprise was sold under the guise of modernization, Japan acquired land and rice purely for Japanese interest and tax revenue thus exerting economic hardship on Korean farmers through land dispossession that consequently pressured them into migration.[315] These figures rocketed from 1,000-2,000 immigrants per annum prior to 1916 but to 5,638 thereafter and eventually up to 14,501 in 1917 due to the First World War.[316] Over the years, Japan tactfully established a plan to augment rice production in Korea thus seeing rice exportation to Japan rise from 400,000 tons in 1919 to nearly 1.5 million tons in the 1930s which saw the rise of rice production by 40% in Korea as the level of rice exports rose by 600%.[317] This process of agricultural assimilation had two prominent effects on the relationship between the two nations. On the one hand, Korea was seen as a territory that served the greater good of the Japanese Empire with little concern for the annexed country or its people. Furthermore, the economic pressures that forced Korean immigration in turn resulted in further denigration of Koreans because they were seen as destitute which fuelled stereotypes regarding Japanese superiority and Korean inferiority.

The outbreak of the First World War resulted in the dire need for Japan to boost its trade through new industries as well as older industries such as coal mining, cotton spinning and silk manufacturing, which gave rise to Japan's dependency on cheap labour. The demand for labourers grew and consequently many Japanese entrepreneurs started to recruit Korean workers. It is important to bear in mind that Korean migrants were predominantly farmers

[314] ibid., p. 17.

[315] ibid.

[316] ibid.

[317] Weiner, 1981, p. 42.

and had to learn new skills and take part in factory labour that they were not accustomed to. Wartime recruitment can be exemplified by the Government-General's report on Kishiwada Spinning Company, which represented typical trends and attitudes of the time:

> As a result of the sudden expansion of the industrial sector in Japan due to the Great War, by about 1918…a shortage of female factory labour in the cotton spinning industry developed. This Kishiwada Cotton Spinning Company, viewing the recruitment of Koreans as an answer to this shortage, dispatched a number of its own officials to Korea. They returned with fifty Korean girls who were then taken on by the company. Although their efficiency was far lower [than Japanese girls], as they did not expect particularly good housing or dining facilities and since their livelihood and wages were much lower when compared with Japanese factory girls, the company judged the results to be relatively good. Therefore in July of the same year an additional 100 Korean girls were recruited and taken on at four of the company's factories.[318]

The above report is particularly important because it highlights the negative attitudes that the Japanese harboured towards the Koreans by comparing them to their Japanese counterparts in terms of productivity even at times of great shortage and war. Furthermore, Japan was the perpetrator of the conditions that caused the stringent economic instability in Korea, which led these farmers to be recruited in the first place. However, the mentioning of the precarious living situations and wages in the report sheds light on the injustices that the Koreans faced as 'nationals and subjects' of the Empire. It is apparent from the above extract that the desperate need for factory workers meant that the Korean workers had to be considered as 'satisfactory' in order to further recruit other labourers. There is evidence that many Korean women were employed in Korea under the pretence of going to work in factories and instead were coerced into becoming 'military comfort women' (*jūgun ianfu*). This systematic state-endorsed 'comfort woman' campaign was highly prevalent during the Second World War which resulted in the exploitation and suffering of many Korean women who have surfaced with dreadful testimony since the liberation of Korea. Although the circumstances which led the Korean protagonists in Shimazaki's *Tsubame* to escape Korea were different, the words of Yonhi's uncle stress the severity of the conditions of Korean immigrants in Japan at the time: 'Nous sommes tombés dans la misère à cause de la colonisation japonaise. Mais n'oublie pas

[318] ibid., p. 59.

que nous sommes de bonne souche'.[319] Furthermore, given the stigma that was associated with Korean women at the time, it is understandable why the Priest in *Tsubame* wanted to protect Yonhi by declaring her to be Japanese.

Educational and Cultural Assimilation

As the political and economic dominance over Korea progressed there were other facets of assimilation that simultaneously took place. In terms of education, the Japanese system was introduced as another mean of 'civilising' Korea. In addition, the usage of the original country name (The Great Korean Empire) was prohibited and replaced with *Chōsen*. The most intensive of assimilation efforts took place in the late 1930s under *Kōminka*-the process of changing the status of Taiwanese and Korean into Imperial subjects of the Emperor (*Kōmin*).[320] This process of Japanization was mean to rally these subjects to uphold the ethos of the war and also to sense an obligation to the Emperor. By 1939, another assimilation policy that forced Koreans to change their names to Japanese names and register for *koseki* (household register) known as *sōshi kaimei* was passed. This policy in turn had an ulterior motive, which manifested itself through conscription of those Koreans in 1944. In the same year, the Central Harmony Society (*Chuō Kyōwakai*) with 31 regional centres regulated the process of Japanization (*nihonjinka)* in general, as well as advocating and controlling worship at Shintō temples (*jinja sanpai)* and *sōshi kaimei.* The process of assimilating these Korean subjects was gruesome at times which covertly resulted in a resurgence of Korean patriotism and sense of hope for a foreseeable liberation. As the Second World War ravaged through Asia and Japanese power started to dwindle, municipalities in Japan encouraged metropolises to be vacated and equally called for colonial residents to return to their homelands.[321] The panic and desperation at the final stages of the war resulted in an abolition of policies and restrictions that had been in place for decades.

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[319] *Tsubame*, p. 13.

[320] Chapman, p. 20.

[321] Ryang, Sonia and John Lee (eds), *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan* (London: University of California Press, 2009), p. 22.

Korean Liberation

The Korean repatriation process was complicated for all parties involved; that is to say, Koreans returning home from the chaos of post-war Japan found the circumstances to be worse in Korea because they found themselves socially and culturally alienated. As a result 600,000 Koreans returned to Japan after repatriation due to the economic and political instability they faced upon repatriation, which was to be funded by Japan as demanded by the Allied Forces.[322] For the Allied Forces and the US, Korea was used as a symbolic pawn to taunt Japan and in an effort to fuel this idea erroneous emphatic declarations such as the following were made:

> The Korean is racially distinct from both the Japanese and the Chinese, although he has some ancestry in common with both. In both physical and psychological characteristics he is much closer to the white peoples than either of his neighbours, and some anthropologists believe that the prehistoric Korean racial strain was very largely Caucasian, and probably Tajik in origins.[323]

These types of assumptions only highlighted the uncertainty with which to consider Korea: a foe or a friend? On the one hand, the Allied Forces saw non-Japanese nationals such as the Koreans as 'liberated' yet since they were 'Japanese subjects' they were also considered and treated as enemies which further confused the position of the Koreans and in turn caused the Koreans to manifest strong anti-Japanese sentiments to emphasise that they need to be considered independently from Japan. To further complicate this animosity, the US Military Government in Korea stated that Japanese officials were to remain in position after the liberation due to the fact that Koreans could only occupy low-ranking positions due to their limited training. Although the Japanese were inevitably removed from these positions, the Koreans started to resent the Americans for favouring their war enemy over them. After the war, the situation of Japanese-Korean prisoners of war was of big concern due to the sensitive nature of the role that they played. Some upheld the notion of protecting the POWs from revenge-seeking local Koreans who would see them as traitors, and to a certain extent, even

[322] Ryang, p. 28.

[323] ibid., p. 23.

the US was unsure of their loyalty. Equally, there were concerns for the safety of the Japanese residing in Korea who might have been at risk of patriotic Korean attack, which meant expediting their repatriation. In any case, the liberation of Korea gave rise to ample questions about the sensitive nature of the relationship between the two nations and opened the debate to an international audience. Domestically, repatriated Koreans were classified in terms of education and equally the time of immigration with some activists proclaiming that Japanese-Koreans should not stand for office or take leading roles in the new Korea due to prejudice and resistance that they might encounter from the locals.

A report in 1945 by the Office of Strategic Services (known later on as the CIA) entitled 'Aliens in Japan' uncovered that many Koreans that entered Japan since the early part of the century had the intention of returning home; however, at the same time there were many illegal Korean immigrants in Japan and, due to the labour needs of the war, Japan in March 1945 lifted all restraints on Korean immigrants which caused the Korean population to rise to more than two million.[324] These findings emphasised that Japan made amendments to local policies to accommodate a Korean labour force and equally assisted the flow of Korean immigration. Furthermore, the report reiterated the strain on the Korean-Japanese relations due to the self-inflicted alienation of the Korean population caused by the overdriven Japanese efforts to assimilate the Korean immigrants in addition to poverty, education and skill-based inferiority to the Japanese, which was difficult to conceal. The report also revealed that with time Korean residents started to opt for permanent residency in order to guarantee economic stability, which in turn gave rise to Korean families in contrast to the previous big population of single migrants. Similarly, the Koreans started to assimilate by perfecting their knowledge of Japanese to gain better chances at escaping poverty.

The situation of the Japanese-Koreans became even more complicated due to the U.S. Occupation policy, which ordered the closure of Korean schools thus recommending Korean

[324] ibid., p. 27.

children to be educated in Japanese schools with Korean language electives. The rationale brought forward for this action was to minimise social unrest which upheld the idea that if Korean residents were to be naturalised as Japanese citizens then their children must abide by educational laws set out by the Ministry of Education and in turn be educated in mainstream Japanese schools.[325] This resulted in alienating the Korean population even further from their ancestral and ethnic identity. Consequently, repatriation for the Korean residents became even more unrealistic due to this. Korean residents were also linked to black market activities and they were connected to leftist parties, which meant that their repatriation was seen unfavourably by Korea. Meanwhile in 1949 Prime Minster Yoshida Shigeru suggested that all residents who were unable to 'contribute to [Japan's] reconstruction' should be forcibly repatriated in addition to making outlandish claims that most Koreans in Japan were 'mostly Northern Korean' even though this is not true.[326] Although Douglas MacArthur, the chief of US occupation, did not agree with these suggestions the general sentiments regarding Korean residents were strained once again. Repatriation was made even more difficult for those who were not associated with the black market or Communist allegiance purely because those repatriating were only allowed to carry 1,000 Japanese Yen and any amount in excess was confiscated. This amount was deemed 'extremely inadequate to enable [the Korean] to begin life anew' as revealed in 'Critical Refugee Situation'.[327] In 1952 just before the end of the US Occupation, Japan and Korea achieved an accord, which mandated that Japan would offer permanent residency to qualified and non-communist Koreans and repatriate 'undesirable' residents. Japan succeeded in repatriating some of the communist residents without much foresight to the reception that they would receive in the Republic of Korea, which upheld an anti-communist ethos unlike Soviet occupied Northern Korea. Furthermore, Japan did not outline citizenship measures for those who were deemed 'desirable' residents.

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[325] Inokuchi, H 'Korean Ethnic Schools in Occupied Japan 1945-52', *Koreans in Japan*, ed. by Sonia Ryang (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 149.

[326] Ryang, p. 31.

[327] ibid.

Due to the cold war, Japan did not want to overtly repatriate any Korean residents to the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea; however, a great repatriation process took place in 1955 with the help of the Japanese Red Cross Society under the guise of a humanitarian project but in essence it became clear in 2004 that the aim was to repatriate 'undesirable' Korean residents who did not earn a living.[328] By 1959 an accord was signed to push forward this repatriation process with the endorsement of the DPRK which had industrial advancement in mind especially after the withdrawal of Chinese volunteers and equally saw this as an opportunity to interject improving relations between Japan and South Korea. The returnees to North Korea experienced a warmer welcome than those who returned to South Korea but with time the returnees came to realise the intricacy of the state run republic that sustained bias and inequality which in turn resulted in the repatriated to be forced in the lower stratum of society.

Although repatriation proved incredibly challenging for those returning to the Korean peninsula due to work, food and shelter shortages, it is estimated that 1.4 million which approximates to two-thirds of Koreans did return home after the liberation thus leaving behind about 600,000 Koreans who resided predominantly in Osaka, Tokyo, Aichi and Hyogo prefectures.[329] The image of the Korean resident in Japan was gravely tarnished throughout the years primarily due to annexation, forced immigration, unrealistic assimilation projects and general denigration of the Korean race by the Japanese government, which propelled general resentment.

[328] ibid., p. 47.

[329] ibid., p. 38.

Modern Day Zainichi

The Korean *Zainichi* in Japan today although 'culturally integrated' still remain segregated due to their ancestral background despite being second, third or even fourth generation Japanese residents. The *Zainichi* speak Japanese at home, attend Japanese schools, watch Japanese TV programmes and lead a life that is similar to that of any Japanese yet issues concerning assimilation and integration continue to haunt this community. Yasunori Fukuoka summarises the generational experience from the Japanese viewpoint:

> Japanese conventional wisdom has tended to divide the Zainichi Korean population roughly along the following lines: first generation, resentful of Japan and nostalgic for the motherland; second generation, disheartened by experiences of discrimination and poverty, and determined to establish the foundations for a successful life in Japan; third generation, well enough adjusted to Japanese society to get by without too many problems.[330]

These monolithic typologies are true to a certain extent; however, they overestimate the success of integration and assimilation on behalf of both parties concerned. What has become apparent from Fukuoka's five year study (1988-1993) of 150 of *Zainichi* Koreans is that younger generations have resolved to 'conflict avoidance' as a form of survival. That is to say, the *Zainichi* have experienced less discrimination by using a Japanese alias and not being forthcoming to those around them about their ancestral origins. In essence the young *Zainichi* experiences a dichotomy of an 'assimilated self' and a 'differentiated self'. The 'assimilated self' is nourished through speaking Japanese as a mother tongue and partaking in cultural and normative societal behaviour which in turn result in a way of acquiring a code of conduct and way of thinking that is synonymous with other Japanese people. However, simultaneously the *Zainichi*'s 'differentiated self' depends on Korean cultural values that are adhered to at home along with Korean schooling and involvement in ethnic organisations. Consequently, the *Zainichi* proclaim Korean values and ways of thinking that are different from the average Japanese, which result in realising a difference between oneself and the surrounding Japanese population. This dichotomy is vital in understanding the opposing forces that form modern

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330 Fukuoka, Yasunori, *Lives of Young Koreans in Japan,* trans by Tom Gill (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2000), p. 43.

day *Zainichi* identity. Furthermore, many Koreans have to internalise the discriminatory negative image that is deep-rooted in the Japanese psyche due to the aforementioned historical context, which results in a fusion of assimilatory and differential aspirations. In other words, some Koreans aspire to assimilate to the Japanese around them and as a result realise that assimilation is not possible however hard they try, therefore, they start aspiring to be different. In any case, it is almost impossible to distinguish which individuals assimilate and which differentiate because those who desire assimilation might find themselves in situations that emphasise their differences and vice versa. As we will see later with Shimazaki's fictional character Yonhi-Mariko in *Tsubame*, years of somewhat forced and self-imposed assimilation due to the stringent anti-Korean sentiments that arose after the Great Kanto Earthquake, her 'differentiated self' surfaced upon hearing about the exhumation of Korean bodies from her neighbour Monsieur Nakamura. This exemplifies how the *Zainichi* assimilation and differential aspirations are juggled depending on external and internal factors.

As more Korean-Japanese residents naturalise (estimated around 10,000 Koreans per annum),[331] more complicated issues arise with regards to their identity as 'legally Japanese' yet significantly other. The term *Zainichi* in itself is fairly monolithic because, according to the figures published by the Ministry of Justice in 2005, there were around 598,687 *Zainichi* living in Japan; however, this broad term encompasses permanent residents holding Korean nationality along with 'new-comer' and 'old-comer' Korean migrants.[332] In other words, the term does not distinguish between those born in Japan or not, nor does it classify pre-war/wartime Korean descendents. The figures along with the term also do not differentiate between Korean residents who have naturalised and hold Japanese passports or have a Japanese parent. In essence, the term can be understood as a misrepresented community that is blindly grouped under a stigmatised umbrella of 'people of Korean connection'. In an

[331] Ryang, p. 84.

[332] Chapman, p. 3.

attempt to decipher these differences new subheadings have come to light: *Zainichi Chōsenjin* (those affiliated to North Korea), *Zainichi Kankokujin* (those affiliated to South Korea), *Zainichi Kankoku Chōsenjin* (all encompassing North and South Korean affiliation) and finally *Zainichi Korian* (a term developed in the 1980s for all Koreans abroad).[333] Although these terms have shed light on Korean subgroupings, the affiliations tend to be by and large politically motivated which leaves the Korean-Japanese resident tormented due to a political classification that does not directly relate to their quotidian identity. As the Korean resident 'community' comes to terms with the past and their present in Japan, debate about identity sparked by the new generations in the 1970s proposed a new interpretation of *Zainichi* identity. What has come to be known as the 'Third Way' (or *daisan no* michi) as proposed by Kim Tong-Myung in 1979, invites the second-, third- and subsequent-generations of *Zainichi* to live in Japan as home and identify as neither Korean nor Japanese but only as '*Zainichi*'. By so doing, the proposed '*Zainichi*' is recommended not to naturalise because by becoming fully Japanese they would inevitably suppress their Korean ethnicity and equally this new '*Zainichi*' should distance themselves from entirely Korean or Japanese spaces.[334] The 'Third Way' can be considered as a step in the right direction for this confused 'community' but this prescribed formula undermines the complexity of human experience, which is affected by an array of external and internal factors. That is to say, even if a Korean-Japanese resident objectively tries to differentiate themselves from other members of the '*Zainichi* community' they will have to be subjective at times and subscribe to his/her conflicted aspirations to assimilate. Sonia Ryang gives an example of this through one of her subjects Mika who is a self-identified 'ex-*Zainichi*'[335] who was faced by questions regarding her identity when looking for a future husband. Mika and her family distanced themselves over the years from *Zainichi* organisations yet they feared that Japanese suitors would discredit her because of her Korean ethnic background. Equally, those within the *Zainichi* community endorsed a culture and

[333] ibid., p. 4.

[334] ibid., p. 45.

[335] Ryang, p. 82.

identity that Mika did not relate to. If we were to say that Mika chose the 'Third Way' for herself, this self-declared sentiment could not pragmatically translate itself into real life. Mika's 'ex-*Zainichi*' identity managed to affirm her 'assimilation aspiration' yet this highlights that her ethnic homeland is permanently lost and that her current 'adopted homeland' limits her from fully experiencing the authenticity of being Japanese because of racial and ethnic limitations even though invisible. So, what is to come of Mika or the 'Third Way'?

Although Korean-Japanese residents like Mika have come to accept the negativity that is deeply ingrained in Japanese society, they have managed to concoct a unique self-identity that oscillates between assimilation and differential aspirations. Having said that, on 17th September 2000 Japanese media reported that the North Korean regime had abducted thirteen Japanese citizens from the costal prefectures in the 1970s and 1980s for training spies in Japanese language. The media sensationalised the story especially because the North Korean leader Kim Jong Il nonchalantly admitted this to his Japanese counterpart Koizumi Junichiro during their first ever meeting.[336] This unsubstantiated confession gave rise to renewed anti-Korean sentiment, which saw Korean schools and offices of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryun-founded in 1955 by nationalistic Koreans who aspired to the repatriation of all Koreans to a unified communist Korea) receive death threats and anonymous harassment. Even though these associations do not endorse the North Korean administration or leader, the Japanese were quick to point the finger at the local Korean residents. This animosity that sits closely below the surface can be contrasted by the new Korean culture adoring mania that swept Japan through Korean soap operas in recent years. It is estimated that the South Korean soap opera *Winter Sonata* (*Fuyu no sonata)* generated an astonishing 122.5 billion Yen in 2004.[337] The series' protagonist, Bae Yong Joon, briefly visited Japan in November 2004 and he was warmly received by 3,500 adoring Japanese female ans. These two conflicting pictures of Japanese attitudes towards Koreans

[336] ibid., p. 62.

[337] ibid., p. 63.

(and to a certain extent 'Koreanness') undoubtedly confuse the *Zainichi* psyche. Furthermore, some Korean-Japanese celebrities in the world of sport, music and academia have started to revert back to their Korean names after gaining celebrity status, which highlights a level of tolerance but at the same time they do not represent Z*ainichi* reality because these individuals are protected by their celebrity status from discrimination that is ripe in society.[338] On the one hand, Korean-Japanese represent scapegoats when the relations between Japan and Korea (be it North or South Korea) are strained due to the re-emergence of political or historical debate. Yet on the other hand, the glorification and reception of South Korean 'pop culture' suggest that Japan has ridden itself of discriminatory ideas that developed over the nineteenth century due the overwrought political interaction between the two nations.

The Korean *Zainichi* identity in modern day Japan is undeniably jaded by its political past and although the new generations aspire to take bold steps towards assimilation; discrimination and self-doubt create boundaries between the Korean-Japanese residents and the Japanese whether consciously or subconsciously. Individual identity is interwoven with many external factors and although neither the Japanese nor the *Zainichi* have come to a resolution in terms of *Zainichi* identity crisis, which is prevalent in all social and age groups, it is safe to assume that debate has helped identify deep-rooted issues. The words of Jung-Mi, Japanese born Korean interviewed at the age of 40 in 1989, summarise *Zainichi* reality in present day Japan:

> First there's my ego. That's the basis of my thinking. The fact that I'm a Zainichi Korean, and a woman- these are just happenstance. My self-awareness as a Zainichi Korean is founded on the experience of discrimination. When I look for an apartment, I get turned down because I'm Korean. When I go for a job, if it's a European or American who interviews me, there's no problem-I get offered the job 99 percent of the time. But if I'm interviewed by a Japanese, even when the job is with a foreign company. I get turned down 90 percent of the time. So you have to call it discrimination.[339]

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[338] Hong, Mikang *Japanese Immigration Policy and its Psychological Impact on Koreans in Japan* (San Diego: UMI, 2006), p. 46.

[339] Fukuoka, p. 212.

II. Zainichi-Burakumin Parallels

If we consider the *Buraku* communities who are descendants of the *eta* and *hinin* groups, which have been labelled as *kegareta* ('polluted') or *hito ni arazu* ('inhuman'), we begin to understand the complexity of Japanese social structure.[340] The *Buraku* have been ejected from Japanese society and remain to be seen as a 'contaminated' race which exists in the periphery of Japanese social order. This idea of a 'polluted race' has its origins in Buddhist notions of the polluting effect of death (s*esshō*) and Shinto concern of purity (*shinsei*) which reinforced the stigma attached to those who handled animal carcasses and dead bodies who were deemed 'unclean' thus leading to an equivocal preconception which remains to haunt this specific community to this very day. Early records of discrimination of the antecedents of the *Buraku* community delineate the intricate exclusionary methods imposed by those who wished to maintain a form of *cordon sanitaire*: *bekka* (avoidance of social interaction), *bekki* (refusal of social contact), *bekkon* (avoidance of intermarriage) and *bekkyosho* (maintenance of separate dwellings).[341] Even though Japanese 'racism' and prejudice towards foreign residents is at times justified due to the self-imposed isolation during the Tokugawa period until 1868, we see social segregation as inherent in Japanese society through *Burakumin* ('humble people') discrimination. By understanding this endemic social hierarchical system that has existed for centuries between Japanese communities, we begin to comprehend the intricacy of *Zainichi* segregation. That is to say, prejudice and discrimination were not consequential to Japan opening its doors to the world. In fact, we can find parallels between the exclusionary practices employed to segregate the *Burakumin* and the *Zainichi*. Avoidance and refusal tactics in terms of *bekka* and *bekki* can be supported by the words of Yonhi Kim: 'Dans la maison du patron, il y a avait des enfants. Je ne jouais jamais avec eux. Les parents leur interdisaient de m'adresser la parole'.[342] Even though the motive behind this form of segregation is not clearly

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[340] Amos, Timothy D. *Embodying Difference: The Making of Burakumin in Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2011), pp. 76-77.

[341] ibid.

[342] *Tsubame*, p. 14.

stated, it can be deduced that it is race related rather than class because there is no evidence to suggest that Yonhi and her mother were ostracised due to the mother's occupation as a sweeper but rather to being a member of a minority.

Even as an adult Yonhi-Mariko fears being shunned away from Japanese society and therefore maintains her Korean origins as a secret: 'Je ne parle à personne de mon origine'.[343] Although Shimazaki does not make direct reference to *bekkon* in *Tsubame*, Yonhi-Mariko never tells neither her lover and father of her son Monsieur Horibe nor her husband Kenji Takahashi of her Korean origins and justifies her decision by stating that 'Pourtant, je ne voulais pas partager avec lui mon fardeau'.[344] As we saw previously with the case of Mika in the previous section, *bekkon* is not consciously exercised in present day Japan; however, the likelihood of resolving marriage plans due to Korean origins is commonplace even today. Yonhi-Mariko's words along with Mika's anxiety in terms of revealing their Korean origins allude to the fact that intermarriage between the two communities is frowned upon. Although statistics between the 1960s and 1990s suggest that there is a significant rise in terms of intermarriage trends between the Korean and Japanese, there are many causes for concern to be considered.[345] Intermarriage reported by the Japanese government is in a sense inconclusive because some marriages might go unreported, some Koreans have adopted Japanese names and naturalised therefore do not technically fall under the *Zainichi* classification; furthermore, the monolithic term 'Korean' itself encompasses Koreans who immigrate from Korea to Japan and require a spouse visa as well as second, third or fourth generation Koreans who were born and bred in Japan. Nevertheless, there is a gender-related trend that needs to be acknowledged. Korean women seem to have managed to cross the ethnic divide in terms of marriage more than Korean men. These gender-based barriers to marriage seem to find their roots in both communities because women are thought to be more accepting of the husband's

[343] ibid., p. 60.

[344] ibid., p. 68.

[345] Fukuoka, pp. 34-35.

traditions and customs thus they are more likely to uphold Japanese family traditions. Data suggests that in every 11 *Zainichi* Koreans, 7 marry Japanese and only 4 marry another *Zainichi*; furthermore, there is an implication that many *Zainichi* men simply cannot find marriage partners mostly because they live in isolation within their ethnic locality which limits their choices of partners.[346] Therefore, the hesitation noted by the fictional character Yonhi-Mariko and Mika (the *Zainichi* participant in the study about young Koreans), with regards to revealing their Korean origins in fear of *bekkon,* highlights the difficulty of intermarriage between the two communities. It is clear that Shimazaki wanted to shed light on this societal issue in her novels. The exchange between Yonhi and her mother prior to the earthquake with regards to intermarriage also highlights Korean resentment towards a politicised royal intermarriage.

> -On dit que le Japon traite la Corée comme un membre de sa famille et que le mariage de la princesse Masako et du prince Un en est un bon exemple.
> Ma mère secoue la tête, l'air dur :
> -Non, non. C'est un mariage politique imposé par le Japon. En Corée, la famille impériale n'a jamais accepté un mariage international. De plus, ce prince était le dernier héritier de la dynastie Chosōn. Quelle impudence ! Quelle humiliation ! Tu vois ce que le Japon trame.
> […]
> -Avant ce mariage, le prince avait été fiancé à une Coréenne de grande famille. Imagine-toi les sentiments d'un couple qui a été séparé d'une telle façon, surtout les sentiments de cette femme qui avait attendu son mariage plus de dix ans.[347]

This exchange suggests that the Japanese used the princess as a way of controlling Korea; similarly, it highlights the unease which both communities felt about this reunion. Although this marriage is not particularly relevant in *Tsubame*, it only serves to accentuate issues relating to Japanese repression of Korea and disparage ideas of institutionalised *bekkon* with regards to Koreans. As mentioned in previous chapters, Shimazaki tends to introduce both sided of the issues raised so that the reader can reach their own conclusion based on the facts provided. However, underlying antipathy of Japanese society in terms of intermarriage as

[346] ibid., p.37.

[347] *Tsubame*, p. 17.

manifested by Yonhi-Mariko's years of secrecy and Mika's uncertainty about revealing her true origins, allude to a deep-rooted avoidance of intermarriage. Interestingly, Shimazaki's plot also shows that many *Zainichi* have kept their origins a secret in order to cross the ethnic divide which suggests that there might be many Japanese people like Yohni-Mariko's son Yukio and granddaughters Natsuko, Tusbaki and Fuyuki who are unaware of their mixed origins.

In *Tsubame*, the protagonists suffer from *bekkyosho* due to the lack of interaction with their neighbours who tend to only reside in Yohni Kim's dwelling on a temporary basis. This notion is supported by Yonhi's words:

> Le *nagoya* (rangée d'habitations mitoyennes sous le même toit) est toujours à l'ombre d'un haut bâtiment situé derrière. Il s'agit d'une usine de médicaments chimiques. Nous habitons dans la pièce au bout du *nagaya*. À part nous, tout le monde est Japonais. Ce sont de gens de la province qui restent ici temporairement…Nous ne rendons pas visite aux voisins. En fait, ils nous évitent.[348]

This deep sense of physical and psychological alienation that is portrayed by Yohni-Mariko alerts us of the resemblance between *Buraku* and *Zainichi* segregation. *Buraku* dwellings were mostly built in the outskirts of castle towns and along highways and mostly in areas not suitable for human habitation such as ill-drained low damp ground, marshland, river junctions, valleys prone to landslides and with limited hours of sunshine, which have resulted in their destruction at times of typhoons or floods.[349] The dire housing conditions inflicted upon the *Burakumin* have evolved in recent years primarily because local governments have started to promote environmental development projects which meant the demolition of old overpopulated poor housing areas and the establishment of new housing systems. Despite

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[348] *Tsubame,* pp. 12-13.

[349] Suginohara, Juichi *Today's Buraku Problem: Feudalistic Status Discrimination in Japan* (Kyoto: The Institute of Buraku Problem, 2002), p. 46.

these new initiatives, this community remains segregated within local communities. These segregated housing areas can be comparable to that of the *Zainichi*, even though there is no evidence that either group co-exists with one another. When considering housing segregation in the case of the *Zainichi*, we need to understand that there is an institutional basis for this problem as Tatsukuni Komori explains:

> Rights of Koreans to the loans offered by the Citizen's Financial Bank and Housing Financial Bank as well as to rental of public condominiums and houses were only admitted very recently, and confined to those who are permanent residents or who have equivalent qualification for residence in Japan. This means that many Koreans residing in Japan on the basis of permanent residence are virtually precluded from enjoying the benefits of low interest loans and inexpensive apartments.[350]

Such legislative hurdles candidly discriminate against Korean residents causing spatial segregation which lead *Zainichi* communities to reside in specific areas. We have a better understanding of these accommodations when Yonhi-Mariko accompanies Madame Kim to her house. Yonhi-Mariko explains:

> Nous sommes dans un quartier où les maisons sont entassées en désordre […] Elle me conduit dans la ruelle très étroite, remplie d'ombre. Il fait frais. Je marche lentement derrière elle. Par terre traînent des boîtes en carton et des bouteilles de bière vides. La ruelle est bordée de plusieurs maisons sans étage. Je regard les fenêtres, les toits, les portes. Quand une odeur me frappe, je m'arrête et demande:
> -Qu'est-ce que c'est, cette odeur?
> La vielle femme dit:
> -C'est l'odeur du *kimichi.* Pas de repas sans riz et *kimichi*!
> […]
> C'est une vieille maison avec une fenêtre en façade. Le bois de la charpente est blanchi. Je regards le toit. Sur la surface de la gouttière, il y a des traces de réparation.[351]

The detailed description above gives an image of a 'shanty town' due to the compact quarters, the disarray and smell of traditional Korean food. Even though Yonhi-Mariko treads with caution and expresses a sense of unease, we soon realise that Madame Kim's neighbourhood

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[350] Komori, Tatsukuni, *'Towards a Joint Struggle against Discrimination: Standing together against the Reality of Discrimination in Japan', The Road to a Discrimination-Free Future* (Osaka: Buraku Liberation Research Centre, 1983), p. 27.

[351] *Tsubame,* pp. 84-85.

was once Yonhi-Mariko's old home. This image of a segregated dwelling is nevertheless enhanced by a sense of camaraderie and ease. Yonhi-Mariko remains perplexed when Madame Kim slides open her unlocked front door; furthermore, a neighbour soon walks into the house bringing corncobs that she wanted to share. Interestingly, Madame Kim is quick to point out that her neighbour is Japanese after her departure. Although we start to form an image of an impoverished Korean slum, the fact that the neighbour is Japanese highlights that there are poor ethnically Japanese residents that live alongside the Koreans in these areas. The fact that despite the passing of all these years, the area is still inhabited by Koreans as in the days of Yonhi-Mariko's childhood gives us a sense of spatial segregation that continues to exist in juxtaposition with racial divides. The formations of these dwellings consequentially have many discriminatory repercussions such as limitations in terms of intermarriage as highlighted previously especially for *Zainichi* men. As a direct result of the Great Kanto Earthquake, Yonhi-Mariko lived in the church until the age of fifteen. Although her time at the church protected her from poverty, anti-Korean racism and granted her a new Japanese identity, the church community was separated from mainstream Japanese society as well. In other words, a sense of *bekkyosho* could be associated with church residence as well as her first home because the church is an autonomous community that is separated from mainstream Japanese society through the Christian faith and the headship of the church by a foreign priest - nicknamed Monsieur Tsubame. This in turn leads us to deduce that Yohni-Mariko suffered from another form of discrimination that is commonly associated with *Burakumin* groups.

Timothy Amos proposes that 'outcasteness is not only a spatial state of exclusion, but also a collection of sequential moments that drive excluded individuals and communities further from their original state of belonging and the likelihood of re-occupying "acceptable spaces" of "normality"'.[352] This analysis is valid in the case of Yonhi-Mariko because we see her early social exclusion prior to the Great Kanto Earthquake and similarly after the event due to anti-

[352] Amos, p. 79.

Korean sentiments which have resulted in her loss of identity and inability to truly belong to Japanese society whether as a Korean-Japanese or 'fully Japanese' by forging a Japanese name and existence. Resonance of loss and confusion are echoed by the words: 'Mon regard se fixe sur le nid. "*Tsubame…"* Une douleur court dans mon corps. Je me dis "Yohni Kim, où est-elle ? Mariko Kanazawa, où est-elle ? Mariko Takahashi, qui est-elle?"'.[353] This sense of loss and disillusion, which Yohni-Mariko expresses, echoes the confusion and torment of the *Buraku.* If we study the following words of Kawamoto Yoshikazi, a *Buraku* activist and writer who lived in the outskirts of Tsuyama in Okayama prefecture, we can draw parallels between *Zainichi* and *Buraku* segregation.

> About the time I entered elementary school, I began to sense that the village in which I grew up was being looked at differently by the people around me. It is difficult to say precisely what made me feel this way, but as I lived from day to day, I noticed little things, like stares that I had never experienced before in my own village. What kind of stares? Of course it's extremely difficult to put my finger on what these stares were, even if I felt them strange myself. Virtually impossible […] [354]

Parallels in terms of experience can be drawn between Yonhi's sentiments of alienation and that of Kawamoto in the opening pages of *Tsubame* where Yohni Kim sees a group of Japanese girls on their way to school. These similarities once again focus our attention on deep-rooted racism and segregation that forms the foundation of Japanese society. In a case study about Young *Zainichi*, a participant named Mika Oh (not to be confused with the previously mentioned Mika) comments on how she kept her identity a secret even within a club to study *Burakumin* issues at university: 'I had never heard of anti-Burakumin discrimination until then. I found the activists kind of appealing…since they were campaigning against another form of discrimination, I guessed they wouldn't discriminate against *me* if I told them I was Korean. But in the end, I didn't even tell them. Maybe I'm just a coward…anyway, it was just easier to hide it…'.[355] This quote allows us to draw important conclusions: firstly, *Zainichi* and

[353] *Tsubame,* p. 58.

[354] Amos, p. 78.

[355] Fukuoka, p. 166.

Burakumin discrimination share many similarities yet for the *Zainichi* the *Burakumin* are ethnically Japanese hence their plight is different in nature to their own; secondly, younger *Zainichi* generations have adopted a silent assimilation strategy which could be seen as counteractive to their cause.

Kawamoto who is Japanese through ethnicity and birth has experienced being ostracised purely due to his *Burakumin* background. Despite the differences in historical and circumstantial terms between the two minorities, correlations can be noted in terms of experience. Both parties experience a sense of alienation that is propelled by being different from the majority. Moreover, the struggle that each group suffers from originates in some form of past experience. Kawamoto advocates the importance of the past and the implications that led to the present. Hence by understanding the past we can reach a better understanding of the status quo. In the case of the *bukarumin,* the stigma associated with this social group due to misinterpreted Buddhist beliefs linked to their occupations has led this ethnically Japanese group to suffer great prejudice.

Kawamoto's emphasis on earlier experience in a sense is similar to that of Pak's who also stresses the importance of *Zainichi* first-generational experience when understanding the here and now. It is understandable why the roots of societal prejudice are indispensable to demonstrate the causes and consequential behaviour of both the majority and the minority in question. However, it is difficult to correlate the origins of *Burakumin* and *Zainichi* experiences due to generational, ethnic and temporal disparities even though there are many convergences as we have seen above. The idea of 'returning to the source' for inspiration as referred to by Kawamoto and equally by Pak leads us to believe that new generations of those minority groups are losing sight of what they should be fighting for. Kawamoto advocates that a solution for the *Burakumin* can be found through democracy and the upholding of the rights of this group as an integral part of Japanese society that can no longer continue to exist in the margins of society. On the other hand, Pak and some *Zainichi* activists believe that identifying as *Zainichi* and existing as a unique entity without assimilating to Japanese majority is crucial.

The *Burakumin* in essence cannot dissociate from being Japanese although they need to fight against social prejudice while the *Zainichi* can blame monolithic nomenclature and economic migration as a direct result of colonisation as principal causes of identity confusion. Although parallels can be drawn in terms of discrimination between the *Zainichi* and *Burakumin* as peripheral communities in Japanese society, these comparisons have to be considered carefully in order to avoid unjust generalisations. Having said that, it is important to understand that there is an inherent culture of discrimination in Japanese society that has been well-established prior to any expansionist ideals that came to life as we saw in Chapter 2 'The Legacy of the Second World War'. Furthermore, Komori highlights the role of the ruling class in terms of social segregation.

> The problem of social discrimination and the violation of human rights in Japan stems from a single source, the divide-and-rule policy (…defined as 'the social justification for the existence of discrimination') adopted by the ruling class, but it takes on a wide variety of forms. These include the following: anti-Buraku discrimination, against which we at the Buraku Liberation League (BLL) are struggling in order to achieve total emancipation; discrimination against Koreans in Japan, who number about 600,000; discrimination against Ainu, an aboriginal minority group in Japan; similar discrimination against the Wirota and Nikubun races; discriminatory policies against Okinawans, continuously maintained by the Japanese government; the problem of human rights of the second-generation victims of the atomic bombings; discrimination against the disabled.[356]

The crushing defeat that Japan suffered during the Second World War resulted in the establishment of a new constitution that upheld fundamental human rights and renunciation of war. In fact, the Japanese Constitution states: 'all Japanese are equal under the law, and they shall not be discriminated in political, economic or social relations by the difference of race, creed, sex and social status or lineage'.[357] Even though the Japanese Constitution endeavours to protect all Japanese citizens there are two primary problems; first, institutional discrimination that is powered by the ruling class; second, a discrepancy exists between policy and practice. These immeasurable issues continue to fuel discrimination in Japanese

[356] Komori, p. 23.

[357] Suginohara, p. 11.

society; yet, it would be unreasonable to ignore the changes that have taken place in Japanese society to decrease discrimination towards *Zainichi* and *Burakumin*; similarly, open debate about these matters has paved the way for change. However, Japanese society is in constant struggle with itself because of its presumed homogeneity that rejects the idea of 'otherness' and heterogeneity to a certain extent. The idea of 'otherness' in Japanese community will be discussed in the following chapter by examining other peripheral communities such as the Christians represented by Nobu in *Tonbo.* Japanese 'hidden apartheid' is fundamental in understanding the sentiments of Yonhi-Mariko and equally Nobu as marginalized members of Japanese community. This fundamental struggle in terms of homogeneity and heterogeneity helps us understand the backdrop of *Zainichi* reality as we delve into a detailed examination of the characters of *Tsubame.*

III. A Francophone Zainichi voice

In *Tsubame*, the third novel in the pentalogy *Le Poids des Secrets,* Shimazaki sheds light on *Zainichi* life in Japan through the eyes of her protagonist Yonhi Kim who leads a double life due to discrimination. Yonhi-Markio's life exposes the struggles of this community throughout the years, starting from the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 through to the 1980s. Shimazaki plays the role of a cultural ambassador who reaches out to the Francophone reader by voicing the struggle of the *Zainichi* in Japan as a direct result of intergenerational tension and prejudice. Although the *Zainichi* debate has taken centre stage throughout the years in academic journals, books and round table discussions, thus forming a fundamental part of present day Japanese social identity, this type of *Zainichi* writing has been by and large marginalized in Japan.[358] This in effect raises questions about institutionalised discrimination. For this reason, by highlighting the prejudice towards the *Zainichi* which has existed since the annexation of Korea until present day, Shimazaki evokes the reader's sympathy, exposes the marginalization of this sensitive topic and opens the debate to an international audience.

[358] Chapman, p. 8.

As discussed previously, the *Zainichi* community today continues to oscillate between assimilation and differentiation. In fact, some Koreans have endeavoured to avoid conflict and assimilate, thus drawing on their 'racial indistinguishability'; that is to say, a Korean with a Japanese name who hides their ancestral heritage is indistinguishable from the average Japanese person in terms of physical features and 'race'. This ability to be 'inconspicuous' has undoubtedly helped those who endeavour to assimilate through naturalisation. On the other hand, some *Zainichi* have struggled with the unjust treatment that they have been subjected to since the Second World War and consequently fight for equality and recognition as 'fully Japanese' citizens. Similarly, intellectuals such as Kang Sang-Jung, a highly respected *Zainichi* scholar, advocate the idea of an ethno-national *Zainichi* identity that is neither Japanese nor Korean.[359] However, new *Zainichi* generations have been said to show a certain level of apathy towards fighting social discrimination due to factors such as: 1) the realisation that Japanese society is rigid and unyielding to change, 2) many have spent up to forty years trying to attain permanent residency and stability in Japan which has consequently diluted any passion they had for the cause. The behaviour of the current *Zainichi* community that has favoured 'invisibility' by avoiding political involvement (in recognising and fighting against discrimination), has been compared to that of Asian Americans who have been acknowledged for being less assertive, less autonomous, more conforming and less expressive in comparison to their European American counterparts.[360] The Asian American community has become apathetic and passive over time because the majority of the members of the community are convinced that they are unable to change neither racism nor discrimination and due to this mentality they avoid confronting these issues altogether. Although they might be perceived as a 'model minority' because of their assumed assimilation, educational and economical success, a disparity exists amongst Asian Americans between those who have succeeded and those who remain unsuccessful in assimilating to American society. In other words, there is no guarantee that passivity would grant automatic assimilation. Therefore, returning to the

[359] Ryang, p. 173.

[360] Hong, p. 49.

Zainichi community, it is important to recognise that the new generational apathy might not be the solution to the prosaic prejudice that exists in Japanese society today towards the *Zainichi* as highlighted by testimonials of the aforementioned young *Zainichi* such as Mika and Jung-Mi.

It is worth noting that *Zainichi* identity conflict exists in the forefront of an intricate backdrop of intergenerational differences, affiliation to North or South Korea and the legacy of Japanese and Korean nationalism, colonialism and patriarchy.[361] This juxtaposition is the focal point of *Tsubame,* which sees Yonhi-Mariko awakening her 'differentiated self' after years of assimilation and avoidance tactics. Yohni-Mariko's generational journey through a troubled Japanese past paves the way for re-examining the past and re-opening the debate before an international audience. Yonhi-Mariko's awakening equally awakens the Francophone reader's interest in the *Zainichi* generational identity struggle as experienced by Yohni-Mariko due to external discriminatory factors which highlight cracks in the veneer of Japanese homogeneity and 'unity'.

Yonhi-Mariko's Learned Helplessness and Psychic Numbing

Research led by Abramson, Seligman and Teasdale (1978) into learned helplessness has revealed that the perception of present and past noncontingency are key to this process. Attribution that the individual makes for noncontingency determines expectations for future noncontingency; as a result, an individual exhibits indicators of learned helplessness.[362] In the case of Yonhi-Mariko, we can directly relate her dormant Korean identity to learned helplessness. Yonhi-Mariko's learned helplessness can be seen under two distinctive categories: personal helplessness and universal helplessness.

The opening pages of the first section of *Tsubame,* which outline the life of Yonhi Kim before and after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, highlight the dire living situation of Yonhi, her

[361] Chapman, p. 3.

[362] Hong, p. 50.

mother and uncle. Yonhi recalls her mother's comments 'si on pouvait renaître, j'aimerais renaître en oiseau'[363] as she observes a group of swallows overhead and adds: 'J'aimerais bien voyager librement comme elles'.[364] These initial remarks draw the reader's attention to a palpable state of imprisonment and limitation that Yonhi suffers at a young age. This in turn sets the tone of *Tsubame* and uncovers the troubled existence of Yonhi. Equally, this opening underlines what can be deduced as Yonhi's 'inherited learned helplessness'. In other words, by emulating her mother's desires to be reborn as a swallow, adding to this sentiment and emphasising the mother's words through the usage of the word 'librement' we begin to understand that Yonhi has subconsciously started her life emulating the despair that her mother suffered as a Korean immigrant in Japan. As Yonhi observes her surrounding and poetically notices the swallows, the blooming flowers, whilst crossing a pond on her way to her uncle's house, she recalls another comment that her mother made the previous evening: 'On n'a pas trouvé des rats dans la maison depuis plusieurs semaines'.[365] Although in retrospect it can be deduced that this reference was made to highlight the imminence of the earthquake, it equally draws our attention to the protagonists' dire domestic conditions. The discrepancy between the swallow's freedom, the beauty of nature and the reality of the rats brings to light the harshness of Yonhi's world.

On her return from her uncle's house, Yonhi sees a group of girls of a similar age dressed in kimonos and *hakama* merrily singing en route to school and Yonhi reflects on the fact that she does not attend school but instead states: 'J'étudie à la maison. Ma mère m'apprend les écritures japonaise et coréenne […] Pendant la journée, je fais le ménage, la lessive et les courses'.[366] To a certain extent, we can infer that the young Japanese girls on their way to school are as free as the swallows and Yonhi by staying home and having to do chores is the

[363] *Tsubame*, p. 9.

[364] ibid.

[365] ibid., p. 10.

[366] ibid., p. 11.

rat that aspires to become a swallow. This notion becomes clearer as Yonhi's family history begins to unfold. The uncle who was a journalist and a writer in his homeland had to become a labourer and equally the mother who was a teacher of Home Economics had to become a sweeper as a result of immigrating to Japan after the annexation of Korea. Yonhi explains how her mother and uncle had no choice but to escape Korea because they were pro-independence activists:

> Mon oncle a été interdit de publication. Ma mère a dû cesser de travailler à l'école. Mes grands-parents avaient été souvent convoqués par les Japonais à leur propos. Ma mère et mon oncle ont dû quitter la ville, mais ils ne savaient pas où aller. Par hasard, ils ont rencontré un de leurs camarades qui tentait d'embarquer sur un bateau clandestin en route vers le Japon. Ils ont décidé de fuir le pays avec lui et c'est ainsi qu'ils sont venus au Japon.[367]

The mere fact that Yonhi's mother and uncle exhibited anti-Japanese sentiments before arriving in Japan undoubtedly added to their frustration as they suffered economic hardship and social injustice in the land of the oppressor. However, Yonhi's uncle reminds her that their misfortune was only due to the circumstances: 'Nous sommes tombés dans la misère à cause de la colonisation japonaise. Mais n'oublie pas que nous sommes de bonne souche'.[368]

In addition to financial austerity, social segregation between the Japanese and the Koreans was ripe at the time as Yonhi explains: 'À part nous, tout le monde est Japonais […] Nous ne rendons pas visite aux voisins. En fait, ils nous évitent'.[369] Yohni also underlines how Japanese children were told not to play with her. We see from the circumstances surrounding Yonhi that she was made to adapt to a passive role in Japanese society as a second-class citizen from an early age. In essence, Yonhi subconsciously was made to develop her own definition of 'learned helplessness' by inheriting her mother and uncle's. That is to say, as pro-independence activists both the mother and uncle had succumbed to prejudice and Japanese

[367] ibid., p. 15.

[368] ibid., p. 13.

[369] ibid.

repression rather than maintaining their political agenda as fighters for the cause that resulted in their flight from their homeland. We notice the early onset of a passive role that some *Zainichi* residents have adopted as discussed in the previous section when compared to American Asians who are seen by the majority as an ideal minority because they do not partake in politicising the injustice they suffer. However, while American Asians are commended for their apathy, the Korean residents in 1920's Japan were treated as an invisible cast in society. It is crucial to highlight the fact that social hierarchy and casting systems are deep-rooted in Japanese society as discussed in the previous section of this chapter entitled '*Zainichi-Burakumin Parallels'*. Nonetheless, this institutionalised form of prejudice does not justify the apathy expressed by Yonhi's family.

It seems as though the mother and uncle have been subjugated to a pattern which dictates that those belonging to an ethnic minority which is traumatized by poverty and discrimination are more likely to experience learned helplessness.[370] Both mother and uncle exhibit symptoms of learned helplessness because they have accepted their inferior societal role. At the same time, they both remind Yonhi of their Korean past and to a certain extent glorify their homeland. Yonhi reminisces about the time when her uncle lived with them and wrote for long hours as well as: 'Nous chantions *Arirang.* La chanson de notre patrie'.[371] It can be assumed that upon arrival the uncle remained loyal to his political cause through writing and singing patriotic songs but with time as he realised the greater power of Japanese discrimination he started to conform to the reality of his situation and in turn exhibit signs of learned helplessness. Similarly, the mother has highlighted her wishes for Yonhi to return to Korea: '[…] je ne veux pas que tu vives ici comme moi'.[372] The mother's words emphasise that even in her absence Yonhi should return to their homeland. Furthermore, the mother also

[370] Hong, p. 50.

[371] *Tsubame,* p. 17.

[372]ibid.

exclaims: 'Rien n'est plus précieux que la liberté. N'oublie jamais ça, Yonhi'[373] thus insisting that Yonhi should fight against Japanese colonization and repression. However, after the Great Kanto Earthquake at the height of anti-Korean racism, the mother reminds her daughter: 'Yonhi, ici tu dois faire semblant d'être Japonaise. Le mieux, c'est de garder le silence. Tu comprends? [...] J'ai écrit dans la lettre que ton nom est Markio Kanazawa. Ne prononce ton véritable nom, Yonhi Kim, devant personne'.[374] Although the calamitous events resulted in unreasonable reactions by the Japanese majority, we see that even the mother had come to terms with her inferior position as a Korean. Hence, Yonhi's learned helplessness could be directly related to the learned helplessness which consumed both her uncle and mother. We can therefore extrapolate that Yonhi Kim would have manifested learned helplessness even if the Great Kanto Earthquake did not take place because she would have continued to emulate her uncle and mother's stance in Japanese society. This deduction could support the ideas of Kang Sang-Jung, the *Zainichi* intellectual who advocates honouring the memory of the first generation as a focal point when discussing *Zainichi*'s present. Kang makes reference to the importance of the experience of the first generation in shaping our views and outlook. In the case of Yonhi-Mariko, it is clear that universal helplessness that she witnessed and experienced has in turn resulted in her personal learned helplessness. Furthermore, when Yohni-Mariko chooses to expose her true identity to Madame Kim in the latter part of the second section of *Tsubame*, her mother's letters and Korean newspapers serve as a focal point thus highlighting the power of first generational experience. Yonhi-Mariko by physically keeping her mother's notebook throughout her life, despite keeping her identity a secret, held on to her mother's experience, which shaped her own experience and learned helplessness.

Inspite of these deductions concerning 'inherited learned helplessness' that Yonhi-Mariko experienced, which prevented her from proclaiming her Korean ancestry later in life; the tragic events that surrounded the Great Kanto Earthquake could have caused *psychic numbing*

[373] ibid., p. 18.

[374] ibid., p. 33.

which is understood to be the emotional distancing of a survivor from the experience of other victims.[375] This form of self-preserving mechanism has been experienced in the past by Hiroshima survivors, tortured prisoners of war and also as a pattern of social reaction to imminent or foreseeable danger. In the case of Yonhi-Mariko, the horrific experience of this natural disaster must have had great resonance in her psyche. Yonhi-Mariko explains the devastation at the time of the earthquake:

> La terre tremble toujours. Les voisins courent vers la rue principale. Les enfants pleurent. Je flageole, je tombe, je rampe. Ma mère me tient fortement par la main. Derrière, on entend un bruit d'explosion. C'est l'usine de médicaments. Le *nagaya* a déjà été soufflé. 'Notre maison a disparu!' L'usine se met à brûler. A cause de choc, je suis incapable de courir. Des flammèches tombent du ciel. Ma mère crie :
> -Dépêche-toi ! Sinon, nous serons prises dans la fumée.
> Son visage est tout blême.[376]

The sense of chaos and panic is apparent in this segment, which clarifies the detrimental psychological effect it had on the protagonist. The earthquake was followed by 'une mer du feu' that ravaged through Tokyo and within minutes Yohni-Mariko narrates: 'Dans le ciel montent d'énormes cumulonimbus. C'est une scène sinistre'.[377] *Psychic numbing* can be defined by two sub-layers which distance the individual from the trauma that is taking place. On the one hand, through a process of denial the individual rationalises that if they do not exhibit any sentiments with regards to the horrible event at hand then they can deny that it is taking place. We see signs of this behaviour throughout Yonhi-Mariko's life but particularly during the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake when Japanese mobs were blaming Korean immigrants for the fire. Yonhi-Mariko narrates:

> Soudain, on entend des cris. Puis plusieurs hommes paraissent devant la foule. Ils ont un sabre, une lance de bambou, une gaffe. Je ne comprends pas ce qui se passe.
> L'un des hommes dit :
> -Arrêtez tous les Coréens! Ils sont dangereux. Ils tentent de jeter du poison dans les puits.

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[375] Hong, p. 52.

[376] *Tsubame,* p. 21.

[377] ibid., p. 25.

La foule s'agite. Un autre homme lance :
-Les Coréens mettent le feu! Ils volent à main armée! Ils violent les femmes!
[…] Le troisième homme dit :
-Capturez tous les Coréens, sans exception![378]

These outlandish claims concerning the culpability of the Koreans were baseless; however, they were sensationalised in order to channel the anger and frustration felt at the time. The Koreans were used as scapegoats and at the point when the men surrounded Yonhi-Markio's mother suspecting that she might be Korean, a Japanese lady came to her rescue by telling the men how 'Madame Kanazawa' was her neighbour thus eluding to the fact that she was Japanese. This episode highlights to the reader that not all Japanese people exhibited anti-Korean sentiments. Nevertheless, this Japanese lady, who came to the rescue of Yohni-Mariko and her mother, was in fact returning a favour because Yohni-Mariko's mother helped her the previous day by calming her crying son. This in turn leads us to question the Japanese lady's behaviour had Yonhi-Mariko's mother not paid it forward so to speak. Furthermore, Yohni-Mariko gives the woman and her son money as a form of gratitude, which the Japanese lady refuses at first but when the money is indirectly offered to the child, the lady accepts it. The Japanese lady then whispers: 'Madame, faites attention! Veillez sur votre sécurité'.[379] Consequently, Yohni-Mariko's mother utters to her daughter 'Il faut partir maintenant'.[380] We understand from previous segments that there were no other Korean immigrants living in the vicinity, which could explain the hostility that Yonhi-Mariko and her family suffered because their Japanese neighbours did not know better. However, Yohni-Mariko and her mother decided to save themselves at this point by abandoning the surrounding area in case of anti-Korean attacks. This decision of self-preservation indicates signs of denial as part of *psychic numbing*. That is to say, instead of investigating the whereabouts of other Koreans to forewarn them of imminent danger, they chose to escape; thus, denying the fact that there might have been other Koreans who needed help. Although Yonhi-Mariko's mothers

[378] ibid., p. 27.

[379] ibid., p. 28.

[380] ibid.

proclaims: 'Qui pourrait faire une telle chose dans cet état d'urgence? On est occupés à fuir le feu. Ce ne sont pas les Coréens qui complotent contre les Japonais. C'est le contraire!',[381] these words however are only shared with Yonhi-Mariko. Once again, Yonhi-Mariko witnesses her mother showing symptoms of learned helplessness; that is to say, as an anti-Japanese occupation fighter the mother should have exposed her Korean identity to the mob and insisted that the claims that the men made regarding alleged crimes committed by Koreans were ludicrous and unfounded. Instead, the mother retreats in order to protect herself and her daughter and inadvertently teaches Yonhi-Mariko how to deny her Korean roots and surrender to Japanese societal repression.

The mother's withheld reaction can also fall under another layer of *psychic numbing*, that of interruption of identification. That is to say, by not identifying as a Korean herself, the mother can no longer empathise with the suffering of a fellow Korean. This dispositional attitude, which we see exhibited by Yonhi-Mariko throughout her life, is vital in understanding the psychological effect of surviving the Great Kanto Earthquake, the bombing of Nagasaki and ongoing *Zainichi* repression. In the opening pages of the second part of *Tsubame,* in 1982 -59 years after the Great Kanto Earthquake, Yonhi-Mariko declares that:

> La défaite du Japon et l'indépendance de la Corée n'ont rien changé à l'attitude des Japonais contre les Coréens au Japon. La discrimination est toujours là. Avoir du sang coréen cause des soucis insolubles. Je ne pourrai jamais avouer l'histoire de mon origine à mon fils et à sa famille. Je ne veux absolument pas que notre vie en soit perturbée.[382]

Yonhi-Mariko's words resonate of the vulnerability suffered by her mother and uncle. Even though *Zainichi* dialogue has evolved through the years as explained in the privous section '*Modern Day Zainichi*', we see that Yonhi-Mariko has stagnated in a state of personal and universal helplessness. In fact, she continues the tradition of 'inherited learned helplessness'

[381] *Tsubame,* p. 31.

[382] ibid., p. 60.

by imagining the torment that her husband and son Yukio would be subjected to if she were to openly expose her origins to them or those surrounding them. By so doing, Yonhi-Mariko internalises their supposed learned helplessness, which in effect magnifies her own helplessness. Yonhi-Mariko explains: 'Je sais bien qu'il aurait accepté mon origine coréenne. Pourtant, je ne voulais pas partager avec lui mon fardeau. Cela aurait pu lui causer des soucis dans ses relations avec les gens et affecter l'avenir de Yukio et de ses enfants'.[383]
By keeping her true identity and origins as a secret from everyone around her, Yonhi-Mariko finds herself unable to live without secrets and therefore orchestrates other scenarios in order to preserve more lies. There is evidence of this in *Tsubaki* as illustrated by her relationship with Yukio's biological father Monsieur Horibe who refuses to marry her; yet they continue their illicit affair in Nagasaki under the guise of being neighbours. In an exchange between the two lovers, Yonhi-Mariko explains:

> […] Tout ce que mon mari a fait, c'est tout ce que tu as refusé. Tu n'as pas voulu te marier avec moi à cause de tes parents, tu n'as pas voulu être lié légalement à Yukio, car tu croyais que je désirais m'emparer de ton argent. Toi et moi ne nous sommes jamais retrouvés ensemble à l'extérieur. Tu ne m'as présentée ni à tes parents ni à tes amis. Même avant ton mariage, c'est toujours chez moi que tu venais, et la nuit tu rentrais à ton appartement où il n'y avait personne. Tu craignais que les ragots des voisins et des amis ne parviennent aux oreilles de tes parents. J'aurais voulu me promener avec toi, voir un film au cinéma, manger au restaurant. Je n'avais que seize ans quand je t'ai rencontré.[384]

We can deduce from these words that Yonhi-Mariko was incapable of living a normal life after leaving the church where she spent her childhood after the disappearance of her mother and uncle. Yonhi-Mariko's learned helplessness as a Korean immigrant who could not expose her roots was equally displaced in her relationship with Monsieur Horibe. That is to say, she lived a life that was entangled with lies on both personal and societal levels. In the section entitled 'Yukiko's War' in Chapter 2, we have examined how the expansionist-war-propelled state of affairs of Japan at the time trickled down to every facet of society even on personal levels thus

[383] ibid., p. 68.

[384] *Tsubaki,* p. 77.

resulting in the breakdown of society through intricate webs of deceit. To a certain extent, we can extrapolate that postwar communities were behaving in a similar way, exemplified by Yonhi-Mariko's behaviour. Although Monsieur Horibe is killed by the atomic bomb and Yonhi-Mariko continues to live in Nagaskai for forty years with her husband Monsieur Takahashi until she joins her son's family in Kamakura, there is no evidence that Yonhi-Mariko was ever capable of freeing herself from the burden of her relationship with Monsieur Horibe. Yohni-Mariko's persistence in concealing the truth in turn has a negative effect on her son Yukio who, as we see in *Hamaguri,* like his mother feels a great sense of loss.

> Je me demande : 'Où est ma petite sœur? Où est mon vrai père? Sont-ils encore vivants?' Ces questions ma reviennent, sans cesse. Je ne rappelle plus leur visage. Je ne sais toujours pas leur nom. Ma mère est la seule personne qui puisse répondre à mes questions. Pourtant, elle garde le silence même maintenant que mon père adoptif est mort il y a treize ans.[385]

Through Yukio's words we hear echoes of Yohni-Mariko's questions regarding her own identity. It seems as though Yukio has inherited a sense of learned helplessness due to Yonhi-Mariko's secrecy and avoidance tactics. Yonhi-Mariko in essence repeats history by emulating her mother: 'Ma mère ne m'a jamais parlé de mon père'.[386] The identity of Yonhi-Mariko's biological father (Monsieur Tsubame - the priest at the church) was revealed by the mother in the journal that was given to Yonhi-Mariko as a child. However, Yonhi-Mariko hid this journal along with her Korean identity for 59 years until she met Madame Kim who translated the Korean journal entry for her. It is clear that Yonhi-Mariko's fear of revealing her Korean origins prevented her from knowing the truth about her own father until much later in life. We can assume that Yonhi-Mariko might have been more forthcoming about Yukio's father's identity had she discovered that her mother did not keep her father's name a secret after all. Therefore, Yonhi-Mariko has misinterpreted her mother's actions and continued to re-enact this misunderstanding hence alluding to a state of universal helplessness. That is to say, Yonhi-Mariko's mother did not share the truth with her; however, Yonhi-Mariko managed to

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[385] *Hamaguri,* p. 82.

[386] *Tsubame,* p. 105.

continue living, therefore Yukio can equally continue a 'normal' life despite his ignorance of the truth. In her apathetic state of mind, Yonhi-Mariko did not realise the detrimental effect this has on her life and that of her son.

When Yukio confronts his mother about his biological father, his mother responds by saying: 'Il a sa propre famille, sa femme et ses enfants. Il ne faut pas déranger sa famille. Sa femme ne sait rien de nous'.[387] As a result of his mother's stubbornness, Yukio becomes complaisant and accepts his interpretation of universal helplessness. That is to say, he cannot get his mother to divulge the truth therefore he accepts her conditions and inherits a form of learned helplessness. Although Yuiko challenges his mother on several occasions about the truth concerning his father, he soon realises that he needs to be more resourceful and consequently asks his adoptive father for the address of the church that Yukio and his mother frequented during his childhood. This comes to no avail because the church was no longer there when he visited and subsequently he finds solace in his learned helpless state. Interestingly, Yukio's adoptive father, Monsieur Takahashi, advises Yukio to create his own life away from his mother: 'Il m'encourageait à vivre loin de ma mère, car elle s'attachait trop à moi, son seul fils, son seul lien de sang'.[388] To a certain extent, Monsieur Takahashi's words conflict with the advice that the priest gave Yukio when they parted to live in Nagasaki: 'Yukio. Tu es vraiment sage et patient. Sois toujours gentil avec ta mère comme tu l'es maintenant'.[389] The priest encourages Yukio to be patient and understanding with his mother because the priest knows Yonhi-Mariko's true story and he empathises with her loss and suffering as a priest, a family friend but ultimately as Yonhi-Mariko's biological father (even though we are not made aware of whether he knows this fact).

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[387] *Hamaguri,* p. 94.

[388] ibid.

[389] *Hamaguri,* p. 32.

On the other hand, we can assume that Monsieur Takahashi wanted his son to break the cycle of deceit and lead a new life that is not haunted by an unknown dark past. Yukio in turn takes his father's advice to heart and moves to Tokyo away from Nagasaki after his studies, which lead us to conclude that although he inherited some form of learned helplessness due to his mother's internal conflict, he took measures to fight it. Yohni-Mariko's secrets in her personal life resulted in causing her and her son Yukio great anguish; furthermore, unaware of his childhood friend Yukiko's true identity as his half-sister, Yukio fell in love with his supposed neighbour in Nagasaki. This incestuous affair during the war could have been avoided had Yonhi-Mariko told her son the truth. However, after years of separation and uncertainty Yukio is made aware of the truth via a letter from Yukiko in *Tsubaki.* Even though Yukio arrives at Yukiko's doorstep after her death to meet her daughter (and his half-niece) Namiko, we see that the truth had to inevitably come to light to Yonhi-Mariko's dismay. At the age of 84, Yonhi-Mariko's learned helplessness and *psychic numbing* can be crystallised in the words of her doctor: 'Elle s'est abîmé le cœur'.[390]

Yohni-Mariko's sense of loss is doubled when she is categorised by Madame Kim after the Korean rally as a member of the Japanese majority who does not understand the suffering of the *Zainichi*: 'Vous êtes Japonaise. Je sais que ce n'est pas facile de comprendre notre situation'.[391] One would assume that Madame Kim's words would be gratifying to Yonhi-Mariko because they mean that she had reached the pinnacle of assimilation and integration to the point where there is no doubt of her Japanese identity. Yet, these words lay heavy on Yonhi-Mariko's heart: 'Chaque mot que madame Kim a prononcé m'a donné une douleur aiguë'.[392] As Yohni-Mariko probes Madame Kim about her life in Japan and her decision to remain after the Korean massacres in 1923, Yonhi-Mariko re-examines her own life but refrains from exposing her true identity at this point. This encounter with Madame Kim at the

[390] ibid., p. 88.

[391] *Tsubame,* p. 90.

[392] ibid.

exhumation rally and the neighbour Monsieur Nakamura's words 'J'ai honte d'être Japonais' instigated Yonhi-Mariko to finally bare her soul to Madame Kim on another visit. Surprisingly though, Yonhi-Mariko's reactions to some of the realities of *Zainichi* life echo of Japanese discrimination. For instance, when Madame Kim tells Yohni-Mariko about her sons who live in American and Canada her immediate reaction which she refrained from sharing was: 'La mère dont les fils sont professeurs habite dans un quartier pareil?'[393] These thoughts allude to inherent discrimination that is commonplace in Japan and to a certain extent devalues Madame Kim's conscious decision to stay within her community which Madame Kim justifies in a second meeting by saying: 'Après la mort de mon mari, mon fils cadet m'a invitée à aller vivre là-bas avec sa famille, mais j'ai refusé. Je suis heureuse ici en compagnie de nos compatriotes et de nos voisins japonais'.[394] This form of *psychic numbing* which dissociates the individual from those within a minority group and in turn removes the burden of having to sympathise with them can be linked to Yonhi-Mariko's attitude in this specific instance. In other words, Yonhi-Mariko has dissociated herself from the Korean community and had cast a discriminatory gaze from a 'Japanese' point of view onto Madame Kim. Equally Yonhi-Mariko's question about the smell of *kimichi* (Korean pickle) once again alludes to a sense of snobbery and the description of the surroundings before arriving at Madame Kim's house also highlights Yonhi-Mariko's dissociation from Korean reality even though she lived in the same area before the Great Kanto Earthquake. Furthermore, Yonhi-Mariko does not disclose her true identity for the sake of redemption or as a form of self-healing; instead, she discloses her identity after Madame Kim came to this conclusion on her own. Yonhi-Mariko's intention was to understand what her mother had written in the journal which she had since her childhood and with this aim in mind she approached Madame Kim whose life is not linked in any form to Yonhi-Mariko's quotidian life. Yonhi-Mariko does break down and unveil how she obtained Japanese nationality because the priest at the church registered her as a Japanese orphan with

[393] ibid., p. 86.

[394] ibid., p. 104.

the name Mariko Kanazawa. This soul-baring episode is unpredictably contrasted by Yonhi-Mariko's reaction when she is told that her biological father is the priest - Monsieur Tsubame.

> -Alors, vous avez maintenant appris qui était votre père. Connaissez-vous cette personne qui s'appelle monsieur Tsubame ?
> -Non…
> Elle dit en souriant :
> -C'est la première fois que j'entends Tsubame comme nom de famille en japonais. C'est peut-être un surnom.
> Je ne réponds pas. Je remets le journal de ma mère dans mon sac à main et dis :
> -Pardonnez-moi de ne pas vous avoir dit la vérité l'autre jour. J'en étais incapable.[395]

Yonhi-Mariko's denial is perplexing because Madame Kim has been her only confidant since the priest; however, after years of secrecy and lies Yonhi-Mariko's immediate reaction had become to lie first and then live with the consequences. This is another example of *psychic numbing* which Yonhi-Mariko expresses by dissociating herself from the reality and in turn not feeling guilty for having lied. Although Madame Kim remains supportive by comforting Yonhi-Mariko by saying: 'Vous n'êtes pas responsable de votre fardeau. Personne n'a le droit de vous en accuser'[396], Yonhi-Mariko remains unyielding to certain aspects of the truth. Meanwhile, Yonhi-Mariko continues to recall Monsieur Tsubame's face yet she does not reveal the truth to her confidant.

Even though Yonhi-Mariko is portrayed as a victim of the circumstance with profound psychological problems who undoubtedly attracts the readers' sympathy, her apathy towards the Korean cause and aloofness must be addressed. Having lived a privileged life as a 'fully' Japanese citizen, she had many privileges awarded to her yet she continued to exhibit patterns of learned helplessness throughout her life. When compared to Madame Kim's struggle we see that Yonhi-Mariko was fortunate to have been born in Japan and to have been awarded the opportunity to integrate.

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[395] ibid., p. 109.

[396] ibid., p. 110.

> Je suis née dans l'ile de Cheju et je l'ai quitté avec mon mari à cause du cholera qui a frappé la population durant l'été 1920. C'était un endroit très pauvre à l'époque. Les gens sont devenus encore plus pauvres. Alors, nous avons décidé d'aller au Japon chercher du travail. Le massacre des Coréens lors du tremblement de terre nous a fait craindre de continuer à vivre au Japon, mais nous ne savions où aller. La vie dans l'île était toujours difficile. Il était hors de question de partir pour le continent. Là-bas, la discrimination contre les gens originaires de l'île était aussi sévère que celle en vigueur au Japon. Alors nous avons décidé de rester ici.[397]

Madame Kim's Herculean efforts and sacrifices resonate of the predicament that Yonhi-Mariko's mother and uncle went through; all the same, Yonhi-Mariko remains consumed by her own psychological state without seeking help or taking a proactive role in bettering herself and the status quo of her people. The trauma of surviving the Great Kanto Earthquake and the atomic bombing of Nagasaki irrefutably had an immense effect on Yonhi-Mariko but these were grand-scale disasters that were shared by a big portion of the Japanese population so help was at hand in the aftermath. Furthermore, Yonhi-Mariko lived until the age of 15 in a protected community at the church and was made Japanese by the help of the priest. In essence, Yonhi-Mariko has led a fairly sheltered life without having to consistently fight to survive as a naturalised *Zainichi*. As Madame Kim recounts how her husband explained to his son the delicacy of the *Zainichi* reality in Japan, we begin to realise how fortunate Yonhi-Mariko has been.

> Tu dois comprendre que *kika* (naturalisation) ne veut pas dire simplement obtenir la nationalité japonaise tout en gardant son identité raciale. Il faut abandonner la nationalité d'origine et être Japonais avec un nom japonais. Et si tu es devenu Japonais, les Coréens d'ici ne t'accepteront plus comme compatriote et les Japonais ne te considéreront jamais comme Japonais s'ils apprennent que tu es d'origine coréenne. Cela n'a aucun sens. Si tu tiens vraiment à devenir professeur, va à l'étranger. Même si tu réussis bien dans ta profession, je ne serai pas heureux de savoir que tu dois encore cacher ton identité.[398]

Yonhi-Mariko did not have to suffer being shunned by the *Zainichi* community nor the Japanese majority. To a certain extent, Yonhi-Mariko could have accepted her 'hybridity' like

[397] ibid., p. 92.

[398] ibid., p. 90.

Jung Yeong-hae the *Zainichi* academic who considers herself as *nihon shimin* (citizen of Japan) thus refusing Japanese and Korean identity and forging a subjective space which upholds dichotomy.[399] This type of higher order thinking could not be anticipated from Yonhi-Mariko who was home-schooled at a young age and did not fully achieve any sense of independence apart from a short period of employment before marrying Monsieur Takahashi and moving to Nagasaki. Yonhi-Mariko's inability to expand her mind and confront her demons could be related to her lack of education and independence. However, Yeong-hae stresses that identity should be seen as neither static nor stable and highlights the importance of plurality (*tagensei*), complex composition (*fukugōsei*), chaotic selves (*kontonsei*) which exist in a state of borderlessness (*mukyōkaisei*). Regrettably, we can deduce that Yonhi-Mariko's identity has remained stoic, unyielding to change and overshadowed by her interpretation of learned helplessness and *psychic numbing.*

Yonhi-Mariko had a self-vindicating opportunity to voice her views and expose her origins to her family in order to alleviate her pain and resolve her inner struggle. However, in her apathetic state of helplessness she decided to be a silent observer. The exchange that took place between Yonhi-Mariko's granddaughter Tsubaki and her son Yukio about Tsubaki's *Zainichi* classmate Yumiko grows into a profound examination of the *Zainichi* community. This conversation plays a critical part in *Tsubame* and more so because the voice of reason is portrayed by a six year old who does not comprehend the reasons for discrimination against this minority. In true *Shimazakian* style as we have seen in *Tsubaki*, the younger generation is puzzled by the Japanese past and present and they continue to probe their elders to make sense of the status quo. The vital difference between the two conversations in *Tsubame* and *Tsubaki* is the role that the eldest member of the family plays. In *Tsubaki* as we have seen in Chapter 2 'The Legacy of the Second World War', Yukiko (the atomic bomb survivor) answers her grandson's questions about the war but candidly challenges his thoughts and attitudes while the bystander is Namiko, the daughter of Yukiko. However, in *Tsubame* Yonhi-Mariko

[399] Chapman, p. 56.

(the Korean survivor of the Great Kanto Earthquake and atomic bombing of Nagasaki) remains silent and uninvolved as she observes her son Yukio's reactions. Despite the fact that Yukio is unaware of his mother's Korean origins he continues to expose Japanese injustice and unfair treatment of the *Zainichi*. Yonhi-Mariko, by remaining quiet during this exchange, highlights her apathy and lack of involvement. Unexpectedly, Tsubaki questions her father: 'Papa, qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, *zaïnichi* ?'[400] and continues to the ask fundamental questions at the heart of current day Japanese debate : 'Mais…Yumiko parle japonais comme tout le monde. Son nom de famille aussi est japonais. Elle et ses parents sont nés au Japon. Alors pourquoi n'est-elle Japonaise?'[401] Tsubaki's questions leave Yonhi-Mariko dumbfounded and her son Yukio who is unaware of his Korean roots concludes: 'C'est la société japonaise qui n'est pas saine'.[402] As we have seen in Chapter 2, Yukio was reprimanded by his *commandant* for siding with the Korean worker who was unjustly accused of stealing food by a Japanese colleague. Yukio's current day impartiality and fairness are consequent to his experience of the Second World War and his subjugation to Japan's unwarranted prosecution of others and inevitably the loss of the war. We see Yukio criticising Japanese discrimination and upholding the rights of the *Zainichi* instead of his mother Yonhi-Mariko who should be proclaiming a voice for those in her situation. By paying close attention to Yonhi-Mariko's reactions and behaviour during the exchange between Tsubaki and Yukio we are able to make some conclusions about Yonhi-Mariko's personality and psychological state to a certain extent.

> J'ai failli laisser tomber mes baguettes. Je baisse les yeux.
> […]
> Je regard mon fils. C'est la première fois que je l'entends parler de ces choses.
> […]
> Cela me rappelle l'histoire de madame Kim.
> […]
> "Clandestins?" Ce mot me donne de la douleur. Je vois l'image de ma mère et de mon oncle. La perte du travail, de la patrie, de la liberté. Ce qui attend ces gens dans un pays inconnu, c'est une vie misérable.

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[400] *Tsubame,* p. 95.

[401] *Tsubame,* p. 96.

[402] ibid., p. 98.

> […]
> Je me demande: 'Y a-t-il des articles à propos de l'événement sur la berge d'Arakawa?' Mais je n'ose lui poser la question. J'ouvre une revue et tourne des pages, sans raison. Je regarde le visage de mon fils. Il m'ignore. Au bout d'un moment je lui dis, hésitante:
> […]
> Je me tais. Il me jette un coup d'œil par-dessus ses lunettes.
> […]
> Je ne sais que répondre. Mes membres se glacent. Je tente de cacher mon trouble.[403]

Yonhi-Mariko's response and subconscious hesitation suggest that she had regressed to a childlike state during this conversation. Her silence and awkwardness resonate of the time when she arrived at the church: 'je ne parle toujours à personne'.[404] Yonhi-Mariko is inundated with panic and unable to express her true feelings or reflections due to the fear of reprimand. This behaviour can be rather puzzling because apart from the incident where the mob of Japanese men sought Korean scapegoats there were no other incidents that could cause Yonhi-Mariko to behave in this manner. If we are to compare Yonhi-Mariko's unnerving silence to Yukiko's words in *Tsubaki* when pushed to react by her grandson we see the difference in personality and attitude to life.

> -Sais-tu…comment certains militaires japonais se comportaient dans leurs colonies des pays asiatiques? 'Violents, cruels, brutaux, inhumains, sadiques, sauvages…' Voilà les mots utilisés par leurs victimes. Cela aurait été peut-être plus terrifiant si le Japon avait remporté la victoire. Beaucoup de gens devaient être contents de la défaite de l'empire japonaise. Je te rappelle que les Japonais ont massacré plus de trois cent milles personnes avant d'occuper Nankin, en Chine. Ils ont tué non seulement de soldats et leurs prisonniers, mais aussi des gens ordinaires, des civils sans armes. Ils ont violé des femmes et les ont toutes tuées par la suite. Même de jeunes enfants de sept et huit and ont été leurs victimes.[405]

There are several factors that must be considered when comparing the reactions of Yukiko. First and foremost, Yukiko is Japanese and unlike Yonhi-Mariko never had to experience Japanese prejudice or discrimination due to her ethnicity or origins. Furthermore, Yukiko

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[403] ibid., pp. 95-99.

[404] ibid., p. 43

[405] *Tsubaki,* pp. 17-18.

belongs to Yonhi-Mariko's son Yukio's generation who had to endure the Second World War as a child and consequently is more critical of Japanese politics. Although Yukiko never had to fight on the battlefield, she had to stop attending school and work for the greater good of Japan at a young age and like Yukio encountered physical abuse by her superiors due to what they envisioned as negligence. If we are to compare Yukio and Yukiko and their reactions to their children's questions respectively, we notice that both parties hold very strong views concerning Japan and that they are not afraid to voice these ideas however negative they might seem. Interestingly, gender roles might have a part to play in the two conversations; that is to say, in Yukiko's conversation the two adults present are women and the male character is the grandson who is younger and half Japanese therefore it can be assumed that Yukiko did not fear expressing her views openly as there were no men present. However, in the other conversation the presence of Yukio as an adult male might have tipped the balance and subsequently led Yonhi-Mariko to silence. Gender roles in Shimazaki's novels play a very important part because Shimazaki narrates from the point of view of both genders and alludes to the fact that Japanese men and women think in a relatively similar fashion although evidence discussed in Chapter 5 'Suicide, Sexuality and Family: the presence of Dazai and Mishima in Shimazaki's novels' suggest that there is undeniable imbalance between the role of the sexes in Japanese society.

Investigations in the role which Yukio and Yonhi-Mariko play in the above-mentioned conversations lead us to analyse the two protagonists closely. The obvious reason behind Yonhi-Mariko's silence could be related to her learned helplessness and fear of prosecution for being *Zainichi*; however, both Yukiko and Yonhi-Mariko are atomic bomb survivors and therefore they have experienced these traumatic events which undoubtedly had grave effects on them psychologically. Furthermore, Yukiko committed parricide and lived with this secret all her life. Therefore, both Yukiko and Yonhi-Mariko had to live with a secret that tormented them for the greater part of their lives, yet Yukiko is not afraid to voice her opinions despite their controversial nature. This could be related to a generational gap in the way of thinking as well as Yukiko's understanding of the vital importance of the role of first-generation in

putting issues in perspective for the younger generations. The only plausible deduction that can be made concerning Yonhi-Mariko's reactions when compared to Yukiko's is that Yonhi-Mariko has become intrinsically detached from her reality due to long years of self-imposed assimilation to Japanese majority and consequently her pro-Korean feelings and thoughts have been deeply hidden. The *Zainichi* community has found solutions to identity related dilemmas through: 1) movement towards assimilation to Japanese society and loss of Korean national identity, 2) a stance against Japanese politics as well as connections with organisations affiliated to North or South Korea, 3) a discourse of hybridity through the Third Way.[406] It seems as though Yonhi-Mariko has over-assimilated to being Japanese to the point of fearing any form of exposure of the reality even if by association thus rejecting the other two solutions. With the disappearance of her biological father, Monsieur Tsubame, and the death of her confidant, Madame Kim, it seems as though there is no hope for any kind of plausible cure to her psychological trauma. In fact, by fearing open debate and absolution at the same time Yonhi-Mariko has doomed herself to an incurable state of perdition.

Conclusion:

The long-standing relations between Korea and Japan which date back to mid-fifth century started to become unsettled after the end of the self-imposed isolation of Japan in 1868. As the Meiji government gained more power in the region, Japan began to denigrate the Korean state and consequently the image of Korea and its people began to dwindle in the eyes of the Japanese. The Japan-Korea Annexation of 1910 resulted in mass economic immigration from that point onwards and as a result the relationship between the two countries became heavily intertwined. Through *Tsubame*, Shimazaki closely examines profound issues relating to the *Zainichi* community in Japan through the eyes of her protagonist Yonhi-Mariko whose life spans the 1920s to the 1980s. In *Tsubame*, '[…] la narratrice (Yonhi-Mariko) s'interroge souvent sur qui elle est ainsi que sur les identités de ceux qui l'entourent- et sur le fardeau que représentent un certain nombre de ce identités'.[407] Yonhi-Mariko's identity crisis forms

[406] Chapman, p. 58.

[407] Dervin, p. 2.

the backbone of the novel as she survives the Great Kanto Earthquake, the bombing of Nagasaki and on-going marginalisation and racism as a *Zainichi.*

'Shimazaki écrit en français et propose de récits situés essentiellement au Japon. De la sorte, elle place ses lecteurs en situation d'alérité face à un contexte qui leur est souvent inconnu'.[408] By taking on the mediating role between Japan and the Francophone West, Shimazaki sheds light on the harsh reality of this relatively unknown minority group. By so doing, Shimazaki gives the *Zainichi* a voice that transcends the confines of the debate within Japanese and Korean spheres. Even though the story of Yonhi-Mariko and her state of helplessness appeals for the reader to sympathise with the protagonist on a personal level and consequently the whole *Zanichi* community, Yonhi-Mariko is portrayed as a weak individual who is the victim of circumstances: Yonhi-Mariko was saved by her mother, named (when registering for *koseki*-Japanese family registry) by her biological father the foreign priest, impregnated by her lover M. Horibe, provided for by her husband M. Takahashi, instigated to join the Korean rally by her neighbour M Nakamura, loved by her son Yukio and supported by her confidant Mme Kim. All in all, Yonhi-Mariko is a non-entity who is consumed by the burden of being Korean in an evolving country that has taken bold steps towards challenging the status quo. Perhaps Shimazaki wanted to highlight the passivity of certain members of this community to urge them to take a stance and fight the injustices of the Japanese society yet this is not clearly manifested. Alternatively, Shimazaki might have wanted to warn us of the dangers of excessive assimilation and the sinister side of this form of existence. Thus Shimazaki emphasises Kang Sang-jung's ideas which state that '[…] the choice is either exclusion through *Zainichi* identity or assimilation through Japanese identity, the *Zainichi* do not have the freedom to self-determination of their identities'.[409] It would be unreasonable to ignore the role of stoicism when considering Japanese-*Zainichi* identity; however, exposing this reality through the voice of a passive individual such as Yonhi-Mariko can be seen to denigrate the

[408] ibid.

[409] Chapman, p. 129.

efforts of *Zainichi* activists and front liners. Having said so, Shimazaki, just by exposing this minority group to the West, has managed to open the debate and criticise the reality of today's Japan. Foucault's words can be interpreted to support the idea that by exposing this minority group and opening the debate in the international arena, Shimazaki has empowered this group by giving it a voice.

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, anymore than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable processes whereby discourse can be both instrumental and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.[410]

Undeniably, *Tsubame* serves as a brief introduction to a deep-rooted Japanese issue and equally a study into *Zanichi* history throughout the 20th century; furthermore, Shimazaki invites Japan to re-evaluate its position with regards to the *Zainichi* issue whilst warning of the shortcomings of assimilation.

[410] ibid., p 6.

Chapter4:

Aki Shimazaki's Japanese Otherness

Japan's Christian Minority

Aki Shimazaki highlights the presence of Christianity in Japan in two distinct manners: the church as the protector and the lighthouse in the storm; and Christianity as a cause of stigmatization and marginalization. In both instances, Shimazaki draws the reader's attention to the presence of Christianity in a country that institutionally adheres to a monolithic Buddhist/Shintoist view of itself and equally promotes this very idea to the world. As expressed by Iwabuchi, Japanese authorities promoted the notion of Japanese uniqueness in order to unite and mobilize the nation at times of war and modernization, repress individuality, and suppress minority groups by manipulating the world's view of Japan as a homogenous nation.[411] Even though in reality, Japan has had experience with a variety of religions and beliefs: 'Beginning in the sixth century, Buddhism (in highly magicoanimistic Mahayana form), Confucianism, aspects of Taosit and Ying-yang thought, and - to a tiny degree - Christianity were simply *deposited* there on top of a primitive, Shintoist folk religion'.[412]

Shimazaki challenges the idea of a unified religion in Japan and draws attention to the central role of the church in protecting those at the periphery of Japanese society like the Korean minority during the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 and other important episodes in modern Japanese history. It is apparent that Shimazaki wants to acknowledge and recognize an institution that exists in the shadows of Japanese society. Yet, Shimazaki also

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[411] Iwabuchi, Koichi 'Complicit exoticism: Japan and its other' *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture,* 8 (1994), <http://wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au/readingroom/8.2/Iwabuchi.html> [accessed 2 March 2011], pp. 49-82.

[412] Robertson, Roland. 'Globalization and Societal Modernization: A Note on Japan and Japanese Religion', *Sociological Analysis*, 47 (1987), pp. 35-42 <www.jstor.org/stable/3711650> [accessed 3 November 2018], p. 37.

underlines that Christianity can be a form of rebellion and self-inflicted alienation. In other words, Christianity is being used by Japanese people, as in the case of Nobu in *Tonbo,* as a means to detach oneself from the mainstream and blame their faith for being ostracized by the majority. Christianity in post-war Japan can be seen as a double-edged sword, on the one side it can protect those marginalized by Japanese society and at the same time it can be a reason for exclusion. Through this analysis, we form a deeper understanding of Shimazaki's intentions in addressing these themes to the Western and Francophone audiences. The main reason being to deepen the reader's grasp of the different layers of social interactions and fractions in Japan from a religious perspective in contrast to racial and political points of view as we have previously seen.

The Church: the protector

Our first encounter with the church is in *Hamaguri* in the opening page of the second book of the first pentalogy *Le Poids des Secrets.* In *Shimazakian* style, the church is presented to the reader through the innocent eyes of the four years old Yukio who timidly follows his mother Yonhi-Mariko on the day before she starts her new job at the church: 'Ça y est, Yukio. Voilà l'église où je travaillerai à partir de demain…Ici personne n'a ni de père ni de mère'.[414] As we have seen previously, Shimazaki uses her youngest protagonists to report on critical issues in her novels such as Japanese involvement in the Second World War by Yukiko's grandson in *Tsubaki* and prejudice against the Japanese-Korean residents by Yonhi-Mariko's seven-year-old granddaughter Tsubaki in *Tsubame.* Shimazaki addresses these crucial topics in her novels through the eyes of her youngest characters because of their objectivity. In other words, children's ideas have not been jaded or manipulated by overpowering mainstream ideologies therefore they can see these perplexing issues for what they are and ask the most fundamental of questions about these deep-rooted societal issues. This form of narration allows the reader who is not familiar with Japanese history and society to create a somewhat unbiased image of the status quo. Similarly, Christianity in Japan is presented to the reader

[414] *Hamaguri,* p. 9.

through the eyes of Yukio who observes and narrates his first encounters with this unfamiliar and 'un-Japanese' faith. Yukio's observations are pertinent and valuable because they allow us to see the inner workings of the church from the viewpoint of an 'outsider'.

The church is presented as an ordinary-looking house that is hidden away in a quiet residential area. The main distinguishing features that catch Yukio's attention as he approaches the church are the fencing around the house, the cries of children and some subtle decorative differences. Yukio reports: 'De l'extérieur, cette église n'est pas différente d'une maison. Sauf une décoration de deux bâtons croisés sur le mur, au-dessus de la porte'.[415] The building represents a physical and an ideological juxtaposition. On the one hand, the building is ordinary and resembles the surrounding houses, which highlights the lack of distinction between those in the church and those outside the church. That is to say, this similarity alludes to a sense of religious harmony between the Christian minority and the greater community because the church was not banished to a remote part of the city and physically ostracised. On the other hand, the church is fenced and this particular detail can draw attention to the position of this establishment. The fact that the church is fenced unlike the surrounding houses could be interpreted as that the building and to a certain extent the Christian faith need protecting from the outside world. This architectural detail also highlights that the church wants to exist within the community yet remain distinguishable. The fence also emphasises the fear of possible reproach from the surrounding community. Just by analysing the structural façade we see that the church is seen to be a place of refuge accentuated by the crying orphans and a place under physical and ideological attack that needs to be protected and fenced. Yet, the fence can also be seen as a form of protecting the Christian ideology and incarcerating those within the church from the outside world. This rather ominous interpretation is accentuated by the sounds of the crying orphans, which can be seen as a sign of repression and dire state of affairs within the church. The sound of crying children warns of a gruesome predicament and even more so from the point of view of a child

[415] ibid., p.11.

like Yukio; however, led by his mother Yukio although puzzled he does not seem reluctant to enter the church.

The mundane exterior of the church is soon contrasted by the exciting interior where children are orphans like 'escargots' because they do not have parents, *Shinpu-sama* (the priest) is like no other (Japanese) man Yukio had ever seen and *Kami-sama* (God) has a child. This new environment instantly perplexes Yukio and highlights the distinctive and 'un-Japanese' character of the church. The young child and his innocence represent to a certain extent the 'outside world' of Japanese Buddhism/Shintoism which is distinctly different to the 'inside world' of the Christian minority which leaves Yukio curious about the very nature of this community. Yukio's reality outside the church where he is bullied and called '*Tetenaishigo*' because he does not have a father is distinctly different to the interior of the church. Furthermore, there are issues such as the use of language, the age of the bullies and equally the lack of reaction by the onlookers to these taunts. It is implicit that the children who torment Yukio are older than him and consequently use words that are unfamiliar to Yukio. One interpretation can be that the children are older hence they know such words; alternatively, they may be mimicking what their parents and the others in the community are uttering. In either case, great emphasis is put on the sense of community and how individuals can be ostracised for not belonging to the traditional family units. Moreover, the lack of reprimand or reaction by the adults highlights a sense of hostility by the community towards Yukio and his mother as if to say that the children are expressing what the adults do not dare express openly. Once again, silence is used by the members of the community to avoid expressing their true sentiments and equally by Yukio to protect his mother. Yukio in a way uses the same method, which he experiences with his mother thus leading us to deduce that the children are subconsciously modelling adult behaviour.

The absence of a father figure torments Yukio whilst highlighting the conservative and traditional nature of Japanese society of the time. The outside world of bullying and name-calling is contrasted with the seemingly loving and welcoming nature of the church: the priest

sides with Yukio when he innocently ridicules the idea of God having a child and the woman in the kimono tells him: 'Ah, c'est toi Yukio! Nous t'attendions'.[417] The disparity between the two worlds is accentuated hence leading us to deduce that the church is a place of refuge for the orphans and those in the periphery of the society. This in turn leads Yukio to enjoy being at the church: 'J'aime aller à l'église. Les enfants ne me disent pas de mots méchants. Les adultes sont très gentils avec nous, ma mère et moi'.[418]

Despite the safe environment that the church provides for Yukio and his mother, we begin to notice that Yukio is not at ease because he feels alienated within the confines of the church. In the church everyone refers to Yonhi-Mariko as '*onêsan*' (sister) and due to the presence of the orphans Yukio has to refrain from calling his mother 'maman' and consequently he decides not to address his mother at all whilst at the church for fear of being insensitive to the other children. Yukio also stresses that he had to partake in prayers even though he did not understand the meaning of the words he was reciting. As he acclimatises and settles in the church, he is identified as a child with a parent and this in turn results in bullying.

> Un jour, un garçon plus âgé que moi me dit dans les toilettes:
> -Tu n'appartiens pas à notre maison à nous. Tu as ta mère, toi.
> Il me pousse aux épaules. Je tombe par terre. Je me relève en silence. Il dit :
> -Quelle mauviette !
> Il s'en va. Il m'arrache mon dessert quand les femmes ne sont pas avec nous. Souvent je ne trouve pas mes chaussures. Je les cherche partout. Je les découvre dans la poubelle ou derrière l'arbre ou dans un seau retourné. Je crois que c'est toujours lui qui les cache. Je ne le dis pas à ma mère. Si je lui dis, elle va pleurer au lieu de se fâcher.
> Je n'ai plus envie d'aller à l'église.[419]

This change in the state of affairs for Yukio consequently results in the church no longer being the safe haven that it was at the beginning. The sense of alienation that Yukio feels highlights on the one hand the difference between Japanese culture and this 'imported' Christian culture.

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[417] ibid., p.13.

[418] ibid. , p. 16.

[419] ibid. , p. 18.

The rituals and characteristics of the church seem incongruous to everything Yukio is accustomed to. Equally, he does not understand the prayers and struggles with uttering the words '*Shinpu-sama*' when addressing the seemingly warm and loving priest. Although it is not made clear whether the prayers were said in a foreign language, the fact that Yukio does not understand them alludes to this. However, it is noteworthy that Yukio is four years old at the time and he could be struggling with the register and new vocabulary rather than the language. In any case, Yukio's alienation due to the rituals along with his inability to address his mother and the bullying he experiences for not truly belonging to the orphanage and by proxy the church itself lead him to dislike his new environment. It would be safe to assume that the orphans are accustomed to the way the church is run and they must have noticed Yukio's critical and quizzical attitude. It would be safe to say that even if the orphans did not bully Yukio for having a mother he would have inevitably been bullied for not 'belonging' to the church or the Christian faith. Through these episodes we can see that the 'cruel outside' world managed to penetrate the fenced exterior and enter the church. Shimazaki tells us that despite the positive role that the church plays in protecting those that have been marginalised by Japanese society (such as the orphans and the single mothers with children) there is no escape from the greater society. In other words, the church cannot singlehandedly protect the marginalised communities that live in the periphery of Japanese society and exist independently. That is to say, the church is unequivocally Japanese even if it is run by a non-Japanese priest and 'foreign' rituals are being practised therefore Japanese societal issues cannot be expected to remain outside the parameters of the church and consequently they have penetrated the fenced ideological divide.

Although Yukio's experience in the church proved to be challenging, it is important to emphasise that had the church not existed in the first place to protect Yonhi-Mariko, Yukio would have never been born. As revealed in *Tsubame*, Yonhi Kim the *Zainichi* (Korean resident) had to seek refuge in the church due to unrest after the Great Kanto Earthquake. The state of panic after the earthquake caused frenzy and Koreans were blamed by the Japanese for poisoning the water and in turn mobs started to hunt Korean scapegoats. After days on the

streets, Yonhi Kim was taken by her Korean mother to the only place that would protect her: the church. Yonhi's mother utters: 'Quel bonheur! Elle a été sauvée par la grâce de Dieu. Elle te protégera, j'en suis sûre'.[420] In fact, the mother was right because the church provided shelter and protected Yonhi in hiding her Korean identity and eventually changing her name to Mariko. Yonhi's mother explains why she chose this name for her daughter: 'Je veux que te sois protégée par Marie'.[421] It is evident that Yonhi-Mariko's mother had strong alliance to the church because she is a Christian herself although this is not made clear. Yukio's mother (Yonhi) as a child upon arrival to the church also felt alienated because she was not an orphan and she had to preserve her Korean identity. There is a link that can be made between Yukio's experiences to that of his mother because they both had to resolve to silence as a way to protect themselves against those around them. Yukio refrained from addressing his mother whilst at the church due to the fear of offending the orphans around him. Equally, Yonhi who was unsure of her mother and uncle's whereabouts whilst feeling abandoned and worried she might be ostracised for being Korean, resorted to silence.

> (Le prêtre) Il me dit gentiment :
> -Mariko, as-tu bien dormi ?
> « Mariko ? » Je baisse les yeux. La fille demande au prêtre :
> -Elle s'appelle Mariko ? Est-elle muette ?
> Il lui répond :
> -Non. Mariko est fatiguée, c'est tout. Elle attend sa mère qui est partie à la recherche de son oncle.
> La fille me dit à voix haute :
> -Alors, tu n'es pas orpheline !
> Tout le monde me regarde.[422]

This exchange draws our attention to the fact that Yonhi-Mariko was anxious of accidently revealing the truth about her Korean origins and her real name therefore she resorted to silence as a solution. However, her decision marginalised her further because she was seen as

[420] *Tsubame,* p. 32.

[421] ibid., p. 34.

[422] ibid., p.36.

different to the others and thought to be mute. The priest by revealing that Yonhi-Mariko was waiting for her mother's return further aggravated the situation. The comment whispered to Yonhi-Mariko by one of the orphans highlights how negative remarks and thoughts are kept festering below the happy façade, which suggests that the church as a whole could be seen to present a peaceful environment although in reality there are profound issues that are left unaddressed. Yonhi-Mariko's decision to keep silent about her origins as well as Yukio's refrain from addressing his mother or reporting the bullying that started to take place once his true identity was exposed, suggest that both Yonhi-Mariko and Yukio resolved to the same method imposed by those around them. In other words, instead of exposing the sinister reality of the church Yonhi-Mariko and Yukio partake in suppressing the reality and uphold false pretence. Furthermore, the very fact that Yonhi-Mariko is not an orphan as in the case of Yukio meant that she did not truly belong to the church and its community because the church was predominantly seen as an orphanage before a religious organization. This somewhat automatic and innate resolution to silence demonstrated in this instance by Yonhi-Mariko and Yukio seems to take a prominent role in Shimazaki's novels as we have seen with many protagonists refraining to speak openly about crimes they have committed or their true identity later in life.

The role of silence is prevalent in the analysis of all the chapters of this thesis, yet it is worthwhile stressing that Yonhi-Mariko and Yukio's silence is a reflection of a societal strategy that favours homogeneity at all costs. Chie Nakane expresses that in Japanese group identification, the *frame* (institution, locality or relationship which binds individuals to a specific group) takes precedence over *attribute* (caste and kinship).[423] That is to say, the Japanese classify individuals primarily on their *frame* be it a company or association as opposed to universal *attributes.* This context consequently promotes group consciousness and strengthens institutional ties within a given unit, which in this case is the church. Therefore, belonging to this *frame* is paramount in societal terms for both the insiders and the outsiders.

[423] Nakane, Chie, *Japanese Society* (London: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 1-5.

One explanation could be that the orphans bullied Yukio covertly to avoid the disruption of the institutional unit yet they highlighted to Yukio on an individual basis that he cannot truly belong to this group - as if to say that suffering for the loss of their parents was the binding unit. Similarly, both Yonhi-Mariko and Yukio in an attempt to maintain the harmony of the *frame* and in an attempt to belong to this institution revert to silence. Nakane also associates the ideas of *attribute* and *frame* to a unique Japanese societal grouping, which relates to the concept of *ie.* Western interpretation of the term *ie* have derived the equivalent of 'household' or 'family' although the Japanese interpretation of the term is more profound and complex because it indicates a social group and management organization based on residence. In the case of the church, the orphans see it as the *frame* because it is a social institution which they belong to and furthermore it is their *ie* or place of residence. Therefore, the church forms two very important Japanese societal organizations for those living in it and those joining it. With this interpretation in mind, Yonhi-Mariko and Yukio's attempts to preserve and belong to this institution are central to their survival in the greater society, which justifies their silence. However, in both cases their tactic failed because the truth came to light and inevitably they were ostracised by the church community for not being orphans.

Although Yonhi-Mariko eventually breaks her silence and starts to talk to the priest, her engagement with the other children in the church is not made clear. It is understood that she left the church at the age of fifteen having been there for only two years. The church saved Yonhi-Mariko from being harmed for being Korean, but most importantly Yonhi-Mariko was officially given Japanese nationality by the help of the priest:

> Le prêtre étranger m'emmena à la mairie pour faire établir mon *koseki* (état civil fixant le domicile légal de la famille dont tous les membres portent le même nom). Il expliqua à la personne qui en était chargée : « Ses parents sont morts lors du tremblement de terre. J'ai essayé de chercher sa famille ou quelqu'un qui la connaissait. Malheureusement, personne ne s'est présenté à son sujet. Le pire, c'est qu'elle a perdu la mémoire. Elle ne se souvient même pas de son propre nom. À l'église, on l'appelle Mariko Kanazawa, temporairement. » Alors, ce nom a été inscrit sur le *koseki* avec l'adresse de l'église et je suis devenue légalement Japonise. Ma mère avait conservé sa

> nationalité coréenne, mais je ne sais pas si j'avais la mienne ou non. Le prêtre a fait son possible pour que je ne devienne pas apatride.[424]

It is clear that the priest lied to the authorities regarding Yonhi-Mariko's origins and he fabricated a story to grant her Japanese citizenship. Although this is admirable to a certain extent, the very fact that the priest has lied very openly about Yonhi-Mariko's background brings him to great disrepute even though this fact never comes to light publically. As the principal representative of the Christian faith and a foreigner, one would think that he is obliged to tell the Japanese authorities the truth. This brave act could be justified as selfless because he feels that he needs to protect those children that the society would not help; be that as it may, the lines become blurred when we think of the motive for his actions. Is the priest acting as an individual to uphold his personal agenda or is he acting in the name of the church?

In the 1970s the church began to express an interest in the protection of Japanese minorities thus highlighting their vulnerability and persecution in Japanese society. In June 1972 the National Christians Council in Japan (NCCJ) held a conference entitled 'Human rights issues of foreign residents of Japan' which shed light on the troubling situation of autochthonous groups such as the Buraku, the Ainu, Okinawans and equally the Korean/Chinese/Taiwanese residents.[425] Consequently, in May 1974, the General Assembly of the Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ) held an international conference with eighty foreign participants entitled 'Minority problems and mission strategy' with the goal of informing international churches of the status quo of these minority groups and the necessity of ecumenical involvement. The priest's actions to protect Yonhi-Mariko and the orphans could be seen as the foundation to what followed many decades later. Even though the priest acted of his own accord, his vision was progressive hence why the NCCJ eventually became aware of the vital

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[424] *Tsubame*, p. 59.

[425] Kumazawa, Yoshinob and David L Swain (eds), *Christianity in Japan 1971-90,* (Tokyo: Kyo Bun Kwan, 1991), p. 143.

role the church can play in protecting and emphasising the marginalisation of these groups. This hypothesis can help justify the priest's unscrupulous deeds with regards to lying to the Japanese authorities in order to protect the young Korean orphan; yet, the basis of the priest's endeavours could be a direct result of personal conflicts.

It is stated that '[…] le prêtre est arrivé au Japon en provenance d'un pays lointain. Il a perdu ses parents à cause d'une guerre en Europe. Il n'avait que quatre ans […] le prêtre est aussi orphelin depuis des années'.[426] Therefore, it can be assumed that his invested interest in helping the orphans is propelled by his own experience of war and having lost his parents at a very young age. Consequently, we need to separate the role of the church as a religious establishment and the priest as an individual even though the two are intertwined; however, distinguishing the two proves to be more difficult because the church funds the priest. Madame Tanaka explains to Yonhi-Mariko how the church can maintain its doors open for the children:

> -Chaque année, l'Église de son pays lui envoie des rideaux, des draps, un costume de prêtre et quelques pièces de tissu. Le prêtre utilise tout pour les enfants. D'autres femmes chrétiennes et moi l'aidons à en faire des chemises, des pantalons, des jupes...C'est pour cela qu'il porte tous les jours ce vieux vêtement noir.[427]

These details highlight that the priest is acting on his own accord rather than realising the wishes of the church he is representing. That is to say, if the church were meant to look after the orphans in the capacity of an orphanage then inevitably the homeland church would have accounted for funds for clothing and sheltering these children. The above quote alludes to the idea that the homeland church was not meant to house these orphans in the first place and the priest on his own accord might have welcomed them. Has the homeland church even been made aware of the orphanage? In any case, there is evidence that this altruistic attitude was commonplace in Japanese churches at the time as described in a letter by Father Steichen in a letter in 1904:

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[426] *Tsubame*, p. 43.

[427] ibid., p. 45.

> Instead of requiring the faithful to come to their aid, whether for the maintenance of the churches or for other running expenses, as is done in all other parishes throughout the world, they deprived themselves of necessaries in order to defray the expenses themselves. So the 58,086 Catholics of Japan contribute hardly 2,000 yen for the maintenance of the Mission.[428]

Even though the priest is represented to selflessly work for the good of the small Christian community that he has created, it seems as though churches in Japan had to function independently in a manner similar to a franchise although failing to be fully self-sufficient economically which suggests that the priest's actions were commonplace at the time and not particularly altruistic.

We also understand that the priest was born in 'une île du Pacifique Sud'[429] and even though we have to make many stipulations about the priest's homeland one deduction could be that the priest is Catholic, French and born in French Polynesia. This assumption can be supported by the fact that the Société des Missions-Étrangères of Paris had taken a prominent role in Japan and consequently nearly all of the missionaries at the beginning of the twentieth century were French.[430] This in turn helps us understand the rationale behind the priest's sentiments and alliance with the orphans and those at the periphery of society. On the one hand, the priest himself is an orphan therefore he feels the need to help the orphans although this is not a clerical mandate. On the other hand, he sympathises with ostracised individuals because he relates to their sense of alienation. As a European citizen who was born in a Pacific Island he was inevitably treated differently whether in the island or back in Europe. The priest's ability to empathise with being different has helped him identify with the Korean residents and orphans to a certain extent. On the contrary, the priest can also be seen ominously because he forms part of a colonising mission. That is to say, French missionaries

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[428] Cary, Otis D., *A History of Christianity in Japan: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant Missions* (Tokyo: Charles E Tuttle, 1987) p. 367.

[429] *Tsubame*, p. 51.

[430] Cary, p. 362.

from 1880s to the First World War worked closely with French colonial expansionists to spread Christian teachings and subsequently glorified the French way of life.[431] In turn, French missionaries managed to dilute local traditions; uphold European teachings that were congruent with colonial agendas. Regardless of whether the priest's attitudes have changed since arriving in Japan, it is important to emphasise that his original intention by going to Japan was synonymous to the colonial mission. As in the case of Indochina, the Christian missions proved to be facilitators for French colonialism and in fact the missionaries were present for nearly two centuries prior to official colonial troops being put on the ground.[432] Furthermore, missionaries were encouraged to abandon the role of soldiers of God and take a more proactive role in the 'French mission' thus they gathered intelligence, helped expeditions and scientific missions as well as acting as translators and interpreters. The Catholic missions in the region had a key role to play in upholding 'French dominance' which led to colonialism. Therefore, even though Shimazaki paints the priest in a favourable selfless light it is important to highlight that the priest can be seen as a colonialist whose fundamental objectives were to spread the word of God but simultaneously introduce and uphold French ideals.

The priest's actions and decisions need to be assessed independently of the church because they represent a reflection of his personal life. Above all, later in *Tsubame* we discover through the dairy of the mother of Yonhi-Mariko that the priest nicknamed 'Monsieur Tsubame' was indeed Yonhi-Mariko's biological father. This further complicates the role of the priest in protecting Yonhi-Mariko's identity. It is clear that he lied to protect his daughter rather than just an orphan in his church therefore he had invested interest in her and her illegitimate son Yukio subsequently. That is to say, would he have done the same for another child in the same circumstances? It seems as though members of the Christian mission took

[431] Daughton, James Patrick *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the making of French Colonialism 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 260.

[432] Doughton, pp. 57-70.

the liberty of interpreting how to spread their faith in Japan according to what they saw fit. A letter by M. Sauret, a medical doctor in 1905, expresses how Japanese nurses were employed to secretly administer evangelical work.

> Moreover, if a child is dying in the neighbourhood, it can be baptised unknown to the parents […] Whilst the pagans admire so much scientific knowledge in a Japanese woman, she profits by the occasion to administer the Sacrament of Baptism, making use of the Latin formula. The unknown language sounds rather strange to pagan ears; they imagine her words to be some kind of incantation to add efficacy to the remedies.[433]

It seems as though foreign nationals in respectable positions had taken their own initiative to manipulate situations as they saw fit with little regard to what the Japanese might want. This behaviour is identical to that of colonialists who only concerned themselves with their goals with little respect to the wishes of the local people. We see parallels between M. Sauret's attitude towards the 'pagans' and that of the priest towards the authorities when he lied about Yonhi-Mariko's true identity. Although both men have philanthropic intentions at heart, they seem to express this in a subjective manner as we have seen.

The priest is presented as a selfless and loving individual who treats all the orphans equally. This is supported by Madame Tanaka's words:

> Les enfants d'ici ne connaissent pas leurs parents. Ce sont des enfants abandonnés. Ce petit garçon a été laissé devant la porte de l'église, enveloppé dans un tissu. Il était tellement beau. Aucun mot ne l'accompagnait. On croyait qu'il avait six ou sept mois. Malgré son malheur, il est devenu un bon garçon grâce à la tendresse du prêtre.[434]

As we consider the representation of Christianity in Shimazaki's novels, it is important to recognise that there is confusion between the roles of the church as an institution that is providing for those at the margin of society and the priest as an individual acting on his own accord. Although, the priest inevitably represents the church it must be stressed that his actions are propelled by his own experiences and empathy towards Yonhi-Mariko. Although

[433] Cary, p. 369.

[434] *Tsubame*, p. 44.

the church provides refuge for individuals, in the case of Yonhi-Mariko it had caused her anguish and pain. In other words, by assisting her in becoming Japanese the priest had supressed her Korean identity and nourished her fear of being ostracised if her true identity was ever to be revealed. In effect, Yonhi-Mariko as we have seen in the previous chapter lived a passive life in order to needlessly protect her true identity from everyone around her including her family. Even though the church (and to a certain extent the Christian faith as presented in the novels) plays a focal role in salvaging the lives of marginalised individuals such as the orphans and the Korean residents, it does not give them the means to better themselves. This could be argued because Yonhi-Mariko was allowed to leave the church when she found a job in a pharmaceutical firm and live alone. Hence the church is presented as a safe haven and not as a cult for instance because if that were the case then Yonhi-Mariko would have had to remain in the church forever to repay her debts because the church/priest saved her life from anti-Korean Japanese mobs and gave her a new Japanese identity. Furthermore, Yonhi-Mariko was allowed to return to the church with her illegitimate child when she needed to find work in order to support her son Yukio. The church also helped in finding Yonhi-Mariko her future partner who adopts Yukio and provides them with security and stability. In any case, whether we see the church as a religious institution independently to the priest or not the impact of the church, although ambivalent at times, had been positive on many lives like that of Yonhi-Mariko, Yukio, Madame Tanaka, the orphans and Monsieur Takahashi (who volunteered in the church) by introducing him to his future wife and son.

Christianity: the cause of woe

In *Tonbo* the third novel of Shimazaki's second cycle entitled *Au Cœur du Yamato*, we are introduced to the Christian protagonist Nobu Tsunoda whose traditionally Japanese character is juxtaposed with his Christian identity which in turn causes him anguish and confusion. The disparity between how Christianity is presented in *Hamaguri* and *Tonbo* allows the reader to access Christianity in Japan from three distinctive perspectives: time periods, economic status and personal viewpoints. In *Hamaguri,* Christianity is examined against the backdrop of a war-torn country that is undergoing dramatic societal and political change. As a result, the

church and ultimately the priest play the role of the protectors. The compassionate role that the church played in protecting the needy during the time of war is contrasted to how Christianity is viewed as a reason for being ostracised in an economically stable Japan of the 1980s. Nobu's narrative allows for a deeper understanding of how Christianity is perceived from the point of view of an adult unlike the previous analysis that was based predominantly on children's interpretations. Even though *Tonbo* does not deal with Christianity as a main theme in the novel, Nobu's actions and thoughts could be directly related to how he views himself as an outsider due to his faith.

Nobu is presented as a traditional Japanese man who is seemingly stable and happy. Nobu prides himself on his achievements relating to the *juku*[435] he founded in 1981. The opening pages of the novel narrated by Nobu describe his daily commute on foot to the *juku* as he observes the willows and nightingales along his route. Nobu is proud of his students' academic achievements which mainly compromise of passing entrance exams to secondary schools and he seems content with his accomplishments. Yet he is haunted by the image of his father's body floating on the river as he crosses a bridge and contemplates how his father would have turned sixty years of age had he been alive. This contrast between a sense of contentment and underlying confusion and pain crystallises Nobu's psychological state, which oscillates between happiness and agony.

Nobu's *juku* that specialises in *kokugo* (national language) highlights that he is traditional in his ways because he wants to uphold his national identity through teaching the Japanese language. This in turn surprises the members of the community who question him: 'Vous y enseignerez seulement le *kokugo*? Pas d'anglais ni de mathématiques?'[436] These comments are not surprising when we consider the importance that Japan puts on English language teaching as a way to bridge cultural exchange between Japan and the world; however, Nobu

[435] A centre for private study attended in addition to normal schooling to prepare for entrance exams.

[436] *Tonbo,* p. 12.

remains resolute about teaching only *kokugo* and possibly introducing singing and piano courses in the future to turn the *juku* into a cultural centre which seems reminiscent of the pre-war era. Although, the *juku* is successful and seems to grow from year to year, Nobu seems to be aware of how things might change at any time:

> Le *juku* Tonbo est maintenant reconnu dans le quartier comme un établissement éducatif de qualité. J'en suis très heureux.
> Cependant, il ne faut pas trop se fier à la prospérité actuelle : il y a ces derniers temps quelque chose d'anormal dans l'économie du Japon. Bien que le PNB stagne, le prix des actions monte sans arrêt. Les taux d'intérêt ayant baissé, les gens achètent à qui mieux des actions ou des immeubles. On se croit riche et on dépense l'argent sans retenue. On voyage à l'étranger en profitant de la hausse du yen par rapport aux autres monnaies. De même, les parents n'hésitent pas à inscrire leurs enfants des cours privés dispendieux. Tant mieux pour moi, mais cette situation ne durera pas. Il faut se préparer à une éventuelle récession.[437]

It is evident that Nobu is very critical of Japanese society that seems to relish the economic success achieved without much forward thinking or preparation for the worst possible outcome. This caution expressed by Nobu might be propelled by the uncertainty he experienced in the period subsequent to his resignation from his previous job at Goshima Company after seven years of service. At Goshima, Nobu worked in the personnel department and he envisioned working there until his retirement; however, he was asked to transfer abroad with the company. Nobu expresses: 'J'en fut choqué: j'avais choisi le service du personnel justement parce que je ne voulais pas travailler à l'étranger et j'étais faible en langues étrangères'.[438] There are two key elements that need to be explored with regards to Nobu's words. On the one hand, Nobu's reserve about working in a foreign nation could be propelled by his fear of the 'Other'. In the post-war period introspective essays and ideas under the collective name of 'Nihonjinron' emerged with the intention of examining theories related to 'Japanese uniqueness'.[439] Japan's national identity was measured and contrasted to

[437] ibid., p. 14.

[438] ibid. , p. 15.

[439] Goodman, Roger and Ian Neary (ed.), *Case Studies in Human Rights in Japan* (Oxford: Routeledge Curzon, 2003), p. 53-54.

the West (as a cumulative entity with little regard to regional cultures, religions or traditions). In these essays, Japanese identity was seen as a fusion of self and other that is subjugated and submerged in peer group identity, whereas Western identity was seen as individualistic and nonconformist. Consequently, Nobu's reluctance to work in a foreign country could be linked to ideas originating from Nihonjinron, which view the West in a dramatically opposing nature to Japan; that is to say, Nobu fears the idea of living in a country that upholds distinctive societal ideals to what he is accustomed to.

Even though the very nature of Japanese society that revolves around group mentality is the primary reason that led Nobu's father to commit suicide, Nobu could be favouring the safety of his nation unaware of the shortfalls which he discovers later in the novel when the truth about the circumstances leading to his father's death comes to light. Similarly, Nobu's linguistic restraints also allude to the notion that he prefers to hide within the assumed linguistic and cultural homogeneity of his homeland. On the other hand, Nobu could be weary of the perception of Japanese people in the West due to the atrocities committed by Japan during the Second World War. Although the Japanese have taken responsibility for the crimes committed during years of invasion and occupation of many parts of Asia that claimed around 20 million lives, there are efforts by different nationalistic groups that have tried to justify and minimise the extent of responsibility of wartime misdeeds.[440] Allegations with regards to the efforts made by national institutions such as the Ministry of Education to encourage national amnesia concerning Japan's atrocities have meant that history regarding Japan's involvement is very much rife in present day Japan. Furthermore, for Nobu's generation, due to the Cold War, Japan did not have to confront China, its neighbour and bearer of the heavier burden of Japanese occupation, until 1970s. This resurgence of debate regarding Japan's involvement in the Second World War must have reignited a sense of guilt within Nobu and equally fear of how the Japanese are perceived in other countries. These guilt-ridden notions could point to the reality that the burden of war still lies heavy on new generations today.

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[440] Kingston, Jeff, *Contemporary Japan: History, Politics, and Social Change since the 1980s* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), p. 164.

By refusing to accept his transfer orders, Nobu had no choice but to resign and start a new life. Nobu's reserve concerning leaving Japan and his inability to learn other languages supports the idea that Nobu is a traditionalist. We can also assume that Nobu is unable to fully enjoy his happiness and he always contrasts the here and now with a sinister memory or a negative future outcome due to his religious faith. To a certain extent, Nobu seems to be subconsciously living with a sense of guilt that could be linked to the teachings of the Christian faith. A psychological study conducted by Mujgan Inozu in 2012, which investigated obsessions and guilt to religious individuals, has revealed the following.

> Clearly, guilt plays a critical role in the heightened obsessionality of religious individuals. Our regression analyses found that guilt accounted for the most of the variance between religiosity and obsessions. We can only speculate at this point whether an enduring state of excessive guilt might cause religious individuals to become more distressed by unwanted, unacceptable intrusive thoughts and images.[441]

In other words, Nobu could be said to be experiencing excessive guilt due to his religious beliefs which in turn cause him great anxiety and consequently he cannot enjoy the here and now. The image of his father's floating body counteracted his pleasant thoughts about the success of his *juku* and equally he judges the Japanese society on relishing the riches of the present without a sense of remorse. Nobu's guilt-ridden thoughts could be a by-product of his interpretation of Christianity; alternatively, it could be assumed that his nature and way of thinking that is propelled by guilt makes him fitting to his Christian faith.

Nobu explains that his career at Goshima was ideal because the company placed a lot of importance on the Japanese language and his main task was to create entrance exams for secondary school graduates joining the company that focused on *kanji* (Chinese characters) as well as Japanese literature and history. Goshima seemed to uphold a traditional view, which

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[441] Inozu, Mujgan 'Why are religious individuals more obsessional? The role of mental control beliefs and guilt in Muslims and Christians', *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental* Psychiatry, 43:3 (September 2012), p. 959-966.

converged with Nobu's outlook. However, with the arrival of a new manager, Nobu soon started to feel out of place.

> Il disait que j'étais de mauvaise compagnie : je ne buvais pas d'alcool, je ne jouais ni au golf ni au mah-jong, je rentrais à la maison tout de suite après le travail. Bref, disait-il, je perturbais l'harmonie de l'équipe. De plus, il n'aimait pas le fait que j'étais chrétien.[442]

Although very little is written about the nameless new manager, the impact that this manager has had on Nobu's career is grave. It seems as though the new manager was both traditional and untraditional in his way of thinking. On the one hand, he seemed to uphold all the clichés associated with 'salary-men' in Japan, that of excessive alcohol consumption after work and playing golf or mah-jong during the holidays, which make the new manager a conformist to the new Japan of economic stability. On the other hand, he seems to be untraditional because he puts more emphasis on creating a harmonious working environment based around social interaction instead of work related tasks. The fact that Nobu does not drink alcohol, play golf or mah-jong does not directly relate to his faith. Undoubtedly, abstaining from alcohol can be linked to certain Christian denominations; however, there is no proof that Nobu's abstinence is due to his faith. The following statement proves that his abstinence was a personal choice rather than a forced one: 'Mais pour moi, cette activité (assister aux séance) était plus agréable que de sortir boire avec mes collègues de la compagnie'.[443] This proclamation highlights that Nobu made a choice regarding drinking with his colleagues yet he does not specify any negative aspects he associates with drinking per se which highlight the fact that he does not strongly oppose his colleagues' drinking habits. Moreover, we are unaware whether Nobu openly declares that he prefers going to church over socialising with his colleagues or whether he actually goes to church every time his colleagues go for an outing.

Nobu extrapolates his manager's attitude to mean that the manager held a particular grudge against Christians. This is a serious accusation that Nobu seems to have created as a way to

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[442] *Tonbo,* p. 21.

[443] ibid., p. 66.

justify being marginalised. In other words, it seems as though Nobu is sensitive to the fact that he is a Christian and conveniently makes a link between the negative feelings he sensed from his new manager to faith-based prejudice. Nobu also deduces that his transfer order to São Paulo was a direct consequence of the new manager wishing to get rid of him. In most cases, transferring to an overseas post is seen favourably because of the experience that could be gained and the financial privileges associated; therefore, this transfer could have come from any other manager who saw it fit for Nobu's professional development hence the transfer could be seen as a privilege rather than a punishment. Furthermore, the new manager had a more forward-thinking and somewhat 'Westernised' attitude towards work and therefore Nobu's traditional attitude might have proved to be a hindrance to the progress of the company on a small scale and the whole country on a larger scale as Japan tries to adopt Western models. As a result, Nobu's thoughts regarding his marginalisation due to his faith seem greatly unfounded especially because the new manager did not directly confront him about this issue, which leads us to think that Nobu is overly sensitive regarding his Christian faith.

A comprehensive survey examining the image of Christianity in Japan was conducted by the Institute of Christian Culture at Sophia University in Tokyo thus highlighting some of the common attitudes ripe in Japanese society in the 1980s. The survey recruited 492 participants from the metropolitan areas and 103 respondents from the Kyushu area (historically linked with early Christian settlements), which were selected on the basis of probability sampling in order to minimise bias.[444] The results were unsurprising regarding general attitudes towards Christianity, namely that Christianity is seen as a 'foreign, western religion' unlike Buddhism which is thought of as a predominantly 'Japanese, oriental religion'. If we consider these findings as a basis for our analysis in the case of Nobu's new manager, it seems as though the new manager, although welcoming to 'foreign' work ethics that promote camaraderie and good non-professional relations, was unreceptive to the idea of Christianity

[444] Colligan, James P. (ed), *The Image of Christianity in Japan: A Survey* (Tokyo: Komiyama Printing Co., 1980), p. 120.

because it is 'un-Japanese'. In other words, the visionary new manager who wanted to promote 'foreign' ideals could not come to terms with Nobu's 'foreign' faith. That is to say, Nobu is seen to upset the harmony of the company by opposing the majority and being 'foreign'. If we consider this point from a different perspective, we can say that Nobu also subscribes to this notion that associates Christianity with being foreign or even alien to the Japanese norm. That is to say, Nobu marginalises himself whether consciously or subconsciously for being Christian from the greater Japanese society. Thus, the conflict is internal in the case of Nobu because his traditional values and Japanese identity that he wants to preserve through *kokugo* would inevitably disapprove of Christianity because it is not Japanese in origin. Could the struggle be even more profound because Nobu ultimately wants to see Christianity as undeniably Japanese?

Nobu's personal conflict can be directly traced to his father's suicide, which subsequently saw him convert to Christianity. Nobu explains: 'Je suis devenu chrétien après la mort de mon père. Plus précisément, après ma rencontre avec Haruko. Auparavant, j'étais bouddhiste non pratiquant, comme mes parents et comme la plupart des Japonais'.[445] The fact that Nobu chose to become Christian confuses our understanding of his intentions and situation. In the above quote, Nobu alludes to the fact that he converted due to his wife Haruko but there is great emphasis linking his conversion to his father's death. It seems as though Nobu by converting to Christianity wanted to reject Japanese society because of the pressures that led his father to commit suicide. Equally, Nobu seems to have sought a reason to be marginalised by the community in general thus using Christianity as a reason to be ostracised in order to deflect from the shame of his father's suicide. Undoubtedly, it can also be said that Christianity might have provided solace and comfort after the ordeal of losing his father publically to suicide. Yet, the manner in which Nobu refers to Christianity can certainly be seen as detached from endearing sentiments associated with a newfound religion. In fact, it seems as though

[445] *Tonbo,* p. 65.

Nobu uses Christianity to 'self-ostracise'; that is to say, Nobu choses to marginalise himself from the mainstream and uses Christianity as a reason for being ostracised.

In order to understand the mental and emotional frame of mind that led Nobu to smoking and subconsciously to Christianity, we need to analyse his father's suicide and the reason why it has left such a deep scar on Nobu's psyche. The father's unexpected suicide in 1972, as Nobu expresses, had detrimental effects on the family: 'Pendant ma troisième année d'université, une tragédie s'est produite chez nous: mon père s'est suicidé. La vie de notre famille en fut bouleversée'.[446] A phone call made by Jirô Kanô, under his married name Monsieur Tanaka, to Nobu in response to an advert for a position of a piano teacher unveiled the father's story.

The father, Monsieur Tsunoda, a frail and introverted biology teacher who was not conscripted during the war due to his ill-health and asthma, taught at secondary schools for nineteen years before working at a *teijisei* (an evening/part-time secondary school for those who worked during the day). Although Monsieur Tsunoda hardly spent time with his family due to his work schedule, he enjoyed his new position, which mostly catered for those who would not pursue an academic career past the completion of their secondary school education. Monsieur Tsoumada's life, which resonates of Nobu's current life, was disrupted during his fourth year at the *teijisei*.

> À la fin de sa quatrième année au *teijisei* S., un évènement malheureux se produisit : mon père gifla un élève et celui-ci mourut le lendemain.
> On apprit bientôt que cet élève avait déjà un grave problème cérébral et que sa mort après la gifle était vraiment une coïncidence. Mon père ne fut pas accusé d'homicide. Cependant, certains médias l'attaquèrent en faussant la réalité : 'Le professeur Tsunoda a tué un élève a coups de poings!'[447]

The events that have transpired were tragic, but they emphasise Monsieur Tsunoda's innocence with regards to Kazu's death. However, the consequent developments, which led to

[446] ibid., p. 23.

[447] ibid., p. 36.

Monsieur Tsunoda's suicide, are important because they highlight many Japanese societal aspects disapproved of by Monsieur Tsunoda.

First and foremost, Monsieur Tsunoda's students Kazu and Jirô are polar opposites and they represent many attributes of the younger generation of post-war Japan. Kazu is presented as a rich yet intelligent playboy who spent his evenings enjoying the nocturnal life of Kobe city, sleeping all afternoons whilst his parents worked selflessly to provide for him and attended the *teijisei,* which was mostly frequented by the working class unlike him. On the other hand, Jirô who moved from Fukuoka with his hardworking mother to avoid gossip about his father's suicide works all day at an instrument shop and gives private piano lessons to children in order to save enough money to go to university. The opposing characters represent two social strata of the younger generations of the new Japan. Despite the fact that Kazu is rich, he lacks the love and attention of his parents and consequently bullies Jirô whilst demanding his *bentô* (lunchbox) and threatening to expose the truth regarding Jirô's father who took his life on a trip with a lover. The *bentô,* which is carefully prepared by Jirô's mother, represents sentiments that are lacking from Kazu's life. Sensing Jirô's unfounded fear, Kazu starts to demand money along with the lunchbox thus leaving Jirô tormented psychologically and financially. Although Jirô reveals the true story to Nobu fifteen years after the event, we are made aware of the deep-rooted impact of *ijime* (bullying) on Japanese society. *Tonbo*'s central story revolves around the culture of bullying that is commonplace in Japanese schools and workplaces, which Nobu alerts us of towards the end of the novel. The characters of Kazu and Jirô as predator and victim highlight important aspects of Japanese society: the reader is made aware of how overworked parents forget to nurture their children sentimentally as in the case of Kazu; and equally how the culture of saving face is focal as we see with Jirô who relocated to Kobe from Fukuoka to avoid gossip about his father's suicide. Monsieur Tsunoda having discovered the bullying and in an attempt to resolve it, scolded Kazu for his behaviour, which in turn resulted in Kazu scorning Monsieur Tsunoda during his lesson and consequently receiving a slap by his teacher for his insolence.

Although the full story was not available to Nobu at the time these events transpired, we are clear that Nobu respected his father for siding with his student Jirô whom Kazu taunted in class because his mother worked in a Chinese restaurant in Chinatown. Monsieur Tsunoda evidently disliked this dreadful yet endemic social culture of bullying and he wanted to put an end to it. This behaviour supports the idea that Monsieur Tsunoda rejected some Japanese conventions such as shaming others and bullying. Subsequently, we see Nobu rejecting Japanese society by not wishing to spend time with his colleagues and seeking a 'foreign' religion and escaping societal norms. Furthermore, the father's suicide was a direct result of two other events that are directly linked with saving face. After the death of Kazu, leaving the *teijisei* became paramount because the media sensationalised the events inaccurately thus pointing the finger at Monsieur Tsunoda as the guilty party. Tormented by the taunts of the media and the arrival of many journalists at his doorstep, Monsieur Tsunoda had no choice but to look for another post, which proved difficult at first but he succeeded in the end. At the new *juku*, Kazu's story came to light and Monsieur Tsunoda was dismissed accordingly. The following words resonated with Monsieur Tsunoda and led him to suicide: 'le professeur Tsunoda ne montre aucun remords, A-t-il encore le droit de pratiquer son métier?'[448] This highlights the importance of social approval and employment as a status symbol for Monsieur Tsunoda who could not see a life past being socially ridiculed.

Monsieur Tsunoda is presented as a man of honour who is unique at the same time because of the principles he upholds. Not having participated in the war, Monsieur Tsunoda must have been an outsider because he could not relate to those who were conscripted. He also supported the idea that Japan was founded by a Korean empress: 'D'après lui, dans la deuxième moitié du quatrième siècle, cette impératrice était venue de la Corée au Japon et son fils Ôjin était né en Kyushu. Les deux auraient par la suite conquis le royaume Yamataï-koku et fondé le royaume de Yamato'.[449] Monsieur Tsunoda was an outsider even though he belonged

[448] ibid., p. 50.

[449] ibid., p. 76.

to the Japanese majority. Yet, he conforms to Japanese norms of secrecy because he does not expose Kazu's bullying to the media when he is wrongly accused and furthermore he sees his life as worthless without a job thus highlighting Haruko's words: 'Perdre son travail, ce n'est pas seulement perdre de l'argent. C'est aussi perdre sa confiance en soi et son but dans la vie'.[450] Perhaps, the only plausible reason for Nobu's obsession with his father's suicide is due to the uncertainty concerning his father's refusal to clear his name when publically denounced by the media, which comes to light with Jirô's visit. Nobu respected his father very much to the extent of emulating his life: 'En fait, tenir un *juku* était le rêve de mon père pour après sa retraite'.[451] In other words, Nobu resigned from Goshima Company after the arrival of the new manager and the unease he felt just like his father who resigned from the *teijisei* after the Kazu affair, even though he was not asked to leave. Nobu also opened a *juku,* which was his father's dream after retiring. Furthermore, one can stipulate that he subconsciously converted to Christianity to remove himself from Japanese society that his father criticised but equally to have a sense of 'not belonging' like his father did by not being conscripted. It seems as though Nobu like Jirô wanted to escape his hometown of Kobe to avoid being ridiculed for his father's suicide. However, this action simultaneously accentuates the importance of belonging to a community at the same time. The most important link that Shimazaki is making in addition to criticising the ways of Japanese society in terms of bullying, secrecy and suicide, is that history repeats itself. That is to say, there is a profound sense of perpetual repetition and guilt that is sensed despite the change of time, politics and economy. Nobu replicates the sense of loss that is felt by Monsieur Tsunoda, Jirô and even Kazu in his quest to understanding the past and moving forward, which tells us that the past is forever affecting the present and equally the future. The words of Jirô resonate with the reader because they emphasise the burden felt by Nobu as well as Jirô: 'Pendant ces quinze années, j'ai tenté d'échapper à mon fardeau'.[452] It seems as though there is a burden that is felt by all

[450] ibid., p. 73.

[451] ibid., p. 24.

[452] ibid., p. 113.

parties concerned that might directly relate to Monsieur Tsunoda's story but, as we have seen in Chapter 2 'The Legacy of the Second World War', Japan is still carrying the burden of the atrocities of war and even though this is not openly expressed the sentiments are deep-rooted in Japanese society and way of thinking. The untold story of Monsieur Tsunoda's struggle reflects the turmoil experienced by Japan as a direct result of a culture of secrecy and saving face. Towards the end of the novel Nobu seems secure and happy after Jirô's apology for escaping to Yokohama and not supporting Monsieur Tsunoda's actions publically; however, there is no reason to suggest that Nobu has battled all his demons especially if we were to consider his doubts regarding suicide and Christianity.

After admitting his father's suicide to Haruko, Nobu questions: 'Les chrétiens n'admettent pas le suicide, n'est-ce pas?'[453] This is the first and only time in the novel that we see Nobu making a direct remark about the gospel and although sounding sincere it seems as though Nobu is looking for another way to 'ostracise' himself from within. In other words, it is apparent that Nobu has followed a pattern in life that is very hard to change which suggests that he will continue to be tormented in the future by his father's past because he was shamed publically despite his innocence and equally by his faith which rejects his father's suicide. Although Haruko reassures Nobu that his father's suicide could be 'pardoned' in her interpretation of Christianity: 'Admis ou pas, ça arrive. Dans la Bible, on ne trouve nulle part une phrase qui l'interdit. D'abord, personne ne naît en souhaitant se suicider'.[454] One would assume that Haruko's meaningful words would calm Nobu's uncertainty but the fact that he does not address this point leads us to conclude that Nobu remains unconvinced and resolute about his views.

The previously mentioned survey about attitudes towards Christianity also revealed that Japanese people see Christianity as a religion of 'social involvement' and in many cases a

[453] ibid., p. 66.

[454] ibid.

'religion of love'.[455] Although the 'social involvement' aspect directly relates to missionary schools, propaganda and door-to-door visits, this generalisation could be closely linked to the way Christianity is perceived by the majority. If we infer this generalisation to Goshima Company and Nobu's experience, we can see that Nobu's 'antisocial' behaviour might have given a conflicting image to that of what is expected of a Christian. To reiterate, Nobu's new manager and colleagues might have anticipated his readiness to engage in social activities because they perceive Christianity to be social and 'foreign'; therefore, when he rejected socialising and seemed unaccepting of foreign social trends their subsequent reaction was negative. That is to say, the new manager's dislike of Christians is specific only to Nobu because he did not behave in a way synonymous to the perceived image of a Christian. Therefore, Nobu's life choices are to blame for the transfer orders and not his faith as he deduced. Regardless of what the manager's intentions were, Nobu alerts us that *ijime* (bullying) is inherent in Japanese society because the manager, in order to make Nobu succumb to his transfer order, attempts to blackmail him by saying: '[…] il m'a laissé entendre de manière détournée que mon père avait tué un élève d'un coup de poing'.[456] Once again the reader is left to their own devices with regards to the main theme of *Tonbo,* which oscillates between bullying and the Christian minority, which are both sub-themes of the plot. In any case, the reader is made to conclude that Christians in Japan feel marginalised whether overtly or covertly thus justifying Nobu's oversensitivity.

Nobu's conversion to Christianity seems to have come as a result of external factors rather than internal ones. In other words, Nobu decided to become a Christian of his own accord and he was not pressured to convert by neither his Christian wife nor his Christian friends. As we see from the following passages Nobu made a conscious decision about converting to Christianity, yet he does not seem passionate about Christianity or the fundamentals of Christianity.

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[455] Colligan, p. 124.

[456] *Tonbo,* p. 107.

> Lorsque je suis venu à Tokyo pour travailler à la compagnie Goshima, j 'ai retrouvé mon ami d'enfance de Kobe. Il m'a présenté ses amis et je me suis lié d'amitié avec l'un d'eux, qui comme moi aimait la littérature. Celui-ci était chrétien.
> Un jour, il m'a invité à son église pour assister à une séance de lecture de la Bible. Je l'ai suivi par curiosité. L'ambiance était agréable et le pasteur amusant. À la fin de la soirée, on a chanté un hymne. J'ai continué d'assister aux séances, qui se tenaient les jeudis soirs. Je ne pensais pas devenir chrétien, et personne ne me le demandait…Et c'est là, dans cette église, que j'ai rencontré Haruko.[457]

It seems as though Nobu's Christian experience was pleasant and enjoyable which made him consider converting to Christianity. However, it does not seem as though he was moved by the gospel or the teachings of Christianity. From the above quote, it is clear that Nobu was at a loss as a result of moving from Kobe to Tokyo and therefore needed company in a big metropolitan city. The fact that he decided to convert to Christianity without being pressured affirms the fact that he just wanted to belong and to a certain extent he was drawn by the 'foreignness' of Christianity. As in the case of Yonhi-Mariko and her son Yukio the church is presented as a safe haven although this pretext is deeply embedded between the lines. Nobu, himself a 'foreigner' in Tokyo who is perplexed by the reasons that led his father to commit suicide, sees the church as a place of comfort and consolation. It seems as though Shimazaki wants to affirm the position of the church as the protector as we have previously seen in the first section of this chapter. Furthermore, we see a similar pattern as with Yonhi-Mariko that the church is a channel that leads to happiness because both Yonhi-Mariko and Nobu found their life partners via the church. The reader is not made aware of Yonhi-Mariko's religious beliefs and there is certainly no mention of her discussing her religious views or asserting them on her partner Monsieur Takahashi. We see a similar relationship here between Nobu and his wife Haruko.

> À notre troisième rendez-vous, j'ai demandé à Haruko de m'épouser. Elle a dit : 'Oui, avec une condition.' J'ai d'abord cru qu'elle voulait que je devienne chrétien. Cela me semblait compréhensible et j'y étais prêt. Je me trompais. Elle voulait simplement que j'arrête de fumer. Je m'étais mis à fumer après la mort de mon père, pour échapper au

[457] ibid., pp. 65-66.

> stress, surtout quand j'étais seul. J'ai accepté la condition de Haruko. Depuis, je ne fume plus.[458]

This exchange is important because it seems as though Nobu wanted Haruko to ask him to convert to Christianity as a way of belonging and being accepted; however, the fact that Haruko does not make faith a prerequisite to marriage is confusing. Firstly, Haruko is portrayed as a devout Christian and we assume that she was born a Christian and did not convert like Nobu although this is not made clear. If this were the case then Nobu's faith would inevitably be a point of contention or discussion at the very least. Perhaps the main intention of presenting Haruko in this light is to emphasise her openness and compassion like Monsieur Takahashi who volunteered at the church and accepted Yonhi-Mariko even though she comes 'd'origine douteuse'[459] with an illegitimate child. It seems as though Shimazaki is highlighting that sympathisers of the church are respectable individuals with a deep sense of duty and compassion. Secondly, Haruko's prerequisite regarding smoking is important because Nobu developed this habit due to the loss of his father. Haruko wanted Nobu to distance himself from bad habits and equally the source of his pain - the loss of his father. Yet, Nobu does not speak out about neither his admiration of the Christian faith nor the pain caused by his father's death. Once again we see a relationship that is haunted by echoes from the past that is made more complex because of unresolved issues that fester and reveal themselves in a painful manner later on in life as we have seen in the confessions of Yukiko in Chapter 2 'The Legacy of the Second World War' and Yonhi-Mariko in Chapter 3 '*Zainichi* Identity in Japan'.

Nobu's choice to convert to Christianity remains puzzling because he does not seem vehement and enthusiastic about the teaching of the Christian faith. Words such as 'agréable' and 'amusant', which Nobu associates with the church, are not emotive words one would expect to hear from someone who makes a conscious decision of converting to a new faith. However,

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[458] ibid., p. 67.

[459] *Hamaguri,* p. 25.

Nobu does stress the fact that he attended the sermons because of curiosity. This could tell us that Nobu was always curious about Christianity and he was able to address this curiosity because he was away from his hometown Kobe and his family. Another explanation could be the fact that Nobu did not regard Christianity as a foreign entity but intrinsically Japanese. The following affirmations that Nobu makes help support this idea because they highlight how Nobu has a deep-rooted connection with Japanese culture and he wants to instil these values in his children thus emphasising that he sees Christianity as a Japanese religion.

> Je désire que mes enfants soient éduqués et instruits au Japon, au moins jusqu'à la fin du lycée. Je ne voudrais pas qu'ils habitent à l'étranger avant de connaître leur propre culture, nos traditions, notre histoire. Ils ne seraient pas Japonais s'ils ne savaient pas nos chansons merveilleuses, ne connaissaient pas notre littérature unique, n'avaient pas expérimenté l'opulence de notre nature avec ses quatre saisons bien démarquées. Pour moi, c'est une question d'identité et de racines.[460]

Nobu is the most traditional and patriotic of Shimazaki's protagonists and the way he upholds conventional values in a country that is outward looking stresses a sense of nostalgia to pre-war Japan. So how can such a traditionally minded Japanese man convert to a 'foreign' religion such as Christianity especially if he does not glorify it and only mentions its teachings in passing? It is unequivocally clear that Shimazaki wanted to marry Japanese traditionalism and Christianity so as to emphasise that Christianity is an inherently Japanese religion in its own right as much as Buddhism or Shintoism. Perhaps this is a generalisation especially when Nobu reminds us that: 'Nous formons une famille ordinaire, ni riche ni pauvre, rien de spécial. Si nous différons de la majorité des Japonais, c'est que nous sommes chrétiens. Ceux-ci représentent à peine un pour cent de la population'.[461] The Christian population undoubtedly represents a minority, as discussed previously in the chapter entitled '*Zainichi Identity in Japan'*, minorities in Japan are marginalised and their struggles are disregarded which suggests that it is impossible to belong to the majority whilst being a member of a minority. It seems as though Shimazaki is juggling two separate concepts: on the one hand, Christianity

[460] *Tonbo,* pp. 122-123.

[461] ibid., p. 62.

can no longer be labelled as 'foreign' because it is fully Japanese considering its long history and therefore a traditional man like Nobu who upholds Japanese culture can equally defend Christianity as a Japanese institution; on the other hand, Shimazaki is overemphasising the existence of Christianity as a way to educate the Western reader as she has done with Korean residents, war and other central issues of her novels. If Shimazaki's intentions were to intertwine Japanese identity with Christianity in order to support the idea that Christians in Japan can no longer be seen as 'outsiders'. Then again, why present this ideology through a person who is not 'truly' Christian by birth and instead centre the novel about the kakure Krishtian[462] (Christians who went underground in 1639 for two centuries) in the southern region of Kyushu? This would have educated the Western reader more about the true and unique struggles of Christian identity in Japan. Although Shimazaki does not talk about kakure Krishtian directly we can stipulate that Jirô's weakness, cowardice and instability are a direct result of being a native of Fukuoka (largest city in Kyushu). Even though *Tonbo* is set in Kobe and Tokyo, subtle reoccurring references to Kyushu are made again and again. Kyushu being the epicentre of Japanese Christian community is fundamental in how we understand *Tonbo* as a novel about Christianity because we are reminded of the origins of Japanese Christianity.

Jirô's religious affiliation is not referred to in the novel; however, his demeanour suggests that he is Christian. When expressing his remorse to Nobu for not supporting Monsieur Tsunoda he explains: 'Ce n'étaient pas les actes de mon père, mais les miens, ma lâcheté. À cause de ma lâcheté, votre père a perdu son travail puis la vie'.[463] Jirô is presented as a weak individual who was the victim of Kazu's bullying and his natural instinct was to flee Fukuoka after his father's suicide and similarly flee Kobe after his teacher's suicide. Jirô's unfounded fear of Kazu suggests that he is inherently weak: 'J'avais peur de son regard sarcastique. J'étais constamment gêné pas sa présence agaçante […] il me fixait froidement. Il me scrutait comme

[462] Harrington, Ann M., *Japan's Hidden Christians* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993), p. 35.

[463] *Tonbo,* p. 113.

s'il lisait dans ma tête. Je n'osais pas lui adresser la parole'.[464] This fear of his classmate could indicate that Jirô feared persecution (due to his faith or hometown) in general and could sense that Kazu might be the perpetrator of hateful acts hence why he chose to avoid him at all cost. Perhaps this fear can be due to factors such as Jirô's feelings of displacement in his new surroundings and similarly his worry of his father's suicide story coming to light. However, a notion of prejudice that he is accustomed to because of his Christian faith could have propelled Jirô's weakness. Once again, these are stipulations about his faith yet the fact that Shimazaki chose this weak and cowardly character to originate from Kyushu does not come as a surprise.

Jirô's compliance with Kazu's terms with regards to his lunchbox and money resonate of oppression that could represent how the Christian minority is being harassed. In this analogy Kazu represents the mainstream dominant majority and Jirô the Christian minority that feel powerless as highlighted by Jirô's words: 'J'étais tellement honteux de ma faiblesse que je pleurais'.[465] It is important to highlight that Shimazaki's characters and plots are deliberately chosen in a way to expose and discuss inherent issues with Japanese society therefore this analysis is not in anyway farfetched especially when we focus on this extract of the conversation between Nobu and Jirô.

> -Alors, dis-je, que était son problème ?
> -Le problème de Kazu? Non, c'était notre problème, à nous deux, comme agresseur et victime. Nous étions attirés l'un vers l'autre, étant tous deux des enfants à problèmes.[466]

Superficially the interaction between Kazu and Jirô might seem as an ordinary episode between two teenagers; however, the fact that Jirô makes reference to being a victim and Kazu the aggressor, suggest that there is more at stake. This plot seems to represent Japanese

[464] ibid., p. 96.

[465] ibid., p. 103.

[466] ibid., p. 107.

society as a whole with the minority and majority co-existing in a sensitive and unsettled environment. The plot thickens when we consider the role of the other classmate Akitzu. Nobu makes reference to his father's student's name thus linking her name directly to Japan:

> Mon père avait noté […] 'La forme du pays ressemble à un accouplement de libellules.' Akizu ou Akizu-shima, l'ancien mot pour *tonbo* qui veut aussi dire Yamato, Japon. On l'appelle également Akitsu depuis l'époque de Heian…comme l'ancienne élève de mon père Akitsu. Celle-ci était originaire de la préfecture de Nara. Je me dis : 'Nara, Yamato, Akitsu, Tonbo, Japon'.[467]

This crucial link that is made between Akitzu and Japan is paramount because Akitzu was unaware of the bullying that was taking place between Kazu and Jirô. Akitzu who represents Japan is unaware of the plight of its people. Furthermore, when Akitzu supported Monsieur Tsunoda by writing a letter to the journalist who denounced him her words went unnoticed. Similarly, when Jirô wanted to flee Kobe with his mother Akitzu was unaware and unable to stop them from fleeing. We can extend this analysis to include Monsieur Tsunoda who was righteous and wanted to stop the conflict between Kazu and Jirô to represent other marginalised groups in Japan. As we have seen previously, Monsieur Tsunoda was at the periphery of society for not going to war due to his health and his introverted personality; therefore, Monsieur Tsunoda who embodies one of the other Japanese minorities was sentenced to suicide by the state of affairs in Japan and his helplessness to change the status quo which leaves Nobu and the others with an unresolved burden for years to come. In summary, Jirô's role as a weak and cowardly character is vital because he symbolises the Christian minority of Kyushu and Japan's situation as a whole. Also, by association we begin to understand that the name *Tonbo* was not chosen arbitrarily because it means Japan; therefore, *Tonbo* is a profound examination of Japanese society and domestic issues that the Western world is not aware of. Shimazaki is telling the reader that this Japan is *Tonbo* a Japan unknown to the world.

[467] ibid., p. 78.

Unlike Jirô's feeble characterisation, Nobu although troubled by the past represents another take on Christianity. What is frustrating about Nobu is his nonchalance with regards to Christianity, yet he manages to manipulate Christianity to 'self-ostracise'. Furthermore, Nobu seems uncertain about his faith: 'Suis-je vraiment chrétien? Je ne sais pas. Ce qui es certain, c'est que Haruko, qui est chrétienne, m'a apporté la sérénité et que je ne regrette pas ma conversion'.[468] This affirmation sheds light on the reader's possible curiosity regarding the lack of passion that Nobu exhibits towards Christianity. Having said so, Nobu's dependence on his wife's faith supports theories about the self in a Japanese context. According to Doi Takeo, one of the most renowned Japanese psychoanalysts, Japanese male patients focused on their dependency needs especially if they were not being satisfied unlike their western counterparts who were reluctant to admit dependency needs.[469] This suggests that Japanese males continue their parent-child love-dependency patterns into their adulthood; while Western men are encouraged to 'grow-up' and 'leave home', these Western psychological stages are unfamiliar to Japanese men. What does this mean in relation to Nobu? It is apparent that Nobu remains troubled about his relationship with his father's absence and the culmination of this dependency, which consequently makes him feel lost and distressed. Therefore, as a form of comfort he projects his need for a love-dependency relationship onto the Christian faith to begin with and then onto Haruko. If we consider this theory as an axis we can begin to understand that Nobu's lack of passion towards his newfound faith is justified because he is playing the role of the 'child' who is guided by his 'parent', a role that Haruko fulfils. In other words, he is following the guidance of Haruko in terms of faith, which does not require him to have a stance of his own when it comes to Christianity. Doi Takeo also discusses the dual self-consciousness of Japanese adults that is two-fold: *omote* - how the self is presented in public, *ura* - how the hidden or private self is conducted. This theory could be extended to how Nobu presents himself in public and in private. To a certain extent, Nobu

[468] ibid., p. 68.

[469] Lee, Robert, *The Clash of Civilizations: An Intrusive Gospel in Japanese Civilization* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), p.48.

might have presented himself as a 'Christian' individual to his colleagues and new manager which made them form a certain stereotype regarding his behaviour and conduct although deep inside in the private realm he is not very religious and dependent on his wife for spiritual guidance. The question remains unanswered: why is Nobu the overtly Christian protagonist of this novel? Another hypothesis for centralising the novel around Nobu could be that Shimazaki wanted to support the idea that the Japanese are not religious and Buddhist traits are very difficult to change; thus, alluding to the blurred lines between Christianity and Buddhism in Japan.

In order to understand the profound ideological and linguistic connection between Christianity and Buddhism in Japan, it is important to delve into the historical evolution of Christianity. It is definitely noteworthy that the first successful years (1543-1551) of the Christian delegation in Japan proved rewarding in terms of numbers; however, Higashibaba alerts us of many shortcomings that made contextual understanding of the Japanese catechisms heavily intertwined with the Buddhist doctrine. The main concern that Higashibaba raises relates directly to Anjirō the first Japanese Christian baptized in Goa in 1548 who played the part of main translator of the teachings preached by the missionaries. Anjirō's knowledge and understanding of the Christian doctrine was commendable along with the progress he made in learning Portuguese; however, the fact that Anjirō was uneducated in the Japanese language limited him from accessing Buddhist scripture and equally prevented him from accurately translating Christian scripture and dogma into Japanese without heavily depending on Buddhist terminology which inevitably hazed the lines between the two religions.[470] Although highly debatable, the usage of Buddhist terms such as *dainichi* (the Great Sun/Illumination) as the Christian God, *jōdo* (Pure Land), *jigoku* (hell) and *tamashii* (souls) made it easy to access the Christian doctrine for the Japanese because they could relate these nuanced words to pre-existing Buddhist concepts hence some words had to be changed to the Latin equivalent to avoid any such confusion and consequently the word Deus

[470] Higashibaba, Ikuo, *Christianity in Early Modern Japan,* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 8-10.

replaced *dainichi* in the Japanese translations. Ironically these critical linguistic misconceptions worked in favour of the spread of Christianity and in turn in 1551 the Lord Ōuchi Yoshitaka of Yamaguchi awarded the missionaries a former Buddhist temple to continue spreading their word which he referred to in a statement as: 'monks who have come from the western regions (India) to spread the law of Buddha (*buppō o shōryū no tame)'.*[471] The blurring of the lines between the two religions due to poor translation resulted in the success of the Christian mission. Considering the fact that Xavier the head of the first Portuguese Jesuit mission left Japan after two years of missionary work, it is estimated that by 1581 there were 150,000 Christians (2.5% of the population) given that the majority of the 200 churches established were primarily founded in Kyushu and the southern island.[472]

As indicated, Christianity was presented to the Japanese through Buddhist terminology and even though some of the wordings have evolved since they were first presented; Japanese understanding of Christianity is unique because it subscribes to the general attitudes of the Shinto-Buddhist majority. The following conversation between Jirô and Nobu supports the idea that some Buddhist ideologies are deeply ingrained within Japanese mentality.

> -Ce doit être l'*innen* (fatalité)
> -L'*innen* ?
> Je ne comprenais pas pourquoi il avait tout d'un coup prononcé ce mot de provenance bouddhiste.[473]

Jirô was referring to how destiny has brought them together after all these years. Nobu's surprise with regards to the usage of this Buddhist term alludes to the fact that both Nobu and Jirô are Christians therefore the use of this Buddhist language seemed inappropriate. However, the fact that Nobu understands this concept of fate and chooses not to contradict or interject Jirô substantiates the argument that Buddhist-thinking is commonplace. Nobu undeniably was a self-confessed non-practising Buddhist before he converted to Christianity

[471] ibid., p. 11.

[472] Francis, p. 9.

[473] *Tonbo,* p. 114.

so these terms might be easier for him to understand. Nevertheless, the idea brought forward by Jirô and Shimazaki is that these Buddhist notions are unequivocally Japanese and they bond people of all minorities in the way of general culture. In trying to understand the characterisation of Nobu, it seems as though Shimazaki has deliberately chosen a self-conflicting protagonist because he raises many questions about his faith and identity in the new Japan burdened with an atrocious past, a push for westernisation and ultimately a lost identity.

Conclusion:

The history of Christianity in Japan dates back to 1543 and the evolution of Christianity in Japan is unique for many reasons: the lack of Japanese contact with Western religions prior to the arrival of the missionaries, the interpretation of the gospel through Buddhist ideologies, the expulsion of missionaries, the hidden Christian communities during the closing of the borders and the many fractions of Christianity present during the war and today in Japan. However, Shimazaki has chosen to divert from these historical facts to present Christianity to a Western reader through a plot that any reader can relate to and understand. Although the church plays a central role in *Tsubame* in protecting Yonhi-Mariko from the wrath of anti-Korean bandits, it was the mother's despair that coerced her to leave her daughter at the doors of the church. Yonhi-Mariko's mother who chose the name 'Mariko' as a Japanese derivative of Mary alludes to her Christian faith; however, we discover that in reality the mother was leaving Yonhi-Mariko with her biological father, the priest Monsieur Tsubame. In this instance, the church or more specifically the priest represents a safe haven for Yonhi-Mariko and subsequently her illegitimate son Yukio in *Hamaguri* who remains puzzled by the 'foreignness' of the church and eventually experiences the same cruelty for not truly belonging to the church or the faith. Yonhi-Mariko's story is contradicted with that of Nobu Tsunoda who converts to Christianity in the 1980s in an economically stable Japan. The circumstances that led Yonhi-Mariko and Nobu to the church could not be more conflicting: the dire need of protection and curiosity respectively. Nobu as the main Christian protagonist

is characterised in a pitiable way because of his anguish that is related to his father's suicide, his nonchalance towards his chosen faith and 'self-ostracising' use of Christianity.

Shimazaki emphasises the existence and importance of the Christian faith in Japan through *Tonbo*. Even though we are candidly told that Christianity is a minority religion, Shimazaki clearly wants to interweave Christianity with Japanese past and present. Shimazaki relentlessly explores and exploits the idea of Japanese homogeneity as if to say that the Japanese are as multicultural and multi-ethnic as any other nation (namely Western nations). This consistent message is admirable because Shimazaki educates the reader about Japan's underlying societal problems as she weaves plots of human interaction that any reader can relate to. However, at times the overemphasis that Shimazaki puts on racial and religious conflict in Japan alludes to dire fractions that represent Japan as a lost and deeply divided nation. This is not entirely true because Japan has managed to exist as a nation and strive even through the worst adversities. Undeniably, as a literary ambassador of Japan to the Western world, Shimazaki presents a reality that many Westerners are unaware of. Furthermore, Shimazaki opens the debate to the West and equally to Japan and underlines the urgency of these burning topics relating to prejudice. As to Christianity, it is tempting to assume that Shimazaki subscribes to this faith and that is why she vehemently wants to address this issue in three of her novels but that would be an irrational assumption even if plausible because Shimazaki cannot equally be a Korean resident and the embodiment of all the societal fractions. In other words, Shimazaki is impartially reporting on the reality of Japan and through every novel she addresses fundamental issues that trouble today's generations. In this light we see *Tonbo* as a catalogue of Japanese societal problems ranging from *ijime* (school and workplace bullying), the pain of saving face, the destructive nature of group mentality and ultimately the marginalisation of religious minorities. Shimazaki's efforts to expose these issues are highly commendable, yet we are left with one question: what is the solution? Although the reader is left to draw their own conclusions, there is one clear message that Shimazaki stresses: the need to openly talk about these issues is the only resolution to be had. Shimazaki encourages Japan and the world to communicate about these shortcomings

and break with Japanese traditions of silence and secrecy. As we see at the end of *Tonbo*, a planned reunion between Jirô, Nobu and Akitzu after exposing the truth about past events not only brings peace to Nobu and Jirô but reminds us that: 'Continuer à vivre est en soi une chose incroyable'.[474]

[474] ibid., p. 132.

Chapter 5:

Suicide, Sexuality and Family: the presence of Dazai and Mishima in Shimazaki's novels

> '…la mort volontaire ne nous apparaîtra plus comme le consentement passif à des tentations, à des impulsions, mais comme le choix délibéré d'une solution parmi d'autres, comme un geste éthique référé à des princes, à des valeurs'[475]

The theme of voluntary death or suicide has a prominent role in Aki Shimazaki's novels even when it is not addressed directly as is the case of the presumed suicide of Yukiko in *Tsubaki*. In this particular scenario it is suggested that suicide was an unavoidable conclusion to having lived through national atrocities during the Second World War and the guilt of committing parricide. In *Tonbo*, Shimazaki deals with the profound effects of Monsieur Tsunoda's suicide on his son Nobu. In both instances, voluntary death is expressed through the survivors who try to understand the reasons that have led to this act and to a certain extent rationalize it. Suicide in Japan has deep-rooted cultural connotations that lead back to the samurai era and how this clan and their caste code of conduct has permeated national identity and culture. Furthermore, suicide has been expressed as a deeply selfless and honorific act that at times even when condemned the act is not viewed as negatively as seen in the West. Shimazaki, whilst exposing Japanese realities to a Western audience, could not avoid mentioning voluntary death in Japan because it forms a unique cultural tradition that haunts many families and the nation as a whole. Moreover, Shimazaki writes about suicide to shed light on a Japanese literary tradition that directly deals with suicide as an inevitable reality due to social obligations by referencing and following in the footsteps of Osamu Dazai and Yukio Mishima.

[475] Pinguet, Maurice, *La Mort Volontaire au Japon,* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 35.

Why write about suicide?

Before delving into the socio-cultural, psychological and historical context of suicide in Japan, it is important to discuss links between Japanese writers and suicide. The frequency of suicide among Japanese writers is remarkable; in fact it is reported that six writers among the 100 writers whose work has featured in the *Complete Works in Modern Japanese Literature* have committed suicide.[476] Furthermore, a large number of stories and novels have been indicated with suicide as a primary theme (Figure 1). The table reveals that suicide has a prominent literary standing in Japanese literature and therefore the inclusion of suicide in Shimazaki's novels does not come as a surprise with this in mind. However, the conscious choice of making suicide a somewhat secondary theme with an impact on primary protagonists is particularly interesting because Shimazaki exposes the sorrow and pain that suicide causes on family members thus de-romanticizing suicide and making it tangible to the readers.

Two of the six prolific writers who committed suicide can be directly linked with Shimazaki: Osamu Dazai and Yukio Mishima. As revealed in an interview with Linda Amyot, Shimazaki has made particular reference to having read works by Osamu Dazai: 'Entre 13 et 18 ans, j'ai écrit des nouvelles pour m'amuser ou montrer à mes amies. Mes temps libres étaient consacrés à la lecture de romans et de biographies d'écrivains dont la vie était hors de l'ordinaire, comme celle d'Osamu Dazai'.[477] The fact that Shimazaki makes reference to Dazai and labels him as out of the ordinary is thought provoking because this comment could be shedding light on Dazai's view of the world, which revolves around his obsession with suicide, which culminated with his own death. Consequently, Dazai's style and thematic use of suicide could be directly correlated to Shimazaki's interest in exploring suicide in her novels; that is to say, Shimazaki has been consciously or subconsciously influenced by his morbid style. For instance, Nobu indirectly mentions Dazai in *Tonbo* as Jirô recounts how his father and lover

[476] Iga, Mamoru, *The Thorn in the Chrysanthemum: Suicide and Economic Success in Modern Japan* (London: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 17&69.

[477] Amyot, p. 45.

committed suicide (quotation on page 17 of this thesis). Shimazaki makes reference to what can be assumed to be Dazai yet she does not mention his name. This could be because she wants the readers to research Dazai and discover him on their own accord or because Dazai is not well known outside Japan and mentioning his name might deter from the narrative. By stating that Nobu's wife had negative views concerning Dazai despite not having read his novels, Shimazaki urges individuals to form their own opinion about Dazai rather than simply labelling him for his acts rather than his literary work.

Osamu Dazai (pen name of Tsushima Shūji) lived a turbulent life that ended with his suicide in 1948.[479] His short-lived thirty-nine years of life were fuelled with frustration, narcissism and most notably disillusion with the Japanese cultural inclination towards pretentiousness in terms of social conduct. This in turn has made him into a hero amongst young Japanese people especially during rebellious university years because Dazai represented their anxiety, misperception and mistrust of all things Japanese particularly when post-war debates arise. Dazai's obsession with suicide first surfaced at the young age of 20 in 1929 due to the communist fever that swept Japan, which revealed that his aristocratic life was founded on the exploitation of the poor. The following year he attempted suicide with a married barmaid but he survived (this is the incident alluded to by Nobu above), he attempted *shinjū* (double suicide) with his wife Hatsue (a geisha who he wanted to save by marrying but divorced after their attempted suicide) which was unsuccessful and he finally succeeded in ending his life with a lover thus leaving his second wife Michiko Ishikawa in an impoverished state with three children.[480] On a personal level, Dazai's life highlighted his narcissism through his attempts at double suicide and nihilistic nature, which could also be associated with his alleged dependency on drugs. His pessimistic views concerning human nature and the endemic exploitative social order were highlighted by revelations of the atrocities that

[479] McCarty, Ralph F., *Self Portraits: Tales from the life of Japan's great decadent romantic* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1991), pp. 9-12.

[480] ibid., p. 86.

followed Japan's defeat after the Second World War, which in turn granted him a reputable status as a Japanese post-war writer.

Dazai's literary work had one key objective in mind, which was to expose real feelings that are kept hidden under Japanese social norms. This is best explained through his words: 'almost all of my agony is concerned with the difficult problem posed by Jesus Christ, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"'.[481] Dazai yearned to express his inability to love and he viewed literature as a way to depict his deepest thoughts and feelings as a form of confession. It is clear that Shimazaki's writing can be correlated with Dazai's wish to expose those innermost thoughts and criticise Japanese society for hiding individualistic views. Similarly, Dazai's concern with the exploitation of the poor and the lower classes could also be translated into Shimazaki's interest in uncovering the status quo of Korean and Christian minorities as seen in previous chapters. Furthermore, Dazai's words with reference to Jesus Christ are particularly thought provoking because there is no conclusive evidence that Dazai was a Christian.

Dazai's concerns with Christian teachings in a predominantly Buddhist country can be seen as a way to generate controversy or to shed light on Christianity as a 'Japanese religion'. It could be assumed that Dazai in his attempt to end the exploitation of the marginalized made this remark to support the Christian minorities in Japan; that is to say, just by highlighting their existence he draws the society's attention to them even if he disagrees with one of the teachings. This point can be coupled with Shimazaki's reasoning for addressing the Christian minority in her novels. Nevertheless, Dazai's troubles with Christ's teaching could be a critical view of Japanese Christians who base their religion on the notion of creating a harmonious community based on love, which Dazai's nihilistic self rejected. This could infer that Shimazaki's reference to minority groups and in particular Christian groups is not necessarily based on her compassion with this group; instead, it could be a more critical interpretation of their beliefs and existence on the periphery of society. Is Shimazaki faulting these Christians

[481] ibid., p.89.

for not integrating into Japanese society perhaps? Shimazaki, by unmasking the realities of Japanese society, could be proving her nihilistic thoughts by demonstrating that human nature is indeed malevolent and what Japanese society seeks to disguise through silence and 'keeping face' is this very nature, which leads to detrimental consequences such as suicide, war and inevitably the break down of society.

Yet the question remains unanswered, why does Shimazaki include suicide in her writing? For Dazai, death is a method of making an insignificant life more significant; that is to say, Dazai saw suicide as a way of making life more purposeful through its legacy. Although this explanation could clarify his own suicide because with the advance of his tuberculosis he ceased to produce more literature and therefore his life would have had more significance if 'preserved' as it were though suicide, this notion however does not justify his attempted double suicide with his lovers; therefore, it could be concluded that Dazai's views of death are inconsistent. In the case of Yukiko in *Tsubaki*, we can see her suicide as a way of making her life significant because by revealing the truth about her past in a letter to her daughter Namiko, and by asking her to pass on the letter to Yukiko's grandson, she suggests that life can be 'preserved' due to her suicide. Yet no link can be made when we consider the suicide committed by Nobu's father in *Tonbo* because it seems as though he did not want to preserve his legacy like Yukiko. In fact M Tsunoda withheld his true thoughts, which led Nobu and his family to make deductions about his suicide. This is an example of how silence can consequently result in suicide. Even though Dazai's view of the world was perplexed and the circumstances were significantly different from that of Shimazaki's characters, correlations could be made in the sense that both writers wanted to expose what Japanese people feel and think specifically with regards to a social code of conduct. A code which supresses the expression of the truth which in turn leads to suicide as a method to unmask hidden feelings that are not 'allowed' to surface otherwise.

Another prominent Japanese author, Yukio Mishima, plays a key role when exploring the theme of suicide in Shimazaki's novels because he is directly mentioned several times in

Tsukushi. Yukio Mishima (pen name of Kimitake Hiraoka)[482] born in 1925, like Osamu Dazai was disenchanted with life and manifested signs of narcissism and egoism. Mishima lived a privileged yet isolated life having been raised by his very controlling and aristocratic grandmother, who limited his interaction with the outside world and other children (especially boys to prevent him from learning bad habits) until her death when Mishima was fourteen years old. Upon his return home to his parents he was showered with his mother's love as a way to compensate for the years they had spent apart. These two important female figures seemed to have nourished Mishima's narcissistic self. In an address to the students of Waseda University in 1968, Mishima openly declared: 'regarding the problem of humanism and egoism, I am not one who can have sympathy with other people. I am only worried about myself'.[483] Mishima exhibited his academic excellence and graduated as one of the top students of Tokyo University in 1947, which in turn resulted in his appointment at the Ministry of Treasury, a post that was preserved for the pioneers of the new Japan, which he turned down after one year because he wanted to concentrate on his writing. Mishima made many publications between 1949 and 1968 when he became a Nobel Prize candidate, two years before committing *seppuku* (self-disembowelment in a traditional samurai ritual) with a fellow admirer after a heartfelt request to the members of the Self-Defence Forces to revive the Imperial army.[484] Both Osamu Dazai and Yukio Mishima came from privileged backgrounds and equally have expressed problems dealing with human emotions and love in particular. Mishima's voice can be heard through his protagonist Nobouru in *Shizumeru* who expresses: '[…] did not feel the necessity to love at all, but to be loved was always convenient'.[485] Similarly, love is analysed by another protagonist, Saburo in *Thirst for* Love:

> There was no room in his life for the idea of love as a daily necessity, as something for which he might some day risk his life. It was difficult for him to imagine such a thing.

[482] Iga, p. 92.

[483] ibid., p.94.

[484] ibid., p. 93.

[485] ibid., p 94.

> The stupidity that leads some lovers to ruin their whole lives in order to rid themselves of an unhappy love was, to him, utterly ridiculous.[486]

This troubled relationship that both writers had with love highlights their detachment from human reality and speaks negatively of their psychological state.

Although Dazai and Mishima articulate their deep disillusion with modern society, Mishima's obsession was related to his belief in the purity of the samurai way. Mishima's obsession started to blossom during his schooling at Peers School where masculinity was favoured and students were instilled with samurai spirit with the aim of creating the future generations of Japanese leaders.[487] Mishima was fascinated by *Hagakure*, a set of teachings by the samurai-priest Jōchō Yamamoto (1965-1719) that was published by his student Tsuramoto Tashiro. This treasured manuscript became public during the Meiji Era to emphasise the teachings of loyalty, which were interpreted to equate loyalty to the emperor. The nationalistic fever of the 1930s saw the republication of this manuscript increase as the way of the samurai was commended and upheld in the battlefields.[488] This document was of great value to Mishima:

> I began reading it during the war, when I kept it always on or near my desk, and if there is one single book I have referred to continually in the twenty years since, rereading a passage now and then according to the occasion, never failing to be moved anew, that book is *Hagakure*. In particular, it was after the extraordinary popularity of *Hagakure*, after its wartime preeminence as socially obligatory reading had ended, that its light began to shine within me. Maybe *Hagakure* is after all fundamentally a book detained to paradox. During the war, *Hagakure* was like a luminescent object in broad daylight, but it is in pitch darkness that *Hagakure* radiates its true light […] It must be a book that could support firmly this loneliness of mine and my anachronistic stance […] This book, like all others made much of during the war, came to be thought of as a loathsome, ugly, evil book, a tainted book to be wiped from memory, tied roughly in

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[486] Mishima, Yukio, *Thirst for Love,* trans. by Alfred H. Marks (Gateshead: Northumberland Press, 1969), p.179.

[487] ibid., p. 95.

[488] Mishima, Yukio, *Yukio Mishima on Hagakure: The Samurai Ethic and Modern Japan,* trans. by Kathryn Sparling (London: Souvenir Press, 1977), pp. vii-viii.

> bundles, and consigned to the rubbish heap. Thus, in the darkness of our age, *Hagakure* for the first time radiates its true light.[489]

For Mishima *Hagakure,* which upheld the slogan 'I found that the Way of the Samurai is death', is a cultural treasure. Mishima's sense of inferiority that could be consequent to many factors not least his 'less manly' appearance that prevented him from being conscripted, could have been the reason that led him to highly respect the samurai code as a way to interpret the present and combat any injustices of the status quo. Mishima also goes on to explain that death for the Japanese has a profound and significant connotation: 'The Japanese have always been a people grimly conscious of death beneath the surface of their daily lives. But the Japanese concept of death is straight and clear, and in that sense it is different from the loathsome, fearful death as seen by Westerners'.[490] The distinction that Mishima makes between the Japanese interpretation of death and that of Westerners is paramount because he emphasises the difference in the way death is perceived and interpreted. Although Mishima makes reference to 'death' instead of suicide, correlations between the two can be made especially because he committed suicide. Dazai's understanding of death, even though unrelated to samurai codes or *Hagakure,* also emphasises its importance as a way of making any given life more significant. Mishima also agrees with this understanding: 'If we value so highly the dignity of life, how can we not also value the dignity of death?'[491]

Mishima's comments on how the Japanese are aware of death beneath the surface of their daily lives is undeniably nihilistic in nature but it brings to question why this is the case. One viable explanation as Mishima puts it is the strong cultural ties between death and the Japanese way of thinking as expressed by samurai teachings such as *Hagakure.* Moreover, death is a reality for the Japanese in modern day Japan because they have had direct or indirect contact with it through the Second World War. The war remains to be a vivid reality

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[489] ibid., pp. 4-6.

[490] ibid., p. 100.

[491] ibid., p. 105.

and it 'maintains a powerful grip on the modern Japanese psyche'.[492] The cultural connotation of selfless death coupled with the experience of death due to war, makes the Japanese experience of death very unique. With reference to Shimazaki's character Yukiko, in the letter she wrote to her daughter Namiko, she explains that the excitement of the end of the war was overridden by a sinister wish: 'On se mit à pleurer devant la radio en répétant: "La guerre est fini!" Pourtant, ce que je ressentais à ces mots, ce n'était pas le soulagement ni la joie, mais c'était le regret de ne pouvoir nous battre jusqu'à la mort'.[493] As previously explained in Chapter 2 'The Legacy of the Second World War', the war frenzy of the time clouded the judgement of individuals, which resulted in the misguided interpretation of everything via death and murder. This disturbed understanding is what might have led Yukiko to commit parricide. One could argue that these sentiments are difficult to extinguish and therefore they live on subconsciously in the Japanese psyche hence why Mishima saw death as a reality in modern day Japan because he subconsciously longed for death as a result of inherited feelings of resentment. Shortly after the defeat in the Second World War approximately five hundred army officers and civilians, amongst whom was Mishima's friend Zenmei Masuda, committed suicide as a way of accepting defeat and apologizing to the Emperor.[494] Mishima's close contact with suicide and death must have resonated with him over the years thus culminating with his own disembowelment. Furthermore, these are suggestions that Mishima also fantasised about the death of others as much as his own which was intertwined with a notion of eroticism. Mishima's characters seem to highlight this fantasy uttered in *Confessions of a Mask* (1958):

> 'The weapon of my imagination slaughtered many a Grecian soldier, many white slaves of Arabia, princes of savage tribes, hotel elevator boys, waiters, young toughs, army

[492] Seaton, p. 7.

[493] *Tsubaki,* p. 93.

[494] Marías, Javier and Costa, Margaret Jull, 'Yukio Mishima in Death', *The Threepenny Review*, 104 (2006) <www.jstor.org/stable/4385482> [accessed May 2018], pp. 9-10.

> officers, circus roustabouts...I would kiss the lips of those who had fallen to the ground and were still moving spasmodically'.[495]

Mishima's ideas concerning suicide seem to have developed through his interpretations of historical perceptions, which glorified it along with a sense of cultural inevitability and personal fantasies.

If Mishima's interpretation of death were to be explored further in relation to Shimazaki's main characters, could it be said that Shimazaki's protagonists tend to anticipate suicide? The reactions of Nobu to his father's death were traumatic to him and his family: '[…] mon père s'est suicidé. La vie de notre famille en fut bouleversée'.[496] Even though Nobu questions the reasons behind the death of his father as he tries to keep his memory alive by realising his dream of opening a study centre, there are instances were the father's death is expressed in a matter of fact fashion. For instance, M Tsunoda's suicide is referred to as if it were a normal death: 'Mon père s'est suicidé en 1972, l'année où Okinawa a été resituée au Japon'[497] and 'Mon père s'est suicidé à la fin de la saison des fleurs de cerisiers. Le temps était nuageux, anormalement froid pour cette période'.[498] The reference made in these two instances is very impartial and they do not cast any shadow of judgement on M Tsunoda's suicide. Furthermore, suicide is put side to side with fundamentally Japanese aspects of life. In the first quotation, suicide is made emblematic of Japanese unification as if to say that Okinawa is as Japanese as suicide is. M Tsunoda's suicide was consequent to a series of personal life events, which left him unemployed and his life 'worthless' yet his suicide coinciding with the return of Okinawa to Japan suggests that Shimazaki wanted to create a link between Japanese lives lost on the battlefield namely the Battle of Okinawa which saw the suicide of many locals during the Second World War and lives that are being lost today. Once again alluding to a deep

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[495] ibid.

[496] *Tonbo,* p. 23.

[497] ibid., p. 33.

[498] ibid., p. 54.

connection between Japan's cultural heritage and suicide. Similarly, the second quote links suicide with the season of cherry blossom, a focal point in the annual Japanese calendar which denotes the arrival of the Spring and beginning of the fiscal and academic new year.

Linking suicide with cherry blossoms along with the restitution of Okinawa has deep cultural significance, which suggests that suicide is intertwined with the fabric of Japanese culture and identity. However, Nobu's remark with regards to the turbulent weather at the time of the cherry blossom and his father's suicide is sinister in nature because this period of new beginnings is culturally regarded as joyful. The ominous reporting of the abnormal weather conditions invites the reader to deduce that Shimazaki wanted to couple suicide with profound Japanese characteristics as if to say that suicide is a Japanese entity synonymous with Okinawa and cherry blossom; yet, it is important to consider the that there are sinister connotations linked to death such as the troublesome history of Okinawa and the backdrop of a gloomy cherry blossom season that must be considered when focusing on suicide. On the surface, Nobu's comments suggest that suicide, even when least expected, is anticipated at any given time and the wish to commit suicide lies below the surface of Japanese society as interpreted by Mishima; however, this matter of fact commentary needs to be examined cautiously to understand Shimazaki's motives.

Mishima's haunting presence in *Tsukushi*

In *Tsukushi*, reference to Mishima is made on several occasions and links between Yûko, the wife of the illustrious Takashi Sumida, and Mishima's wife are referred to throughout the novel. The first reference to Mishima is made when Mme Matsuo is invited to a party at Yûko's house, which is the biggest and most luxurious house in the area. Mme Matsuo notices a grand chandelier and instantly exclaims: 'Tiens! Ce lustre ressemble à celui de Mishima.'[499] This comment surprises Yûko because she had never made the connection between her house and that of Mishima. However, Mme Matsuo's comment led Yûko to analyse the possible connection.

[499] Shimazaki, Aki, *Au Cœur du Yamato: Tsukushi* (Montreal: Leméac, 2012), p. 36

> ‘La maison de Mishima?’ Je réfléchis un moment. Moi aussi, j’ai vu des photos de sa maison luxueuse dans une revue littéraire. Pourtant, je n’ai jamais fait de lien entre la nôtre et la sienne. Son style rococo, son grand salon, une statue d’Apollon en marbre blanc plantée au milieu du jardin. Sa maison ignore totalement l’existence des objets japonais, comme si son propriétaire japonais s’imaginait vivre ailleurs qu’au Japon. Je le trouve bizarre. Je demande à madame Matsuo :
>
> -Voilà vingt-quatre ans que cet écrivain est mort. Qu’est-il advenu de sa maison ?
>
> -On dit que sa femme l’habite toujours.[500]

Even though, Takashi’s grandfather originally built the house in the 1950s, the Western style house made Mme Matsuo create a link between the Sumidas’ house and that of Mishima. The extravagance of Mishima’s house as noted by Yûko alludes to the idea that Mishima wanted to create a non-Japanese environment for himself. It is rather uncharacteristic of Mishima to want to live in a westernised space whilst upholding samurai principles. In other words, one would assume that Mishima’s house would be exceptionally Japanese in character because of his passion for Japanese traditions as exemplified by *Hagakure.* The picture of Mishima (Figure 2) in his western style house is particularly interesting because the very westernised background highlighted by the candelabra on the dining table, the portrait of what seems like an 18th Century countess is contradicted by the hakama (traditional Japanese Kimono for men) that he is wearing. The contradiction between the two worlds is confusing because it seems as though Mishima wanted to isolate himself from the reality of Japan by living in a westernised surrounding as if to say that his thoughts are liberated by physically distancing himself from Japanese society even though he defended fundamentally Japanese ideas.

There are two links that can be made to this idea; firstly, we can see a similarity between Shimazaki and Mishima in the sense that Shimazaki resides in Canada and writes in French yet all her novels are set in Japan and she continues to dissect Japanese society and unmask Japanese shortcomings. The idea that being ‘physically’ displaced from Japan allows for freedom of thought and freedom of expression is puzzling because it alludes to the idea that a

[500] ibid., pp. 38-39.

Japanese individual cannot detach themself from Japanese mentality and way of thinking unless they are removed from Japanese society. Secondly, the fact that the Sumida house is westernised invites the reader to assume that the Sumidas wanted to escape the constraints of Japanese society and by creating a dissimilar environment from those around them they are allowing themselves to see Japanese society in a distinctive fashion. Undeniably, owning a western-style house denotes economic stability, overindulgence and modernity especially in Japan of the 1950s; however, it could also be assumed that Takashi's grandfather, the founder of the Sumida Bank who spent the majority of his free time overseas, wanted to duplicate what he had seen in other countries in the spirit of the Meiji Era when Japan started to emulate the West as a way of modernizing the country. On the one hand, the comment linking both houses could indicate that Mishima was like most Japanese people at the time who wanted to glorify the West and distance themselves from traditional Japan because of the tragic outcomes of the war. Nevertheless, the extravagance of the grandfather could be linked to Mishima because both men had an eye for indulgence. The workers in the Sumida house have informed Yûko: 'Mais il n'emmenait jamais sa femme parce qu'elle n'était pas « normale ». Elle avait tenté de bruler la maison…son patron était furieux. Il avait décidé de désormais enfermer sa femme à la cave, dans la salle insonorisée'.[501] The peculiar relationship between the grandparents and the grandmother's wish to burn the house insinuates that the grandfather wanted to distance himself from his wife and the grandmother's wish to burn the house suggests that the house represents something more ominous.

As highlighted in Chapter 4 regarding Christianity in Japan, Shimazaki has used the physical description of the church to denote an ideological representation; that is to say, the fenced exterior of the church which resembled an ordinary house in an average neighbourhood suggested that the church needed to be protected from the outside world whilst safeguarding and upholding its identity in an non-Christian surrounding. In this case, the description of the Sumida house similarly suggests that the Sumida family is not an ordinary Japanese family and that they aspire to the West through the representation of the house that can be

[501] ibid., p.133.

connected to the exuberance and freedom of thought of Yukio Mishima. What is particularly interesting is how Yûko represents a traditional Japanese element within the westernised surrounding.

> Je lui montre les deux pièces à tatamis. Elle regarde les instruments d'ikebana et mon koto couvert d'un tissu avec un motif de fleurs de camélia. Il y aussi une petite cuisine avec une table et quatre chaises. Je lui dis que ce pavillon sert aussi à recevoir des invités qui n'aiment pas les lits de style occidental.[502]

The pavilion, which was built at the time of Takashi and Yûko's wedding, became a beacon of Japanese arts. Furthermore, the tatami flooring and the alternative that the pavilion offers to guests who might prefer the traditional Japanese surroundings suggest that the pavilion is a Japanese oasis in the midst of the western house. This pavilion was built as a symbol of new beginnings symbolised by the whirlwind marriage, which was orchestrated by the Sumida family to prevent the exposure of Takashi's sexual orientation. Hence the pavilion represents the nucleus of the house because of its traditionally Japanese attributes. The fact that Yûko discovers Takashi with his gay lover in the pavilion also signifies that foundations of Japanese traditions are challenged and put into question by this building. Thus suggesting that there are grave societal problems hidden within the traditional façade.

The following conversation between Yûko and Mme Matsuo allows Yûko to relate herself to the wife of Mishima.

> J'ai vu une photo du mariage de Mishima dans un journal. Sa femme était belle. Le regard très sérieux, elle fixait l'appareil. Elle me semblait très nerveuse. Une jeune fille ordinaire avec un écrivain célèbre. Je songe à notre cérémonie de mariage. Moi aussi, j'étais nerveuse devant tous ces inconnus, surtout les journalistes et les cadres des banque.[503]

This self-analysis acts as a prelude to a series of events that draws parallels between Yûko and the wife of Mishima. The resemblance in terms of feelings as stated above can be seen in the

[502] ibid., p. 40.

[503] ibid., p. 39.

face of Yoko Sugiyama (Figure 3). Although this photo was staged for the camera to emphasis Mishima's extravagant lifestyle, we can deduce from Yûko's words that this particular snapshot of Yoko Mishima speaks volumes of her inner turmoil. For Mishima, the role of his wife was iterated in an essay named 'The Writer and Marriage' where he highlights: 'with regard to her behaviour in the outside world I will not be generous with her; the world will be watching'.[504] For both Mishima and Takashi, their wives represented a trophy to parade in order to control any wagging tongues that might reveal their sexual orientation. In the case of Mishima, his marriage was instigated by his mother's cancer scare, which propelled Mishima to fulfil his duty and reassure his mother that the family bloodline would continue to exist after her death. Mishima revealed to his matchmakers the qualities which he sought in his future companion: 'the bride should be neither a blue-stocking nor a celebrity- hunter; she must wish to be married to Kimitake Hiraoka (his real name), the private citizen, not to Yukio Mishima, the writer; she should be no taller than her husband, even in high heels; she must be pretty and have a round face; she must be prepared to look after her parents-in-law and be capable of running the home efficiently; lastly, she must not disturb Mishima while he was working'.[505] There was very little regard for Mishima's future wife to be anything but a trophy wife that fulfilled his alter ego's needs. As Yûko becomes more drawn to the character of Mishima's wife, she starts to wonder about the legitimacy of her marriage.

> Un instant, je songe à la grande maison de Mishima…Je songe aussi à sa femme qui s'est mariée par *miaï* (rencontre arrangée en vue d'un mariage) avec cet écrivain célèbre. J'ai lu quelque part qu'après seulement deux rencontres, leurs familles ont échangé un *yuinô* (cadeau de fiançailles échangé entre les deux familles). Je me demande pourquoi Mishima était si pressé de se marier. Dans mon esprit, le visage tendu de cette femme se superpose au mien lors de notre somptueuse cérémonie de mariage.[506]

It is clear that Yûko had not contemplated her marriage until she was compared to the wife of Mishima. Yûko alludes to a certain level of naivety on the part of both wives and it does not

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[504] Nathan, John, *Mishima: a Biography* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1974), p. 140.

[505] Marías, pp. 9-10.

[506] *Tsukushi,* pp. 45 & 137-138.

come as a surprise that Shimazaki chose a name that is fairly similar to that of Mishima's wife for her character. Although Mishima demanded an obedient wife who would ultimately play a specific role of the writer's companion, after their marriage Yoko had reportedly accompanied Mishima on his trips overseas which was not commonplace for Japanese writers of the time thus suggesting that Mishima might have held Yuko in higher regard than perceived after their marriage. In the case of the protagonists of *Tsukushi,* Yûko was enamoured with Takashi because he accepted to raise her child she was carrying who belonged to her previous lover T Aoki. This gallant gesture and the words uttered by Takashi moved Yûko and solidified their relationship in her eyes at the time of their marriage: 'On ne peut pas regretter le passé indéfiniment. Je ferai de mon mieux pour devenir un bon mari'.[507] Yûko interpreted Takashi's words in terms of her transgressions; however, he might have been seeking solace for his own wrongdoings because their rushed marriage was to avoid reporters from leaking the story of his homosexuality to the public. Takashi by agreeing to raise Yûko's daughter as his own was in a way manipulating their relationship; he has preserved her secret so ultimately she would be able to keep his secret if the truth about his sexuality came to light. Again we see a web of deceit forming around two central ideas: saving face to protect oneself in the community and keeping of secrets that might inevitably come to light.

Analysing the similarities between Mishima's wife and Yûko is paramount because Shimazaki very cleverly unveils speculations about Yoko Sugiyama's life through her protagonist. As the wife of a renowned artist, little is known about Yoko Sugiyama especially after Mishima's suicide; however, during the years they lived together, Yoko like Yûko might have been consumed with Mishima's public persona. Yûko explains how Takashi portrays the image of a perfect husband.

> Takashi Sumida me paraît un mari presque parfait. Il est tendre, intelligent et compréhensif. C'est aussi un bon papa. À l'extérieur, il passe pour un gentleman, respectueux envers tout le monde […] C'est très rare qu'on entende des remarques

[507] ibid., p. 29.

> négatives sur lui. Les gens répètent : « Monsieur Sumida est distingué, digne héritier de la famille Sumida. » Je suis fière d'être sa femme.[508]

This idealistic image that Takashi projects to the world could be synonymous to that of Mishima; that is to say, both men are highly regarded by society and equally by their wives. Although Mishima was outspoken and controversial in his attitudes, he was highly regarded by others because of his artistic creativity.

Despite this idealistic image of Takashi that Yûko holds dear, fundamental problems in their marriage were ignored in order to maintain their relationship. Yûko explains: 'Mon mari a une déficience physique, grave pour un homme. Bien qu'il ne me le dise pas clairement, je suppose, qu'il est stérile. Il m'a mentionné quelques années après notre mariage qu'il avait eu les oreillons dans son adolescence'.[509] This revelation underlines the fact that although their marriage seems rather flawless when viewed from the outside there are deep-rooted issues within. The marriage between Yûko and Takashi is perceived by the outside world through the charm that Takashi exhibits.

> Ce serait l'enfer de vivre avec un homme aussi charmant que Takashi Sumida. Sa femme devrait être prête à partager son mari avec d'autres femmes. Sinon, elle deviendrait folle de jalousie. [510]

Yûko's sense of loneliness and loss, which she attributes to Mishima's wife, is in fact a reflection of her own woes which she projects on to the depiction of Yoko's devoid image with her 'ideal husband' in a grandiose western style house. Shimazaki is undoubtedly questioning whether Mishima's wife was suffering from the same predicament as her protagonist;

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[508] ibid., p. 53.

[509] ibid., p. 55.

[510] ibid., p. 68.

moreover, Yûko justifies her marriage despite the lack of physical intimacy by stating '…nous sommes très riche. Que voudrais-je de plus?'[511]

Shimazaki could be questioning the validity of Mishima's marriage and deducing that, despite possible shortcomings, Yoko Sugiyama decided to remain married to Mishima purely because of his social status. Mishima's homosexual fantasies, desire and speculations about his lover Morita (his right-hand man who also committed suicide with Mishima) have given rise to conclusions about intimacy between him and his wife.

> In fact, there is some evidence that Mishima was unable to feel real sexual excitement in the presence of a woman. In *Confessions,* he tells the story of his miserable attempt at a love relationship with the beautiful Sonoko. Although his marriage of thirteen years was not an unhappy one for either Mishima or his wife Yoko (the two even produced two children), the arrangement seems to have been more a result of the social demands of a literary gallant than any kind of real libidinal investment.[512]

As there are parallels between the lives of Yûko and Yoko, there are some clear divergences as well because Yûko only had one daughter whose biological father was T Aoki her former lover; yet, Yûko's friend Yoshiko (Mme Matsuo), who confesses that her husband M Matsuo is bisexual, has two children and tells Yûko: 'Notre vie conjugale va très bien. Nous avons deux enfants à nous. Il n'est pas nécessaire de révéler une chose pareille à nos familles'.[513] Here again we notice that Shimazaki is alluding to Mishima and his wife by using another character.

To a certain extent by doing so, Shimazaki is making a case for many families of couples whose marriages might be camouflaging the realities of the husbands' sexuality. As if to say that Mishima is not the only man who had to disguise his sexual orientation through marriage and childbearing. This idea invites the reader to sympathise with Mishima and men in his situation but equally highlights the injustices of being a woman in a traditionally family

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[511] ibid.

[512] McAdams, Dan P.,'Fantasy and Reality in the Death of Yukio Mishima', 8:4 (1985), <www.jstor.org/stable/23539389> [accessed 26 July 2017], p. 300.

[513] *Tsukushi,* p. 106.

orientated society. However, Shimazaki through Yûko questions the idea of whether Mishima did lust after his wife Yoko. Regardless of Yoko's actual intentions to why she chose to stay with Mishima undeterred by his extravagance and listlessness, Shimazaki sheds light on a possibility that Yoko might have wanted to be part of Mishima's life despite the flaws. Yet, Yûko seems to be oblivious to the reality of Takashi's life: 'Finalement, j'ai trouvé que j'avais tort de m'inquiéter. C'est un homme fidèle. Je n'ai jamais entendu de rumeurs quant à des relations avec d'autres femmes'.[514] This statement supports the idea that Yûko was unaware of Takashi's double life and continued to view him in a favourable light; this in turn might suggest that Yoko was also unaware of Mishima's actions thus interpreting his writing as purely fictional rather than a window into his psyche.

Yûko's characterisation is pertinent when associating Shimazaki's writing with Mishima because she embodies similarities with Mishima's wife Yoko Sugiyama but also with Mishima's protagonists. *A Thirst for Love* (1950) is made reference to by Yûko's friend and confident Yoshiko (Mme Matsuo). The main character, Etsuko, is presented as a frustrated aristocratic wife who experiences an array of sentiments due to the correlation of her existence to the men around her and principally her husband. Yoshiko explains the plot to Yûko:

> L'héroïne est une femme d'origine aristocratique. Après la mort de son mari, qui était volage, elle continue d'habiter la grande propriété de la famille de son mari. Riche mais le cœur assoiffé, cette veuve devient l'amante de son beau-père. À un moment donné, elle se sent très attirée par un domestique, jeune et vigoureux. Cependant, celui-ci a une petite amie, domestique aussi. La veuve est alors tourmentée par la jalousie. Et lorsqu'elle apprend que la fille est enceinte […][515]

There are many parallels that can be drawn between Etsuko and Yûko because both characters live protected aristocratic lifestyles without the need to fend for themselves which in essence renders them to a submissive role. Yûko's emptiness which she disguises from

[514] ibid., p. 69.

[515] ibid., p. 68.

those around her and attributes to Mishima's wife could have a more profound and sinister meaning:

> Underneath the mask of a submissive wife, she possesses an enormous power to dominate the object of her love- her husband, Ryôsuke. What she seeks is absolute love, the purity of a love that must exist only for her, yet must deny all her desires.[516]

Yûko's sexual frustration along with the burden of keeping the secret regarding her daughter Mitsuba's father creates a big void in her role as a submissive wife. Yûko conceals her true emotions to save face in the community and plays along as a wife of a well-reputed and honourable banker yet this does not extinguish the resentment she feels within. These confused sentiments are contorted by the discovery of Takashi in bed with his lover M Mori. Rage and anger are replaced by solitude as Takashi leaves her in the empty pavilion because he had to tend to a business meeting with his father and some clients at a bar. Yûko is left alone to contemplate her life and its absurdity.

> Désemparée, je n'ai pas la force de faire quoi que ce soit. Assise sur les tatamis, je contemple les fleurs de lis blanc dans le *tokonoma* que j'ai arrangées la veille […] Son mariage avec moi n'était-il qu'un camouflage ? Une douleur aiguë transperce mon cœur. Je pousse des sanglots.[517]

These moments after the discovery of the affair between Takashi and his good friend M Mori who he has known prior to his marriage to Yûko are focal because not only do they expose the reality to Yûko but more so because it represents the 'death' of Takashi in the eyes of his wife. As Yûko sits alone pondering life, she casts her gaze on the white lilies, which are symbolic of devotion thus representing her dedication to her marriage of thirteen years but moreover these flowers are linked to funerals. It is at this specific moment that we can assume the symbolic death of Takashi because he no longer represents the husband that she had loved

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[516] Wilson, Michiko N., 'Three Portraits of Women in Mishima's Novels', *The Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese*, 14:2 (1979), pp. 157–180.

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[517] *Tsukushi,* pp. 103 & 105.

and his physical absence at this paramount instance further supports the idea of his loss. Furthermore, Takashi explains that he had to meet his clients at a bar and he did not disclose where he had to go. This suggests that he might have gone to the bar 'fréquenté par des homosexuels'[518] thus removing him even further from his role as Yûko's husband. Consequently, Takashi's figurative death can be linked to the death of Ryôsuke in *Thirst for Love,* which set alight nihilistic desires within Etsuko and similarly Yûko.

> Etsuko's death wish is born out of 'the terrible, fearful affirmation', which she experiences at the time of her husband's death. What she desires is a Hindu widow's death. 'It was an occult thing, that sacrificial death she dreamed of, a suicide proffered not so much in mourning for her husband's death as in envy of that death.' To bury herself alive, to confine herself in a windowless room and live in the void of nothingness is Etsuko's solution for survival.[519]

In the case of Etsuko, her jealousy drove her to kill the object of her desire, the young gardener Saburô, before confining herself to the windowless room. Yoshiko expresses to Yûko: 'La jalousie, c'est un sentiment très difficile à contrôler'.[520] Although life resumes to normal after Takashi's confession about his affair with M Mori (which started after the death of his wife due to cancer), Yûko seems to plunge into further isolation and solitude. This in turn reaches a crescendo at the end of the novel when she prepares to leave for Kobe. The closing words of the novel:

> Je songe au roman de Mishima, *Une soif d'amour*…Je reprends ma valise et mon sac à main et sors de la chambre. En fermant la porte, je me dis : « Adieu, mon chéri ».[521]

Even though mentioning Mishima's novel might suggest that Yûko like Estuko driven by her jealousy would murder either Takashi or his lover M Mori, we can stipulate that she will commit suicide instead. What ideas support this deduction? Firstly, Yûko leaves behind the

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[518] ibid., p. 71.

[519] Wilson, p. 165.

[520] *Tsukushi,* p. 68.

[521] ibid., p.136.

box of matches from the bar that Takashi frequents which is owned by his lover M Mori in a visible spot and whilst pondering: 'Je me demande si mon mari sera "surpris" en la retrouvant ainsi'.[522] This notion clearly suggests that Yûko placed the box of matches with the picture of a horsetail 'tsukushi' purposefully so that Takashi would understand that his liaison instigated her to take her life. Similarly, the closing words 'Adieu, mon chéri' suggest this fatality as well because at the time Takashi was on a business trip in France hence this remark is figurative. These words could propose an alternate ending, one that is more empowering, that is to say, Yûko had decided to leave Takashi and move to Kobe. However, this idea is not plausible because Yûko has not taken her daughter with her but instead arranged for Mitsuba to visit her grandparents during her absence. In contradiction to the box of matches she left for Takashi to find, Yûko decides to make a chocolate cake for Mitsuba to find upon her return, which suggests that Yûko is leaving a gesture of love for her daughter. The question remains, why would Yûko kill herself instead of finding another solution? It is clear that her overt obsession with Mishima's wife, extravagant house, and novel subconsciously glorify Mishima's thoughts, which see death as inevitable. As suggested by Wilson: 'The success or failure of Mishima's creation of the three women characters is closely linked to his misogyny and the rigid dichotomy of femininity (survival) and masculinity (death)'.[523] By choosing death, Yûko is transforming her role from the female who survives atrocities into a male figure who brings honour to himself by committing suicide. Furthermore, female suicides in Shimazaki's novel are not openly discussed but instead they are suggested as in the case of Yukiko in *Tsubaki.*

Yûko's presumed suicide is emblematic in many ways. Firstly, it suggests that her woes of being a wife of a homosexual man will live on to be told. Thus not only shaming her husband Takashi, his lover M Mori but others such as her friend Yoshiko and her husband who have accepted a similar predicament and finally the Sumidas, the parents of Takashi who insisted

[522] ibid., p. 135.

[523] Wilson, p. 175.

on their son's wedding to avoid the exposure of their son's sexuality to the general public. Secondly, Shimazaki is suggesting that Yoko Sugiyama 'had confined herself to a windowless room' as well after the suicide of Mishima hence her life lost purpose or meaning after the loss of her husband. Alternatively, Yûko's suicide could be questioning why Yoko did not choose a similar fate for herself as a way of honouring the falsehood of her relationship. Thirdly, this suggested suicide once again highlights the inevitability of voluntary death in Japanese society because of the repression that individuals feel as expressed in the beginning of this chapter through the ideas of Dazai and Mishima. Moreover, the role of silence or the bearing of pain through silence is brought to light. The words of Yûko before her departure invite us to contemplate this notion.

> Je pense à mon mari. Notre vie s'est normalisée en apparence. Comme avant, nous discutons des choses quotidiennes. Nous dormons dans la même chambre, chacun dans son lit, séparés. Nous sortons en famille manger au restaurant, voir une pièce de théâtre ou un film…Je n'aborde plus le sujet de monsieur Mori, que je ne vois plus. Et mon mari non plus n'en parle pas. Pourtant, je crois que les deux continuent à se voir. Pour eux, ce n'est pas une aventure mais un amour profond. Ce que je ne pourrai jamais trouver avec mon mari.[524]

Morbid silence has retransformed the lives of Yûko and Takashi into what it used to be: a series of obligations that need fulfilling without questioning. However, the pain of the reality remains hidden within even if unmentioned. The despair that lies beneath the calm surface would have to inevitably rise to the top and consequently express itself in a fatal and explosive manner. Perhaps these were the reasons that led Yûko to end her troubled life and leave a void in Takashi's heart like Mishima did with his wife.

Even though *Tsukushi* is critical of how Japanese society dictates a 'normative' lifestyle through heterosexual partnerships and family bonds for individuals such as Takashi, Shimazaki simultaneously highlights the suffering of these men that are obliged to follow tradition and indulge such norms without resistance. There is no doubt that the secondary protagonist of *Tsukushi* is Yokio Mishima because constant reference is made to him

[524] *Tsukushi,* p. 135.

throughout the novel. Although Shimazaki makes passing remarks concerning societal and historical facts as well as mentioning Japanese authors such as the nameless author who might be Dazai in *Tonbo,* in this novel Mishima's presence is very strong. Mishima is mentioned directly as an author, his wife has a haunting effect on Yûko and equally his majestic western style house along with his novel *Thirst for Love* form the backdrop to this novel. One interpretation for this conscious effort on Shimazaki's part could be due to the fact that she wanted to shed light on yet another minority in Japanese society - the homosexual community which is personified through Mishima. The ideals that Mishima upheld throughout his life, which equally glorified his tragic end, the samurai code, did not condone homosexuality.

> The *samurai* code of the sword, in fact, traditionally allowed for homosexuality among warriors. There was no contradiction between the glorification of the warrior ethic and the practice of soldiers loving other soldiers sexually.[525]

This fact might come as a surprise to a Western as well as an Eastern reader because it is contradictory to the macho image formed when picturing these warriors that would fight to their death and would rather commit suicide through disembowelment instead of facing dishonour. Yet, *Tsukushi* invites the reader to sympathise with Takashi and his lover M Mori and agonise over whether to forgive their actions because it is propelled by love. Yûko's discovery of the box of matches in her husband's drawer serves as the first part of the jigsaw puzzle that culminates with her discovering Takashi in the arms of M Mori. At her daughter's birthday party, Yûko takes out the box of matches to light the birthday candles and Mme Matsuo explains that the drawing on the box that of two 'tsukushi' (horsetail) was drawn by her husband who was commissioned by an owner of a bar. The two women discuss the drawing which Yûko finds 'très artistique' whilst Mme Matsuo exclaims that the drawing for her '[…] est très érotique…surtout cette couleur de peau et la forme'.[526] It comes as no surprise as to why Shimazaki entitled the novel *Tsukushi* when this exchange is considered.

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[525] McAdams, p. 300.

[526] *Tsukushi,* p. 50.

This playful conversation suggests that the title of the novel is highly sexualised and it links homosexuality to eroticism and unconventionality rather than love. Moreover, the matches contained in the box could be seen as phallic symbols thus symbolising a community that is contained within a 'box' within society. The use of *tsukushi* as an image on the box to represent this hidden community suggests that homosexuality is as natural as horsetail; that is to say, homosexuality should be seen as an expression of nature because the matches which could be seen to represent homosexual individuals are similar in appearance to horsetail stalks. This idea is supported by Yûko's thoughts: 'Être homosexuel ou bisexuel est inné, tout comme être hétérosexuel. Il n'y a que à accepter la réalité et la différence de chacun'.[527] Furthermore, the act of lighting the candles with these matches is symbolic as well because it suggests a certain form of eroticism that is represented by fire. Hence this act is also suggestive of the damage that these relations could cause; in other words, by lighting the candles Yûko has instigated the fire that would ultimately bring an end to their relationships and burn their marriage hence warning of the power of fatality that could be caused by exposing these figures.

This first interpretation, which is rather damning to homosexuality, is contradicted by the conversation that Yûko has with the receptionist at her husband's bank. On a routine visit to the Sumida bank, Yûko notices a diary entry on her husband's desk suggesting an appointment at *Tsukushi* bar which in turn makes her think of Mme Matsuo's husband and whether there are similarities between the two men (we are later informed that M Matsuo is bisexual). Subsequently Yûko asks the receptionist who is very knowledgeable of the symbolism of different flowers what the meaning of *tsukushi* might be. The one word reply 'fraternité' takes Yûko by surprise. However, this link remains with her from this instant on like the haunting image of Mishima's wife: 'Je revois dans ma tête la jolie image de deux *tsukushi* sur un fond bleu pastel et le mot anglais « fraternity » sur l'autre face'.[528] These

[527] ibid., p. 82.

[528] ibid., p. 70.

words suggest a certain delicacy attached to the image of the horsetail stalks on the box of matches and they also imply Yûko's fondness of this depiction. Equally, if we are to analyse the image of the stalk on the cover of the novel it would be easy to associate a sense of tenderness and fragility even though the horsetail stalk on the cover of the novel is only one in comparison to the two on the box of matches referred to above.

All of Shimazaki's novels in both cycles (*Le Poids des secrets & Au cœur du Yamato*) are named after elements of nature thus alluding to Japanese *haiku* poetry, which provoke evocative allusions and comparisons between nature and seasons. Therefore, the image of *tsukushi* on the cover does not particularly stand out without contextualisation to mean more than what it might represent: an element of nature. That is to say, the image of the horsetail stalk on its own does not necessarily evoke neither an erotic nor a sensualised image that can be associated with homosexual relationships. Yet, the stalks on the box are depicted in a more suggestive manner to possibly attract the attention of the clientele of the bar. Interestingly, the wording on the box (fraternity) is in English and Shimazaki has chosen to use this word rather than 'fraternité' or the Japanese equivalent (yûai=友愛). Japanese words are sporadically used in romanji (i.e. the representation of Japanese sounds using Latin letters) in Shimazaki's novels and a glossary is provided to help decipher the meaning of these words for those unfamiliar with the Japanese language; however, the use of an English word in a French novel about Japan invites us to scrutinize the power of foreign words in liberating Japanese sentiments and to a certain extent taboos. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, it seems as though Shimazaki uses the French language to emancipate her critique of Japanese society because it is almost impossible to liberate her criticism of Japan in Japanese. Equally, we see this link clearly made here in the case of *tsukushi*. In other words, the expression of this hidden reality could only be expressed in a code but more precisely a foreign code. Consequently, the box of matches becomes a more powerful tool because it brings together a community and liberates them through the use of this English word. The choice of the word 'fraternity' is charged because it is undoubtedly symbolic of the French language due to the French national motto of *Liberté, égalité, fraternité.* Hence the wording on the box is

revolutionary to a certain extent because it is making reference to these French ideals and equally universal because it is in English the *lingua franca* of the world.

On the other hand, this idea of fraternity could be deeply linked to Mishima and his beliefs which are associated to the samurai code. Shimazaki's choice of symbols and wordings suggests that homosexuality should be viewed through the samurai code, which allowed homosexuality between warriors. Perhaps Shimazaki is reminding us that Japanese culture ultimately did not prohibit these liaisons so why are these relations frowned upon by society nowadays? However, the plot of *Tsukushi* supports the idea of 'fraternity' in a different sense when we consider the relationship between Takashi and his lover Michio Mori. As expressed by Yûko's confident Yoshiko, the owner of the bar *Tsukushi* is Takashi's lover who goes by the pseudonym of Yuji Sumida. This information is very troubling for Yûko because of the connotations that this name has.

> « Yûji Sumida ? » Je suis suffoquée. Yûji, c'est le prénom que mon mari avait choisi pour « notre » bébé s'il avait été un garçon. Il me disait : « Yûji Sumida. C'est beau. Ça coule bien. » [529]

By using this pseudonym, M Mori has adopted the family name of his lover but furthermore he has chosen the name of Takashi and Yûko's unborn child. This notion leads us to interpret 'fraternity' in a more complicated sense. That is to say, M Mori is no longer just a lover or a companion but he is seen as a partner, a family member and the personification of Takashi's unborn child. Shimazaki therefore explores the idea of this homosexual liaison from a different angle. Thus implying that this relationship is fundamentally legitimate and real because of the adoption of Takashi's family name and that the love which the two men share for each other is credible yet 'unborn' because it has not come to see the light of day. The notions associated with this relationship are profound because they are founded upon the idea that homosexuality is ultimately an expression of fraternity. Having said so, the link to Mishima in the novel also suggests that fundamentally homosexual relationships are doomed

[529] ibid., p. 122.

because they are legitimized under the samurai code which concludes in self-annihilation as in the case of Mishima and his suspected homosexual lover Morita. Although the end of the novel suggests that Yûko has embodied the 'male role' by ending her life, the reader is left to ponder what repercussions this would have on Takashi and M Mori. If we are to correlate the novel to Mishima's life then a sinister turn of events are likely to conclude the relationship between Takashi and M Mori.

Concluding comments

The influencing role of both Osamu Dazai and Michio Mishima on Shimazaki's body of work is prevalent especially when considering the role Shimazaki plays in unmasking realities concerning Japanese society. The sense of despair that Shimazaki's characters demonstrate could directly be related to that of Dazai's work: 'Dazai's *oeuvre* in its entirety shows a continuing development through greater integration of certain basic themes which, taken in sum, create the dominant idea-despair'.[530] Although Shimazaki alludes to hope and continuity despite individual and communal trauma because her novels recount family stories, the reader is almost always burdened with a sense of guilt and pain, which are the central axis of these fictional-autobiographies. This is certainly the case if the concluding words of Dazai in *Katei no Kōfuku (Happiness of the Family)* are considered: 'The Happiness of the Family is a book of many evils'.[531] Dazai suggests that Japanese family relations are arduous and to a certain extent the cause of distress. Brudnoy proposes that Dazai sees '[…] family egoism as one of the insidious foundation stones for the brutality of life'.[532] This is certainly the case when we consider the actions of the Sumida family in *Tsukushi* who pleaded with Takashi to get married after news of his relationship with M Mori started to surface. It is in fact the deeds of this family that have given rise to the anguish of all parties concerned but specifically that

[530] Brudnoy, David, 'The Immutable Despair of Dazai Osamu', *Monumenta Nipponica*, 23:3/4 (1968), <www.jstor.org/stable/2383500> [accessed 17 September 2016] p. 457-474.

[531] ibid., p. 460.

[532] ibid.

of Yûko who assumedly commits suicide at the end of her novel. Similarly, the suicide of Monsieur Tsunoda in *Tonbo* bares a heavy burden on his family. Brudnoy proposes a complex understanding of the work of Dazai in terms of the relationship between the individual and society he lives in:

> […] the individual in the society of *seken* (world) and *ie* (family) strives impotently to overcome his isolation through his sincerity and confession (or has made this attempt before the story begins). Failing, he thus takes the stance of a poseur, or sinks deep into the mire of perversion and cruelty. He is terrified by an image of a vengeful god which eats away at him from inside. He collapses into negativism and seeks release from his chains through suicide or, at least, through undermining his health. It is to a large degree a self-portrait of the novelist, and to some extent it gave rise to an idealised conception of himself as living solely for the sake of his art.[533]

Parallels between this analysis and subsequent actions of Shimazaki's characters can easily be made. The importance of confessions has been highlighted in both *Tsubaki* and *Tonbo* through the letters, which Yukiko and Monsieur Tsunoda leave behind for their family members after their suicide. These confessional letters as discussed in previous chapters highlight how the burden of secrets can have a detrimental effect on individuals. Moreover, Dazai's presence is felt very noticeably in *Tonbo* as Mishima is in *Tsukushi.* Even though Dazai's name is not directly mentioned reference to his life and novels makes it easy to make the connection.

Suicide forms the backdrop of *Tonbo* because apart from the voluntary death of Monsieur Tsunoda reference is made to other suicide scenarios. Mostly notably, the suicide of the father of Jirô, Monsieur Tsunoda's student who comes to meet Nobu to confess and redeem himself for his actions.

> -Mon père s'est suicidé avec son amante.
>
> J'ai failli laisser tomber ma tasse de thé. « Son père aussi s'est suicidé ? » Je reste bouche bée : « Et avec son amante ! »

[533] ibid.

> Je me rappelle un célèbre écrivain japonais qui lui aussi s'est suicidé avec son amante, alors qu'il était marié. Il avait déjà tenté de le faire à quatre reprises : deux fois avec une femme et deux fois seul. À sa première tentative, seulement la femme est morte. C'est un grand écrivain que les gens lisent toujours, comme un classique. [534]

The introduction of the death of Jirô's father is very pertinent because it highlights the prevalence of suicide in Japan. Furthermore, the link that is made to Dazai suggests that suicide is endemic in Japanese society.

> This year's report, approved by the Cabinet, shows that the number of people who took their own life declined to 21,897 in 2016, the lowest level in 22 years.[535]

The despair that Dazai tried to express through his novels seems to penetrate the pages of *Tonbo* more so when we consider the profound effect suicide has had on both Jirô and Nobu. Both characters express their anguish and despair that suicide has caused them. Jirô expresses: 'J'avais honte de mon père'[536] thus highlighting that his father's actions disgraced him but particularly because the father committed suicide with his lover and the story became public. Furthermore, Jirô explains that the passing of time could not lessen the pain that the loss of his father had on him: 'Pendant ces quinze années, j'ai tenté d'échapper à mon fardeau'.[537] It is this idea of 'fardeau' that seems to be expressed through the novels of Shimazaki thus upholding Dazai's idea that in fact families are the cause of great anguish and the more that individuals discover about their family members, the more this results in further pain.

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[534] *Tonbo,* p. 90.

[535] Otake, Tomoko. , Suicides down, but Japan still second highest among major industrialized nations, report says', *The Japan Times,* 30 May 2017,<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/05/30/national/social-issues/preventive-efforts-seen-helping-2016-saw-another-decline-suicides-japan-21897/#.Ww-IKK2B01g> [accessed 12 October 2017].

[536] *Tonbo,* p. 93.

[537] ibid., p. 113.

As an enigmatic character, the story of Yoko Sugiyama (the wife of Mishima) remains to raise many questions in Japanese minds, and Shimazaki through her characterisation of Yûko tries to decipher this enigma. Even though the story of Yûko takes an unpredicted turn through the discovery of her husband with his lover in her traditionally styled pavilion, by mentioning Mishima and his wife throughout *Tsukushi,* Shimazaki pays homage to this world-renowned writer not only by drawing parallels between Mishima's life and the protagonists of the novel but also by exposing and examining profound issues concerning homosexuality and suicide in Japan which Mishima embodies especially for a foreign reader. That is to say, Mishima, as perhaps the best known Japanese writer in the West, serves as a recognizable shorthand for aspects of tensions within Japanese society. However, there are certain risks involved regarding the symbolizing of Mishima as the homosexual figure par excellence of Japanese society because Mishima was an eccentric character and his ideals are unique to him.

> For Mishima, the group is *not* comprised of separate and unique individuals interacting with one another in view of a common good. The group interacts *as a whole* with Mishima, and Mishima with the group. 'I belonged to them, they belonged to me; the two formed an unmistakable 'us'.' There exists the unique Mishima and the collective other, the two exist in a relation, for sure, but it is a relation of individual-to-group, instead of individual-to-individual within the context of a group. The distinction is crucial. It points to a false sense of community, which Mishima holds up as a replacement for lifelong isolation and narcissism. [538]

There are undeniably elements that both Dazai and Mishima hold in common which lead us to question whether their interpretation of Japan is fair and just. These two writers have voluntarily dissociated themselves from society due to their dismay therefore we have to be weary of their views and even more so if these ideas are extrapolated to new generations of Japanese fiction. Undoubtedly, the question remains whether Shimazaki's writing can be classified as Japanese literature if it is written in French. Having said so, a parallel between Shimazaki and the two writers can be made because Shimazaki has also isolated herself from Japanese society by moving to Canada and writing in French about Japan. Shimazaki has also

[538] McAdams, p. 310.

highlighted her disenchantment with Japanese society yet she remains obsessed with Japan and writes about all aspects of this society.

Although Shimazaki reminds the reader that Mishima was a writer first and foremost despite his political stance, the link made between Mishima and a novel, which ultimately discusses homosexuality as a taboo, denigrates Mishima to nothing but an emblem of homosexuality. Mishima needless to say was one of the most prominent Japanese writers of all time and he tirelessly wrote and discussed the intricacies of Japanese society. To a certain extent, Shimazaki honours Mishima and Dazai as her idols and holds utmost respect for them by making clear reference to them in her novels. However, both Dazai and Mishima had convoluted ideas about humanity as a whole, which is underlined by despair. It is almost unavoidable to remark that Shimazaki is portraying these great writers' thoughts onto a new stage. Moreover, Shimazaki is delving into the reality of Japanese society with regards to voluntary death. Shimazaki is shedding light on this very sensitive subject through two ways: by openly discussing it through her protagonists and referring to Japanese writers who have decided to take their lives. As the chronicler of inconvenient aspects of Japanese society, Shimazaki has uncovered a sinister reality in Japanese society that can no longer be ignored. Shimazaki is beckoning Japanese society to introspect and realise that societal norms have profound effects on families and the Japanese society as a whole by demonstrating the pain that these norms are causing to homosexual communities and all those who have to 'save face' to the point of self annihilation.

Figure 1[539]

(*Only writers with more than five suicide novels and stories are mentioned below.)

Writer	Number of 'suicide' novels or stories
Yukio Mishima (committed suicide)	26
Yishio Toshima	19
Yasunari Kawabata (committed suicide)	18
Torahiko Tamiya	13
Takehiko Fukunaga	13
Tsutomu Mizukami	13
Kyōka Izumi	10
Mokuami Kawatake	10
Katai Tayama	10
Ogai Mori	8
Kan Kikuchi	7
Masao Kume	7
Ryuunosuke Akutagawa (committed suicide)	6
Osamu Dazai	6
Kafu Nagai	6
Yasushi Inoue	6

[539] Iga, pp. 69-70.

Figure 2[540]

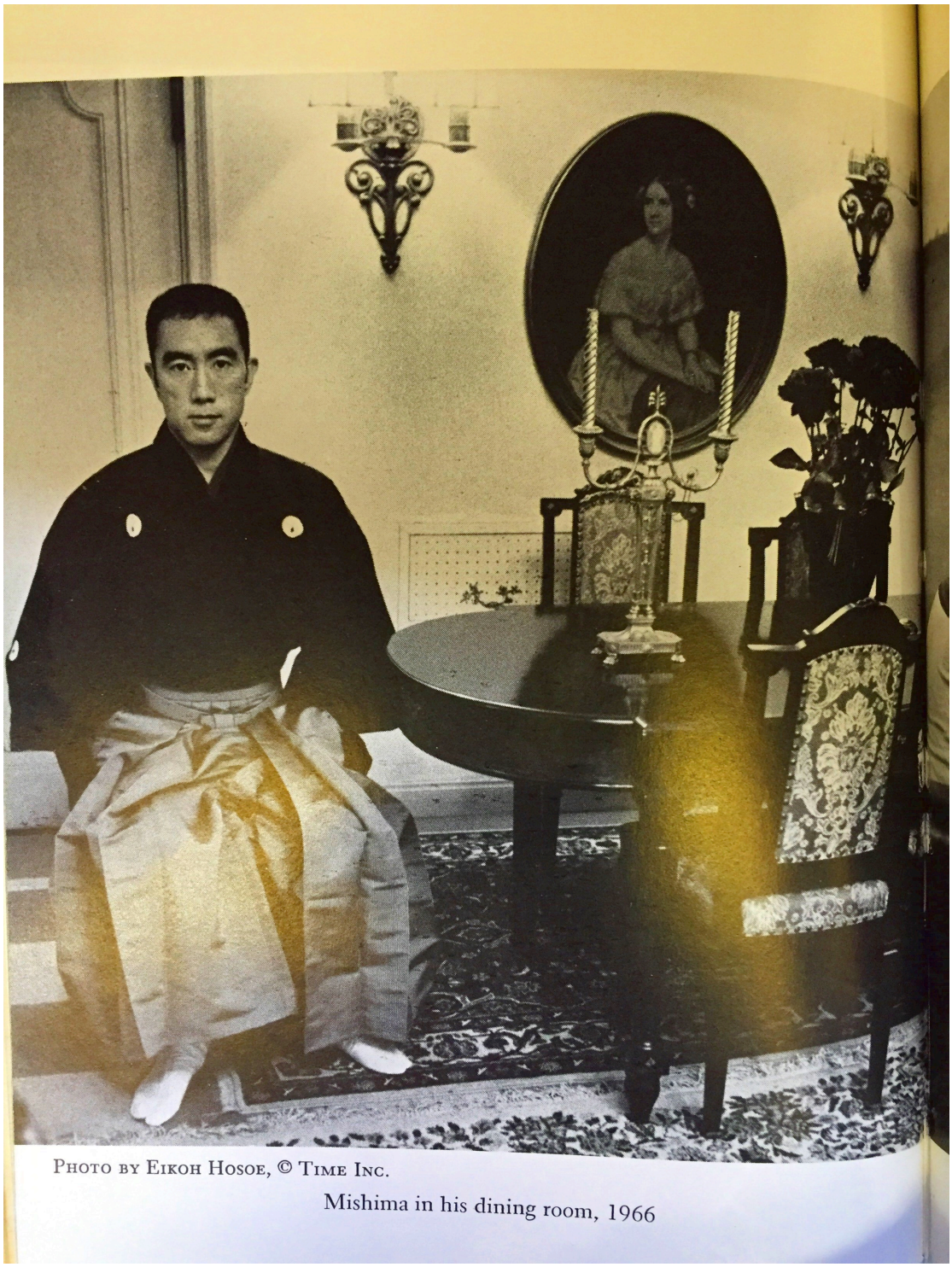

Photo by Eikoh Hosoe, © Time Inc.

Mishima in his dining room, 1966

[540] ibid.

Figure 3[541]

[541] ibid.

Conclusion

Je ne veux pas avoir à expliquer comment
on doit lire mes histoires.
Je préfère que les lecteurs décident.[542]
-Aki Shimazaki

This dissertation's main intention has been to shed light on the Japanese-Canadian author Aki Shimazaki who made her debut in 1999 with *Tsubaki* and has since written fifteen novels to date. The enigmatic nature of Aki Shimazaki has meant that her literary contributions have been noticed yet little academic analysis has been conducted to examine her body of work and the underpinning messages that these novels carry. Shimazaki's work is unique because she started to write in French about her native Japan whilst mastering her linguistic skills and continued to investigate all aspects of Japanese society through her fictional characters. These novels are aesthetically and contextually Japanese in nature yet they are expressed through the French language, a language that Shimazaki has chosen over English and Japanese because of what she commends for its precision. Through elaborate plots and the interwoven characterization of family members, Shimazaki has been able to expose injustices in Japanese society such as: the effect of the Second World War on survivors and the following generations; marginalization of Korean residents, Christian minorities and homosexuals; the detrimental consequences of silence and ultimately suicide.

When considering literary classifications, Shimazaki's Japanese plots can be difficult to categorize because despite being written in French the content of her novels go beyond French translingual literature and *littérature-monde*. Even though categorization such as translingual writing is inclusive, it still remains vast and restricting as seen in Chapter 1 'Aki Shimazaki in the context of Translingualism'. There is no doubt that Shimazaki's work

[542] Lapointe, 2015.

contributes to this style of literary writing because her writing is in French and her themes are universal in nature and, like other prominent Franco-Japanese writers, Shimazaki strives to expose injustices and universal themes that surpass geographical and cultural confines. The themes of the Second World War and *Zainichi* residents, examined in Chapter 2 'The Legacy of the Second World War' and Chapter 3 '*Zainich* Identity in Japan', are particularly Japanese in nature; however, these themes serve as backdrops to stories about individuals in society that have been victimized by external factors. The emphasis of these novels as expressed by Shimazaki is that 'l'injustice est omniprésente'[543] thus highlighting the universality of pain and suffering in any community in any part of the world. Similarly, the idea of 'otherness' due to religious beliefs as discussed in Chapter 4 'Aki Shimazaki's Otherness', sexual orientation and suicide which were analysed in Chapter 5 'Suicide, Sexuality and Family: the presence of Dazai and Mishima in Shimazaki's novels', exemplify pertinent themes in current day Japan which need our careful examination and consideration.

Despite being educative and managing to raise many valuable questions regarding the status quo of Japanese society, the work of Shimazaki explicitly avoids the assumption of a political stance, which problematizes the reading of her novels. Shimazaki remains ambiguous about her exact political stance and her objectives when unmasking Japanese realities. In other words, Shimazaki seems to promote 'universal justice' by demystifying the shortcomings of Japanese society and expressing anti-establishment sentiments; however, she does not categorise her thoughts and sentiments within a specific paradigm or political arena. There is no denying that Shimazaki's work is highly politicised yet no explanation of her political opinions is offered to the reader whether explicitly or implicitly. By not overtly expressing her political opinion, there is a danger that Shimazaki's novels are not valued for the messages that they are trying to convey. Perhaps this is part of the reason why Shimazaki's novels have not been researched in-depth because she does not seem politically *engagée.* This noncommittal attitude was appropriate at the start of her career as an author in order to gain

[543] Amyot, p. 49.

wider readership; however, there is no need for such avoidance now that her novels have been accredited for their plots, characterisation and message. Shimazaki criticises Japanese writers for not expressing their thoughts directly as if to say that she is different from her counterparts. Yet, we have seen ample examples by Mizubayashi and Sekiguchi that contradict such assumptions about Japanese writers. Furthermore, Shimazaki could be criticised for falsely advocating an 'impartial' political stance through her characters but it is clear that the aforementioned *inconvenient* topics that are addressed in her novels are highly political. Shimazaki needs to assert some authority regarding her political views and endeavour to make ground-breaking changes to these societal issues through her novels and position as a French translingual writer.

This dissertation does not delve into the role of translation but there is an implicit need to consider this topic, even if briefly. It seems as though only Shimazaki's first novel *Tsubaki* was translated (by Megumi Suzuki) into Japanese yet the author herself did not translate it. Shimazaki has stated that her plots are weaved and transcribed directly in French and despite the fact that these stories take place in Japan between Japanese protagonists (for the greater part), Shimazaki claims that her ideas are formulated entirely in French. There are explicit questions that come to mind regarding the reliability of this claim given that Shimazaki has lived in Japan for half of her life before emigrating to Canada and also because she writes in a 'concocted' French that alludes to Japanese syntax and uses an array of native Japanese words in her writing. Could an author relinquish all linguistic knowledge of their native tongue just by writing in a different language? This is clearly impossible especially when we consider Mizubayashi's struggle with the French language despite his lifelong dedication to it. In a sense, Shimazaki wants to make her writing in French more credible by making such claims, which in turn highlight a sense of inferiority that such translingual writers continue to feel whilst writing in their chosen language. Nancy Huston, for instance, chooses to translate her own work between English and French in order to maintain her relationship with the writing and preserve the nuance that she intends to present to the reader. By not translating *Tsubaki*, Shimazaki avoided this responsibility and allowed for syntactical, metaphorical and

ideological misinterpretations of her work. One would assume that the notion of *traduttore, traditore* would be of the essence for Shimazaki given that she is in a position to reach a Japanese audience through her writing. Having said so, Nancy Huston as quoted by Mizubayashi explains a contradictory thought:

> L'acquisition d'une deuxième langue annule le caractère naturel de la langue d'origine- à partir de là, plus rien n'est donné d'office, ni dans l'une ni dans l'autre; plus rien ne vous appartient d'origine, de droit et d'évidence. [544]

Huston's interpretation could offer some explanation to Shimazaki's reluctance with regards to translating her own writing to Japanese which takes us back to the notion of '*perte de soi*' as referred to by Mizubayashi. In light of Huston and Mizubayashi's concepts then to what extent is Shimazaki's writing truly Japanese? There is room for interpreting Shimazaki's writing as purely Franco-Japanese thus a set of writing that does prescribe to neither French nor Japanese linguistic standards.

Although it is hard to find many reviews or reactions to the translated version of *Tsubaki* in Japanese, there is clearly room for Shimazaki's work to be considered from the Japanese perspective with regards to the message that Shimazaki is presenting and whether these Japanese tales could be qualified as Japanese literature given that they are written in French. Furthermore, there are questions regarding the validity of Shimazaki's message if the parties concerned such as the Korean-*Zainichi* and other marginalised groups cannot access this material because it is written in French and they are not translated into Japanese. The analysis of Shimazaki's novels suggests that she does not want her novels to instigate a debate in Japan but in a 'neutral' sphere; that is to say, what Shimazaki is wishing for is a debate about Japanese societal issues in neither the Japanese nor the English spheres but instead in the French-speaking world. This could be propelled by the need to expose Japanese historical past and present impartially to a relatively unfamiliar circle in order to allow for new dialogue that is not influenced by Japanese or American rhetoric. There is clearly room for further

[544] Mizubayashi, p. 261.

discussions regarding the idea of Japanese readership, the role of Shimazaki as a 'Japanese translingual' writer, translations and the political stance of the author.

As the *chronicler of inconvenient aspects of Japanese society*, Aki Shimazaki has managed to play an important role in educating the French-speaking reader about societal injustices and opening the debate to a worldwide audience. Although Shimazaki claims that her writing centres on 'la vie et l'amour'[545] there is no denying that her work is far more intricate and profound than what she claims it to be. In fact, Shimazaki's work has bridged a linguistic and cultural divide between the Western world and Japanese society with regards to on-going debate that has been limited to the Japanese language such as the marginalization of the *Zainichi* community. Through her writing, Shimazaki has also alerted her readers to personal narratives relating to the Second World War, which have had adverse effects on many generations with which most French-speaking readers are unfamiliar. There is no denying that Aki Shimazaki's novels have to be read and investigated carefully because: firstly, her translingual poetic style that marries Japanese themes with minimalistic French is pared-down, evocative and thought-provoking; secondly, Shimazaki presents her readers with issues that are deep-rooted in Japanese society yet she maintains an impartial stance thus presenting contrasting points of view which allow the reader to make up their own mind regarding the issue at hand; thirdly, Shimazaki writes from an unparalleled position as someone who has lived half her life in Japan exclusively and the other half in Canada meaning that she can express Japanese experiences from an authentic stance and make it accessible culturally and linguistically to a French-speaking audience. Lastly, Aki Shimazaki shatters the idea that Japan is a monolithic entity that exists on the periphery due to being 'exotic', 'unique' or 'impenetrable', Shimazaki presents us with a provocative, uncomfortable interpretation of Japan that beckons to be challenged and understood.

[545] Lapointe, 2015.

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